

BAKUNIN'S SOJOURN IN JAPAN: NAILING DOWN AN ENIGMA (2)

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1. Introduction

Michael Bakunin's dramatic, 25,000-mile trans-Pacific flight from Siberian exile in the summer of 1861 was undoubtedly one of the longest escapes on record. It has also left behind a wealth of mysteries: how did he manage to pull off the escape when he should have been one of the most heavily marked men in Siberia? Were there any accomplices, and if so what part did they play? Why did he remain silent about his experiences, leaving its details to be pieced together by historians? How did he pass the two weeks he was obliged to spend in Yokohama, Japan, waiting for a ship to take him across the Pacific? What influence, if any, did his passage have on the countries he passed through? These and other points have been tackled and partially solved by historians, notable by Bakunin's biographer Carr, during the century and more since the great revolutionary's death. Many questions remain, however, and may never be answered, particularly those related to Bakunin's brief sojourn in Japan.

The first part of this article, using chiefly fragmentary materials available in Japanese, sought to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge concerning Bakunin's stay in Japan, principally those two weeks in Yokohama. The second and third parts, while amplifying and

augmenting the first part and correcting some of the mistakes it contained, will throw more light on the Siberian background, point to some of the more indirect ways in which Bakunin affected developments in Japan, and finally seek to place the entire episode in the wider context of Pacific studies.

Bakunin's direct ideological effect on Japan has usually been considered as dating from the appearance of Japan's own self-conscious anarchist movement in the second decade of the 20th century, and the Japanese anarchists themselves have been the people most concerned to confirm that influence. It should not be forgotten, however, that it was only in the last half-decade of his life that Bakunin was to begin using the word "anarchism" and pointing to the state as the origin of all social evils, and that at the time of his visit to Japan his political position was closer to that of a radical-nationalist democrat. To seek only for the influence of his anarchist ideas, therefore, ignores the fact that his passage toward those ideas was a long and sometimes painful process.

Beginning from an examination of Bakunin's activities in the crucial decade following his return to Europe, when he began to shift gradually from idealistic nationalism to an outright denial of the state, this second part will tentatively suggest that in fact the effects of the ideas he held at that time became apparent in Japan, albeit indirectly, at least thirty years earlier than the anarchist ideas usually associated with him. The medium for their transmission was furnished by certain Japanese thinkers and activists who had spent time in Paris during the crucial years between 1870 and 1880 and come into contact with the radical movement there. Many of these men, following their return, were

subsequently influential in the Popular Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*) that broke out in Japan in the late 1870s. The evidence suggests that the radical ideas with which they became associated while in Paris were strongly influenced by the decentralizing trend already represented by Michael Bakunin. While the effects of French radical thought on the modern Japanese liberal tradition have long been recognized, the possibility that Michael Bakunin's ideas played even an indirect part has never really been explored. The evidence that emerges points yet again to the value of inter-cultural research for throwing new light on old problems.

2. French Encounters

When Itagaki Taisuke, a liberal politician and leader of the Popular Rights Movement, met the renowned French novelist Victor Hugo in Paris in the early 1880s, he asked him a question that stands not only as a telling illustration of the absence in neo-Confucian Japan of a home-grown libertarian ethic, but also as a classic instance of the early Meiji period's openness to new ideas: "How might we go about effectively establishing the ideology of freedom and popular rights in a backward country like Japan?"¹⁾ Hugo, as well as being the most celebrated French novelist of his generation, was also a champion of liberalism, whose compassionate depiction in *Les Misérables* of the angry masses of Paris immediately prior to the 1848 revolution there was only natural given his sympathy for that short-lived experiment in freedom, the Paris Commune of 1871. For Itagaki, searching for ways to prevent his own fledgling movement from splitting against the rock of government intransigence, Hugo was a natural source of inspiration. For Hugo, on the other hand, the gap between his own radical definition of liberalism

and the highly limited version held by Itagaki must have yawned embarrassingly wide, and may well be the reason why his response to Itagaki's question has gone unrecorded.

Itagaki Taisuke could hardly have known of Bakunin's Yokohama sojourn: although Bakunin's name had been introduced to Japanese readers along with his anarchist ideas in a text on the European socialist movement as early as 1882,²⁾ the first mention of his visit to Japan did not appear until some two decades after Itagaki's meeting with Victor Hugo, in Kemuriyama Sentarō's pathbreaking text *Anarchism* (Musei-fushugi), published in 1903.³⁾ He was thus hardly to know that Hugo's radical liberalism, as well as his long and adventurous life, overlapped not only with those of other men closely linked to the Popular Rights Movement, but also with that of the fiery radical and emerging anarchist Michael Bakunin himself.

In the summer of 1867, as Europe braced itself for a revival of radicalism following the suppression of the 1848 wave of revolts, preparations began for an international conference that would, unwittingly, help set the scene for the polarization of the European socialist movement. In the wake of the Second Congress of the International Workingmen's Association (the so-called "1st International") in Lausanne, Switzerland, a meeting of "concerned democrats" was hurriedly called in the nearby city of Geneva to discuss the growing threat of war between France and Prussia. One of the prime movers of this conference, which despite efforts by Karl Marx to scuttle it resulted in the formation of a new organization called the League for Peace and Freedom, had been a French radical neo-Rousseauian and professor of jurisprudence named Emile

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Acollas (1826-91). Accollas' appeal must have touched a sensitive nerve, for the proposal gained no less than 10,000 sponsors including Victor Hugo, John Stuart Mill, Garibaldi, Louis Blanc — and Michael Bakunin. The hallmark of the gathering was a rousing speech by Bakunin, still the most charismatic representative of that generation of European radicals, in the course of which, to everyone's surprise, he made his first public denunciation of aggressive nationalism.

The meeting, which Accollas had initially insisted be referred to as a "revolutionary conference" rather than merely as a "peace conference", set out three major areas of concern. The first concerned the compatibility of monarchical politics and peace, and it was agreed that only the assurance of complete personal liberty within a "United States of Europe" comprised of a federation of republics could bring the continent a permanent peace. The second concerned the conditions for bringing about such a situation, and the consensus was that only by returning to the ideals of the French Revolution — the blending of politics and morality and the removal of all forms of prejudice through the awakening of conscience and the expansion of education — could that aim be realized. The third issue was that of how to ensure the permanence of such a state of affairs, and the drawing-up of a plan for uniting all democrats and lovers of liberty in one organization was made the major task of the conference. Though the potpourri that the gathering's participants represented more or less ensured that none of these targets would be reached, the ideals at least suggest that Accollas' characterization of it as a "revolutionary conference" was not far off the mark, and make the violent opposition of Karl Marx more easily understood.

Bakunin, optimistic and pragmatic as always, had seen the League as a potential vehicle for propagating radical ideas. He had yet to begin defining himself as a socialist, let alone as an anarchist (even the word “anarchism” had yet to appear in the lexicon of socialism), and his appeal was clearly pitched at the cautious sensibilities of the democrats who dominated the Congress. Yet, in the context of the times, “democracy” was a far more dangerous concept than it appears today, and like that of the Popular Rights Movement at its best, Bakunin’s position was a fine rejection of an entrenched aristocracy and of the oppressive values it represented. Most important, in terms of Bakunin’s own political development, was his denunciation of nationalism, hitherto the principal plank in his revolutionary platform. Declaring aggressive nationalism to be the fundamental characteristic of all centralized states, he called for those states to be replaced by free associations.

The conference, though hopelessly torn by rivalries, was deemed significant enough to justify the convening of a second one, and arrangements got under way immediately, with Bakunin as an energetic convenor, for a follow-up meeting in the Swiss capital of Bern a year later. (Acollas had been arrested and imprisoned following his return to France, on a charge of plotting with Garibaldi against Emperor Napoleon III.) This second meeting, however, to which no more than 100 delegates bothered to turn up, was but a shadow of the first, the idealism that had surrounded its predecessor having dissolved in the intervening year thanks to the growing influence of the 1st International and the heightening tension all over Europe. Once again it was sponsored by Victor Hugo, and had Emile Accolas as organizer and Michael Bakunin as its most illustrious delegate.⁴⁾ For Bakunin, as before, its

chief significance lay in his two keynote speeches in which he prophetically anticipated the key points in his subsequent dramatic confrontation with Marx concerning the nature of revolution:

“All states are evil in the sense that by their very nature... they represent the diametrical opposite of human justice, freedom and morality. And in that respect... there is no great difference between the savage Russian empire and the most civilised state in Europe... A virtuous state can only be a weak state, and even it is criminal in its thoughts and desires.”

Bakunin concluded his speech with the declaration that liberty, justice and peace, to say nothing of the emancipation of the masses (a point which did not enamour him to his fellow-delegates), could be realized only by the dissolution of all states and their replacement by “free productive associations”.⁵⁾

Twelve years spent in the dank fortresses of three different European autocracies following his arrest in 1849 (including that of his native Russia) had clearly convinced Bakunin, if he had needed any further convincing, of the dire nature of oppressive politics whatever their hue. When he had first arrived back in Europe in late 1861, at the end of a voyage that had taken him through the ports of Yokohama, San Francisco, New York and Liverpool, he had consequently thrown himself into the thick of the struggle to reorganize the oppressed for a new assault on aristocratic privilege; as the foremost intellectual radical of the time, Karl Marx was a natural figure for him to attach himself to.

Marx was at that time in England struggling to finish the first volume of his *Das Capital*, and although Bakunin has left no formal record of

his brief Japanese stopover it has been suggested that the passing references to Japan to be found in Marx's book were at least partially the fruit of his excited reminiscences about the things he had seen there.⁶⁾ Unfortunately, however, Marx's very success was beginning to encourage the paternal and dictatorial tendencies that had been a marked facet of his personality since his early years in the revolutionary movement. For Bakunin, who must have had visions (borne out only too accurately by subsequent history) of new dungeons sunk this time in the name of socialist principles rather than aristocratic ones, the split between them had been merely a matter of time.

Half a decade later, in his second speech at the 1868 congress of the League for Peace and Freedom, Bakunin would make his first public revelation of the gulf that divided him from his former comrade:

“Communism I abhor, because it is the negation of liberty, and without liberty I cannot imagine anything truly human. I am not a communist, because communism concentrates and swallows up in itself for the benefit of the State all the forces of society... I want to see society... organised from below upwards, by way of free association, not from above downwards, by means of authority...”⁷⁾

Not surprisingly, the conference rejected his proposals, and Bakunin went on to associate himself with more promising comrades including those of the 1st International. The League for Peace and Freedom held one more full-fledged Congress in the following year in Lausanne, where Emile Aollas declared war on the very concept of monarchy,⁸⁾ and Victor Hugo, elected as chair, delivered a rousing plea for the

League to take a more radical position: "The first condition of peace must be liberation... it is very certain that we must have a revolution..."⁹⁾ Less than a year later, however, the League was dealt its death-blow by the long-awaited outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and before long had sunk into oblivion.¹⁰⁾ As luck would have it, though, the war, which culminated in the siege of Paris by the forces of Prussia, was to cause the paths of Victor Hugo and Emile Acolas to cross once again, and the events of the ensuing decade would send insurrectionary tremors as far away as Japan.

Just about midway between the first and second congresses of the League for Peace and Freedom, Japan had finally succeeded in overthrowing the 260-year rule of the Tokugawa shoguns and installing an ostensibly modernizing government bent on equipping the country to stand up to the onslaught of Western expansionism. If Michael Bakunin knew anything of these dramatic events in the country he had left just six years before, he certainly did not refer to them; among those who had taken part in those same events, however, were some who found their inspiration in the same popular uprising that had given birth to the ideals upon which Bakunin and his comrades based their creed: the French Revolution of 1789, heralded as a forerunner to their own "Meiji Restoration".

Prince Saionji Kimmochi (1849~1940), scion to a branch of the Fujiwara clan (a noble family only one rank lower than the imperial family itself), had grown up as the playmate of the Meiji Emperor and went on to become Japan's consummate elder statesman until his death on the eve of the Pacific War. In his teens, clad in traditional battledress,

he had led Restoration forces against adherents of the overthrown Tokugawa shogunate, then returned to his place at court where, on removing his war-helmet and armour, he revealed himself as the first court noble to cut his hair and dress in the Western fashion.

For a restless and aristocratic personality such as Saionji's was, the end of the fighting brought about a combination of acute boredom and political curiosity, and in December 1870, after eighteen months' study of French, he successfully prevailed upon the new leadership to allow him to travel to Paris.¹¹⁾ Save for the fact that he was able to make use of the newly-opened American transcontinental railroad, his voyage reduplicated that of Bakunin ten years before, touching at San Francisco, New York, Liverpool and London before bringing him to Paris in late March 1871.¹²⁾ More important, Saionji, as well as being of similar breeding to his aristocratic Russian counterpart Bakunin, must also have had the same knack of being able to home in on significant historic events, for his arrival coincided almost to the day with the outbreak of the uprising that would change the shape of European radicalism: the Paris Commune of 1871.¹³⁾

Acollas was evidently away from Paris at the time of Saionji's arrival, having accepted a post at the University of Bern in Switzerland in 1870. Whether he had sought the position out of fears for his own life following the outbreak of hostilities with Prussia, or whether the government had made it difficult for him to work in Paris after his release from prison, is not clear. Victor Hugo, however, was there, having flown back temporarily from exile to rouse the city's inhabitants to stand firm against the Prussian invaders, and to issue a plea for a republican

democracy which would represent the interests of the ordinary people over those of the leisured classes. After those people, in protest against a peace treaty that permitted the Prussian armies to enter the city, established a revolutionary committee to rule them in place of the discredited Emperor Napoleon III, Emile Acolas was appointed Dean of the Law Faculty of the University of Paris, a post which he was never to take up for fear of being rearrested. He was thus spared the recriminations that were to follow the crushing of the Commune, and after his return in the autumn of 1871 was able to establish a cram school for those, particularly overseas students, wishing to take the university's entrance examination. Not long after that, through the intercession of the Japan Research Society (of which Acolas because of his interest in Eastern languages was evidently a member) he acquired a new student in the person of 23-year old Saionji Kimmochi.¹⁴⁾

Unlike Acolas, Saionji had been in Paris almost throughout that exciting and ultimately terrible year of 1871, when the city's populace raised the red flag of revolution only to be slaughtered in the streets by the troops of their new President Thiers. His newness to the city, together with his aristocratic origins (and, evidently, the highly-conservative atmosphere of the first French-language school he attended, whose instructors actually set up barricades to defend the government side in the fighting), combined to make him a highly critical observer of events. In his letters written at the height of the insurrection he describes the "despicable" Communards as "bandits" and "vagabonds gathered from all over Europe", and calls for the execution of supporters of republicanism should they be unearthed in Japan, attitudes that are hard to reconcile with the radical liberalism he would come to espouse

over the ensuing decade.¹⁵⁾ He was to remain in the city for ten years, first as a French-language student, later as an avid imbiber of the libertarian philosophy of Emile Acolas. At the University, finally, he would absorb the legal ideas that go to form the basis of a democratic state, ideas that would finally bring him to reconsider the ideals if not the radical methods of the Paris Commune.

Why would Saionji, despite his revanchist outlook on the events of 1871, choose a school run by such an obvious radical as Emile Acolas? Apart from the presence there of several other Japanese students, we also have to consider his background. The court nobility he belonged to, along with the emperors themselves, had been kept under severe constraint by the warrior class that had ruled Japan for more than 260 years, and Saionji had become committed to a political order in which the people ruled themselves, albeit under the benign protection of a wise monarch. Acolas too, developing the ideas of Rousseau, was a confirmed believer in constitutional rule responsive to popular demands, and so, by 1874, we find the tone of Saionji's letters home undergoing a radical change.

Personal ties seem to have played an equal part: among Saionji's fellow-students at the Acolas Law School was a young republican named Georges Clemenceau (1841~1929). In 1871, as the popular mayor of Montmartre, Clemenceau had almost lost his life in the resistance to the suppression of the Commune. Through Clemenceau, moreover, Saionji was almost certainly introduced to Leon Gambetta (1838~1882), another republican and, like Clemenceau, a future Prime Minister. As a result, his conviction of the need for the political

world to incorporate some degree of popular will became stronger than ever. In a symbolic demonstration of this political realignment, when some time in 1875 Clemenceau requested Saionji's cooperation in bringing into France a black-listed publication that he and Acollas had recently had published in Geneva, Saionji cheerfully agreed.¹⁶⁾

Clemenceau would subsequently, along with Emile Acollas, be one of the go-betweens for Victor Hugo's meeting with Itagaki Taisuke mentioned at the beginning of this article.¹⁷⁾ Almost half a century later, as an elder statesman representing his country at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Saionji would re-encounter his old comrade, now become Prime Minister of France. In his memoirs Clemenceau looked back on their younger days with wistful nostalgia, speaking of "Amiable Prince Saionji, impetuous once, today quietly ironical, an old comrade of mine at the lectures of our law professor, Emile Acollas".¹⁸⁾

Saionji was certainly not the first post-Restoration Japanese to study in Europe (nor even the first to study under Emile Acollas),¹⁹⁾ neither was he alone in being affected by the liberal ideas that were current at the time. Within a year or two of his arrival Acollas' law classes had a new member in the shape of another Japanese government-sponsored student named Nakae Tokusuke, better known as Nakae Chōmin (1847~1901). Nakae had left Japan in December 1871 with the Iwakura Mission, a party of court officials and government leaders despatched on a tour of inspection to the USA and Europe, and had arrived in Paris in the middle of February 1872 en route to Lyon. Lyon was to be his home for more than half of the total of two years and three months he spent in France (he would eventually depart in April 1874), during

which time he gained a name for himself by organizing his fellow-students to resist a government order to return home.²⁰⁾

As the son of a low-level *samurai*, Nakae Chōmin came from a very different background to that of the court-bred Saionji Kimmochi, and it is hard to know what they found in common unless it was a shared taste for outrageous behaviour. Despite the fact that their time in Paris overlapped by only a year or so, far less than with many of Saionji's fellow-Japanese students, it is to Nakae rather than to anyone else that Saionji would subsequently refer most warmly in his memoirs. Nakae, for his part, retained a fondness for Saionji that would last right up to his death from cancer in 1901, his final work *One Year and a Half* (*Ichinen yuhan*) praising him as the most high-minded, intelligent and wise of all the statesmen he had encountered.²¹⁾ Nakae Chōmin, following his return to Japan in 1874, was to have a seminal effect on both the Popular Rights Movement and the libertarian movement that developed in its wake. Saionji Kimmochi, who was to stay another six years in Paris, would briefly join forces with him on his return, then, after turning to politics, become a liberal irritant to successive army-dominated governments.

Emile Acollas was no blind follower of Rousseau. Arguing that Rousseau's ideas concerning individual autonomy would by themselves lead to a dictatorship of the majority, he insisted that only through the introduction of representative government would they have any tenability for the modern world.²²⁾ His lectures taught Nakae enough of Rousseau's philosophy to allow him to produce the first Japanese translation of the *Contrat Social* in 1882, and at this point the wheel turns to

bring us back to the career of Itagaki Taisuke.

In 1874, the same year that Nakae himself returned to Japan, the government leadership had split over policy toward Korea. Itagaki and others, after resigning from the government, submitted a petition demanding a popularly elected national assembly. Looking around for an ideological base that would distinguish them from their rivals, their eyes soon hit upon Nakae's translation of the *Contrat Social*, which began circulating in manuscript form in 1877 and had already earned him the title of "The Rousseau of the East". In 1881 Itagaki founded a new political party which he called the *Jiyūtō* or Liberal Party. Its doctrine was based closely on the ideals of the French Revolution and the Rousseauan ideas propagated by Nakae Chōmin, and in the following year, in the Notes to the first published edition of his translation, Nakae explained the revolutionary nature of those ideas.

According to Rousseau, he noted, political power belonged exclusively to the people and was not something to be shared. More important, and most heretical of all, Nakae, going beyond Saionji Kimmochi and paraphrasing Emile Aollas, contended that even a constitutional monarchy in which ultimate power rested with the emperor and his officials was a travesty of democracy, and that only a republican government answerable to the people would suffice.²³⁾ While stopping short of the revolutionary anarchist position that Bakunin came around to in the last half-decade of his life, Nakae's opposition to the status quo grew out of the same concern for the integrity of the individual, and in the context of Japan's political tradition it was a radical position indeed, winning him many recruits among the young supporters of the

Popular Rights Movement. ²⁴⁾

Nakae Chōmin had hoped that the ideology he had helped create for the Liberal Party would be sufficient to convince the Japanese people to elect it to power in the promised national elections, but just when it was at the peak of its power the party began to disintegrate. In April 1882 Itagaki Taisuke was attacked by an assassin. Though he was not seriously hurt, the rage within the party was fierce, and the government, seeing a chance both to cool down the political atmosphere and to remove the man who more than anyone symbolized the democratic opposition, offered funds for him to take a tour of recuperation to Europe. Itagaki, to the chagrin of his allies, accepted and went off to France (where he was to have the famous meeting with Victor Hugo), leaving behind a party deeply divided. At the same time as this affair was throwing doubt upon the integrity of its chief leaders, the increasing radicalism of its lower echelons together with the attacks of police and government-linked gangsters undermined the Liberal party's organization too, and in 1884, after returning from Europe, Itagaki finally decided to disband it altogether. Although the party was re-established to fight the first election campaign in July 1890, shorn of its radical elements it was but a shadow of its former self, and soon became caught up in the chaotic mayhem of compromise and backstabbing (sometimes literal) that characterized Meiji period politics. ²⁵⁾

These unhappy events clearly had a powerful effect upon Nakae Chōmin. The profound influence of Emile Aollas can be clearly seen in the repeated references to him and his ideas in Nakae's writings; yet it is also clear that, in the dog-eat-dog world of late 19th century

Japan, Nakae gradually came to find Acollas' ideas over-idealistic. In his most famous work, a witty yet sagacious discussion of mid-Meiji political and intellectual trends titled *Three Drunkards Discourse on Government* (1887), Nakae has the character named Highbrow (*Shinshikun*), an avid proponent of Westernization, remark:

“Recently when the French philosopher Emile Acollas classified all of the various kinds of laws, he ranked international law in terms of morality rather than of jurisprudence. According to Acollas... [m]orality, unlike law, is made effective only by the dictates of individual conscience. Similarly, international law has no officials to enforce it but depends instead only on the ‘consciences’ of the nations involved.”²⁶⁾

Later on in Highbrow's speech Nakae makes it plain that, though the League for Peace and Freedom itself may have expired, the ideals that fired it had remained as real as ever for Emile Acollas, and had lived on in the lectures he delivered at his classes in Paris:

“Recently when [savants] from all the European countries met together, those who advocated a lasting peace emphasized the need for democracy and the desirability of unifying all the countries of the world into one great nation. When considered in terms of the law of political evolution this idea is not so very extravagant.”²⁷⁾

The assessment of Highbrow's position by Nankai *sensei*, the character held to be closest to Nakae's own views, is significant, for while dismissing it as “an airy cloud of resplendent ideals” on the one hand, on the other he lauds it as “the hope of the future”. While the ideals were identical to those he had once projected for the Liberal Party, that is, in

the present parlous state of Japan, where most people's minds were filled with the ideas of the past, it would be impossible to create such an ideal democratic world. The first task confronting the proponents of democracy in Japan, he had come to believe, was to educate the people to the stage where they could take their place as citizens of a modern state, aware of the crucial role they played in the political process.²⁸⁾ In the last pages of the *Discourse on Government* Nankai sensei finally unveils a position hardly different from that which the courtly Saionji Kimmochi would ultimately advocate:

“I think that Japan should frame a constitution, strengthen the honor and glory of the emperor and increase the well-being and security of the people. . . .”²⁹⁾

Hardly what Bakunin would have recommended, but Bakunin, after all, was never faced with the practical problems of organizing a post-insurrectionary society.

Back in Paris, meanwhile, Saionji himself was still a student of law under Emile Acollas, whose classes he continued to attend even after he qualified for the University. The two had evidently become good friends as well, and Saionji would later look back on Acollas as the closest of all the acquaintances he had made in Paris.³⁰⁾ Having lived through both the excitement of the Commune and the horror of its suppression, he now became witness to the next stage in France's struggle to renew its reputation as the homeland of liberty: the campaign to force the conservative government to grant amnesty to the thousands of people who had been imprisoned or had their rights suspended because of their involvement in the events of 1871.

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Here once again the paths of Acollas and Victor Hugo crossed, as they had a decade before at the congresses of the League for Peace and Freedom. Acollas, in his first venture into politics, ran in the February 1876 General Election on a radical platform demanding "full and complete amnesty for all convictions [of Communards]". The proposals set out in his campaign speeches to the voters of Paris' VIth *arrondissement*, namely "decentralized federalism, revokable mandates for elected representatives, and free association as the only way to ensure the equitable distribution of goods", located him somewhere midway between radical liberalism and outright anarchism. Almost identical to the positions taken up by Bakunin at the congresses of the League for Peace and Freedom, the proposals indicated clearly the degree to which Bakunin's ideas had tempered Acollas' former idealism. They would also, significantly enough, become the key demands of the radical wing of Japan's Popular Rights Movement which was to erupt a few years later.

At the centre of Acollas' campaign, however, was the amnesty:

"Fellow citizens... there is one measure which I daily would demand; it is that of an Amnesty toward all the condemned men of the Commune: I would demand it, not as an act of compassion, but as a measure of conciliation, of reconciliation in the largest and best meaning of that word."

Although Acollas' campaign lost in a showdown with those who favoured a partial or delayed amnesty, it helped lay the groundwork for the beginnings of a socialist opposition to the proto-monarchist government that had ruled France since 1871.³¹⁾ In those same elections, Victor Hugo, at the urging of Georges Clemenceau, ran successfully for the Senate. A year later, in a speech based on Abraham Lincoln's Second

Inaugural Address, he introduced a Bill appealing for the Communards' citizenship to be restored, only to go down to ignominious defeat thanks to the opposition of provincial Senators. Whether this continuing bitterness toward Paris' radical tradition had anything to do with Saionji's decision to return to Japan is not clear. In his *Memoirs* he relates how Acollas himself had urged him to call an end to his leisurely European sojourn and return to put his talents at the service of his own country's politics. With things already shaping up for the creation of a quasi-democratic regime there, there is little doubt that Nakae Chōmin and other liberals were chaffing anxiously at Saionji's continued dalliance abroad. Perhaps, however, it was precisely the knowledge that he would have to play a central role in Japan's political wrangling that caused him to delay his return for so long, for his reply to Acollas' adjurations made it clear that he did not relish the prospect.³²⁾ Whatever the truth was, the summer of 1880 saw him making his preparations to leave, and by the end of October he was back in Japan. Before long he and Nakae Chōmin, together with several more of their Paris acquaintances, would be playing conspicuous roles in the movement to create a more responsive political environment there.

Although an aristocrat to the bones, Saionji's experiences in France together with his own vibrant personality had made him a unique presence within the imperial court. As an eccentric who hated restrictions, he was instinctively opposed to totalitarianism in politics. (Twenty years later, when he found himself in the Prime Minister's seat, his insistence upon a permissive attitude toward the emerging socialist movement in order to avert a social crisis would earn him the ire of his less realistic colleagues in the government.) Though unable to

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conceive of the total elimination of the imperial throne, he did believe that the times presented the perfect opportunity for it to be refurbished as an institution accessible to popular sentiment; in other words, as a constitutional monarchy.

Consequently, within six months of his return he and Nakae Chōmin, together with several friends from their Paris days, joined forces to found the *Oriental Free Press* (Tōyō jiyū shinbun), the first Japanese newspaper ever to employ the word "free" (*jiyū*) in its title. Short-lived (its 34 issues all appeared between March and April 1881) but influential, the paper set out to prick the government in its most sensitive spot: its undemocratic nature. When a government refused to recognize the natural rights of the people, insisted Nakae in an article published in the paper in 1881, those people had the right to rebel against it.³³⁾ The ideas set forth in the *Oriental Free Press*, though not glaringly radical, had a seminal effect on the growing movement for local autonomy that formed the grass-roots basis for the Popular Rights Movement until its harsh suppression in the mid-1880s. Under the circumstances, top government leader Iwakura Tomomi's remark that the country was in a similar state to that which must have preceded the outbreak of the French Revolution³⁴⁾ was probably not too far off the mark.

The government, appalled that a member of the imperial family should lend his support to a movement sworn to bring about its overthrow, protested to the court and succeeded in having Saionji's participation forbidden by personal order of the emperor. Saionji appealed to his former playmate for understanding, saying that his only concern was to make the throne more accessible to the common people, but his pleas

were answered by an imperial edict ordering him to resign, and his loyalty to the throne gave him no choice but to obey. To his credit, he refused all requests to enter the government, and it was only later that year, when the government finally bowed to popular pressure and announced its plan to draft a constitution, that he agreed to take up an official position as adviser. He left Japan soon after with Itō Hirobumi's constitutional research team (see the following section), and would not return to Japan for almost another decade.³⁵⁾ By the end of April the *Oriental Free Press* had collapsed.

Bakunin's legacy, though not openly espoused until the emergence of a conscious anarchist movement in Japan in the first decade of the 20th century, was already exerting an unacknowledged influence over the struggle for human rights in that country even as he lay on his deathbed in 1876. The commitment to freedom which Bakunin more than anyone else came to personify following his return to Europe was the origin of the attraction he held for Emile Acolas in 1867, and Acolas' influence on the two Japanese liberals who studied with him, Nakae Chōmin and Saionji Kimmochi, saw to it that that commitment would recross the Eurasian continent to the land that had granted him a new lease on life. Bakunin's Japan connection, oblique though it was, thus outlived his brief stop-over in the Yokohama Hotel, and was sustained through this series of chance encounters between European and Japanese personalities. Still more surprising is the link to the political figure in whose name the repression of that struggle was conducted: the Meiji Emperor himself, figurehead of the regime that after the Restoration of 1868 set about making Japan a viable member of the imperialist world order. To trace that connection requires turning back the

clock two decades to the early days of the European socialist movement.

3. Strange Bedfellows

In 1840, at the age of 27, Bakunin left his native Russia to study in Germany. It was there, over the succeeding eighteen months, that his transition from idealistic nationalist to radical socialist took place, and the primary catalyst for that conversion was his encounter with the young German political scientist Dr. Lorenz von Stein (1815~90) and his 1842 work, *Socialism and Communism in Contemporary France* (Der Sozialismus und der Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs). In Bakunin's own words, the book

“opened for me a new world into which I threw myself with all the fervor of one who hungers and thirsts. It seemed to me that I was hearing the proclamation of a new dispensation, the revelation of a new religion of exaltation, dignity, happiness, liberation of the entire human race.”³⁶⁾

Sniffed at by Bakunin's biographer Nettleau for having added nothing to the ideological canon of socialism,³⁷⁾ Stein's book nevertheless had a seminal effect on radicals of Bakunin's generation, particularly those in Germany where socialism had yet to receive any systematic explication. Although Stein's primary purpose (like that of his Japanese counterpart Kemuriyama Sentarō, as it happened) was to warn governments of the danger posed by the newly-emerging theories of socialism, as so often happened with books of that nature the close analysis that he provided of the theories of radical thinkers like St. Simon, Fourier and Proudhon in fact served as an ABC of revolution to those inclined to be interested. Himself a former Young Hegelian, Stein pointed out the

role of class conflict in social change, and made the (for some people) exciting prediction that the proletariat would one day seek to oust the bourgeoisie from power if reforms were not promoted. (It was to Stein's book too that a young newspaper reporter named Karl Marx turned when criticized for his lack of understanding of socialism, and numerous critics have pointed out how many concepts central to Marx's analysis were in fact derived from it.)³⁸⁾

What is most germane to the present essay, however, is that it was the same Dr. Stein who, in the early- to mid-1880s, was invited by Japanese government leaders to pen a blueprint for their country's first national constitution. By providing an ostensibly-democratic political framework, it was hoped, the constitution would herald Japan's emergence into the age of modern nation-states and, in the process, take the steam out of the increasingly-radical Popular Rights Movement.

By 1880 it was clear to Japanese government leaders that the autocratic and exclusive state structure established a dozen or so years before would not last much longer without the introduction of some form of limited democracy including a constitution that at least appeared to guarantee basic human rights. While Itagaki Taisuke and his fellow-politicians demonstrated the dominance of English and French political philosophies in the early Meiji period, in fact Japan, with an autocratic and warlike tradition that permeated its conservative ruling class and made light of human rights, was closer to the situation of Prussia. The two countries also shared a determination to catch up with their rivals by building up national strength as quickly as possible.³⁹⁾ As early as the mid-1870s, therefore, a translation of the Prussian Constitution

had been made, and in March 1882 Home Minister Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909) set off on a constitutional fact-finding tour of Europe (accompanied, as we have seen, by Saionji Kimmochi as court representative).

Not surprisingly, Itō's first stops were Berlin and Vienna, and the liberal centres of London and Paris were added on at the end of the tour as little more than a sop to appearances (perhaps also to satisfy the demands of Saionji Kimmochi). The larger part of his time was spent either in Vienna seeking the advice of Stein, or in Berlin soliciting that of another prominent political scientist, the German Rudolph von Gneist (1816~95) (who, it would seem, turned Itō's request down until he had been given a grounding in Japan's modern history).⁴⁰⁾ Itō subsequently reported his findings in a letter to Iwakura Tomomi:

“Thanks to the famous German scholars Gneist and Stein, I have come to understand the essential features of the structure and operations of states... The situation in our country is characterized by the erroneous belief that the words of English, American, and French liberals and radicals are eternal verities... I have acquired arguments and principles to retrieve the situation.”⁴¹⁾

Itō Hirobumi's admiration for both Gneist and Stein was immense, and it was only those scholars' advanced years (both were approaching 70) that prevented their being called to Japan to act as his personal advisers. Even after his own return home (Saionji remained behind as Minister to Germany and later Austria-Hungary, perhaps to keep him away from the mayhem in Japan), Itō ordered all members of the court or government visiting Europe to spend some time with one or both of the two

scholars in order to absorb their ideas on statecraft, ⁴²⁾ and Stein himself was to surprise his visitors with his detailed knowledge of developments in Japan (he evidently subscribed to one of the English-language newspapers established in Yokohama soon after Bakunin's departure).

For Itō, the chief problem in the drafting of the constitution was how to resolve the contradiction between the desire to retain a special place for the emperor at the centre of the political system and the need to affirm the principle of constitutional government. Both Gneist and Stein were conservatives opposed to parliamentary government, Gneist favouring the concentration of power in the hands of chief ministers, Stein advocating a state that was above politics. In the end both men's ideas were incorporated into the constitution that was finally granted to the people as a "gift" from the Emperor in February 1889: while the more authoritarian ideas of Gneist influenced the small print of the document, such as in making ministers of state responsible only to the emperor, it was Stein's concept of a "social monarchy", one that existed to personify the general will of the nation and to arbitrate the competing interests in society while remaining above the struggle itself, that coloured the constitution's overall tone. ⁴³⁾

This was a concept that not only suited the purposes of the post-1868 government coalition, but also appealed strongly to the deep-rooted Confucian tradition in Japan. Consequently, the Meiji Emperor himself, according to Japanese sources, set out on a protracted study of Stein's version under the direction of a court noble lately dispatched by Itō Hirobumi to study with Stein in Vienna. Above all, it seems to have been Stein's emphasis on historical education to create a populace

attuned to the tenor of the constitution that led to his being regarded so highly.⁴⁴⁾ Unfortunately, the ambivalences that resulted from the need to resolve two opposing principles meant that succeeding Cabinets and military leaders would come to use the emperor's protection to justify all their actions in terms of "transcendental authority".

Astounding and heretical as it may sound, Stein's ideas consequently provided a political meeting ground for, on the one hand, the most celebrated of 19th century anarchist agitators and, on the other, the sacred figure in whose name Japan would begin its march toward world conflagration.⁴⁵⁾ Bakunin, had he been able to live thirty years longer, would surely have been happy with the first step on that march, the 1905 victory over Tsarist Russia that would contribute mightily to the eventual downfall of the oppressive imperial system that he despised so much. Ironically, though, as a Japanese researcher has pointed out,⁴⁶⁾ it was to be in the name of that same "Meiji Constitution" that, exactly fifty years after Bakunin's visit to Yokohama, Kōtoku Shūsui, Japan's first self-proclaimed anarchist, was to be executed along with eleven of his comrades.

It has often been noted by historians that the Meiji Emperor, despite his youth, demonstrated an acute awareness of politics that allowed him to make frequent comments on the deliberations on Japan's first constitution, and hagiography has sometimes claimed for him a natural political intelligence when in fact that awareness was due to hard political study (and even that claim has recently come under hard scrutiny). The source of the emperor's information in turn takes us back to the second curious link between Bakunin and Japan's post-Meiji political

history. To trace its origins we have once again to go back two decades to Bakunin's earliest days as a radical agitator.

Not long after Stein's book had awakened Bakunin to the concepts of radical politics, a new encounter was to inspire him to set about their actual implementation. In early 1843 Bakunin moved to Switzerland, where he soon made the acquaintance of the communist tailor Wilhelm Weitling; it was to be a fateful meeting. Though Weitling's vision of a perfectly-managed, ideal communist society left Bakunin cold, his energy and dedication were like a breath of fresh air, convincing him that only by a great deal of hard work could the ideal society be brought about, and at the same time that great things could be achieved by a small number of super-active revolutionaries moving among the people. In his recently published *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, Weitling had written:

“The perfect society has no government, but only an administration, no laws, but only obligations, no punishments, but means of correction.”⁴⁷⁾

Revolution, hitherto something to be discussed by intellectuals in smoke-filled tea-shops, now became for Bakunin a practical way of life. In Weitling's “blend of high-souled idealism and reckless brutality”, as Bakunin's biographer has put it, he found “something congenial to his own turbulent nature... From this time forward, the violent overthrow of the social and political order became the primary and avowed object of Michael Bakunin's career.”⁴⁸⁾

Bakunin's association with Weitling was brief: the Swiss authorities

were already keeping a watch on their activities, and for the first time in his life Bakunin found himself tailed by the secret police. In the autumn Weitling was arrested and sentenced to six months' prison, and his papers were sent to be examined by a commission headed by a conservative jurist and State Counsellor named Johan Kasper Bluntschli (1808~81); they contained the name of Michael Bakunin. Bluntschli's report, citing police evidence that Bakunin was an accomplice of radical communists, was published, and quickly came to the notice of the Russian Legation. Bakunin was ordered to return to Russia, but of course did nothing of the kind, escaping instead over the border to France and thence to Brussels; he was not to return to his native country until he was sent there in chains following his arrest in 1849. In the following year the Tsar sentenced Bakunin *in absentia* to loss of his noble rank, confiscation of his property, and indefinite banishment to Siberia.⁴⁹⁾

Bluntschli, meanwhile, had graduated from compiling dossiers on suspected political agitators to the pursuit of political science, and in 1852, now a respectable professor at the University of Heidelberg, wrote a book titled *An Outline of National Law* (Allgemeines Staatsrecht) in which he developed a theory of the state as possessing a moral validity independent of its people. Given its message, it was not surprising that the book, though little heeded by modern researchers, would have a powerful impact on the political development of far-off Japan. Significantly enough, the year of the book's publication was also that of the Meiji Emperor's birth.

With the dismantling of the traditional feudal system in the first half-decade of the Meiji era, it became clear to the new rulers that, if

the emperor was to be more than a figurehead, his reading material would also have to go beyond traditional Japanese and Chinese works on statecraft. The man chosen by Itō Hirobumi to be his political tutor was a scholar named Katō Hiroyuki (1836~1916). Originally a Rousseauan liberal, Katō had written several works lauding constitutional government before eventually gravitating towards Bismarckian autocracy and gaining a reputation as a Social Darwinist. The first Japanese to undertake the study of German language and thought, the catalyst for his conversion had been his deep immersion in German literature, and he had even been decorated by the Kaiser for his achievements. By the 1870s he had become the foremost spokesman for political conservatism and an avowed enemy of liberalism.⁵⁰⁾

In the absence of any homegrown texts on constitutional law, Katō's choice as the basis for his lectures was none other than Bluntschli's *Outline of National Law*, evidently still popular eighteen years after its first publication; its message made it the perfect text for the task he had been set. For the emperor's benefit Katō produced a Japanese translation of the book (which was later published by the Education Ministry under the title Kokuhō hanron) and developed a series of lectures based closely on its contents. Under Katō's direction, the emperor began his study of the book at the age of 18 or 19, and over the following four or five years absorbed the political knowledge which was to so surprise later observers.⁵¹⁾ Thus did the signature on a secret Swiss police report furnish the second coincidental link between Bakunin and Japan, a land of which he had evidently thought too little to bother to describe his experiences there. Or was it really no more than a case of unconcern? Events surrounding Bakunin's escape from Siberia hint at

a slightly different explanation, which will be explored in the third part of this article.

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Bakunin's Sojourn in Japan:
Nailing Down an Enigma (2)

Philip BILLINGSLEY

ABSTRACT

It is not generally known that the Russian anarchist Bakunin's successful escape from Siberia in 1861 was a side-result of the ending of Japan's 250-year policy of exclusion. Part 1 of this article presented an overview of the events that brought Bakunin to Japan, set out the socio-political background of the times, and sketched the main events of his two-week stay in Hakodate and Yokohama and subsequent route back to England via America.

The present paper delves into other aspects of the hardly-explored relationship between Bakunin and Japan. Beginning from an examination of his pre-anarchist activities following his successful return to Europe, I suggest that many of the decentralizing ideas he held even then had a certain degree of influence on Japan's Popular Rights Movement. The medium for their transmission was furnished by the contacts forged between the liberal Japanese intellectuals Nakae Chōmin and Saionji Kimmochi on the one hand, and the radical French jurist Emile Acollas, who was strongly influenced by Bakunin's ideas, on the other. The paper investigates the nature of the relationships among these men, and makes some new suggestions concerning cultural contacts

between Japan and Europe in the late 19th century.

The second half of the paper looks into the unlikely coincidences linking certain facts of Bakunin's life to the Meiji Constitution. These include the influence on his thinking of von Stein, one of the principal sources of inspiration for the constitution, and the process whereby Bluntschli, who signed the first arrest warrant ever issued for Bakunin, came to be the source of the Meiji Emperor's political education.