

neither able to establish themselves as labour agencies in the labour market, nor were they allowed to create a health insurance system of their own. In short, the comparatively late development of trade unions in Germany, unlike those in Great Britain, is explained in terms of the authoritarian governmental structures prevailing in Germany.

In the last resort the varying experiences of trade unionism are attributed to the diverging developmental paths of Great Britain and Germany, an explanatory model which bears the hallmark of the Bielefeld school of social history. Whereas in Britain national unity had already been achieved in early-modern times, and an industrial economy developed within a comparatively decentralized political system which allowed for the relatively free development of various social and economic groups in the market place, including the trade unions, in Germany the bureaucratic state held the ring from the start, and industrialization got under way comparatively late; the establishment of national unity had to wait even longer.

It may be doubted whether this explanatory scheme, which tends to idealize English conditions during the nineteenth century, and perhaps overrates the role of governmental interference in the German case, provides an altogether satisfactory explanation of the differences between the German and the British trade-union movements. But certainly it demonstrates convincingly the usefulness of a comparative approach to the history of trade unionism.

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RAVINDRANATHAN, T. R. *Bakunin and the Italians*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Kingston, Montreal 1989. x, 332 pp. £ 34.15.

A series of telegrams now in the Bologna State Archives relates how in the early 1870s police spotted Michail Bakunin crossing the Italian border near Locarno, and had him shadowed as he surreptitiously made his way to Milan and down the Peninsula, until a former acquaintance employed at Naples headquarters discovered that the traveller not even remotely resembled the Russian revolutionary. As this should have been plain from his description in the very first telegram the anecdote may be taken to reflect sadly, or happily, depending on one's perspective, on the ineffectuality of the Italian police apparatus at that, or any, time. It may also be construed as one of many indications that by then Bakunin had definitely taken on epic proportions in the minds of those who followed his tracks.

Although abler investigators have since applied their skills to the task, Bakunin largely continued to be cast in the role of either the hero or the villain of their stories. He has been variously portrayed as a precursor of Lenin, Durruti, Hitler, Mao and Abu Nidal, and as a prophet of both liberty and chaos. Interestingly, methodological differences hardly seem to count: an American psycho-historian has recently found him just as loathsome as any turn-of-the-century German Marxist would have done, and the works of some liberal admirers bring to mind what Leo Lowenthal wrote of popular biographies: "One browses through the index of a mail-order house which depends on a large turnover. Everything is the best and the most expensive, the opportunity of a lifetime."

As with Roncesvalles some might even prefer to study the myth rather than the facts, which are anyway far better known than those surrounding Roland. Polemics tend to stimulate inquiry into the smallest details of a person's life, and Bakunin has had his share. Already in 1890 Max Nettlau set out to refute what he saw as the calumnies of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: when he finished his three-volume biography ten years later he knew all the essentials of Bakunin's political career and most of his private affairs as well. By the 1930s the main gaps had been filled by A. A. Kornilov, V. Polonskij, Ju. M. Steklov and other Russian or Czech historians. Indeed a new large-scale biography by Nettlau, written at the time but as yet unpublished, contains virtually all the elements necessary for a fair assessment of its subject.

Today a whole library of meticulous source publications and detailed monographs is at the disposal of the specialist. By way of illustration, Bakunin's stay in Italy in 1864–1867, his activity in the Italian Federation of the International Working Men's Association up to and including the abortive insurrection of 1874, and his relations with Italian republicans, socialists and anarchists of the 1860s and 1870s are the subject of numerous independent books and articles by eminent scholars ranging from, again, Nettlau, whose *Bakunin e l'Internazionale in Italia* (1928) is a classic, to Pier Carlo Masini. They are treated abundantly in biographies of Carlo Cafiero, Errico Malatesta, Andrea Costa and others. They figure prominently in the vast literature on the radical and labour movements in Italy. They even inspired an, admittedly unexciting, novel by Riccardo Bacchelli.

What is lacking, then, are not so much facts as unbiased interpretations. Those few comparative studies that exist are mostly, in the tradition of Fritz Brupbacher's *Marx und Bakunin*, on the level of individuals, like in *Mazzini e Bakunin* by Nello Rosselli (1927) or Aldo Romano's *Storia del movimento socialista in Italia* (1954–1956), which made a (polemical) case for Carlo Pisacane as a hidden source of Bakunin's federalist ideas. Eva Civolani, in her study on *L'anarchismo dopo la Comune: i casi italiano e spagnolo* (1981), naturally focused on Bakunists rather than on Bakunin. There is still scope for a good book on his ways and means in dealing with Italy, provided it takes a much broader perspective. It would be interesting, for instance, to embed them in the context of the development of the young unitarian monarchy, its differences and similarities with the birth of the German Empire, and the differences and similarities among opposition groups facing all this.

Dr. Ravindranathan has not written that book. *Bakunin and the Italians*, originally an Oxford University dissertation (1978), whose most interesting chapter was published in the University of Chicago's *Journal of Modern History* (June 1981), is primarily concerned with who did what, when. It is an elaborate political-biographical sketch concentrating on Bakunin's involvement with the small circles that have come to be seen as the founders of the Italian labour movement. It is singularly devoid of even biased interpretations, and has no consolation to offer in other fields.

In the light of what has been said before, the author's claim to tackle a "less well known" episode in Bakunin's life should be taken as a lighthearted attempt to add weight to some personal urge, though occasionally an uneasy feeling creeps in that he really ignores how well known it is. Apart from the odd archival piece, mainly from Naples, illuminating this or that detail, few facts are new whereas many old

ones are absent. The rich Nettlau papers in the International Institute of Social History, mentioned among the sources, have not been put to much use, the German language apparently defeating good intentions. Treatment of Bakunin's role in Italian Freemasonry disregards most recent findings, like those of Franco Damiani in *Bakunin nell'Italia post-unitaria 1864–1867* (1977), Miklós Kun's article, "Un Tournant décisif dans la vie de Bakounine" (in *Acta historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1980), as well as his doctoral dissertation on Bakunin's Italian years, *Utban az anarchizmus felé* (1982), Aldo Mola's *La Massoneria nella storia d'Italia* (1980), the contributions by Mola and Masini to *Garibaldi cento anni dopo* (1983), etc.

Crucial material relating to the International Brotherhood, Bakunin's secret society founded in Sweden in 1864, if not earlier, is completely ignored. First analyzed by Lolo Krusius-Ahrenberg in 1953 its oldest known documents have since been published by Ugo Fedeli (in *Volontà*, 1959), E. L. Rudnickaja and V. A. D'jakov (in *Problemy Ital'janskoj istorii*, 1972, and in *Revoljucionnaja situacija v Rossii v 1859–1861 gg*, 1974), Silvio Furlani (in *Rivista storica Italiana*, 1977), Michel Mervaud (in *Bakounine: combats et débats*, 1979) and Kun (1982), among others. The main text was even circulated as a Bulgarian Samizdat in the 1970s.

As a final example, chosen at random, the secret programme adopted by the leadership of the Italian Federation after it embraced insurrectionary tactics at the time of the 1872 split in the IWMA is attributed to Costa and said to have disappeared. But an Italian translation of Bakunin's original manuscript was located in the Roman State Archives by Franco Della Peruta as early as 1954 (*Movimento operaio*, cf. his *Democrazia e socialismo nel Risorgimento*, 1973), and published by Arthur Lehning in volume V of the *Archives Bakounine* (1974).

These omissions in themselves need not have prevented Dr. Ravindranathan from offering new insights into an intricate topic. They are, alas, not incidental. Most notably, the central place of the secret society in Bakunin's thinking is not just missing from the book's bibliography: it is not grasped at all. What discussion there is, is merely a repetition of old questions – whether any such organization ever existed and, if so, how many members it had, and for how long they stayed. These questions were answered over twenty years ago by Peter Scheibert: of course the secret society existed, if only because it corresponded to the specific method of Bakunin, to his equivalent of Marx's "party in a higher, historical sense". One may add that the exact number of recruits was insignificant compared with the fact that he was unable to cease recruiting.

*Bakunin and the Italians* is too shallow for the epic and too honest for the shallow trends in Bakuninology. But then maybe Bakuninology is at its end. Maybe something should replace it.

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