

# BAKUNIN, YOKOHAMA, AND THE DAWNING OF THE PACIFIC ERA

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## 1. Introduction:

When the Tokugawa shogunate opened the doors of Japan at cannon-point in the mid-1850s, it could hardly have known that one of the first 'barbarians' to take advantage of its decision would be none other than Michael Bakunin, the fiery radical and bane of Europe's princely houses who would in the last years of his life come to be known as the "Father of Anarchism". Nor indeed could the Shogunate's nemesis, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy have foreseen, when his four heavily-armed 'black ships' first heaved to off Uraga Bay near present-day Tokyo in 1853, that a side-effect of his expedition would be to usher in a new phase of European revolution. Bakunin's sudden arrival, via Yokohama, at the London home-in-exile of the Russian liberal Alexander Herzen in December 1861, when he ought to have been set for safe burial beneath the Siberian permafrost, set governments and financiers throughout Europe shuddering at what they perceived to be the resurrection of the Devil Incarnate. Within a few years their fears were proven to have been only too well founded.

Whatever its subsequent effect upon the Asian political world, America's westward expansion to the shores of Japan was certainly a triumph of fate for Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876), the aristocratically-born Russian who embodies perhaps more than any other person the free spirit of European radicalism. But for this fortuitous event, Bakunin, who had been imprisoned since 1849 and permanently exiled to Siberia in 1857, would almost certainly have remained a victim of the Tsarist Gulag until the combined effects of prison scurvy and semi-Arctic cold claimed his ravaged body. Ironically, he might have rendered an additional prayer of gratitude to the Tsar of All the Russias himself: the Tsar's messengers, after knocking unsuccessfully at Japan's northern and western gates for a century or more before Perry's arrival, finally followed their rival's example and found the front door all but unguarded. Not surprisingly, though, Bakunin did not waste any time in showing his appreciation during his flight, and idled long enough in Japan only to await the arrival of a ship that would take him out again and across the Pacific. In the meantime, as far as can be judged, he whiled away his hours in Yokohama on the first snooker table ever seen in Japan, and sampled the cellar of a hotel bar, also the first of its kind in that country.

Bakunin's 25,000-mile Trans-Pacific flight from exile in the summer of 1861 was not only unprecedented in the annals of Siberia, but also one of the longest escapes on record anywhere. How did he do it? How did he manage to pull off such an 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 so conspicuously silent about his accomplishments, leaving the details to be pieced together by historians? There are no easy answers to any of these questions. As Bakunin's biographer E.H. Carr has pointed out, the great revolutionary's mysterious escape inevitably sparked off rumours of "dishonourable" conduct, particularly among those who wished him no good. Marx's later followers, pointing to the fawning tone of Bakunin's Confession to the Tsar in the early days of his confinement following his arrest

in 1849, liked to speculate that his release had been deliberately engineered by the Tsar in order to confound their own methodical plans for revolution.<sup>(1)</sup> This, of course, is nonsense, fuelled by a mixture of malice and paranoia, since Bakunin's struggle with Marx for the loyalty of the European revolutionary movement did not begin until long after he was safely back in Europe. Yet Bakunin himself, hardly a man to sit down and write his memoirs, has done little or nothing to throw light on what really happened.

While much of the credit for the escape may be attributed to Bakunin's extraordinary energy, his magnetic personality, and his enormous will to live (to say nothing of a large degree of unscrupulousness), it also owed much to a combination of good luck and official connivance. In addition, the escape was ultimately made possible by the unique convergence of certain inter-linked historical factors which may be summarized as follows: (1) the decline of China as a power in Asia; (2) Russia's concomitant eastward expansion toward the Pacific; (3) the emergence of Japan from some 250 years' isolation; (4) the rise of the USA as a Pacific power; and (5) the rivalry between the USA and Russia for influence over the new market of Japan. Without these historical conditions, it is safe to say, Bakunin's personal characteristics would hardly have sufficed to see him safely home to Europe. In this sense it is possible to see the affair as an early indicator of the upstaging role that the Pacific Ocean was to play in world politics a century later. At the same time, precisely because the Pacific loomed so small in European eyes in those days, Bakunin's own evident disinclination to linger resulted in a cloak of invisibility being thrown over his entire passage through the region.

Today, Bakunin is best known for his confrontations with Karl Marx over the role of the state in the transition to a socialist society. To put it extremely simply, whereas Marx believed that a state in the hands of the working class would represent their interests until they were mature enough to run society themselves, Bakunin insisted that centralized control was itself the root of all evils; people would only learn how to run society through practical experience in voluntary associations. The confrontation between the two profoundly different world-outlooks has continued up to the present day, with the black flags of Bakuninist anarchism being flown in every social upheaval from Spain in 1936 to Paris in 1968 and Beijing in 1989. The state of affairs in much of eastern Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall suggests definitively that Bakunin was in fact right and Marx disastrously wrong as far as the role of the state in teaching people to manage themselves is concerned. Whatever, one thing is certain: had Bakunin been unable to make his escape from Siberia via Japan in 1861, none of the arguments described above would have been heard.

It was not until 1865, four years after his passage through Japan, that Bakunin's anarchism came to be explicitly stated. Until then he was a firm believer in nationalism, not as something narrowly restricted to the interests of one's own country but as a liberating force in itself. He was also committed to the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, particularly that of individuals like brigands, whose personal example demonstrated that it was possible to overthrow the tyranny of work that bound peasants to the land, and, by extension, the bonds which bound the people to more human tyrants. At the time of his visit to Japan, the country was in the throes of emerging from 250 years' all-but-hermetic isolation under the Tokugawa shoguns, and racked by a series of desperate peasant uprisings not dissimilar to those Bakunin had encouraged in his native Europe. It is fascinating to speculate on what might have happened had he, as one of the few 19th century European radicals to visit Japan, found himself a permanent exile there. As luck would have it, however, Bakunin's fortune was speculative history's misfortune: his ship came in within two weeks of his arrival in Yokohama, and his time there, evidently no more than a frustrating interlude keeping him from returning to where the 'real action' was, appears to have

been spent in shooting pool rather than in shooting oppressive aristocrats.

Hailed by some, bewailed by most, Bakunin's reappearance on the scene caused something of a stir in European revolutionary circles. And yet, just as most returned travellers find their friends to be less than captivated by the story of their escapades, so Bakunin's adventures, if they were ever told, seem to have had little lasting effect on those around him. Consequently, while standard European biographies of Bakunin have duly recorded that he made his successful escape from Siberia via Yokohama, San Francisco and New York, for various reasons they have failed to fill in the details. Bakunin himself, admittedly, who to all intents and purposes appears to have been committed to silence both by his own fugitive circumstances and by the fate of those who aided his flight, did little to help. The details of his escape, therefore, particularly of his sojourn in a land that was, after all, still beyond the pale of the average European imagination, have hardly been told.

Even in Japan, though various odd items, mostly dating from before World War II, may be found scattered here and there, evidence of what Bakunin did with his time in Yokohama is sparse. Although his name had been introduced to Japanese readers along with his anarchist ideas in a text on the European socialist movement as early as 1882, the earliest recorded mention of Bakunin's visit to Japan was not until 1891. At the Brussels convention of the Second International in that year, Sakai Yuzaburo, the Japanese socialist and delegate to the convention, reminded the audience that the great revolutionary's feet had once touched the soil of his home country (no reaction is recorded).<sup>2</sup> Japanese readers as a whole did not learn of the episode until even later, through the medium of Kemuriyama Sentaro's path-breaking text 'Anarchism' (Museifushugi), published in 1903.<sup>3</sup> Conscious and to no small extent proud of their own country's unwitting contribution to the development of libertarian thought, Japanese anarchists and others have searched through archives for information that might throw light on this forgotten episode, but to little avail.<sup>4</sup>

The present paper has three principal objectives. One is to bring together materials available in both European and Asian languages, and from them seek to present a hypothesis concerning Bakunin's escape from Siberia and his brief stay in Yokohama. A second is to throw light on some of the less obvious connections between Bakunin's ideas and Japan, chiefly the link with late 19th-century popular movements there. Finally, an attempt will be made to put Bakunin's Yokohama sojourn into the context of Pacific Studies, and to show how it can be seen as a portent of the role that the Pacific Ocean would come to play in the 20th century.

## 2. Siberian Opportunities

In February 1857, after Bakunin had spent more than eight years in the jails of three different countries following his arrest at the Dresden Insurrection of 1849, the Tsar was finally induced to relent by the pleas of Bakunin's mother, and he was allowed to exchange his cell in the notorious Schlüsselberg Fortress for a life of permanent Siberian exile. The cold Siberian air worked wonders on Bakunin's ravaged body, and before the year was out he was chaffing at the bit once more. Forbidden to travel more than a short distance from the small town of Tomsk that had been designated as his place of residence, he sought to add a semblance of stability to his life by marrying a student to whom he had been teaching French to earn extra cash. Then, no more than a few months after his marriage, his fortunes began to change. The catalyst was the appearance in his life of one of the most formidable figures in 19th-century Russian history, the

governor-general of Eastern Siberia Count Nicholas Muraviev-Amurski ("Muraviev of the Amur"; 1809-1881). Muraviev, by one of the happy accidents that blessed Bakunin's life, just happened to be his second cousin on his mother's side.

Muraviev, with his combination of idealism and despotism, had during the ten years of his governorship been the major architect of Russia's eastward expansion. As his title indicated, he was also a man with a mission: to win back the territory along the 3000-mile Amur River that had been ceded to China in the 17th century. At that time the government of China, still only one generation into the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty established by the Manchus in 1644, had been strong and confident enough to repel Russian claims to the territory. By the middle of the 19th century, following the Opium Wars and the increasing political and economic domination of the country by European imperialist powers, it had been weakened and was only too ready to reach a deal with Muraviev over the desolate lands of Siberia; the bait held out was a Russian promise to relent elsewhere.

In 1858 Muraviev carried out the first part of the plan, pressuring the Chinese government into signing the Treaty of Aigun which ceded all the land north and west of the Amur River, including the important port of Nikolayevsk, to Russia. Two years later, following the signing of the Treaty of Peking which granted Russia all the territory between the Ussuri River and the sea, he was able to plant the Russian flag at Vladivostok, the ice-free port at the mouth of the Ussuri. Muraviev's pioneering exploits did more than just endear him to the Tsar: by gaining access to the ice-free eastern seaboard, they enabled Siberia to be opened up to overseas trade and marked the birth of Russia as a Pacific power. For Michael Bakunin, too, those exploits were to be of vital importance.

In the early autumn of 1858, the newly married Bakunin met Muraviev for the first time when the governor-general arrived in Tomsk on a visit. For all the contrasts in their respective careers, the two men shared not only an aristocratic upbringing but also a tendency toward temperamental behaviour; not surprisingly, they hit it off immediately. It was a time, following the accession to the throne of the new Tsar Alexander II, when democratic aspirations were gaining a degree of respectability in Russia; Muraviev, as long as his authority was not challenged, was pleased to indulge his whimsy by setting himself up as the protector of the Siberian exiles. For a man of Muraviev's character, the notoriety of Bakunin's radical views would have made patronage of him highly appealing even without the blood tie or the repeated pleas of his cousin, Bakunin's mother. Thus it was that, in March 1859, Bakunin received permission to switch his family's abode from Tomsk to Irkutsk, capital of Eastern Siberia, and to take up a post with the Amur Development Agency, a trading company recently set up under the auspices of Muraviev himself. In terms of Bakunin's own political development, meanwhile, his evident infatuation with Muraviev, revealed in letters addressed to Alexander Herzen when Muraviev was attacked in Herzen's liberal publication *The Bell*, made it clear that the influence of his noble birth had not been totally eradicated. We might even speculate that Muraviev's apparent fusion of authority and liberalism was the very ideal that Bakunin himself aspired to at this stage of his life.<sup>5</sup>

The memoirs of fellow-anarchist Prince Peter Kropotkin provide some indication of what might have been at the back of Bakunin's mind, and even a hint of what could have come about had the escape opportunity failed to materialize. Muraviev's almost single-handed achievement in forcing the opening-up of Eastern Siberia, Kropotkin pointed out, had made him a hero figure not only among disaffected exiles but also among impatient young army officers anxious to yank Russia into the 20th century. It had been only a few years before this that Herzen and the American poet Walt Whitman had jointly declared that America and Russia shared a common

destiny; nowhere did their dream appeal more strongly than in Siberia.

By the 1860s, resentment at the St. Petersburg bureaucracy's treatment of Siberia as a colony and 'dumping ground' for its malcontents had provided the impetus for vigorous discussions in Muraviev's headquarters. Amid those arguments, in which Bakunin was evidently an eager participant, the most heated topic was the form which Siberia's new political identity was to take. Given the stimulus furnished by the political experiment undertaken in the United States less than a century before, it is not surprising that out of those discussions emerged the concept of a 'United States of Siberia', independent of metropolitan Russia and federated instead to its neighbour across the Pacific in what was ultimately to be a 'United States of Siberia and America'.<sup>6</sup> Bakunin's dogged defence of Muraviev against liberal detractors suggests that he was fully in favour of the proposal, and that he perhaps even foresaw a role for himself in its enactment. Given that, until 1867, Alaska remained a part of Russia, and that, even after it was sold to the United States, the Russian and American land-masses were separated by no more than the 50-mile wide Bering Strait, the concept was if anything highly rational, and if put into effect might have brought about the Pacific Era a full century earlier. Unfortunately for history, the Tsar stepped in to nip the plan in the bud, and Muraviev was eventually dismissed.

Muraviev was far from being Bakunin's only benefactor among the Siberian authorities, however. Through him he also made numerous other useful contacts, some of whom would prove essential to his later plans. There was Muraviev's young chief of staff Kukel, sympathetic enough to democratic ideals, according to Kropotkin, to have the entire works of Alexander Herzen in his study;<sup>7</sup> the civil governor Izvolsky, who actually allowed his residence to be used as Bakunin's correspondence address; and, most important, Muraviev's deputy and eventual successor General Korsakov. Bakunin's effusive personality ensured that their doors were always open to him, and much to the disappointment of his fellow-exiles he seems to have spent less time with them than he did with these officials. Though with the benefit of hindsight we may charitably assume that he was already preparing the way for the escape plan beginning to form in his mind, many were the cat-calls of "pseudo-liberal" and "pseudo-democrat" that Bakunin had to endure.

The role of commercial traveller, though it gave him the freedom to move about without arousing suspicion, was not one to which Michael Bakunin was naturally inclined, and after only a few months he resigned. Given his connections to Muraviev, he evidently had expected to be freed and allowed to return to Europe fairly soon after his move to Irkutsk, but that was not to be the case. Muraviev's influence did, however, persuade Bakunin's employer to keep him on at the same salary of 2000 roubles a year, even while excusing him from the performance of any further duties. At the same time, Bakunin's mother continued with her tireless but also fruitless appeals to the Tsar for clemency. In this respect, unfortunately, even Muraviev's reputation proved insufficient to penetrate the coterie of bureaucrats which surrounded that ruler. With his health and energy now fully restored, Bakunin realized that escape was his only option.

With roads west evidently closed to him, Bakunin began to muse on the possibility of flight in the opposite direction. There were only two options: via China, making use of the treaty ports of Shanghai and Tianjin (Tientsin) forced open by Britain's victory in the 1840 Opium War; and via Japan. Whether or not he considered the first option we do not know, but it was clearly the inferior one, involving as it did a long port-hopping route down the Pacific coast including an obligatory call at the major port of Vladivostok. If the hounds of Tsarist retribution were on his heels, they would surely be within snapping range by the time he reached there. Even should he succeed in reaching one of the China ports, there was the risk that their British administration

would deny him permission to disembark or, worse, hand him over to the Russian authorities there. In effect, then, Japan, which could be reached within two days' sailing from a port midway down the coast, was his only safe choice. Having heard from Muraviev of the recent opening of certain Japanese ports to Russian shipping, and moreover that American ships paid frequent visits to the country, Bakunin began gradually to construct a scenario for his return to action. A route that a few years before would have been inconceivable was now a practical, if dangerous, possibility: to Europe via Japan and America, the longest Siberian escape on record – if he pulled it off. His curiosity was further fuelled by the visit that Muraviev himself had paid to Japan in that same summer of 1859, the climax to five years' Russian diplomatic pressure.

When the news of the impending departure of an American expedition to force open the doors of Japan reached Moscow in the winter of 1852, Muraviev had sent the Tsar an urgent warning: if Russia wished to retain its strong position in east Asia, it must establish relations with Japan before the Americans and the British achieved the same hegemony there they had already achieved in China. The first Russian expedition under Admiral Putiatin consequently reached Shimoda at almost exactly the same time, the spring of 1854, as did Perry's American fleet when it returned from its wintering in the Ryukyu Islands. Although Perry rejected Putiatin's proposal for the two fleets to join forces, the presence of the Russian squadron off the shore, though given little credit in the history books, undoubtedly helped influence the foot-dragging Japanese authorities to reconsider their position.

The Russo-Japanese Treaty of Amity, concluded in February 1855, in fact achieved more than Perry's Kanagawa Treaty of the previous year, since it provided for the opening of the port of Nagasaki in addition to Shimoda and Hakodate, and included the right to station a Russian consul in Hakodate. The conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce three years later and its ratification by Muraviev during his visit the following year led to a brief period of relative harmony in Japan-Russia relations. More to the point: when Bakunin came to put his escape plan into action in the summer of 1861, these diplomatic developments were to open a road for him even as they almost led to his downfall.

At the beginning of 1861, Muraviev was forced to retire from the post of governor-general of Eastern Siberia when the conservative St. Petersburg bureaucracy became alarmed not only at the seditious 'United States of Siberia' concept (which they saw as a pretext for Muraviev to make himself a 'Siberian Tsar'), but also over the shadow that his conquests were casting upon relations with China. While the departure of his ally was to finally trigger off Bakunin's decision to escape, the new configuration at the top of the East Siberian hierarchy which replaced Muraviev throws an intriguing light on both the escape itself and Bakunin's curious silence concerning how he managed to bring it off.

Muraviev's successor, his former deputy General Korsakov, was young, and, according to Kropotkin's *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, even more sympathetic to the plight of the exiles in Siberia than his predecessor had been.<sup>(8)8</sup> What figured more strongly for Bakunin was that there were once again personal ties between the two families: Korsakov's cousin had recently married Bakunin's younger brother Paul. When Bakunin accompanied his request for permission to make a trip down the Amur River to the coast with a disarming promise not to betray the new governor-general's trust, therefore, Korsakov's qualms about letting a political prisoner go so far afield evidently took second place. Indeed, he actually went out of his way to issue Bakunin with an open letter giving him passage on all ships on the Amur and its tributaries on condition that he be back in Irkutsk before the rivers froze. Bakunin, seeing a chance not only to make his request seem more natural but also to raise the cash he needed to carry out the escape, swallowed his

pride and became a commercial traveller once more. After receiving some 3500 roubles in commissions from several local merchants plus advances on the transactions he promised, he set out on the first stage of his arduous journey; it was June 5, 1861. The trip was a complicated one, involving first an overland trek to the Amur to find a ship, but after transferring to a river steamer he made better progress, and on July 2, exactly four weeks after his departure, Bakunin arrived at his initial destination: the port of Nikolayevsk, 2000 miles away at the mouth of the Amur opposite the northern tip of Sakhalin. So far so good, but it was as far as Korsakov's letter would take him.

Although Korsakov had curiously omitted to mention that its bearer was a political exile, there is no hard evidence to suggest that the governor-general's sympathy went so far as to allow him to connive at Bakunin's escape. The same cannot be said for his subordinates, however. Indeed, it seems likely that, even given his usual extraordinary complement of good luck, only a combination of incompetence and disaffection on the part of certain official functionaries could have safely allowed Bakunin to weather this, the first crisis on his danger-filled escape route. A letter from Civil Governor Izvolsky to the Governor of the Maritime Province warning that Bakunin was under police supervision mysteriously failed to arrive, and numerous other incidents suggest that the usual laxity of Russian colonial officials was laced with a considerable degree of calculation. Whatever the truth was, this was as far as Bakunin could go with the blessing of the official authorities: both to linger in Nikolayevsk and to wander further afield could warn the authorities of his real intentions. Yet, to a man whose sights were fixed on the nearby ocean, Nikolayevsk was a tantalizing spot, for its importance had been eclipsed by the opening of the ice-free port of Vladivostok in 1860 (the result, ironically enough, of Muraviev's efforts). Ocean-going ships rarely came nearer than the port of Kastri, 100 miles south along the eastern seaboard.

It was then that luck played its part again, in the form of a government vessel the *Strelok*, scheduled to leave for Kastri on July 9. Bakunin persuaded the Chief of Staff to the Provincial Governor, Afanasiev, to issue him with written permission to take the *Strelok* as far as Kastri and to return from there to Irkutsk using an overland route. A few days into its voyage, the *Strelok* took in tow an American sailing ship, the *USS Vickery*, becalmed in the Straits of Tartary off the coast of Sakhalin while trading along the Siberian coast, and Bakunin managed a smooth transfer to the American vessel just before they reached Kastri. The captain of the *Strelok*, who had been given no instructions to restrict Bakunin's movements, did not interfere. Once the *Vickery* had completed its last Russian port call at Olga, some 500 miles further down the coast, (where Bakunin tested his luck by lodging with the local military commander), it set off across the Sea of Japan to the Japanese island of Hokkaido and its first Japanese port call, Hakodate, opened to foreign shipping only three years before. Bakunin was, it seemed, high and dry.

By all rights he should never have got this far. Before leaving Irkutsk, almost as if he were seeking to push his luck to the limit, Bakunin had sent a letter to a fellow-exile who had recently moved to Nikolayevsk asking him to expect his imminent arrival en route to freedom. It was an astonishing show of naïveté, and soon came to the ears of another 'good friend', formerly a co-participant in the Polish revolutionary movement, who saw in it a chance to ingratiate himself with the Tsar. The letter was thus leaked to the authorities, as it well deserved to be, and that should have been that.

It is at this point that the mystery thickens. Plans to prevent the escape were not put into effect until minutes after Bakunin had already departed on the *Strelok*. Afanasiev, who later claimed to have received no information about Bakunin's political status, nevertheless wrote to the

commander at Kastri warning him of what had happened. Unfortunately, however, the letter's arrival was delayed until a full five days after the Strelok's arrival, and by that time, of course, Bakunin was safely on board the Vickery bound for Japan. It would be another two months before Governor-General Korsakov made his first report to Moscow, by which time, mid-September 1861, Bakunin would already be partway across the Pacific.

The official commission of inquiry into the affair seems to have found it as hard to fathom as do historians today. This is hardly surprising, though, for much of the investigation was left up to the man ultimately responsible for allowing the scandal to occur in the first place, Korsakov. After dragging on for some two and a half years, the inquiry finally found Afanasiev guilty of negligence but not of treason, and he was sentenced to be imprisoned for two months in the same fortress that had once been home to Bakunin. Most of the others involved in the affair got off scot-free, and the inquiry was finally abandoned in 1864.<sup>9</sup>

E.H. Carr, writing in 1935, noted that the inquiry left behind as many unanswered questions as answered ones and seemed to be primarily concerned with exonerating Korsakov from all blame. The Russian historian Pilnova in her 1970 biography of Bakunin unearthed a number of additional facts and constructed a hypothesis that has considerable importance for the present paper.

Alexander Herzen, the fellow-exile at whose London home Bakunin arrived at the end of his long journey in December 1861, has recorded that he and Bakunin had already discussed in letters the feasibility of an escape from Siberia.<sup>10</sup> Pilnova suggests that this dialogue was in fact made possible by the collusion of Afanasiev with an official in the Irkutsk Government Office, one Vassily Bodisco. Bodisco had been a member of Herzen's radical circle in the 1840s, and had probably made the acquaintance of Bakunin at that time; he had also made a number of secret visits to Herzen in 1853 and 1854. He was thus not exactly reluctant to oblige when asked to deliver a letter from Bakunin to Herzen during a visit that he made to Europe at the end of 1860 following his transfer to Nikolayevsk. After his return, Pilnova suggests, Bodisco revealed the plan to his friend Afanasiev, and, after introducing the two men in his apartment in Nikolayevsk, leaned on him to see that Bakunin was able to board the Strelok without interference.<sup>11</sup>

While Pilnova's concern was only to explain Bakunin's miraculous (and never-to-be-repeated) escape, her hypothesis also suggests the reason for his reluctance to talk about his experiences after his return to Europe. While he may not have kept his promise to live up to the governor-general's trust, his sense of loyalty to the much more vulnerable Afanasiev and Bodisco would have been enough to make him hold his tongue. Had he bragged of his experiences, it is certain that the former's incarceration would have been much longer, and that many more heads would have rolled as a result. While a lack of concern with what he found in Japan may well have played a part in his subsequent reticence, therefore, it seems more than possible that Bakunin was also sworn to secrecy by an agreement with those who had supported or connived at his flight to freedom.

If these facts bear any resemblance to the truth, they could also explain the curious statement by another contemporary visitor to Japan, Alexander Siebold (discussed in more detail later on in this paper), that Bakunin's presence in Japan "was... being winked at by the authorities".<sup>12</sup> Japanese researchers have pointed out that this could hardly refer to their own country's authorities. In the Japan of 1861, there were no immigration officials to check the identity of every suspicious-looking foreigner that arrived; moreover, were the Japanese authorities really keeping tabs on Bakunin's movements, there would surely be some mention in official records of



his arrival and departure; no such mention has been found.<sup>13</sup> Siebold's account of his trip to Japan was not published until 1903, and was undoubtedly supplemented by items of information that came his way during the intervening forty years (he had been no more than a teenager accompanying his more famous father Philipp Franz von Siebold when he visited Japan). It thus seems likely that he was either confused or else referring to hearsay regarding the Siberian authorities in Bakunin's escape rather than those of Japan.

Whatever the truth was regarding the circumstances of his escape, once safely ensconced in Hakodate Bakunin must have felt that he was safe, but shortly before his departure for Yokohama there was another dramatic moment. Taken for a Russian aristocrat, (which he was, of course, by birth if not by inclination), he was invited to join the captain's table for a banquet being prepared for a "special guest": the guest, when he arrived, turned out to be none other than the recently-appointed Russian consul Goshkevich.<sup>14</sup> Here was Michael Bakunin, fiery revolutionary and avowed enemy of the Tsar, who had escaped the hangman's noose by inches and should have been safely in Siberian exile, sitting in an American boat in Japan, about to have dinner with the Tsar's own representative! With hindsight the occasion seems more akin to a cliff-hanging scene from a Marx Brothers movie, but it was in fact absurdly dangerous, and Bakunin must have felt for a moment that all was lost. Never one to abandon hope before the shackles were actually around his wrists, however, he took the situation in hand. Without waiting to be challenged, he engaged the consul in conversation, identified himself but explained that he had been given official permission to go sightseeing, and assured his listener that he would be returning to Irkutsk via Shanghai and Beijing. The consul's recorded response was a gullible query: "Then you will not be returning to Russia with the fleet?" (for at that very moment a Russian naval squadron was moored in the straits nearby and preparing to set sail for Nikolayevsk). "No, for I've just arrived here in Japan, and there are still many things I want to see," replied Bakunin, and the matter was closed.

By the time the banquet was over Bakunin and the consul were the best of friends, and the next morning he sailed, beneath an American flag, under the very noses of the officers of the Russian Imperial Navy. It must have been one of the closest shaves of even Bakunin's dramatically lived life (and, had it been ten years later, it would certainly have ended quite differently: the introduction of the telegraph cable to Asia, had it come in 1861 instead of 1871, would have made it a simple thing for the consul to check on the truth of his companion's story). As it was, Bakunin was now away and free, and must have regarded his successful adventure as a propitious omen. By late August he was in Yokohama awaiting his next connection.

Even so, Bakunin was far from home and dry. On August 21, just 17 days after his departure from Hakodate, an urgent message arrived at Goshkevich's legation warning him to be on the lookout for a fugitive revolutionary named Michael Bakunin, and, should he appear in the city, to arrest him immediately and send him back to Nikolayevsk under close guard. Under the circumstances, then, it seems less surprising that Bakunin neither tried to cut a high profile in Japan nor lingered any longer there than he had to. On the contrary, we can assume that he must have looked out anxiously every day from the Yokohama dockside for the Russian naval squadron that could have meant his return to St. Petersburg in irons. Fortunately for him, though, Goshkevich waited until September 14 before replying to his government that Bakunin had already left the port several weeks before.<sup>15</sup> His delay adds yet another intriguing element to the story: could the enlightened consul too have been, if not actually in on the plot, a supporter of the 'United States of Siberia' concept and therefore a sympathetic observer of the significant events taking place within his jurisdiction? Probably we will never know.

### 3. Yokohama Doldrums

Just as had been calculated in Washington, the sudden appearance upon the Pacific horizon in July 1853 of US Navy Commodore Matthew Perry's four black-hulled, smoke-belching warships sent a spasm of consternation through the insular Japanese authorities. While officials hummed and hahed over how to respond to this abrupt reminder of the fragility of Japan's 250-year old seclusion policy, pranksters in the city of Edo (now Tokyo) demonstrated a more knowing reaction. A popular tanka (short poem) of the time summed the situation up aptly:

"Taihei no nemuri wo samasu jokisen – tatta shihai de yoru mo nerarezu".

Translated literally, this would come out something like: "jokisen [a strong green tea] disturbs our peaceful slumber – just four cups and a sleepless night ensues". The song, though, was a play on words. "Taihei", through its original meaning of "peace" or "peaceful", can also be interpreted as meaning the Pacific Ocean; "jokisen", written with different characters, can mean "steamship"; and "hai", "cup", has had its usual meaning extended to signify a "vessel". Whether the allusive wording was intended to throw sand in the eyes of the vigilant shogunal police, or whether it was merely a witty pun designed to amuse the highly-literate population of Edo, events subsequent to Perry's dramatic stage-entry proved that the message had got through. With just four ships, Perry's appearance on Japan's Pacific shore disturbed the sleep of centuries, sending the country – both the security-conscious authorities and the factions hitherto excluded from authority – into a state of restless agitation.

The groundwork for the growth of uncertainty in Japan had already been laid a century and more earlier. By the mid-18th century, increasing numbers of scholars had begun to realize that the scientific approach adopted by the Western texts imported through the Dutch trading establishment in Nagasaki was far superior to the semi-superstitious theories with which Chinese Confucian texts, previously regarded as gospel, abounded. It was also through the Dutch, who since the early 17th century had been the only Western nation to enjoy trading rights in Japan, that intellectuals had learned of the steady encroachment upon their country's shores of the Russians, overland through Siberia, and the British, via the sea lanes as far as Singapore and China. In short, while the official policy of barring all direct contact with outsiders had until that fateful year of 1853 remained essentially unchanged, there was a strong feeling among the educated elite of Japan that change was inevitable.

The American interest in Japan sprang from a combination of strategic and commercial motives, with an added dash of humanitarian feeling derived from the fate not only of the Japanese fishermen washed up as castaways on the shores of the west coast but also of the handful of Americans unlucky enough to have tested Japan's hospitality. The opening of the Chinese coast over the previous twenty years had created the need for a port where ships could be fuelled and provisioned en route, while the prospects of a new market for their goods had whetted the appetites of the traders now increasingly found following in the wake of the flag.

Perry made it clear that his was no single ship that could be dealt with expediently and sent about its business but the spearhead of a potentially far greater force. He then sailed away to winter in the Ryukyus before returning the following spring, leaving the Japanese elite to ponder the implications of his threat. When he returned, it was to find that the advocates of acquiescence to American demands had prevailed, and as a result a limited convention was

signed at Kanagawa in March 1854. Similar conventions with other Western nations rapidly followed: with Britain (September 1854), with Russia (February 1855), and with Holland (October 1857). Compared to the wars and bloodshed that accompanied the West's irruption into Chinese affairs, then, Japan's experience was relatively harmonious. This peaceful transition can be explained by a number of factors stemming from calculations arrived at by either side. The Japanese ruling elite, aware, unlike its Chinese counterpart, of its own weakness and culturally conditioned to respect superior strength took a realistic attitude to the demonstration of obvious technological superiority. On the Western side, the fact that Japan seemed to offer far less inviting commercial prospects than did China's vast market permitted a degree of tolerance that pushed violence to the bottom of the agenda.

If any members of the Tokugawa elite thought that these initial treaties had solved their problems with foreigners, they were soon to be proved drastically wrong: as things turned out, the period immediately following Perry's arrival proved to be the lull before the storm. The early conventions had made no reference to trading rights, and had confined foreign residents to the ports of Hakodate and Shimoda, far from the centre of political power in Edo. Commercial interests were far from satisfied with these agreements, and pushed for the opening of trading facilities and the right to reside in Japan for the purpose of trade. Consequently, only five years after the Kanagawa convention, the Americans, by a mixture of threats and lies, forced the authorities to sign the Treaty of Edo, a comprehensive commercial agreement that not only opened several new ports but also, to the horror of traditionalists, allowed foreign diplomats to actually reside in Osaka and Edo. Similar treaties, all of them unequally balanced against Japan, were signed with most of the European powers over the succeeding three years. They laid down that foreigners were to have the right to live and trade in the ports of Nagasaki and Kanagawa as well as the already-opened Shimoda and Hakodate, and that they were to be shielded from Japanese judicial control through the principle of "extraterritoriality".<sup>16</sup>

The economic effects of the unequal treaties were disastrous, as the injection of foreign currency disrupted the domestic monetary system. Foreign exploitation of the relatively low gold-silver exchange rate (6:1 as compared to 15:1 elsewhere) produced wild fluctuations in prices, while the inflow of cheap foreign textiles and the manufacture of money to finance the government's crash armaments programme set off a severe inflationary spiral. Still more sensational were the political effects. Samurai distrust and hostility toward the foreigners coupled with economic hardship led many of them to make the decision to become 'ronin' or 'masterless samurai' so as to leave themselves free to act according to their convictions. Among the numerous outbreaks of localized trouble that followed this development, Western diplomats and traders came in for frequent attack. Several assassinations took place in 1859 (including three Russian sailors killed during Muraviev's visit); in 1861 an interpreter attached to the American Legation was killed; and in the same year the British Legation in Edo was attacked (it was finally burned down in 1863). The latest of these incidents, in which two members of the British Legation were attacked and almost killed, occurred only a month before Bakunin's arrival.

While the samurai and the political establishment battled over the issue of Japan's political future, the majority of the population, the peasants, were in a similar ferment, though not so much over questions of politics as over the hardships brought about by price rises and crop failures; some 70-odd peasant uprisings took place between 1854 and 1870. Scattered and disconnected, and always put down with resolute force well before the pre-modern communications system allowed them to spread, it is doubtful if these uprisings caused more than a few raised eyebrows in the capital. If Bakunin had any inkling of them, he has left no record of his reaction.

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A generation or more before Perry made his abrupt appearance off Japan's shores, Hiroshige's Fifty-three Stages of the Tokaido had preserved the area for posterity, but for Hiroshige it was not Yokohama but nearby Kanagawa, a post-town, that warranted depiction. No. 4 in the series shows a rustic town overlooking Edo Bay, with female touts importuning male travellers on the great post road that passed through it to spend some time in the 'teahouses' dotted along the way. Things changed little before 1853, and one would have been hard put to predict what was to come.

It was only some five years after Perry's final departure, when the Treaty of Edo designated it as the first of Japan's international trading ports, that Yokohama began its transformation. Foreign consuls, aghast at the prospect of a shabby collection of fishing huts bounded on the east by the desolate shores of the Pacific, on the west by a saline swamp, on the south by a tidal creek, and on the north by a river estuary becoming their permanent abode, had argued strongly for the choice of Kanagawa, across a small bay closer to Edo, as a more accessible site. The shogun's government, however, was determined not to have a motley settlement of foreigners so close to the Tokaido or Eastern Highway used by the mighty daimyo for their passage between Kyoto and Edo. Consequently, even as equally determined foreign legations began to put up their signboards at Kanagawa, the Japanese authorities began busily erecting the rudiments of a clapboard settlement across the bay in Yokohama, aiming to tempt pioneer merchants and entrepreneurs to take advantage of its superior facilities. Within a few weeks, carpenters, masons and their labourers had constructed a series of bridges connecting the area to the mainland, together with dwelling-houses, causeways, jetties, go-downs and a Customs House. Sturdy, well-guarded gates at the end of each bridge, firmly closed at sundown each day, served both to keep out the increasing numbers of hostile samurai and to contain the hardy foreigners who had responded to the shogunate's calculated bet within the settlement's limits.<sup>17</sup>

By the end of 1859 a jumbled collection of makeshift buildings stretched out along the shore. Alongside "the disorderly elements of Californian adventurers, Portuguese desperadoes, and the moral refuse of European nations" (to cite the moralizing Bishop of Hong Kong, one of Yokohama's earliest visitors),<sup>18</sup> growing numbers of enterprising Japanese merchants were also setting up shop, eager to turn a quick profit from the growing numbers of foreign tourists who were already beginning to arrive.

Although, as the authorities had foreseen, Yokohama with its deep-water harbour was infinitely more attractive to these merchants than was Kanagawa, the absence of basic requirements made life hard for the Europeans: there was no dairy, therefore no beef to be had; and no grain crops, therefore no bread. There was no library, no club, no town hall, no park, no theatre, and a distinct lack of female residents (the Settlement's first ball, organized by the American consul in 1860, was attended according to Joseph Heco by "only two Englishwomen and three or four female American missionaries."<sup>19</sup> Most frustrating of all, visitors had to pass the watchful eyes of armed guards when leaving or entering the Settlement, and even then were bound by the terms of the treaties to stay within a distance of some 25 miles of the boundary. Still, there was no doubt that business was thriving, and this evidently offset the hardships of everyday life: an extraordinary total of £1,000,000 in trade was reported at the end of Yokohama's second year of operations; 3000 bales of silk and 1,250,000 lbs. of tea were exported to Europe and America; and vast quantities of gold and silver were leaving the country for the world market.<sup>20</sup> Small wonder, then, that John Black, editor of Yokohama's first English-language newspaper The

Japan Herald, described the settlement in glowing, if typically-Victorian mercantilist terms:

"The profitable results of almost every transaction that was entered into, kept all in good spirits... everybody knew everybody, and kind feeling and good fellowship were the rule... it is not to be wondered at that any who heard of Japan... were charmed with the description, and pictured to themselves... a terrestrial paradise where 'all but the spirit of man was divine'." 21

There was another side to this apparent idyll, however. The residents of Yokohama did little to encourage a sedate atmosphere, and by 1861 British Minister to Japan Sir Rutherford Alcock, concerned at the Wild West atmosphere prevailing there, was drawn to condemn

"the common practice of carrying fire-arms during the day and in the most ostentatious manner....Furious horse riding in the streets of Yokohama is a common practice among foreigners, and not only among them but among their Chinese servants...."22

Compounding the fly-by-night atmosphere of the town was the political insecurity: alarms continued to be sounded throughout the period surrounding Bakunin's stay, an atmosphere which perhaps contributed to his reluctance to move about more than was necessary.

The end came for this era of Yokohama's existence with the Great Fire of November 1866, which saw a large proportion of its makeshift buildings go up in flames. Following the arrival of British and French troops in 1862, the town finally began to develop an air of brick- and stone-reinforced respectability.<sup>23</sup> No doubt this made it a much more pleasant place to live in than it had been in 1861, but one wonders whether it can have been quite as hospitable for fugitives from Tsarist justice.

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Thanks to the recent discovery of the extensive diary of Francis Hall, a prominent American entrepreneur and journalist resident in Kanagawa and Yokohama from 1859 to 1866,<sup>24</sup> we are now able to speculate with some confidence on Bakunin's sojourn in Japan even though there is as yet no hard evidence of his ever having been there. Above all, the discovery has thrown a new light on the assertion that, while in Japan, Bakunin came into contact with a "presumably politically advanced American trader".<sup>25</sup> Though other sources have rejected this statement (derived from Bakunin's correspondence) as unsubstantiated, we can now assume that this "trader" was in fact Francis Hall. Hall was intelligent and enlightened, and hardly likely to remain ignorant of the arrival of a man of Bakunin's physical and intellectual stature. Bakunin, for his part, must have been anxious both for some kind of political protection to mask his highly noticeable physical presence and for connections to smooth his intended passage to and across the United States, and Hall would have been the obvious choice.

His name, however, does not appear in Hall's diaries. How are we to explain this disappointing mystery? The clue, I would speculate, lies in the political situation that surrounded the two men. After his close escape at Hakodate, Bakunin must have been on the lookout for the arrival of the Tsar's agents in Yokohama, and the likelihood is strong that, after explaining his circumstances, he threw himself upon Hall's mercies. With rivalry already building up between the United States and Russia for influence in Japan, Hall, whose status was sufficient to allow him to stand in for the American consular representative in Kanagawa during the latter's absences,<sup>26</sup> was hardly likely to give away one of the Russian government's principal enemies. Though the facts do not

yet allow us to go beyond the realm of speculation, I am inclined to suspect that it was as a result of a deliberate agreement between the two men to allow him to remain incognito that Bakunin's name is not to be found in Hall's otherwise copious record of his day-to-day life. If this were the case, it would also help explain Bakunin's love affair with the United States referred to in the following section of this essay.

Another revelation contained in Hall's diary is the presence of Captain Brooks, master of the recently arrived sailing ship *Vickery* to which Bakunin owed his salvation.<sup>27</sup> The details of Bakunin's passage from Hakodate to Yokohama have until now been shrouded in mystery. Only one source states clearly that he remained on board the *Vickery*, but the fact that the ship was in Yokohama in September suggests strongly that this was in fact the case, and that Bakunin remained a passenger as the *Vickery*<sup>28</sup>. sailed south and west down the Pacific coast of Japan.

In his September 19 entry Hall records a visit by Mrs. Brooks, the Captain's wife. Their after-dinner conversation concerning the attractions of the Amur region evidently sparked his interest, for four days later he paid his own return visit in order to hear more from her husband. The captain, it seems, was full of the rumours of Tsarist designs upon Hokkaido, heard in the course of conversations with Russian traders he had met en route. The Russians, he added, were already building so extensively in Hakodate that the Japanese garrison there had constructed a fort whose guns were trained exclusively on the Russian headquarters.<sup>29</sup> There was also a thriving foreign community in the town,<sup>30</sup> but given the overwhelming Russian presence we could hardly blame Bakunin for wanting to get out of Hakodate as quickly as possible. The imminent departure of the *Vickery* had no doubt helped persuade him.

Networking appears to have been one of Bakunin's primary occupations while in Yokohama, and the introductions provided by Francis Hall were vital. One of them was to Joseph Heco (Hamada Hikoza, aka. Amerika Hikoza; 1837~1897), the Japanese newspaper and banking pioneer who would later be on board the same mail-clipper that carried Bakunin across the Pacific. Heco and Hall were on intimate terms thanks to their mutual connection to the American Legation, and Heco, who had become an American citizen while in the USA, also took up residence in the foreign community rather than in the Japanese section of the town after arriving in Yokohama to act as the Legation's official interpreter.<sup>31</sup> His nine-year residence in America after his boat had been blown onto the west coast in 1850, together with his close association with Townsend Harris,<sup>32</sup> had made Heco an unwelcome character among the chauvinistic and belligerent ronin following his return in 1859, and numerous death-threats had been issued against him. Nevertheless, he had become a familiar figure in the Yokohama of 1861, and Hall, who was also a close friend, writes sympathetically of the difficulty Heco had in accepting the advice of well-wishers that he should leave the country before he too became the victim of revanchist assassins.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of any direct record by Bakunin himself the relationship is difficult to trace, but certain events suggest that Bakunin's movements during his subsequent visit to the USA owed a lot to the introductions provided by Heco, whom he would almost certainly have met through Hall's auspices during his stay in Yokohama.

Heco's protracted stay in America had been as much the result of American politics as of his being barred, on pain of dire punishment, from returning to pre-Perry Japan. For the leaders of the United States, chaffing at their inability to prise open the doors of Japan, the shipwrecking episode was Heaven-sent. As then Secretary of State Daniel Webster put it, the rescue of Heco and his fellow-mariners was seen as "afford[ing] a favorable opportunity for opening commercial relations with the empire of Japan, or at least, of placing our intercourse with that island upon a more easy footing."<sup>34</sup> Among Heco's chief benefactors following his chance arrival on American

shores (though he was later to speak less than charitably of him) was the Californian Senator William F. Gwinn. In 1857 Gwinn had escorted Heco on his second visit to Washington to meet President James Buchanan with the express purpose, endorsed by the government, of allowing him to acquire, before being returned to Japan, an intimate knowledge of American politics via a post in the State Department.<sup>35</sup> Could it have been mere coincidence that Bakunin would later come to find himself on board the same ship as the said Senator Gwinn?

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Inevitably, since it was evidently the focal point of the Settlement, Hall's narrative also refers to the Yokohama Hotel. Built in 1859-60 immediately following the Settlement's opening and situated at Lot No. 70 in the foreign settlement near the Customs House, the Hotel was the focal point of the town, used not only for the funeral of the two Dutch sea-captains (both evidently guests at the Hotel) killed by renegade ronin in February 1860, but also as the designated rallying point in case of attack.<sup>36</sup> Managed by a Dutchman named Hufnagel (and thus sometimes referred to as the 'Hotel Hufnagel'), it was Japan's first Western-style hotel (as opposed to Japanese-style inn). 'Hotel', though, is rather a misnomer for what was really no more than a single-storey, largely Japanese house. Though one contemporary resident opined that the wooden fence surrounding the place would furnish little help in case of an attack, the Hotel subsequently became the stationing point for British marines in the aftermath of the assassination in January 1861 of Henry Heusken, interpreter to the American Legation, when an all-out onslaught on foreigners was feared.<sup>37</sup> When tensions were lower, the Hotel's well-stocked bar and billiard table made it a popular meeting place – perhaps the only meeting place – for those feeling the need of either (male) company or the excitement of the gambling table, or for those, like Bakunin, who simply had nothing better to do.<sup>38</sup>

Since it was the only available place to stay for foreigners like Bakunin with no permanent establishment in Japan, the Yokohama Hotel crops up regularly in foreigners' memoirs of Japan, as well as in histories of Japan's hotel industry. We can get a little of its flavour from the account of one Gustav Spies. Spies, a member of the 1859-62 Prussian expedition to East Asia headed by the aristocrat Eulenberg, had stayed at the hotel almost a year prior to Bakunin's arrival and left the following description:

"[It had] a big garden, faced on three sides by wooden single-storied buildings. On one side was the dining room, which joined onto the bar and billiards room, while on the opposite side were situated the living and sleeping quarters. Behind them, facing the main buildings, was a barn. The whole place was built with planks hastily hammered together, the appurtenances half Japanese-style, half Western-style. The kitchen and cellar were excellent, the host reliable and highly accommodating, [but] for service one was expected to wait on oneself."<sup>39</sup>

Furniture in the eight windowless guestrooms was sparse, consisting of no more than a bunk, a table, and a couple of Chinese-style bamboo chairs.<sup>40</sup> Even so, the reputation of the Yokohama Hotel was apparently sufficient to seduce customers into making the seven-hour trip on horseback from far-off Edo in order to sample its wares. The only disappointment, apart from the lack of heating even in the blustery weather of November, was that there was no piano. If this was enough to bring curious customers all the way from Edo, we can get a good idea of what the general run of facilities for foreigners must have been like in the Japan of those days! The attraction, evidently, apart from the billiard table and bar, was the hospitality of the management who, for \$2 a day or \$50 a month, provided not only a room to stay in but also three delicious

and well-prepared meals a day, with an excellent selection of wines also available at moderate prices. 41

Not surprisingly, given the overwhelmingly male population of Yokohama in those days, the bar was the centre of activity. Evenings frequently became given over to shooting practice, sometimes using the big clock over the door as target, but just as often "without caring where the bullets go", according to the British diplomat Ernest Satow.<sup>(42)</sup><sup>42</sup>. All in all, the place seems more like the venue for a spaghetti western than an outpost of empire. Bakunin, we may imagine, spent much of his time either bent over the celebrated billiard table which, as soon as it was installed, proved a great success as a means of killing time for those whose only purpose in Yokohama was to await a ship to take them out, or else propping up the adjacent bar, where a black waiter named Macaulay apparently saw to customers' needs.<sup>(43)</sup><sup>43</sup>.

Once again, however, Bakunin's name is not to be found alongside those of other boarders. What appears to be a positive identification, a reference to a note said to have been left in the Hotel's register that "a big man, in flight from Russian exile, was also resident",<sup>44</sup> is unfortunately not considered authentic, having been written some years after the event. In any case, Bakunin, concerned to leave as little trace as possible of his passing, and undoubtedly so jumpy as to be startled by the southing of the wind, was hardly likely to be staying under his own name. Investigations have revealed another name, however, and a quite unexpected one at that: Wilhelm Heine (1827-1885), the German artist who had fought alongside Bakunin in the closing days of the Dresden Insurrection a dozen years before! For that information we are indebted to two more fellow-residents, the already-mentioned Siebolds, whose memoirs provide one of the few references to Bakunin's stay in Japan.

The elder Siebold, formerly attached to a Dutch company in Nagasaki as doctor and naturalist from 1823 to 1828, had received official permission to instruct local doctors in Western medical methods, and had had a seminal influence upon the development of modern medicine in Japan. In 1829, however, he had been expelled from Japan for seeking to smuggle out forbidden goods (chiefly maps), and made persona non grata. Rejected for the Perry expedition because of these political difficulties, he was finally able to return to Japan in August 1859, as assistant to a Dutch trading company in Nagasaki, after a diplomatic treaty was signed with Holland. In the spring of 1861 he was appointed diplomatic adviser to the Japanese government, and it was following his transfer to Edo from Nagasaki that he made his, for us significant, stop at the Yokohama Hotel.  
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Heine, after eluding arrest in the aftermath of Dresden, had fled to New York and then to Central America. Returning to New York in 1852, he was selected from among scores of applicants for the post of official artist to the 1853 Perry expedition. While in Japan, his position on Perry's staff allowed him to visit the capital, Edo – still officially closed to ordinary foreigners, and he recorded the events and customs of the time with a vivid brush. His four hundred sketches and paintings not only add colour to Perry's official Narrative of the Expedition of the American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, published in 1856, but also provide a unique record of Japan in its pristine days before the arrival of foreigners in force. Back home, meanwhile, Heine seems to have been forgiven for his youthful escapade at Dresden, for in 1859 he returned to Germany and was immediately invited to join the Eulenberg expedition to Asia, again as official artist. After its mission was completed, Heine, who had taken out American citizenship during his previous stay in that country, decided against returning to Europe and resolved instead to make his own way back to America, where he was eventually to become an officer on the Union side in the Civil War. The first stage of his journey, in July 1861, took him from Tianjin to Yokohama, where



he was to await an America-bound ship scheduled to sail on September 17. By almost-impossible coincidence, it would also seem to have led to the emotional reunion with his old comrade-in-arms Michael Bakunin in the Yokohama Hotel.<sup>46</sup>

In the diary of this second visit, kept by Siebold's son Alexander, we find the following entry:

"In that boarding-house we encountered some "rowdies" as well as many other interesting travelers. [One of the latter was] so-called 'Colonel' Wilhelm Heine... [Another was] the Russian agitator Michael Bakunin, in flight from Siberia, [whose presence] was as far as one could see being winked at by the authorities. He was well-endowed with money, and none who came to know him could fail to regard him with enormous respect."<sup>47</sup>

This entry, unfortunately, has to be taken with a pinch of salt. Alexander Siebold's diary, as already said, was published some forty years after the events it describes, and there is undoubted evidence that he felt the need to spice up the manuscript with some embellishments of his own. Without independent confirmation such as an entry in the hotel register, therefore, we cannot be entirely sure that the two old comrades did indeed meet up in Yokohama. However, the timing of their respective visits matches perfectly (which alone would amount to an almost impossible coincidence), and, since there was no other place for a transient foreigner to stay in the Settlement, the probability of their having met while propping up the bar in the Yokohama Hotel is strong.

Francis Hall's diary entry for September 17, 1861 notes laconically:

"Today the Carrington left for San Francisco with nineteen passengers... It was a great number to go from our little community at one time though some of them had been merely temporary residents."<sup>48</sup>

Among those anonymous "temporary residents" were Michael Bakunin and, we may be reasonably sure, Wilhelm Heine.<sup>49</sup>

#### 4. Across the Pacific

With his safe arrival in San Francisco Bakunin felt, in his own words, that he was "risen from the dead", and he celebrated his rebirth with a triumphant letter to Herzen:

"I have succeeded in escaping from Siberia, and after long wanderings on the Amur, on the shores of the Gulf of Tartary and across Japan, I arrived today in San Francisco."<sup>50</sup>

Among Bakunin's fellow-voyagers had been an English clergyman, the Reverend F. P. Koe. Koe, fortunately, was another diary-keeper, and from his jottings, subsequently tracked down by E.H. Carr, we learn a little about Bakunin's days aboard the USS Carrington. He describes Bakunin as "more like a friend than anyone I have met for a long time." The two evidently spent many of their waking hours in long-ranging discussions, Bakunin professing great sympathy for the tenets of Protestantism while regaling his audience with the story of his life, and before the voyage ended the two were on the best of terms. We learn also that the 3500 roubles Bakunin

had possessed at the outset of his adventure must have been exhausted, for shortly before docking in San Francisco he touched his clergyman friend for a "loan" of \$250, and a few days later cabled the ever-patient Herzen to send \$500 more to New York to defray the expenses of his Atlantic passage.<sup>51</sup> Whether the money had all gone into the pocket of the Yokohama Hotel's proprietor Hufnagel, or whether some of it had been necessary to buy the collusion of Afanasiev and Bodisco, remains a mystery.

Bakunin, however, was not a man to let something like money to stand between him and his objectives, and it seems likely that these were not his only sources of cash during his American passage. It was the time of the Gold Rush, and among those seeking a quick fortune along the shores of California were numerous Russian and Polish immigrants. Exiles like these were no more immune than the Reverend Koe had been to the importuning of a man who had already, in 1848, persuaded the French government to pay him to leave their country; a whip-round produced the money required for the next stage of Bakunin's journey, the trip from San Francisco to New York.<sup>52</sup>

Aching though he was for a speedy return to Europe, it would still be several years before the transcontinental railroad, which could have carried Bakunin across America toward New York and home, would finally reach the Pacific coast. From San Francisco, therefore, where he had arrived on October 14 after what had evidently been the fastest trip on record,<sup>53</sup> he was obliged to take the long and slow route via the Panama Isthmus. On October 21 he embarked on the steamship *Orizaba*, docking in Panama on the 24th; from there, after a delay of two weeks, he found another ship, the *Champion*, to take him through the Canal and back north again along the Atlantic coast. The Civil War had broken out some five months previously, and his fellow-passengers included not only the Commander-in-Chief of the Union army in California, General Sumner, but also three prominent Confederate sympathizers including Joseph Heco's one-time benefactor the former California Senator William M. Gwin. Bakunin, perhaps already beginning to sense that over-centralization was the source of many of the world's socio-political injustices, seems to have been favourably impressed by the former Senator's arguments. Only one day into the voyage, however, Gwin and the others were arrested by General Sumner as secessionists.<sup>54</sup>

Bakunin finally arrived in New York on the morning of November 15. Unfortunately, war fever must have limited the usefulness of Heco's introduction, if there had been one, for we hear no more of Senator Gwinn after Bakunin's arrival. During the month or so that he spent in the city (including a short trip to Boston), he renewed acquaintances with numerous old friends from the 1848 Revolution in Europe (the so-called "48ers"), met several celebrated abolitionist figures including the poet Longfellow, and managed to obtain from one of them George Washington's autograph, which he had been "very anxious to possess". After augmenting the remittance from Herzen with a further loan from an otherwise-unidentifiable Englishman named Smith, Bakunin was ready for the final leg of his epic journey. Learning that the USS *City of Baltimore's* departure for Liverpool was imminent, he abandoned his plan to visit Washington and on December 14, a little more than six months since he had left Irkutsk and two months after arriving in America, embarked on the two-week voyage across the Atlantic. On the evening of December 27 he arrived at Orsett House, Herzen's London home-in-exile, and burst into the drawing room where the family was having supper:

"What! Are you sitting down eating oysters?! Well, tell me the news! What is brewing, and where!?"<sup>55</sup>

Bakunin evidently retained a positive impression of the United States. Though the country was in the early stages of civil war when he arrived, he seems to have felt that the end of the war would bring about a happy union of the liberal qualities of the north and the agrarian nature of the south, once the tendency of the north toward over-centralization and the black spot of slavery that tarnished the otherwise libertarian south had both been cauterized by the hostilities. His opposition to black slavery, a natural corollary to his rejection of serfdom in Russia, prompted him to remark that, had circumstances permitted, "he would have cast his future fortune with Americans and heartily joined in the events of the War".<sup>56</sup> What distinguished his circumstances from those of his companion from the Yokohama Hotel and co-passenger on the USS Carrington Wilhelm Heine, who subsequently became a highly decorated officer in the northern army, was the fact that the Russian embassy was pressing hard for his extradition. The refusal of the United States government to heed the embassy's request undoubtedly played a large part in forming Bakunin's positive image of the country, and even persuaded him to "make a primary declaration of American citizenship".<sup>57</sup>

Despite his disparaging comments in letters to Herzen about the "banality of soulless material prosperity" and "infantile national vanity" which he had observed in San Francisco,<sup>58</sup> Bakunin clearly saw the American political system as a model for Europe. In his speech to the second congress of the League for Peace and Freedom held in Bern in 1868, in place of the "monstrous and oppressive centralization" that now evidently appeared to him as the origin of all the evils affecting the European continent, he advocated the "great and salutary principle of Federalism [of] which the recent events in the United States... have... offered us a triumphant demonstration." Even the French Revolution, whose "great socialist and humanitarian ideas" deserved the sympathy of libertarians, took second place, because of its tendency toward centralization, to "the politics of liberty of the North Americans."<sup>59</sup>

Toward the end of his life Bakunin would grow less sanguine about the libertarian prospects for America. In 1870, however, in despair at the threat posed to European liberty by the growing menace of Prussia, Bakunin looked back across the Atlantic and echoed the words of the late Alexander Herzen: "for a renewal, for a continuation of history, there remained no more than two sources:... America, and eastern barbarism [i.e., Russia]."<sup>60</sup>

## 6. Bakunin's Legacy and Japan

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 to point to the state as the origin of all social evils; 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, not only ignores the fact that his passage toward those ideas was a long and sometimes painful process, but also, as will be shown, closes off hitherto unexplored avenues of cross-cultural research.

The effects of French radical thought on the modern Japanese liberal tradition have long been recognized, but by and large it has been to the major French thinkers that that influence has been credited. This section will attempt to add a new dimension to our knowledge. By tracing

personal connections whose significance has never been fully explored, it will suggest that the ideas Bakunin held in his immediate pre-anarchist phase had already begun to be applied in Japan at least thirty years earlier than the anarchist ideas usually associated with him. It will further suggest that 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 representatives of the radical movement there. Many of these men, following their return to Japan, were subsequently influential in the Popular Rights Movement (*jiyu minken undo*) that broke out there 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.

In the early 1880s, Itagaki Taisuke, a liberal politician and leader of the Popular Rights Movement, met the renowned French novelist Victor Hugo in Paris. At the beginning of the meeting, Itagaki asked Hugo 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?"<sup>61</sup>

Hugo, as well as being the most celebrated French novelist of his generation, was also a champion of liberalism. His compassionate depiction, in his novel *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, located on the conservative wing of the Popular Rights Movement, was evidently unaware that there was already a strong European connection within the movement that led almost directly to Hugo himself (another possible reason for the absence of a recorded response). In fact Hugo's radical liberalism, as well as his long and adventurous life, already overlapped with that of other men closely linked to more radical sections of the Popular Rights Movement, but it also led directly to the legacy of the fiery radical and emerging anarchist Michael Bakunin.

After his return to Europe at the end of 1861, Bakunin had thrown himself once more into subversive activity, his own progressive radicalization paralleled by that of the movement as a whole. By the summer of 1867, as Europe braced itself for the first major revival of revolutionary activity since the suppression of the 1848 wave of revolts, preparations had begun for an international conference that would unwittingly help set the scene for the polarization of the European radical 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.<sup>62</sup> 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 Acollas (1826-91). Acollas' 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 Acollas had initially insisted be referred to as a "revolutionary conference" rather than merely as a "peace conference", set out three major areas for discussion. The first concerned the compatibility of monarchical politics and peace, and it was agreed, almost certainly under the influence of Bakunin's American experiences, that only the assurance of complete personal liberty within a "United States of Europe" comprising a federation of free republics could bring the continent a permanent peace. The second concerned the conditions for bringing about such a situation. 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 Acollas' 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. This second meeting, however, to which no more than 100 delegates bothered to turn up, was but a shadow of the first, for the idealism that had surrounded its predecessor had 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 Acollas as organizer and Michael Bakunin as its most illustrious delegate.<sup>63</sup> 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 most of his fellow-delegates), could be realized only by the dissolution of all states and their replacement by "free productive associations".<sup>64</sup>

Eight years spent in the dank fortresses of three different European autocracies following his arrest in 1849 had clearly convinced Bakunin of the dire nature of oppressive politics whatever their hue. After his return to Europe, Karl Marx, as the foremost intellectual radical of the time, had seemed a natural figure for him to attach himself to. Marx was at that time in London struggling to finish the first volume of his *Das Capital*. 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 Bakunin's excited reminiscences about the things he had seen there.<sup>65</sup> Unfortunately, however, Marx's very success as a revolutionary pamphleteer was beginning to encourage the paternal and dictatorial tendencies that had been a marked facet of his personality since his early years in the radical 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 the two men had been merely a matter of time.

Half a decade later, in his second speech at the 1868 congress, 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...."<sup>66</sup>

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,<sup>67</sup> 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...."<sup>68</sup> Less than a year later, the League was dealt its deathblow by the long-awaited outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and before long it had sunk into oblivion. Important relationships had been formed, however, that would consequently 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 Tokugawa shoguns and installed 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 a close friend of the Meiji Emperor; he 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. After returning to his place at court, he removed his war-helmet and armour to reveal 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, 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 language, he successfully prevailed upon the new leadership to allow him to travel to Paris.<sup>69</sup> 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. More important, Saionji, as well as being of similar breeding to his aristocratic Russian counterpart, must also have had the same knack of being able to home in on significant historic events. His arrival coincided almost to the day with the outbreak of the uprising that would change the shape of European radicalism: the Paris Commune.<sup>70</sup>

Emile Aollas 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, is not clear. Victor Hugo, however, was there, having rushed back 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, Aollas 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 Aollas, because of his interest in Oriental languages, was evidently a member) he acquired a new student in the person of young Saionji Kimmochi.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike Aollas, Saionji was 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 support 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 liberalism he would come to embody over the ensuing decade.<sup>72</sup> He was to remain in the city for ten years, first as a French-language student, later as an avid imbibor of the quasi-libertarian philosophy of Emile Aollas. 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 Acollas? 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 300 years, and a frustrated Saionji had become committed to a political order in which the people basically ruled themselves, albeit under the benign protection of a wise monarch. Acollas too, developing the ideas of Rousseau, was a confirmed believer in constitutional rule emanating from the popular will, 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 Acollas 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 in 1875 Clemenceau requested Saionji's cooperation in bringing into France a blacklisted publication that he and Acollas had recently had published in Geneva, Saionji cheerfully agreed.<sup>73</sup>

Saionji was certainly not the first post-Meiji Restoration Japanese to study in Europe and be affected by the liberal ideas that were current at the time, nor was he the only one to study under Emile Acollas.<sup>74</sup> 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 Chomin (1847~1901). Nakae had left Japan in December 1871 with the Iwakura Mission, a party of court officials and government leaders dispatched 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. As the son of a low-level samurai, Nakae came from a very different background to that of the court-bred Saionji, and it is hard to know what the two 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 most of Saionji's fellow-Japanese, it was to Nakae 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.<sup>75</sup> Nakae, 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 for more than half a century.

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, such as a republican system, would they have any tenability for the modern world.<sup>76</sup> 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 Chomin 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 position that would distinguish them from their rivals, their eyes soon hit upon Nakae's translation, which had begun circulating in manuscript form in 1877 and had already earned Nakae the title of "The Rousseau of the East". In 1881 Itagaki founded a new political party which he called the Jiyuto or Liberal Party, its doctrine based closely on the ideals of the French Revolution and the Rousseauian principles propagated by Nakae. 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 Acollas, contended that even a constitutional monarchy in which ultimate power rested with the emperor and his officials was a travesty of democracy. Only a republican government answerable to the people, he insisted, would suffice.<sup>77</sup> While stopping short of the revolutionary anarchist position that Michael Bakunin came around towards the end of his life, Nakae's opposition to the status quo grew out of the same concern for the integrity of the individual as did Bakunin's. In the context of Japan's political tradition it was a radical position indeed, not only winning him many recruits among the young supporters of the Popular Rights Movement, but also leading to his adoption as mentor by the young Kotoku Shusui, later to become Japan's first self-proclaimed anarchist.<sup>78</sup>

Nakae Chomin had hoped that the ideology he 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. In 1884, after returning from Europe, Itagaki finally decided to disband it altogether.<sup>79</sup>

Saionji, meanwhile, had remained in Paris imbibing the ideas of 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.<sup>80</sup> 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 restore 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.

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, revocable 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 radical ideas had tempered Acollas' former idealism. They would also, significantly enough, become the key demands of the radical wing of the Popular Rights Movement.

Acollas' campaign ultimately lost in a showdown with those who favoured a partial or delayed amnesty, but the effect on Saionji seems to have been profound, and after his return to Japan a few years later the rhetoric he had been exposed to would bear fruit. With pressure already mounting for the creation of a quasi-democratic regime there, there is little doubt that Nakae Chomin and other liberals were fretting anxiously at Saionji's continued dalliance abroad, but still he lingered. 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.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps, however, it was precisely the knowledge that he would have to play a central role in Japan's political wrangling that caused Saionji to delay his return for so long, for his reply to Acollas' adjurations made it clear that he did not relish the prospect.<sup>82</sup> 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 Chomin, 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 his 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 rather than a classic liberal, he was instinctively rather than politically opposed to totalitarianism in politics. Though unable to 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 Saionji and Nakae Chomin, together with several friends from their Paris days, joined forces to found the Oriental Free Press (*Toyo jiyu shinbun*), the first Japanese newspaper ever to employ the word "free" (*jiyu*) in its title.

Short-lived (its 34 issues all appeared between March and April 1881) but influential, the Oriental Free Press set out to prick the government in its most sensitive spot: its undemocratic nature. Paraphrasing the Chinese philosopher Mencius, Nakae insisted in one article that when a government refused to recognize the natural rights of the people those people had the right to rebel against it.<sup>83</sup> 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. 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 Revolution<sup>84</sup> reflected the authorities' concern that they had crushed the traditional-style samurai revolts and peasant riots of the previous decade only to be greeted by new unrest rooted in more modern demands.

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 intimate 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 join the government, and it was only later that year, when the government finally bowed to opposition pressure and announced plans to draft a constitution, that he agreed to

take up an official position as adviser. He left Japan soon after with Ito Hirobumi's constitutional research team, and would not return to Japan for almost another decade.<sup>85</sup> By the end of April the Oriental Free Press had collapsed.

These events, together with the collapse of the Liberal Party that followed soon after, clearly had a powerful effect upon Nakae Chomin. The profound influence of Emile Acollas 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, sagacious discussion of mid-Meiji political and intellectual trends titled *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government* (1887), Nakae has a 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."<sup>86</sup>

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 law 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."<sup>87</sup>

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 hand 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 a perfect 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.<sup>88</sup> 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..."<sup>89</sup>

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

## 8. Cultural Stimuli and Pacific Portents: A Conclusion

In 1902, almost a century ago, US Secretary of State John Hay made a prophetic statement:

"Western history began with a Mediterranean era, passed through an Atlantic era, and is now moving into a Pacific era."<sup>90</sup>

The actual state of affairs today is considerably different from that foreseen by Hay, whose implication was merely that the United States would – and should – take over the dominant role in the world then played by Europe. The Pacific era had already been clearly visible fifty years earlier, however, exercising a profound effect on the fortunes of the anarchist Michael Bakunin and, through him, on those of the European continent.

Bakunin's revolutionary career, though it had almost no conscious connection with Japan, thanks to that brief contact made possible by the opening of the country in the 1850s was enabled to reach its full fruition. Had the shogun's government been able to sustain its proud isolationist policy for a few years longer, there would have been no Bakuninist anarchism to counter the totalitarian preferences of Marx and his friends, and the whole shape of the 19th-century European revolutionary movement would have been drastically different. Karl Marx would have had the direction of the European socialist scene to himself, while Bakunin, in permanent exile, dabbled with dreams of Siberian-American federation. The opening of the ports of Hakodate and Yokohama coincided perfectly with Bakunin's decision that escape was his sole means of leaving Siberia, and offered him the only feasible plan of action. Had it been otherwise, there is little doubt that he would today be celebrated as no more than another Russian revolutionary martyr.

It is hard not to ponder on what might have happened had Bakunin found it impossible to embark for America and been obliged to pass the rest of his days in Japan. Would he have been content to shoot pool for the rest of his life, or would he have settled down to learn the language and direct his energies toward the organization of the peasants who could surely be seen working in the fields beyond the boundaries of the Yokohama settlement? Would he perhaps have learned of the dire economic situation many families were in as a result of the foreigners' cornering of the silver supply, and resolved that they were a fair cause to fight for? Would he, twenty years later, have thrown in his lot with the radical organizers of the Popular Rights Movement? Or, heavens forbid, would he have reconciled himself once more to the role of businessman, wheeling and dealing while Japan went through the throes of its rebirth as a modern nation? All these are fascinating but, ultimately, academic questions, to which no satisfactory answer is possible. Bakunin, for one, apparently never considered any possibility but that of getting out of Japan as quickly as possible.

For Bakunin, Japan seems to have been no more than a way station, offering little in the way of temptation. Reliable information about the country that might have made him consider a longer stay was almost non-existent, and the fact that it was difficult to make contact with Japanese other than those concerned merely to make a fast buck out of gullible foreigners did nothing to make his impressions of Japan positive ones. We also have to consider the state of Bakunin's mind. He was on the run, moving incognito, jumping at shadows – certainly, after eight years' mind-killing, body-racking punishment followed by four more years of Siberian exile, in no mood to take chances or to linger in the role of sightseer. It was (and is) difficult enough for any foreigner, let alone a bearded, toothless giant like Bakunin, to disappear in Japan, and he must have constantly feared unwitting exposure by his fellow-residents at the Yokohama Hotel; hence the likelihood that there was a secret pact between him and Francis Hall (perhaps with Joseph Heco too) to conceal his true identity. His heart, moreover, was already speeding towards London and the revolution in Europe, and he was little disposed to take careful note of the things

he saw around him.

Hence, although one would have hoped that the very existence of the void surrounding him in Yokohama, to say nothing of his being in a country whose capacity for revolution was entirely unknown, would have pressed Bakunin to find out more about Japan, it was not to be. Despite the strangeness of the surroundings (it seems certain that he must have heard many fascinating stories if he did indeed meet Heine), Bakunin left no impressions whatever of his stay, and never mentions it in any of his writings. What makes this omission all the more startling and regrettable is the fact that Herzen, who after Bakunin's return to London was obliged to support him, suggested that he raise money by writing the story of his escape from Siberia. Bakunin, it seems, could not be bothered.<sup>91</sup>

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Another lesson that I hope has emerged is the need to re-examine accepted categories. With regard to Japan, Bakunin's legacy has until now only been sought in the words and deeds of the conscious anarchist movement, but I have tried to show the limitations that are imposed when we ignore the process that led up to that stage in his political development. The radical, instinctively-decentralizing ideas that he held during his immediate pre-anarchist phase, thanks to Emile Acollas' influence on Saionji Kimmochi and Nakae Chomin and others, in fact entered Japan a full quarter of a century before he was known there as an anarchist, and were already exerting an unacknowledged influence over the struggle for human rights in that country even as he lay on his deathbed in 1876. The role of Emile Acollas itself also adds a new dimension to our understanding of the transmission of European liberal ideas to late 19th-century Japan. While the fact that translations of the standard political thinkers played a large role in awakening receptive Japanese intellectuals to the possibility of a new political order has been copiously documented, the conduit provided by the almost-forgotten Acollas has been overlooked by all but a small number of Japanese scholars. It was the commitment to freedom which Bakunin more than anyone else had already come to personify in the five years following his return to Europe that was the origin of the attraction he held for Acollas at the conference of the League for Peace and Freedom in 1867. Acollas' influence on the Japanese liberals who studied with him saw to it that that commitment would re-cross the Eurasian continent to the land that had granted him a fresh lease on life.

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Through the prism of Bakunin's passage through Japan, I have also tried to draw together some strands of early Pacific history, and to pinpoint a crucial era in which it might be said that the seeds of the present world balance were sown. The mid-19th-century transformation of international relations in the Pacific area – the decline of Chinese power in north-east Asia allowing the eastward thrust by Russia under the aggressive leadership of Muraviev; and the opening of Japan under pressure from the westward-expanding USA, allowing the introduction of trans-Pacific shipping lanes – created the conditions under which Michael Bakunin would live again. Had China's dynastic decline not allowed Muraviev to push the limits of Russian territory to the mouth of the Amur, there would have been no opportunity of reaching the coast that, given the Tsar's repeated refusals to countenance a full pardon, was Bakunin's only route to freedom. Had American continental expansion not continued in such a timely way across the Pacific to a Japan already to some degree psychologically primed for change, the very idea of an eastward-bound escape route via Japan and America would have been inconceivable to a Siberian exile. Had the treaties with Japan not made it possible for Russians to visit that country,

Bakunin's encounter with the consul in Hakodate would have meant the end of the line. Such are the chances of history.

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The Canadian historian George Woodcock, in his book entitled *The Monk and his Message*, speaks of a history that is fuelled not by pre-determined and self-propelling laws, but by the efforts and aspirations of individuals acting within the limits of their mentality, their physical and mental abilities, and their environment.<sup>92</sup> It is a thesis that appears eminently relevant to the present essay. By focusing on the life of one particular individual, the anarchist Michael Bakunin, I have tried to demonstrate how an apparently trivial event such as a short stay in Yokohama by a disaffected transient can help throw unexpected light on broader historical and cultural patterns. By highlighting some of the more coincidental and ironic connections between a man whose whole being was dedicated to the transformation of Europe, and a country on the other side of the world without which the most productive years of that life might never have been, I have also sought to focus upon the interplay between individuals and the cultural forces they represent. Finally, by dwelling upon the seemingly-random friendships created among Japanese and French intellectuals in Paris in the 1870s (as well as those unlikely alliances forged in the remote communities of eastern Siberia), I have tried to show not only the part played by chance in the unfolding of history, but also the enormous importance of inter-cultural contacts, particularly on an individual level, in creating the vitality that leads to substantial social and cultural renewal.