

The Family Heritage Series

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



Volume II

Lesson Seventy-Four

The Revolution In Russia

LESSON IDEA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

