

The Family Heritage Series

A weekly discussion of Americanist truths and traditions for those "heirs of all the ages" who will have to preserve that most important inheritance of all — freedom. Produced by the Movement To Restore Decency.



Volume II

Lesson Seventy-Four

The Revolution In Russia

LESSON IDEA

To continue our study of revolutionary methods and procedures, and to learn why the Russian Revolution of 1917 succeeded where so many others had failed.

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MICHAEL BAKUNIN, professional revolutionary, incorrigible idler, and son of a Russian noble, was an army dropout who preferred to dabble in philosophy and to meddle in other people's affairs. "I infinitely regret having nourished this reptile," wrote a fellow revolutionary. "He is a man with whom it repels me to shake hands."

So it was not surprising that this Russian "reptile," who preferred borrowing money from friends to earning it, gravitated to Paris in 1848 to preach revolution, equality of salaries, and the leveling of all classes. When his tirades and radicalism proved too much for the Paris leaders, they sent him on a mission to the Slavs, in the declared hope he would break his neck. "What a man! What a man!" said one. "The first day of a revolution he is a treasure, the second he is only good to shoot."

But Bakunin journeyed eastward to become, not a casualty of revolution, but an enthusiastic participant in insurrections in Russia, Prague, and finally in Dresden, where he was arrested and imprisoned. After several years in German prisons, he was turned over to the Czarist government of Russia for another term of imprisonment. Alexander II finally sent him to Siberia where, free to move about, he "took up a little work" for the first time in his life. The emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861, an

immense concession to the cause of liberty, pleased him but mildly — not as a victory for his Cause, but as another weapon for attacking the imperial authority of the Czar. Before the end of the year, he had escaped from Siberia, travelled across Japan and America, and settled in London. There he began working on fresh plots with conspirators of all nationalities.

As one of his fellow revolutionaries noted: "Bakunin renewed his youth; he was in his element. It is not only the rumbling of insurrection, the noise of the clubs, the tumult in the streets and public places, nor even the barricades that made up his happiness; he loved also the movement of the day before, the work of preparation, that life of agitation, yet at the same time rendered continuous by conferences — those sleepless nights, those parleyings and negotiations, rectifications, chemical ink, cyphers, and signs agreed upon beforehand." Another revolutionist of the London conclave, one who took his work more seriously, added that Bakunin "excited himself exactly as if it were a question of preparing a Christmas tree — that annoyed me."

IF BAKUNIN SEEMED to enjoy his new profession, which was nothing less than plotting murder and arson, more than some of his sour-faced Communist associates, it was because he was an Anarchist. The keynote to his thinking was total liberty, not forced equality. Instead of cutting

everyone down to the same pattern, Bakunin's goal was to give all men a lawless freedom to do whatever they liked – the idler should be free to live on other men's labors, the drunkard to drink himself into imbecility, the murderer to cut throats until he wearied of the sport, the thief to steal until he had enough to satisfy himself. The difference between an Anarchist and a Communist, says Nesta Webster, "is that which exists between the amiable eccentric who . . . wishes to open all the cages in a menagerie and leave the wild beasts free to roam about the world, and the lion-tamer who loves at the crack of his whip to see king of beasts and performing poodle alike meekly rotating on a merry-go-round."

The important thing to remember is that both Anarchists and Communists united in revolution; and both, like tigers aroused by the smell of blood, loved violence for its own sake. Both shared the conviction that to bring about a successful revolution, *any* program that led to the annihilation of "all rulers, ministers of State, nobility, the clergy, the most prominent capitalists, and other exploiters" was acceptable. "Therefore," both preached, "great attention should be given specially to the study of chemistry and the preparation of explosives, as being the most important weapons, etc." And further: "It is no longer aristocracy and royalty that the people can intend to destroy. Here perhaps but a *coup de grâce* or two are yet needed. No, but in the coming onslaught the object is to smite the entire middle-class with annihilation . . . Science now puts means into our hands which make it possible to arrange for the wholesale destruction of the brutes in a perfectly quiet and business-like fashion."

Does this sound familiar? [*If your family has studied the French Revolution of 1789, as told in Lessons #36 and #37 of The Family Heritage Series, they should recognize the characteristics of French*

guillotine politics. In any case, be sure to point out that the vast majority of the over one million people executed by the French revolutionists were "common people," not aristocrats.]

Bakunin's favorite toast was: "To the destruction of all law and order and the unchaining of evil passions." And it was Bakunin and others like him who prepared Russia in the late 1800's for the Communist revolution that was to enslave her in the 1900's. Both groups shared a common philosophy, which Bakunin described in his *Revolutionary Catechism* in these words: "Every effort is to be made to heighten and increase the evil and sorrows which will at length wear out the patience of the people and encourage an insurrection *en masse*." Both also were the declared enemies of Christianity, one calling it the "opiate of the people," the other "a swindle invented by jugglers." Each agreed that "whoever assailed Christianity assailed, at the same time, monarchy and capitalism."

IT WAS IN RUSSIA in 1917 that Anarchists and Communists, after many false starts, assassinations, and strikes, established a base camp for their goal: the destruction of all governments and all civilizations, so they could become the rulers of a "new world order." The ingredients used in 1917 were the same ones that bathed France in blood three times in the previous century – a rapidly growing working class that was underpaid and overworked and which, like the gullible French workers of 1848, expected the paradise they had been promised to be delivered to them within twenty-four hours, preferably gift-wrapped. Russia was a nation groaning under the burdens of war; she had lost millions of her best and most patriotic men on the battlefield. There was a food shortage, partially caused by nature and partially by revolutionary sabotage; and all of these problems were made worse by indecision and offers of appeasement from those in power. The results were as predictable in Russia in 1917 as they had been in France in 1789, 1848, or 1871.

But while earlier revolutions had a life span measured in months, the Russian Revolution has held millions of people in its vise of terror for almost seventy years. How did it succeed? Why has it endured where others failed? Since one of the most decisive factors was the enormous amount of

FOR SERIOUS STUDENTS

For the detailed history of the overthrow of the Czar and the revolution in Russia, we suggest reading *Czarism And Revolution* by Arsene de Goulévitch. De Goulévitch was a Russian by birth, a survivor of the Lenin regime who fled to France and founded the anti-Communist organization, Union of Oppressed People. This book is available (hardbound, \$4.00) from most American Opinion Bookstores, or from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

