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## **Review: Workers Unite! The International 150 years later**

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March 21, 2015

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The key lesson for anarchists to learn from the International is why, given the balance of forces in 1872, that within ten years we saw the rise of social democracy and the marginalisation of anarchism in many of its previous strongholds. This gives the Marxist account a plausibility which the subsequent history of social democracy undermines. It is hard not to conclude, as the likes of Malatesta and Kropotkin did, that it was the lack of actual practical activity in the here-and-now that was the cause. The ultra-revolutionism of the late 1870s and early 1880s, the ignoring of mundane activities like winning reforms by union organising and struggle, was the key issue – it is no coincidence that anarchist strength in Spain is the one exception in this marginalisation process or that it was reversed with the rise of syndicalism from the 1890s to 1910s.

Kropotkin never tired of repeating the need to pursue the strategy of the anarchists in the International, namely getting involved in the struggles and organisations of workers in order to push them towards revolutionary means and ends. He was right to do so and this, rather than the hagiography of Marx Musto provides, is what we should take from the International 150 years later.

*Workers Unite! The International 150 years later*

Marcello Musto (ed.)  
Bloomsbury Academic  
New York/London  
2014

## End Notes

## Introduction

The editor of *Workers Unite!* should be congratulated on his aim, namely to make the debates within the *International Working Men's Association* (IWMA) accessible for radicals active 150 years after it was founded in 1864. Yet while the book's subtitle states "150 years later" the introduction is written as if those 150 years do not exist. This is explained by the editor being a Marxist and so unwilling to admit that Marx helped push the workers' movement into a dead end.

The reason this book was produced is grand. Marcello Musto, the editor, notes that the "world of labour has suffered an epochal defeat" and "it is sunk in profound ideological subordination to the dominant system". The "task today, then, is to build again on the ruins, and direct familiarity with the original theorizations of the workers' movement may help significantly to reverse the trend." This is "the first motivation for this book" to offer "to a new and inexperienced generation [...] the beginnings of the long path taken" before and "not to obtain mere palliatives to the existing reality, so that the legacy of the International may live again in the critique of the present day." (xv)

This means including all texts and speeches which "outlined the alternative to the capitalist system". (xv) These are grouped into 13 parts, with those on "Trade Union and Strike", "Co-operative Movement and Credit", "Collective Ownership and the State" and "Political Organisation" having the most newly translated material and relevance for today's debates within the socialist movement.

This desire to discover and hopefully learn from the past will chime with many activists and any serious anarchist will be happy to see a work which presents 80 selections from the documents and debates of the IWMA written by "more than 30 internationalists, many of them ordinary workers" of which 33 are newly translated. (xv, xvi) However, the problems with the book are in many ways the problem with the IWMA – namely Marxism. Musto is

clearly a Marxist and must, even if the facts are at odds with reality, show “Marx’s indispensable contribution” (xv) and in “the conflict between communists and anarchists” (xvi) sides with the former.

This means that the framework within which the book is constructed is fundamentally flawed. Marxist accounts of the IWMA generally express four things. First, a contempt of anarchist thinkers and anarchism in general. Second, praise for Marx which, at best, borders on the embarrassing. Third, an unwillingness to consider what happened next after the apparent success of Marxism at the Hague Congress. Fourth, self-contradiction as the facts differ from the ideologically correct narrative. Musto’s introduction is marked by all four and this influences the material selected and so the most interesting debates – such as the syndicalist contributions at the Basel congress – being mentioned almost in passing

Musto is right, in a sense, to state that the IWMA “gave birth to the prototype of all organisations of the workers’ movement, which both reformists and revolutionaries take as their point of reference” (2) however given that the reformists (presumably the Second International) were originally revolutionaries before working in the system slowly changed them, we need to do far more than eulogise Marx as this book does. So while combating the “orthodox Soviet view” of Marx, Musto presents him as single-handedly dragging the International forward (6) and in terms of texts, Marx (29 in total, 24 as sole author) and Engels (7 in total, 3 as sole author) get the bulk of the entries. Again we have the IWMA and its debates being little more than the background to the genius of Marx.

This can be seen when Musto describes the initial creation of the IWMA. Thankfully, he rejects the mythology that see so many proclaim it *Marx’s* International and, correctly, notes that Marx played no role in its organising (which was actually done by British and French trade unionists, the latter followers of Proudhon). He, however, suggests a “third” grouping “in importance” at the meeting

cise spot where its predecessor ended.”<sup>76</sup> We can expect a similar process at work in any attempt to create a militant workers organisation today.

In the last analysis, while it should be possible to unite many in an organisation based on direct action and extra-parliamentarian solidarity the fact is that Marx’s children will – like him – undermine it by insisting that it stand candidates in elections. So while the Second nor the Third Internationals may have “constantly referred to the values and doctrines of the First International” (65) they were built of political parties and not unions and we can expect the same of any sixth International the Marxists would seek to produce from any movement unfortunate enough to be deemed – like Marx with the IWMA – worthy of their presence. While Marx may be forgiven by incorrectly – unlike Bakunin – predicting the consequences of this, those active today have 150 years of experience to learn from. Yet, like Musto, they do not and are left wondering why socialism is now further away than when the IWMA was founded.

It is not hard to conclude that Marxism *itself* is part of the problem, not least because its adherents do not recognise that its own strategy (political action) and goal (state socialism) do not work. The sooner people recognise that Marx is just one thinker amongst many who contributed to our critique and analysis of capitalism and, more importantly, that contribution can be appreciated without having to embrace the rest of his ideology, the better.

And that is the problem – we have socialist ideology, not socialist theory as we had in the International. As Musto and so many others inadvertently show, while theory is where you have ideas, ideology is where ideas have you. It is this that allows someone to discuss the IWMA and conclude that Marx was right – *in spite of 150 years of history that proves the opposite*.

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<sup>76</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 49: 238

tainly will not have read *The Basic Bakunin* and its collection of articles written when Bakunin was a member of the International and seeking to influence its direction (needless to say, this key work is not even referenced by Musto). Sam Dolgoff's *Bakunin on Anarchism* is quoted but only in relation to the struggle with Marx and then only unpublished works. As for *Statism and Anarchy*, well, it goes unmentioned that this was published after the split and in Russian.

This shoddy scholarship reflects Musto's Marxist prejudices and could be understandable (if lamentable) in an obvious polemical attack on anarchism but this book is presented as a work making the ideas and debates of the International available to a new generation. This task needs objectivity rather than cheerleading.

So if we reject Marxist cheerleading, what lessons are to be drawn from the First International? Musto thinks that the "aims of the organisation founded in London 150 years ago are today more vital than ever. To rise to the challenges of the present, the new International cannot evade that twin requirements: it must be plural and it must be anticapitalist." (66) Except, of course, that Musto seems to equate "anticapitalist" with Marxist and think that Marx was right to foster his own political programme on the organisation. For if Marx did achieve "a non-exclusionary [...] political programme that won it a mass character beyond all sectarianism" (5) *he* was also the one who destroyed it by fostering a specific political programme – his own – on it.

In terms of "plural", this is remarkably at odds with the Marxist tradition for if "there was a definitive parting of the ways between anarchists and socialists" (63) then this was driven by Marxists and their insistence on "political action." After the anarchists were expelled from the Brussels Congress of the Second International in 1891 Engels proclaimed that it "proved a brilliant success for us [...] And, best of all, the anarchists have been shown the door, just as they were at the Hague Congress. The new, incomparably larger and avowedly Marxist International is beginning again at the pre-

as those "grouped around" Marx, which he insultingly suggests were the only "anticapitalist" ones. He defines "anticapitalist" as being "opposed the existing system of production and espoused the necessity of political action to overthrow it." (4) Yet the followers of Proudhon (the mutualists) even if they rejected "political action" opposed the capitalist system for as Musto himself notes they aimed for a society in which "the worker would be at once producer, capitalist and consumer" (13) based on "the founding of producer cooperatives and a central People's Bank". (19) Sadly, the ideas of Proudhon are not accurately recounted so reinforcing the foregone conclusion – Marxism is right.

This kind of selective reporting undermines the potential usefulness of this book and, as such, undermines its aim of giving current activists the material needed to be inspired by and learn from the past. This is the past already judged and its conclusions already found – with the appropriate texts selected or ignored to ensure that the reader sees that this is the only possible ones to draw. This does not get us far. For if it is true – and it is – that an "abyss separates the hopes of those times from the mistrust so characteristic of our own" (65) we need to be willing to admit that it was dug by those who pursued the Marxist agenda so clearly approved of by Musto. It is *not* enough to state "the workers' movement adopted a socialist [i.e., Marxist] programme, expanded throughout Europe and then the rest of the world" and then complain that the "passion for politics among the workers who gathered in London in 1864 contrasts sharply with the apathy and resignation prevalent today" (65) when the one helped to produce the other.

To indicate the potential for today of revisiting the IWMA we need to bring out what Musto fails to mention or gets wrong thanks to his Marxist blinkers. Once we correct his mistakes (often, but not always, simply by quoting other words of his<sup>1</sup>) and present

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<sup>1</sup> Thus it is well known that Marx hand-picked the London Conference of 1871 yet Musto suggests that "[d]espite the efforts to make the event as represen-

what he misses out, it soon comes clear that it is not a case of Marx “winning every major conflict inside the organisation” (20) but rather one of Marx happening to be on the same side of a majority moving in roughly the same direction (socialisation of land and support for strikes) or using his position against the majority of the organisation (the imposition of “political action” in 1871–2). It is not the case that “partly through his own tenacity, partly through occasional splits, Marx’s thought became the hegemonic doctrine”. (6) Marx used his position to foster his prejudices onto the IWMA even when the majority clearly opposed him (the “splits” in question were usually Marx siding with a minority against a libertarian majority). Like the reader of this book, the International deserved better than to be reduced to that of a ladder used to place Marx onto his pedestal.

## **Proudhon: The missing piece of the jigsaw**

As a Marxist, Musto cannot bring himself to do the research necessary to challenge his own assumptions about Proudhon’s ideas, their influence or their evolution. As such, he gets the debates within the International on socialisation wrong and cannot understand why Bakunin’s influence so quickly spread within it. This can be seen from his chapter entitled “Defeat of the mutualists” that summarises a debate which not only had mutualists on both

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tative as possible, it was in fact more in the way of an enlarged General Council.” (36) The reality is admitted on the next page when Musto writes that “Marx summoned all his energies [...] to check Bakunin’s growing influence.” (37) Similarly with the Hague Congress of the following year that when Musto contradicts himself by first proclaiming it to be “the most representative gathering in the history of the International” (42) before admitting that the “representation of the delegates was indeed completely skewed, not reflecting the true relationship of forces within the organisation” and some “mandates were highly debatable” while others “had been delegated as members of the General Council and did not express the will of any section.” (43)

While Musto may think that “Marx undoubtedly played a key role in the long struggle to reduce Proudhon’s influence in the International” (20) the reality is that Proudhon’s ideas were transformed by debates between his followers in which Marx played little or no role. Just as the founding of the International took place without him so did the debates on agricultural collectivisation and the final resolutions on collectivisation were steeped in Proudhonist terminology. This is unsurprising as, regardless of Musto’s assertions, Proudhon was in favour of socialisation of capital and support for its extension to land is by no means alien to his work.

So given that the key debate within the International was primarily between self-proclaimed mutualists and was consistent with Proudhon’s ideas, it is simply false to proclaim that Marx’s “ideas were fundamental to the theoretical development of its leaders”. (20) The resolution on collective property would have passed anyway without Marx – as can be seen from the awkward fact that he was not even at the congresses at which the issue was debated. All the other real and lasting developments in the International were produced – like the International itself – by those influenced by Proudhon, not Marx. Similarly Musto does recount how, if the Parisians had listened to Marx, there would not have been a Paris Commune (31) yet he does not let this stop him proclaiming Marx “fortified the workers’ movement, impelling it to adopt more radical positions and to intensify its militancy”! (35)

Which raises a key issue with the book. As can be seen from his account of Bakunin, by concentrating on the “official” documents of the International a false picture of its evolution is presented. No articles are included from meetings or journals of its sections and so key discussions are either missed or summarised based on reports of debates at the annual congresses. So the articles on how trade unions should become the institutional framework of a free society are not quoted and so the actual majority position in the International is downplayed. It also means that Bakunin’s ideas are pretty much incomprehensible to the typical reader who almost cer-



“whole International there [in Belgium] is just so much hot air and nothing more.”<sup>75</sup>

This arrogance could not but help undermine the organisation as Marx and Engels clearly saw no one as their equal and abused their position accordingly. Thus we Musto admit that a British Federal Council was finally agreed in 1872 because in “Marx’s view” it was “no longer necessary to exercise close supervision over British initiatives.” (38) Thus Marx and Engels – just like their followers today – were not there to work with and learn from others as equals – and so enrich everyone’s politics – but rather to announce to the working class what their objective interests were and, consequently, what was expected of them (all as discovered by Marx). Musto’s hero worship – such as proclaiming Marx “not only the brains shaping its political line, but also as one of its most combative and capable militants” (37) – would be amusing if it did not express the same sort of arrogance and so undermines the contribution of his book.

## Conclusion

If the biased, incorrect and frankly question-begging “Introduction” is ignored, we do have a book which may be of help to modern activists. It does present texts – even if over-edited and whose selection is skewed – which played key roles in the development of all schools of socialism. It contains a wide selection from the debates and minutes of the International and it is good to see texts by such people as Jean Louis Pindy, Eugène Hins, Adhémar Schwitzguébel, James Guillaume and César de Peape appear in English for the first time. Whether the book’s price warrants purchase based on these – sadly – minority of pages will very much depend on the tolerance and budget of the reader. In short, this book is a wasted opportunity.

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<sup>75</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 44: 263, 407

sides but also whose conclusion reflects Proudhon’s ideas down to the very words used.

In terms of the first point, while Musto fails to mention it other writers on the International do note that the debate on land nationalisation was between self-proclaimed followers of the French anarchist. “Like the Parisians,” one book notes, “the Belgium socialists considered themselves mutualists. At Lausanne de Paepe had tried to support the case for land nationalisation on mutualist grounds.” At the Lausanne congress de Paepe introduced an amendment recommending land nationalisation as a subject of study by the movement” and had “insisted that, as a ‘mutualist’, he wanted not only ‘that the cultivator should be guaranteed by society the full product of his toil,’ but also that society in its turn should have some control over what was produced. Social ownership must be extended to the land as the most fundamental of all means of production.”<sup>2</sup> To quote de Peape:

“I am just as much a mutualist as Tolain and Chémalé, but I do not see that the collective ownership of land is opposed to the mutualist program. This program demands that the whole product of labour shall belong to the producer, and shall be exchangeable only for produce created by precisely the same quantity of labour. But land is not the product of any kind of labour, and reciprocity of exchange does not apply to it. To stand on the same footing with productive labour, the rights of the owner of land must be restricted to a right to own the produce of the land... To make the land itself the property of a few individuals amounts to making all the other members of society the vassals of these few. The landowners need merely come to an agree-

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Collins and Chimen Abramsky, *Karl Marx and the British labour movement: years of the First International* (Macmillan; St. Martin’s Press, 1965), 141, 129

ment among themselves, and they would be able to starve the others into submission.”<sup>3</sup>

At the International’s Brussels Congress the idea of a Proudhonian *Bank of the People* “found enthusiastic support among the Belgian delegates” with the Brussels branch “praising Proudhon directly for his inspiration.” For de Paepe “his ‘mutualism’ would assure the cultivator as well as the artisan of receiving the totality of what was produced by his labour”.<sup>4</sup> Engels admitted the same in a private letter in September 1874:

“Jealousy of the growing power of the only people who were really ready to work further along the lines of the old comprehensive programme – the German Communists – drove the Belgian Proudhonists into the arms of the Bakuninist adventurers.”<sup>5</sup>

Ignoring Engels’ attempt to rewrite history to hide the awkward fact it was “the German Communists” who were the ones seeking to replace the “old comprehensive programme” with their own one of “political action” and political parties, the fact remains that the collectivisation debates within the International were not actually that suggest by Musto and a long line of other Marxist commentators.

So it must be stressed that the debate was not between private and social ownership at all. It was focused on a very specific topic, namely land ownership.<sup>6</sup> This can be seen from the summary of the exchange which started the debate:

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by G. M. Stekloff, *History of The First International*, www.marxists.org

<sup>4</sup> Julian P. W. Archer, *The First International in France, 1864–1872: Its Origins, Theories, and Impact* (Lanham/Oxford: University Press of America, Inc, 1997), 126, 101

<sup>5</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works*: 45, 41–2

<sup>6</sup> “Unity was shattered” on collective ownership “when de Paepe introduced an amendment recommending land nationalisation as a subject of study by the

## Marx, Engels and the International

While Musto, like most Marxists, paint Marx and Engels in the best possible light the facts are they were more than happy to undermine the democratic decision making bodies of the International when it suited them.

This was for the simple enough reason: to retain control over it. For, as Marx wrote to Engels in 1867, “when the next revolution comes, and that will perhaps be sooner than might appear, *we* (i.e., you and I) will have this mighty ENGINE *at our disposal*.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the contempt of Engels for the highest decision making body of the international – its annual congress – is quite shocking:

“The congress really does appear to have been swept away in the French tide this time, the number of Proudhonist resolutions is really far too large [...] whatever they resolve there is more or less wasted breath as long as the CENTRAL COUNCIL remains in London.”<sup>72</sup>

This desire to use their positions to marginalise opposition – even if it were in the majority – may have been expressed in its full force against Bakunin and those close to him but it was a recurring theme. For example, Engels wrote that “up to now this opposition [in Belgium] has kept itself within the bounds of legality and will likewise be dealt with when the time is ripe. Apart from De Paepe, the Belgians were never anything much.”<sup>73</sup> Marx later dismissed de Paepe as a “bombastic chatterbox”<sup>74</sup> and both he and Engels expressed contempt for the Belgian socialists in spite of their obvious contributions to socialist theory. “Mr Hins and his wife”, Marx complained, “are Bakuninists” while, for Engels, the

<sup>71</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 42: 424

<sup>72</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 42: 425

<sup>73</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 44: 289

<sup>74</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 45: 277

This debate was not about the definition of words. How you define and so view the state has obvious implications for your political activity. If you view the state as the only form of social organisation possible then you have two options – capture the existing state and reform it or create a new state (with an appropriate prefix, possessive or adjective). In terms of the former, this ignores the dangers of both electioneering (the slow descent into reformism) and how easy it will be (the state has evolved a structure to ensure minority rule and that bureaucracy has the real power and will hinder use of political power for the many<sup>69</sup>). As for the latter, the natural tendency is to produce all the institutions we associate with the state – executive bodies, top-down processes, etc. – under the illusion that the power of a prefix or possessive will ensure that this does not have the same results as when the ruling minorities implemented them to secure their position.

So, as noted, we have had 150 years of experience to draw upon. Who was right? Well, social democracy became as reformist as predicted and capitalism remains while the Bolsheviks produced the dictatorship *over* the proletariat and state capitalism remains in only a few countries. Sadly, Musto fails to discuss this and instead leaves the reader with Marxism triumphant for the Ghent workers Congress in 1877 “confirmed that Marx had merely been in advance of the times”<sup>70</sup>. (64)

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<sup>69</sup> See section B.2 of volume 1 and section J.2.2 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

<sup>70</sup> Which, of course, contradicts his claims that it was not the struggle between Marx and Bakunin which ended the IWMA but rather “changes taking place in the world around it that rendered the International obsolete” (49) and that “the socio-economic conditions in those countries made it unthinkable” to build Marx’s “working-class political parties”. (61) A week may be a long time in politics but five years is hardly sufficient to transform a socio-economic epoch and industrialise Spain, Italy, France and so on.

“Longuet [...] agrees with these conclusions, provided that it is quite understood that we define the State as ‘the collective body of citizens’ [...] it is understood also that these services will not be run by State officials [...] He understands that railways, canals, mines, etc., shall be constructed, exploited or administered by working class Companies, who will be bound to give their services at cost price [...] in submission to the general principles of mutualism.

“De Paepe [...] says that the only difference between Longuet’s theory and his is that Longuet accepts collectivism [*collectivité*] for all under the ground, for railways and canals, while he (de Paepe) wished to extend it to the land as a whole.”<sup>7</sup>

Musto is right to suggest that it was the workers who “were already side-lining Proudhonian doctrines” (20) in terms of opposition to strikes but it is not true that they “convinced the French leaders of the International of the need to socialise the land and industry.” (21) As historian Julien Archer notes in his account of the International in France:

“The endorsement of collectivism by the International at the Basel Congress might appear to be a rejection of the French position on co-operatives. Actually, it was not, for collectivism as it was defined by its proponents meant simply the end of private ownership of agricultural land. Lumped together with this was usu-

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movement.” (Collins and Abramsky, 129) The proponents of collectivisation at the Lausanne Congress wanted to “extend Tolain’s ideas to all property.” (Archer, 101)

<sup>7</sup> *Revolution from 1789 to 1906* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), P.W. Postgate (ed.), 392–3

ally the demand for common ownership of mines and railways.”<sup>8</sup>

At the Brussels Congress, de Paepe “reminded Tolain and other opponents of collective property that they were in favour of collectivising mines, railroads, and canals [...] the same logic which led Tolain’s group to accept these collectivisations should lead it to accept collective property” in land. To the list of property agreed at previous congresses “was added the collectivisation of agricultural property [...] which would be turned over to ‘agricultural companies’ [...] with the same guarantees as those required of the ‘workers’ companies”.<sup>9</sup>

The issue, then, was *not* socialisation but rather the socialisation of agricultural land and to suggest otherwise is to distort the historical record. Even the Leninist Stekloff – in between insults like “individualist”, “middle-class”, “bourgeois”, “petty bourgeois” – managed to admit, if only in passing, that the “Proudhonist” were “prepared to approve of the socialisation of machinery and of the means of industrial production in general”<sup>10</sup>.

Musto does reference Archer’s book (footnote on page 4) and so knows these facts. This can be seen when he implicitly contradicts himself by noting that the 1867 Lausanne congress voted in favour of collective ownership of industry but that “the mutualists remained totally opposed to the socialisation of land ownership” and “discussion of the issue was postponed until the next congress”. (19) To then proclaim that “the mutualists” were “op-

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<sup>8</sup> Archer, xxi.

<sup>9</sup> Archer, 127, 128

<sup>10</sup> Henryk Katz also notes that at Lausanne “Tolain was in favour of collectivising the means of transport and of mining property, but not land. De Paepe [...] insisted in his defense that he was still a ‘*mutuelliste*’ [...] Tolain proposed to remove from the motion the controversial words [on land], and it was accepted by a large majority [...] So began one of the greatest controversies in the history of the International.” (*The Emancipation of Labor: A History of the First International* [New York/London: Greenwood Press 1992], 33)

omy, etc. The one (Parliament) is repugnant to us *on principle*, the other is a modifiable or a modified side of a struggle that most of us approve of.”<sup>67</sup>

The question is whether de Peape or Marx were right in suggesting that the state could be captured and transformed. The answer so far as been no: while various socialist parties have become the head of the state in numerous countries capitalism has remained. Of course, it will be objected that these parties were socialist in name only but to utilise that defence confirms the anarchist critique that reformism would replace revolution when socialists use “political action”.

What of the Bolshevik regime? Ignoring its degeneration into Stalinism, the awkward fact is that very quickly the regime became a workers’ state in name only. The centralisation of power isolated the ruling party from the people who it claimed to represent and, to secure its power, quickly undermined soviet democracy and replaced it with party dictatorship. Worse, the party placed the necessity of its *own* dictatorship – equated, of course, with the class dictatorship – at the core of its ideology and used state power to break any working class protest to secure it.<sup>68</sup>

The fate of Marxism – its degeneration into reformism or state capitalism – confirms that this is not a case of semantics. The intellectual confusion expressed in using the same name to describe things that are fundamentally organised in different ways and for different purposes is reflected in both these developments. The state needs to be smashed and de Peape’s arguments hide this necessity. For not to smash the state means that you can recreate all the institutions of the class-state under the illusion that you are creating a state “of the people” or “of the workers” – as the Bolsheviks did, with sadly predictable (and predicted!) results.

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<sup>67</sup> *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 390–1

<sup>68</sup> See section H.6 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

send] their representatives to an agreed meeting place [...] vested with similar mandates to constitute the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces [...] to organise a revolutionary force capable of defeating reaction [...] it is the very fact of the expansion and organisation of the revolution for the purpose of self-defence among the insurgent areas that will bring about the triumph of the revolution [...] Since revolution everywhere must be created by the people, and supreme control must always belong to the people organised in a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations [...] organised from the bottom upwards by means of revolutionary delegation.”<sup>66</sup>

A better analogy than machinery would be a trade union. Unlike the state, a union is in theory an organisation of the many – created by the many to identify and defend their interests. However, a union can be organised in different ways. It can be decentralised or centralised, federal or unitary, bottom-up or top-down. In short, it can be organised in a libertarian or authoritarian manner. Significantly, when it is organised in the latter way it empowers a few bureaucrats at the expense of the membership – *as in the state*. As Kropotkin summarised:

“the difference between a Trade Union and a Parliament is that one is an organisation for fighting capital, while the other (Parliament, be it well understood) is an organisation to uphold the State and authority. The one sometimes becomes revolutionary, the other never does. The one (Parliament) represents centralisation, the other (the Trade Union) represents auton-

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<sup>66</sup> *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), Arthur Lehning (ed.), 170–2.

posed [to] socialisation of the land and the means of production” (19–20) is simply not true – particularly when the truth can be seen from the titles of the extracts he himself presents which are all on landed property. Needless to say, he does not bother to include any of the opposition speeches and arguments and so an impoverished account of the International is presented.

The tendency to proclaim the Parisians the only mutualists and present them as opposed to all forms of social ownership is not limited to Musto, of course. The reason for this reflects the lack of understanding of Proudhon’s ideas, particularly in Marxist circles who think that *The Poverty of Philosophy* is an accurate critique. That it also helps inflate the influence of Marx in the International is undoubtedly a bonus. Marx presents Proudhon as a backwards looking reactionary who was opposed to large-scale industry but, in reality, he argued for workers’ associations to manage such concerns. The clear links between the debate in the IWMA and Proudhon can be seen when comparing the Basel resolution (90–2) to his 1848 Manifesto:

“under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership [...] We do not want expropriation by the State of the mines, canals and railways: it is still monarchical, still wage-labour. We want the mines, canals, railways handed over to democratically organised workers’ associations operating under State supervision, in conditions laid down by the State, and under their own responsibility. We want these associations to be models for agriculture, industry and trade, the pioneering core of that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland/Baltimore: AK Press, 2011), Iain McKay (ed.), 377–8

Eight years previously, in *What is Property?*, Proudhon had argued that “the land is indispensable to our existence” and “consequently a common thing” and that “all accumulated capital being social property, no one can be its exclusive proprietor.” Thus “property in product [...] does not carry with it property in the means of production [...] the right to means is common” and “all property becomes [...] collective and undivided.” Managers “must be chosen from the workers by the workers themselves.”<sup>12</sup> In *System of Economic Contradictions*, he sketched the nature of workers’ associations needed to run industry in mutualist socialism,<sup>13</sup> a subject he continually returned to in his writings. Hence the French Internationalists advocating “the emancipation of labour from capitalism through cooperatives”.<sup>14</sup> Given this, for Musto to proclaim Marx’s “theoretical contribution was fundamental” (65) in understanding the need to overcome wage-labour is just ridiculous.

Musto’s version of the resolution does not include the significant phase “double contract” which appears in other translations<sup>15</sup> although it does indicate that social property would be “let by the state” to “companies of working men bound by contract to society” with goods and services produced “at a price nearly as possible approximate to the working expense” with a “second contract” to “guarantee the mutual right of each members of the companies in respect to his fellow workmen.” (91) Compare this to Proudhon’s *General Idea of the Revolution* and its discussion of workers’

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<sup>12</sup> *Property is Theft!*, 105, 118, 112, 137, 119

<sup>13</sup> *Property is Theft!* 213–5. Also see K. Steven Vincent’s excellent discussion on this subject (*Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], 154–6)

<sup>14</sup> Archer, 136

<sup>15</sup> Collective property “will be conceded by society not to capitalists as today, but to workers’ Companies, in virtue of a double contract; [...] guaranteeing to society [...] the services of the Company at a price as near as possible to cost price, the right to inspect the Company’s books” and “guaranteeing the mutual rights of each member of the workers’ Association in face of his colleagues.” (*Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, 393)

Perhaps needless to say, it was the party leaders who determined what was “wavering and unstable” based on their superior knowledge of the real interests of the masses. For, as Marx and Engels put it in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, “a portion of the bourgeois goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.” The Communists are “the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties” and “they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the general results of the proletarian movement.”<sup>63</sup> This gives a privileged place to the party (particularly the “bourgeois ideologists” who join it) – a place which can be easily abused in favour of party power and hierarchical leadership from above. Which it was once the Bolsheviks seized state power.

So while a workplace produces useful goods and so will need to continue to do so immediately after a revolution, the state is an instrument of class rule and its product (coercion) is not needed as a free people can organise and defend themselves using their own organisations created in the struggle for freedom (unions, councils, etc.)<sup>64</sup>. It is important to stress that anarchist opposition to the state does *not* mean opposition to social organisation nor defending a revolution.<sup>65</sup> To quote Bakunin:

“the federative Alliance of all working men’s associations [...] will constitute the Commune [...] by the creation of a Revolutionary Communal Council composed of one or two delegates [...] vested with plenary but accountable and removable mandates [...] all provinces, communes and associations [... would

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<sup>63</sup> *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 44, 46

<sup>64</sup> See section I.2.3 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

<sup>65</sup> See section H.2.1 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

describe the centralised, top-down, instrument of minority rule it has *always* been historically and use another word to describe the decentralised, bottom-up, social organisation of a free humanity? In short, a federation of communes is a social organisation but it is *not* a state so while a state is a social organisation, not all social organisations are states.

In his speech, de Peape used the analogy machinery noting how workers initially destroyed it but later came to recognise that they could use it to produce for themselves: “Machinery belongs to us! The state is a machine”. (190) This is flawed as machinery is *not* neutral as bosses often pick it precisely to undermine workers’ power in production and to secure their control (often sacrificing potential profits from more participatory possibilities to do so). This means that workers will have to transform and humanise their workplaces and its machines. Unlike the state which *can* be replaced by other social institutions, this process needs to take time as production cannot be disrupted by smashing the machinery. The machinery of a workplace may initially stay the same but the management structure is transformed within it. In the state, the management structure remains intact (i.e., power is delegated to the few) and the machinery is used for the same purpose (i.e., enforcing the decisions of that few).

The dangers are all too obvious (at least to non-Marxists) and are summed up by Lenin’s comments to Bolshevik’s political police (the Cheka) in 1920:

“Without revolutionary coercion directed against the avowed enemies of the workers and peasants, it is impossible to break down the resistance of these exploiters. On the other hand, revolutionary coercion is bound to be employed towards the wavering and unstable elements among the masses themselves.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Collected Works* 42: 170

associations and its “double contract” between the members of the co-operative and between it and society. While its members have “an undivided share in the property of the company”, the company itself was “a creation and a dependence” of society and “holds its books and records at the disposition of Society, which [...] reserves the power of dissolving the workers company, as the sanction of its right of control.” The company was to be run democratically with “all positions are elective, and the by-laws subject to the approval of the members” so producing an institution which “has no precedent and no model.”<sup>16</sup>

So Musto’s “decisive step forward in defining the economic basis of socialism” in terms of “the socialisation of the means of production” (21) simply repeated Proudhon. Which raises the interesting question of how *agreeing* with Proudhon means the debates on land ownership within the International had “eradicated Proudhonism even in its French homeland”? (23) Musto simply fails to mention that awkward fact and so presents a Marxist narrative which is fundamentally false. The debates were consistent with Proudhon’s ideas, focused purely on the social ownership of land as collective ownership of industry was not disputed, were conducted between followers of Proudhon and the resolutions were written in Proudhonist terminology rather than Marxian.

The debate focused on land ownership for a reason. Proudhon’s ideas – or at least his terminology – underwent a modification with the popular support of Louis-Napoleon by the peasantry. While pre-1851 he clearly advocated the abolition (socialisation) of property, after 1851 his works tended to call peasant possession of land “property” undoubtedly in an attempt to woo the peasantry away from reaction. Indeed, Longuet at Basel made this very point arguing that “the country people whom you have not consulted, and who are not represented here, will turn against you as in June 1848.

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<sup>16</sup> *Property is Theft!*, 585–6.

I have seen the days of June and I do wish that they may never occur again.”<sup>17</sup>

In short, those habitually labelled French “Proudhonists” and “mutualists” stressed the 1851-and-after aspect of Proudhon’s legacy in terms of land ownership while the so-called collectivists like de Peape and Bakunin stressed the earlier aspect. Both, however, shared a common support for workers’ associations for industry. As Daniel Guérin suggests:

“Proudhon is too often confused with what Bakunin called ‘the little so-called Proudhonian coterie’ which gathered around him in his last years. This rather reactionary group was stillborn. In the First International it tried in vain to put across private ownership of the means of production against collectivism. The chief reason this group was short-lived was that most of its adherents were all too easily convinced by Bakunin’s arguments and abandoned their so-called Proudhonian ideas to support collectivism.

“In the last analysis, this group, who called themselves *mutuellistes*, were only partly opposed to collectivism: they rejected it for agriculture because of the individualism of the French peasant, but accepted it for transport, and in matters of industrial self-management actually demanded it while rejecting its name. [...]

“Proudhon really moved with the times and realized that it is impossible to turn back the clock [...] With regard to large-scale modern industry requiring a large labour force, he was resolutely collectivist [...] Property must be abolished [...] The means of production and exchange must be controlled neither by capitalist

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<sup>17</sup> quoted in Collins and Abramsky, 154

currently in vogue) implicitly acknowledge that the anarchists were right. The numerous possessives, adjectives and prefixes required to distinguish the new, wonderfully democratic state from every other state that has ever existed show this. Indeed, de Peape noted “this traditional notion of the state, which, in fact, has thus far never been anything other than authority, power, and, further, despotism” (187) yet also argued “what is that regional or national Federation of communes going to be, in essence, other than a state?” (189)

If a state were organised in a libertarian manner would it still be a state? Could it be? Can de Peape’s “a non-authoritarian state” exist? (190) The fact is that the state has always been an instrument of minority class rule and so James Guillaume was simply generalising from the experiences of history when he argued “as we define it, every state is the organisation through which one class rules over the others, every state is a *Klassenstaat*.” (192) Subsequent experience has confirmed his prediction:

“If you establish a new state [...] you will have [...] created a new privileged class, a class of rulers who will dominate the masses [...] armed with a power even greater than that which the bourgeois governments hold; for they will have control over all the social capital” (193)

For all its talk of being “scientific”, Marxism has failed to produce a scientific theory of the state (i.e., one drawn from empirical analysis) nor has it learned from subsequent experience (i.e., the dismissal failure of all so-called workers’ states). Marxism’s metaphysical definition (drawing an essence of the state as an instrument of any class’s rule rather than a minority class) has helped ensure confirm Bakunin’s fears that the Marxist revolution would simply change masters rather than systems.

If you have to distinguish *between* states by possessives, adjectives or prefixes would it not just be easier to use the term state to



the laws of justice”<sup>59</sup> (91) while at the congress, de Peape contrasted “present-day society with the state as it is presently constituted” and “purely political” to the state which has “become economic [...] to be no more than a federation of the various groups of workers represented by their delegates”. (174)

All this reflected Proudhon’s ideas whether in the words “the laws of justice” or a restructured state based on a representation of labour groups which echoes his call in 1848. Moreover, Proudhon started to use the term “state” in the same manner as de Peape in the 1850s and 1860s, apparently giving up distinguishing between libertarian and authoritarian social organisation as he had in his polemics of the 1840s.<sup>60</sup> Bakunin also used the term “state” in the same ambiguous manner in the 1860s, for example urging “the destruction of all national and territorial states, and the construction on their ruins of the international state of millions of workers. It will be the role of the International to build that state.” (177) The problem with this is obvious:

“The anarchists soon saw [...] that it was rather dangerous for them to use the same word as the authoritarians while giving it a quite different meaning. They felt that a new concept called for a new word and that the use of the old term could be dangerously ambiguous; so they ceased to give the name ‘State’ to the social collective of the future.”<sup>61</sup>

The advocates of the “people’s state” or the “semi-state” or the “workers’ state” (or whatever possessive, adjective or prefix is

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<sup>59</sup> The resolution provided by Musto seems incomplete. Another translation states property “would belong to the social body as a whole, represented by the State, but by the State regenerated and subject to the law of justice.” (*Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, 393)

<sup>60</sup> Compare “Resistance to the Revolution” written in December 1849 to “The Federative Principle” written in 1863 (*Property is Theft!*, 479–94; 689–720)

<sup>61</sup> Guérin, *Anarchism*, 60–1

companies nor by the State [...] they must be managed by associations of workers”<sup>18</sup>

It is simply not the case that the 1868 resolution was the International’s “first clear pronouncement on the socialisation of the means of production by state authorities” (22) for while state ownership of some kind was accepted their actual running would be done by workers’ co-operatives. As such, it is wrong to suggest as some have that by 1868 de Peape “was beginning to see the answer in terms of workers’ rather than State control”<sup>19</sup> for, like Proudhon, he had been advocating it from the start. This is sharply at odds with Marxist nationalisation – which is rooted in state rather than workers’ control – but, then, Musto confuses nationalisation with “socialist principles”. (22) Given that the mutualists (on both sides) supported state ownership, this raises more questions than it answers – what kind of state? The resolution talks of “a state itself subject to the laws of justice” (21) which is a very Proudhonian way of putting the matter. We will return to the subject of the state.

So while Musto admits that the mutualists wanted “the founding of producer cooperatives and a central People’s Bank” (19) he makes no attempt to understand what was implied by this nor how it related to Proudhon’s ideas. His ignorance of Proudhon also means he unwittingly suggests that the despised petit-bourgeois Frenchman had “formulated what later became the classical position of the workers’ movement” that “wars are inevitable in a capitalist system” (18) by quoting César de Peape who, in turn, was obviously summarising the conclusion of Proudhon’s *War and Peace*.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, the resolution on machinery from the Brussels

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<sup>18</sup> *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 44–5

<sup>19</sup> Collins and Abramsky, 142

<sup>20</sup> As can also be seen from Tolain’s amendment to a resolution at the Lausanne Congress that “war has its first and principal cause pauperism and the lack of economic equilibrium, and to end war [...] it is [...] necessary to modify so-

congress (90) reads like a summary of Proudhon's discussion in *System of Economic Contradictions*<sup>21</sup> both in terms of its critique and solution (workers owning machinery by means of co-operatives<sup>22</sup>).

Similarly, it is wrong to suggest that "it was the workers' movement that demonstrated, in opposition to Proudhon, that it was impossible to separate the social-economic question from the political question." (21) Proudhon – like other anarchists – had argued that state and capitalism were interwoven and both had to be combated. He "look[ed] upon the political question and the economic question as one and the same" for "the labour question and the question of the State [...] are, at bottom, identical and susceptible to one and the same solution."<sup>23</sup> The question was how to correctly answer "the political question" rather than ignoring it. In 1846 Proudhon had argued as follows:

"Such is the war that you have to sustain: a war of labour against capital; a war of liberty against authority; a war of the producer against the non-producer; a war of equality against privilege. [...] Now, to combat and reduce power, to put it in its proper place in society, it is of no use to change the holders of power or introduce some variation into its workings: an agricultural and industrial combination must be found by means of which power, today the ruler of society, shall become its slave. [...]"

"Thus power, the instrument of collective might, created in society to serve as a mediator between labour

cial organisation in the direction of a more equitable distribution of production." (quoted by Archer, 103)

<sup>21</sup> *Property is Theft!* 182–195.

<sup>22</sup> Proudhon's views were reflected in the motion "by a statement that the only way workers could come to possess machines was through mutual credit funding the creation of cooperatives." (Archer, 123)

<sup>23</sup> *Property is Theft!*, 496

## The "S" word: A storm in a teacup?

The debates within the International before and after its split focused on many issues but the decisive one was over the state. Musto presents some of the texts of these debates and, given his prejudices, we get more material from the pro-state advocates than the anti-state ones. So while he presents a lengthy extract of de Peape's speech on the state the reply of an anarchist is not included.<sup>56</sup>

As would be expected, the issue of the state arose before Bakunin joined the International and figured in the resolutions on collective ownership. This is worth looking at as it puts the subsequent debates into context. At Lausanne a French mutualist agreed to social ownership "provided it is quite understood that we define the State as 'the collective body of citizens'" and "that these services will not be run by State officials" but by "working class Companies [...] in submission to the general principles of mutualism."<sup>57</sup> This was the foundation for general agreement:

"Though the Lausanne Congress could not agree on collectivisation of agricultural property, there was unanimous accord that the state should own the means of transportation and exchange of goods – that is, roads, canals, and railways [...] due to the Congress's endorsement of a special definition of the state as a 'collectivity of individuals' with no power superior to the individual and having 'no interests apart from society.'<sup>58</sup>

The Brussels resolution stated social ownership would rest with "the community, represented by the state, a state itself subject to

<sup>56</sup> The response by Adhémar Schwitzguébel is included by Daniel Guérin in *No Gods, No Masters* (230–7) so there really is no excuse not to provide it.

<sup>57</sup> *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, 392

<sup>58</sup> Archer, 101

This process was already at work within the International. Musto notes that “Bakunin’s activity [in Geneva] divided the organisation into two groups of equal size” before admitting that the “group aligned with London was slightly smaller” (27) and failing to mention that the smaller group was the reformist one and predominantly middle class while Bakunin’s had the support of the authentic proletariat in Geneva. E. H. Carr in his (hostile) biography of Bakunin, noted that the “sections of the International at Geneva fell into two groups.” Skilled craftsmen formed the “Right wing” while “the builders, carpenters, and workers in the heavier trades, the majority of whom were immigrants from France and Italy, represented the Left.” Unsurprisingly, these different groups of workers had different politics. The craftsmen “concentrated on [...] reform” while the others “nourished hopes of a complete social upheaval.” Bakunin, as would be expected, “fanned the spirit of revolt” among these, the proletarian workers and soon had a “commanding position in the Geneva International.”<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that Marx and the General Council of the International consistently supported the reformist wing of the International in Geneva that organised political alliances with the middle-class liberals during elections.

In short, while proclaiming Marx to be right in the International, Musto fails to note what happened next. For good reason as it showed Bakunin had a deeper understanding of the issue but for a work intended to help current activists it is strange to see it downplaying the 150 years of its subtitle in favour of proclaiming the genius of Marx and the inherent failings of Proudhon and Bakunin.

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<sup>55</sup> *Michael Bakunin* (London: Macmillan, 1937), 361. As Marxist Paul Thomas confirms, “Bakunin’s initial support in Switzerland – like Marx’s in England – came from resident aliens, political refugees [...] but he also gathered support among *Gastarbeitier* for whom Geneva was already a centre, where builders, carpenters and workers in heavy industry tended to be French or Italian”. Bakunin “also marshalled considerable support among French speaking domestic workers and watchmakers in the Jura.” (*Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 390)

and privilege, finds itself inevitably enchained to capital and directed against the proletariat. No political reform can solve this contradiction [...] The problem before the labouring classes, then, consists, not in capturing, but in subduing both power and monopoly – that is, in generating from the bowels of the people, from the depths of labour, a greater authority, a more potent fact, which shall envelop capital and the State and subjugate them.”<sup>24</sup>

He raised a similar call during the 1848 revolution and “propose[d] that a provisional committee be set up [...] amongst the workers [...] in opposition to the bourgeois representatives,” so that “a new society be founded in the centre of the old society” for “the government can do nothing for you. But you can do everything for yourselves.” This “organisation of popular societies was the pivot of democracy, the cornerstone of republican order” and would “rip the nails and teeth off State power and hand over the government’s public force to the citizens.”<sup>25</sup>

Which, incidentally, explains why the mutualists were “hostile to state intervention in any field”. (19) They, rightly, viewed it as an instrument of minority class rule which could not be captured and used by working people to free themselves. Instead, they formed the International to create institutions that would produce the economic reforms which would result in the state being ended along with wage-labour as Proudhon had repeatedly argued from the 1840s.

Marx, of course, disagreed and Musto quotes him on how workers getting social reform legislation passed would “transform that [state] power, now used against them, into their own agency.” (13–4) Musto smugly comments that “far from strengthening bourgeois

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<sup>24</sup> *Property is Theft!*, 225–6

<sup>25</sup> *Property is Theft!*, 321–2, 407.

society (as Proudhon and his followers wrongly believed), these reformist demands were an indispensable starting point for the emancipation of the working class". (14) Yet given that the working class has not been emancipated and bourgeois society is still going strong, why were Proudhon and his followers wrong? Looked at objectively, it would appear that it was Marx who "wrongly believed" in the impact of reforms achieved by means of "political action." For example, the Illinois legislature passed an eight-hour law in early 1867 but the Chicago anarchists were leading the union struggle for it in 1886. So as should be obvious, laws will be completely ignored – unless there was a strong union to enforce them – as would be expected given it is a capitalist state. Moreover, Marx's position also strengthens reformist notions – if the *Klassenstaat* (class-state) can be used to defend workers then an obvious conclusion to draw is only the *Klassenstaat* because the wrong people have been elected into government and it can, therefore, become the *Volksstaat* (People's State). Which is precisely what the Social Democracy did conclude – with appropriate quotes by Marx and Engels to show its orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup>

The history of the next 150 years has not been kind to the position Musto so unquestioningly repeats. This does not mean that Proudhon's vision of economic and political reform by means of cooperative credit and workplaces is correct – and later anarchists rejected this in favour of militant trade unions as the means for changing society – simply that it cannot be dismissed as easily as Musto seeks to do, particularly for an alternative which has not brought us any nearer to socialism.

Ultimately, for all of Marx's (and Musto's) disdain for Proudhon and his followers it must be remembered that without the French mutualists helping to found the International Marx's ideas would never have reached the audience they did. Similarly, Marx was more than happy to report – without noting their obvious sources

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<sup>26</sup> See section H.3.10 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

thought there were countries "where the workers can attain their goal by peaceful means" (45) not to mention the 1871 change to the IWMA's statutes to include the necessity of "political action" which singularly failed to mention that socialism could not be created using the current state. Musto, of course, presents the full text of this resolution along with another five by Marx and Engels on the subject plus one by a French Blanquist (not to mention two others directed at Bakunin). None suggest anything which would make the notion of a "People's State" obviously inaccurate. Needless to say, while the advocates of political action are well served the anarchists get two responses, one of which is a paragraph.

Perhaps this is unsurprising insofar as the anarchists were proven right, as Musto inadvertently admits. Given his obvious support for "political action", it is bizarre to read him explain how the Reform Act which "expanded the franchise to more than a million British workers" and legalisation of trade unions resulted in a situation where "the [British] labouring classes, so unlike their French counterparts, felt a growing sense of belonging as they pinned their hopes for the future on peaceful change." (17–18) This was reflected in Marx as well, who suggested – much to the annoyance of Lenin – that socialism could be voted into being. Still, we get a wonderful piece of idealist hopeful thinking that "internationalism" would be the party's "vaccine against the deadly embrace of the state and the capitalist system". (46)

So the 150 years of Musto's subtitle confirmed Bakunin's fears not Marx's hopes that when "common workers" are sent "to Legislative Assemblies" the result would be that the "worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois ideas, will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will become bourgeois [...] For men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *The Basic Bakunin*, 108.

torial) the objective observer would surely conclude that it is hardly a “key instrument” of the workers’ movement but rather a symbol of its adjustment to capitalism. Marx, as Musto notes, remained “absolutely convinced” that political action to secure social reforms “should strengthen the working-class struggle to overcome the capitalist mode of production rather than integrate it into the system” (55) but he, unlike Musto, did not have the experiences of the next 150 years to draw conclusions from.

What, then, of the rise and then fall of Social Democracy? It is mentioned but only to attack anarchism. Musto proclaims that Bakunin “grotesquely likened Marx’s conception of communism to the Lassallean *Volksstaat* that he had always tirelessly combated” (53) yet fails to mention that *Der Volksstaat* (*The People’s State*) was the central organ of the *Social Democratic Workers Party of Germany* between 1869 and 1876 and that Marx and Engels contributed to the paper and helped in its editing. Also, this party was founded by August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht in 1869 and only merged with the Lassallean *General German Workers’ Association* at a conference held in Gotha in 1875, taking the name *Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany*. So the alleged “Lassallean” *Volkstaat* was associated with the party most influenced by Marx and Engels rather than by Lassalle. It also appears that “tirelessly combated” means mentioning it in a few private letters and in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* which, while written in 1875 and so years after Bakunin’s polemics, was first published in 1891 and so 15 years after the Russian’s death.

Therefore we can understand why Bakunin did not realise that Marx had “always tirelessly combated” the notion of a *Volksstaat* particularly as Marx and Engels repeatedly argued that there would be a state between capitalism and communism. Marx’s “conception” of a transitional state is very much in line with the “People’s State” notion even if the terminology was different. Moreover, this was how de Peape made use of the concept (as shown in the documents that Musto provides). Then there is the admission that Marx

– on the mutualist ideas raised during the Paris Commune and, like Marx, Musto also fails to mention that the “17 members of the International” (32) were almost all the despised Proudhonists. So it is hardly surprising that *The Civil War in France* is Marx’s most appealing work as he is simply summarising Proudhon’s libertarian socialist vision of a federated society with a co-operative economy which the anarchist’s followers had infused the Commune’s proclamations.<sup>27</sup>

## A Syndicalist International?

Proudhon’s ideas developed over his lifetime. As you would expect, he modified his views in light of new developments in society and in the labour and socialist movements (for example, the experiences of the 1848 revolution brought his anarchist ideas to the fore while its defeat produced a moderation in tone). It comes as no surprise that they continued to develop after his death by those he influenced which means the death of mutualism at the Basel congress which Musto gleefully asserts is wrong. Infused by a false picture of Proudhon’s ideas and their legacy, such reports confuse evolution with extinction. This helps explain Musto’s inability to account for Bakunin’s rapid rise in influence across the sections of the International.

In reality, the International was evolving into a syndicalist body from a mutualist one and this was a natural progression as Proudhon had in 1846 postulated the need for a workers’ organisation to transform society – the “industrial and agricultural combination”. It was surely such a combination which the French mutualists wished to create when they helped found the International and it was the extension of this into militant trade unionism which occurred between 1864 and 1869.

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<sup>27</sup> See “The Paris Commune, Marxism and Anarchism” (*Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 50 [2008]).

Eugène Hins was the secretary of the Belgium federation and wrote an article in February 1868 on these ideas in its newspaper *L'Internationale*. It discussed how in the socialist future the current *Conseil fédéral* (federal council) made up of delegates from the *sociétés de résistance* (resistance societies) would co-ordinate the activities of the trades as well as fixing cost and sale prices (and so wages) while the *sociétés de résistance* would organise production. The International's *sections* would include all workers and would reflect matters of general concern in a *Comité administratif* (administrative council). Consumer co-operatives would function as communal shops (*bazars communaux*) and control the distribution of goods on a non-profit basis. General insurance funds would exist for old age, sickness and life-insurance based on the *caisses de secours mutuel et de prévoyance* (mutual aid and contingency funds). In this way “the economic and political organisations of the working classes were to remain outside the bourgeois framework, so that it could supersede the bourgeois institutions and power in the long run.”<sup>28</sup>

These ideas were raised in the International by delegates from the Belgium section at the Brussels conference in 1868. Unions were for “the necessities of the present, but also the future social order,” the “embryos of the great workers’ companies which will one day replace the capitalist companies with their thousands of wage-earners, at least in all industries in which collective force is used and there is no middle way between wage slavery and association.” The “productive societies arising from the trades unions will embrace whole industries [...] thus forming a NEW CORPORATION” which would “be organised equitably, founded on mutuality and justice and open to all.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> D.E. Devreese, “An Inquiry Into the Causes and Nature of Organisation: Some Observations on the International Working Men’s Association, 1864-1872/1876,” *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830–1940* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden (eds.), 1: 293–5.

<sup>29</sup> *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, 393–4.

to combat radicals within Marxist ranks seeking to utilise it (in spite of best efforts of the likes of Rosa Luxemburg to get around the holy texts by changing “General Strike” to “Mass Strike”). So while it is true that the “groundwork was thus laid for what came to be known as anarcho-syndicalism” (62) at this congress the fact is that anarcho-syndicalism predates it as syndicalist ideas has been advocated in the International from 1868 onwards by the Belgium multualists, Bakunin, Varlin and many others.

In short, Musto’s account of Bakunin’s ideas is as flawed as his account of Proudhon’s. This means that his introduction simply does not explain the actual development of the International. Instead we get uncritical cheerleading of Marx whose brilliance is assumed while enough is said about the next 150 years to make the objective reader ponder whether Bakunin was right all along.

## Political Action Triumphant, or not learning from history

Given the lengths to which Marx went in order to secure the transformation of the international from a quasi-syndicalist body into a political party, it would be wise to indicate its success. We have had 150 years of evidence to do so but, unsurprisingly, Musto does not consider this as worthwhile and instead we get assertions: for the “new advance in the class struggle, Marx thought it indispensable to build working-class political parties in each country” and so “the party was considered essential for the struggle of the proletariat”. (45)

So Musto’s Marxist biases are clear when he suggests that “[w]hereas the Geneva Congress of 1866 established the importance of trade unions, the London Conference of 1871 shifted the focus to the other key instrument of the modern workers’ movement: the political party.” (38) Given that *every* successful workers’ political party has become reformist (or, worse, dicta-

specifically to exclude popular participation and control did not change its nature just because the few at the top proclaimed their socialism. The “proletarian” state did *not* “degenerate” into bureaucracy as it was marked by this *from the start* because that is what a state is.<sup>53</sup>

Marxist dogma comes out in strange ways. “Partly because of his scant knowledge of economics,” Musto informs us, “the federalist path indicated by Bakunin offered no really useful guidance on how the question of the future socialist society should be approached.” (57) This, surely, means something to Musto but what is hard to fathom what. Bakunin was very impressed by Marx’s *Capital* so is Musto suggesting that reading that work imparts you with “scant knowledge of economics”? Doubtful. What of “federalist” ideas lacking “useful guidance” on “how the question of the future socialist society should be approached”? If anything useful can be gathered from the monstrosity which was the Soviet experience, it is that centralised economic structures do not create a socialist – classless – society nor work particularly well. Marx’s “knowledge of economics” did suggest that capitalism would become more and more centralised but, surely, utilising those structures – shaped as they are by minority interests – for the majority would be problematic? Which it was – the Bolsheviks undermined workers attempts at federated self-management in favour of a centralised economic body and so handed the means of production to the bureaucracy.

Finally, there is a certain irony to be appreciated to read a Marxist proclaim that a congress of the federalist International saw the “theoretical-political armoury of the Internationalists [...] enriched by the idea of the general strike as a weapon to achieve the social revolution” (61) when he presumably knows that Engels mocked (after, of course, caricaturing) the idea in his diatribe “The Bakuninists at Work” and that the reformists and bureaucrats of the Second International used that mockery

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<sup>53</sup> See section H.1.7 of volume 2 of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

As Musto notes, “[i]n Belgium, the period following the Brussels Congress of 1868 had been marked by the rise of syndicalism” (26) and this was reflected the following year at the Basel Congress of the IWMA when “Hins of Brussels outlined the first syndicalist programme to be presented to an International Congress”<sup>30</sup> where he argued that the trade unions “represented the social and political organisation of the future”<sup>31</sup>. So “Trade Unions will continue to exist after the suppression of the wage system [...] they will be the organisation of labour.”<sup>32</sup> This “mode of organisation leads to the labour representation of the future” as “wage slavery” is “replaced by the free federation of free producers” while the organisation of trade unions “on the basis of town or country [...] leads to the commune of the future”: “Government is replaced by the assembled councils of the trade bodies, and by a committee of their respective delegates.”<sup>33</sup>

It is one of the book’s few redeeming features that Musto includes extracts from the speeches of these libertarian trade unionists. Thus we read Jean Louis Pindy at the Basel Congress in 1869 arguing that “labour will organise for the present and future by doing away with the wages system [...] grouping of corporations by town and country [...] forms the commune of the future [...] the associated councils of the various trades [...] will replace politics.” These “federations will [...] be charged with [...] the regulation of strikes and activity to ensure their success, until such time as the wage system is replaced with the federation of free producers.” (133, 134) Hin is quoted on how “resistance societies will persist after the abolition of the wages system [...] they will organise work [...] They will replace the old political systems [...] this will be an agency of decentralisation”. (135) “Resistance societies”, Adhé-

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<sup>30</sup> Collins and Abramsky, 156

<sup>31</sup> quoted in Collins and Abramsky, 156

<sup>32</sup> *Revolution from 1789 to 1906*, 394.

<sup>33</sup> *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), Daniel Guérin (ed.), 218.

mar Schwitzguébel argued, “have the great advantage of preparing the general organisation of the proletariat [...] they are the basis for the coming organisation of society, since workers’ associations will [...] take over the running of industrial and agricultural enterprises” (138–9)

In short, the most representative congress of the International expressed a syndicalist position. This should not be seen as a *rejection* of Proudhon but rather an *evolution* of mutualist positions which did lead to a few of his positions – namely opposition to strikes – being rejected while the bulk remained. This vision of a future economic regime based on federations of workers’ associations echoed Proudhon’s vision – right down to the words used!

The links are all too obvious. Take Eugène Varlin, for example, whom Musto proclaims “abandoned mutualist positions”. (25) In reality, it is better said that he abandoned *some* “mutualist positions” – like opposition to strikes – and kept others. Indeed, his political evolution paralleled Bakunin’s and he, like the Russian, argued that unions “form the natural elements of the social edifice of the future; it is they who can be easily transformed into producers associations; it is they who can make the social ingredients and the organisation of production work.”<sup>34</sup> While arguing that co-operatives were “actively preparing the bases for the future society” he, like Proudhon and Bakunin, warned that “placing everything in the hands of a highly centralised, authoritarian state [...] would set up a hierarchic structure from top to bottom of the labour process” and that “the only alternative is for workers themselves to have the free disposition and possession of the tools of production [...] through co-operative association”<sup>35</sup> Similarly with the right-wing mutualists, with Tolain and other Parisians now supporting strikes

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<sup>34</sup> quoted in Archer, 196.

<sup>35</sup> *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View From the Left* (London: Cape, 1972), Eugene Schulkind (ed.), 63–4

1934 for organising secretly in Germany and forgetting to mention Hitler’s dictatorship. Needless to say, Musto admitting that the International “was on the margins of legality for a number of years and its members were subject to persecution” (7) does not stop him quoting approvingly Marx’s comments against secret societies. (55) He also fails to mention that Bakunin and Guillaume were expelled by a commission at the packed Hague Congress for being in a secret organisation which it could not determine still existed. (47)

As noted, Musto proclaims that Bakunin simply insulted Marx and uses this to avoid engaging with his critique, suggesting that “the only exception” to these personal attacks was an unsent letter to *La Liberté* (51) yet he has to admit that his writings on Marx “offered an interesting critical contribution on the questions of political power, the state and bureaucracy.” (52) The objective reader would conclude that Musto uses the word “interesting” as an euphemism for “correct” particularly when some recognition of what happened between 1864 and 2014 creeps in when he admits that “despite Bakunin’s sometimes exasperating refusal to distinguish between bourgeois and proletarian power, he foresaw some of the dangers of the so-called ‘transitional period’ between capitalism and socialism – particularly the danger of bureaucratic degeneration after the revolution.” (56) Yet this “refusal” is the whole point: there are commonalities between the so-called proletarian state and the bourgeois state simply because *they are states*. That Bakunin “foresaw” the “degeneration” of the Bolshevik regime while Marx never recognised the possibility (as seen by, for example, his marginal notes to Bakunin’s *Statism and Anarchy*) is significant and requires more discussion than this.

Simply put, in terms of “proletarian” power the Bolshevik regime used state power to crush the actual proletariat in the name of the higher interests of an idealised proletariat whose objective interests the party claimed to embody. Unsurprisingly enough, a centralised structure which concentrates power in the hands of a few



and branches of the International – so successfully that they became the majority. As Marxist Paul Thomas notes, “the International was to prove capable of expanding its membership only at the behest of the Bakuninists” and “[w]herever the International was spreading, it was doing so under the mantle of Bakuninism.”<sup>52</sup> This was helped by Proudhon’s influence in these countries and that the new collectivist ideas were built upon his ideas.

Musto proclaims the federalists to be the “minority” (57) but in reality they were the majority within the International – as shown by his own figures, the vast majority of members were in non-Marxist sections, the British closely followed by the French, Belgian, Spanish and Italian. (7) This means that opportunistically working with a few Blanquist exiles after the Paris Commune to “strengthen the opposition to Bakuninite anarchism within the International” would hardly “create a broader consensus for the changes deemed necessary [by Marx!] in the new phase of the class struggle” (37) for it was making Marx’s minority slightly less small. It is unsurprising that “Marx’s victory soon proved to be ephemeral” (38) due to the revolt against the General Council across most of the organisation and so Musto is understating the issue to proclaim this “miscalculation on Marx’s part accelerated the crisis of the organisation.” (41)

In terms of Bakunin’s secret societies, they played their role by like-minded activists spreading their ideas but what needs to be remembered is that secrecy was needed due to the repression of states. So while Nechavaev is mentioned by Musto to condemn Bakunin who, we are informed, “enthusiastically supported” his “advocacy of secret societies” (38) in fact Bakunin had advocated the need for secret societies long before – and after – meeting him. Bakunin’s perspectives on the need for secret societies is never actually discussed which comes across like denouncing Marxists in

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<sup>52</sup> *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul plc, 1985), 315, 319

“as a means of transition from our present state of affairs to one of association.”<sup>36</sup>

So it was within the International that libertarians applied Proudhon’s ideas on “an agricultural and industrial combination” in the labour movement. Here we discover the syndicalist idea of unions as the means of both fighting capitalism and replacing it being raised.<sup>37</sup> The Basel Congress was the first which Bakunin attended and where he “emerged as the main champion of collectivism.”<sup>38</sup> As two historians note, “Hins had outlined a complete syndicalist programme at the Basel Congress and there was always the possibility that Bakunin’s anarchism and Belgian syndicalism might come together.”<sup>39</sup> This is precisely what did happen. This was because “Bakunin’s anarchism” was rooted in a syndicalist strategy for social revolution.

### **Bakunin: “Proudhonism widely developed and pushed to these, its final consequences.”**

For Musto, just as Marx had “laid the spectre of Proudhon rest” there “formed a new tendency – collectivist anarchism”. (24) Yet once you understand Proudhon’s ideas and influence, this is not the surprise Musto implies. After all, as Bakunin noted, his ideas were “Proudhonism widely developed and pushed right to these, its final consequences”<sup>40</sup> and were in-line with wider developments within the International. So it is unsurprising, then, when Bakunin met Varlin at the Basel Congress and “once the program of the Alliance

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<sup>36</sup> quoted by Collins and Abramsky, 141

<sup>37</sup> Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 46–7, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Archer, 170

<sup>39</sup> Collins and Abramsky, 293

<sup>40</sup> *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), Arthur Lehning (ed.), 198

was explained to” him, the French activist said he “shared the same ideas and agreed to co-ordinate with their revolutionary plans.”<sup>41</sup>

Just as with his account of Proudhon, Bakunin is badly served by Musto. It is clear that he is no fan of the Russian, dismissing him by proclaiming “Bakunin’s deficient sense of reality” (55) and – ironically given Marx’s indulging in both – that he “lacked the theoretical capacities of his adversary, preferred the terrain of personal accusations and insults”. (51) Yet by not adequately addressing Bakunin’s ideas, his introduction is at odds to explain why Bakunin so quickly became such a threat to Marx and his plans for the International.

Nothing is too trivial to be distorted. Musto, presumably in an attempt to be objective, notes that Marx and Engels “often chose to caricature Bakunin’s position, painting him as an advocate of ‘class equalisation’” (51) but indulges in this himself by referencing Lehning’s anthology of Bakunin’s writings and stating that the “translation provided in this book is inaccurate and misleading”. (23) He fails to admit that Lehning presents the revised version based on Marx’s comments to Bakunin.

The affair is simple enough and not worthy of note if it were not for Marx’s later use of it against the Russian. Bakunin sent the Alliance programme to the International’s General Council and received a letter from Marx which stated that its “equalisation of classes” clause “literally interpreted” would mean “harmony of capital and labour” as “persistently preached by the bourgeois socialists” for it was “not the logically impossible ‘equalisation of classes’, but the historically necessary, superseding ‘abolition of classes’” which was the “true secret of the proletarian movement” and which “forms the great aim of the International Working Men’s Association.” The letter adds the following: “Considering, however, the context in which that phrase ‘equalisation of classes’ occurs, it seems to be a mere slip of the pen, and the General Council feels

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<sup>41</sup> Archer, 186

syndicalism and how it links up with the ideas of Internationalists across mainland Europe, the rise of Bakunin’s influence will remain a closed book – so Musto is at a loss to explain how the Russian managed to become the public face (if you like) of the anti-Marx majority so quickly and is reduced to proclaiming that “thanks to his charisma and forceful style of argument, he had already managed to affect the outcome of its deliberations.” (24)

Given Musto’s low opinion of Bakunin and his political thought, the fact that “Bakunin’s ideas began to spread” (27) causes him problems insofar as he cannot explain it. This flows from his low opinion – based on a lack of understanding – of Proudhon’s actual ideas rather than Marx’s distortion of them for if he had this he would see why Bakunin’s influence grew – his extension of Proudhonian ideas on workers’ associations, federalism and the primacy of economic change into support for unions, strikes and social revolution expressed the same conclusions many others – primarily workers – influenced by the Frenchman had drawn. As Musto admits, Spanish workers had “previously [been] exposed to Proudhon’s texts” (28) and so Bakunin’s ideas would have found a fertile soil to grow and blossom. Although Musto cannot bring himself to admit it, the awkward fact is that the areas of strongest growth in the International were those with the most libertarian influence. Thus he notes that “the International continued to expand in Belgium and Spain [...] and experienced a real breakthrough in Italy” (35) and its “expansion [...] above all, [in] Spain and Italy”. (57) Unsurprisingly, Musto fails to mention Bakunin’s role in Italy combating Mazzini and instead suggests Garibaldi’s joining as the key factor.<sup>51</sup> (35)

So it is obvious that Bakunin’s supporters did far more than setting up secret societies and, in fact, successfully set up both unions

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<sup>51</sup> The best account of Bakunin’s key role in defeating Mazzini’s influence in Italian radical and worker circles is still T.R. Ravindranathan’s *Bakunin and the Italians* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988)

Marxist dogma hiding behind a scientific veneer – parts of the industrial proletariat embraced syndicalism, for example, while few of that class embraced Marxism in its revolutionary rather than reformist form.

So as Mark Leier notes Bakunin “rarely used the word ‘lumpen-proletariat.’ While he does use the French word *canaille*, this is better translated as ‘mob’ or ‘rabble’ [...] When Bakunin does talk about the *canaille* or rabble, he usually refers not to the lumpen-proletariat as such but to the poorer sections of the working class [...] While we might translate ‘destitute proletariat’ as ‘lumpenproletariat,’ Bakunin himself [...] is referring to a portion of the proletariat and the peasantry, not the lumpenproletariat.”<sup>49</sup> This explains Bakunin’s syndicalist vision of the International:

*“the organisation of solidarity in the economic struggle of labour against capitalism [...] first, by the establishment and coordination of strike funds and the international solidarity of strikes; second, by the organisation and the international (federative) coordination of trade and professional unions; third, by the spontaneous and direct development of philosophical and sociological ideas in the International, ideas which inevitably develop side by side with and are produced by the first two movements.”*<sup>50</sup>

Ironically, Musto points out that Bakunin’s “declaration of principles was close to the original aims of the IWMA and pointed in a direction very different from the one taken by Marx”. (53) Yet he cannot bring himself to explain Bakunin’s position and instead proclaims his “militant activity” as involving building secret societies which would “prepare the insurrection and carry out the revolution” (55) with no mention of his syndicalism. Yet without his

<sup>49</sup> *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006), 221

<sup>50</sup> *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 303–4

confident that you will be anxious to remove from your program an expression which offers such a dangerous misunderstanding.”<sup>42</sup>

Bakunin agreed with Marx on the ambiguity of the term and the Alliance changed its Programme to call for “the final and total abolition of classes and the political, economic and social equalisation of individuals of either sex.”<sup>43</sup> Lehning, as would be expected, reprints the revised version of the Alliance’s programme and so Musto claiming that “Engels and Marx quoted directly from Bakunin’s original document” is misleading particularly as he himself notes that “the Alliance modified its programme”. (24) This is indicative of a Marxist perspective which undermines the usefulness of the book.

Similarly, Musto seems to forget that members of the International could express ideas different than Marx’s when he proclaims that distribution of both International and Alliance documents “was a prime example of the Bakuninite confusion and theoretical eclecticism of the time”. (28) Is he seriously suggesting that an organisation which was affiliated to the International could not spread its ideas within it? If so, then his proclaimed support for pluralism is contradicted by this implicit support for Marx’s activities after the Paris Commune which imposed an explicitly Marxist policy on it. If not, then why is doing so “confusion” and “eclecticism”? After all, the International’s founding documents were written in a way that French mutualists could agree with them and to ensure that people with a wide range of social views could join.

Which raises the question of what were the politics of the Alliance? Once that is understood then we can start to understand why Bakunin’s influence quickly rose in the IWMA. The key thing to note that Bakunin’s position echoed the conclusions of most Proudhon’s followers in the International, namely that building co-

<sup>42</sup> *Marx-Engels Collected Works*: 21, 46

<sup>43</sup> *Michael Bakunin: Selected Writings*, 174

operatives – while important – was not sufficient to end capitalism. Rather the International had to build militant trade unionism and recognise the need for a social revolution – insurrection, smashing the state and expropriation of capital by workers’ associations.

Bakunin, then, was “convinced that the co-operative will be the preponderant form of social organisation in the future” and could “hardly oppose” their creation under capitalism but argued that Proudhon’s hope was unlikely to be realised as it did “not take into account the vast advantage that the bourgeoisie enjoys against the proletariat through its monopoly on wealth, science, and secular custom, as well as through the approval – overt or covert but always active – of States and through the whole organisation of modern society. The fight is too unequal for success reasonably to be expected.”<sup>44</sup> Thus capitalism “does not fear the competition of workers’ associations – neither consumers’, producers’, nor mutual credit associations – for the simple reason that workers’ organisations, left to their own resources, will never be able to accumulate sufficiently strong aggregations of capital capable of waging an effective struggle against bourgeois capital.”<sup>45</sup> What was needed was the building of an International federation of unions:

“the serious, final, complete liberation of the workers is possible only upon one condition, that of the appropriation of capital, that is of raw materials, and all tools of labour, including land by the whole body of workers [...] The organisation of the trade sections, their federations in the International and their representation by the Chambers of Labour, not only create a great academy, in which the workers of the International, combining theory and practice, can and must study

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<sup>44</sup> *The Basic Bakunin* (Buffalo, NY:, Prometheus Books, 1994), Robert M. Cutler (ed.), 153, 152

<sup>45</sup> *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), G.P. Maximov (ed.), 293

economic science, they also bear in themselves the living germs of the new social order which is to replace the bourgeois world. They are creating not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself.”<sup>46</sup>

While Musto does quote Bakunin to this effect, he also makes the usual mistake of Marxists by confusing Bakunin’s “lumpen-proletariat” with Marx’s. (54) Not only does he not seem to notice the obvious contradiction this interpretation has with his previous quotation of Bakunin’s, he also fails to mention how the Russian had previously defined his revolutionary agency in the same work:

“I do not think that I need show that for the International to be a real power, it must be able to organise within its ranks the immense majority of the proletariat of Europe, of America, of all lands.”<sup>47</sup>

Bakunin’s “lumpen-proletariat” was, then, all workers bar the “semi-bourgeois” workers, “the upper layer, the aristocracy of labour, those who are the most cultured, who earn more and live more comfortably than all the other workers” to which he claimed Marx looked.<sup>48</sup> It is also important to note, as Musto does not, that “the factory proletariat” (54) Marx was focused upon was a *minority* of the working classes in all countries bar Britain. If, as Musto asserts, Bakunin’s ideas “were more in keeping with a region where the industrial proletariat had a presence only in the main cities, and where the workers’ movement was still very weak and mainly concerned with economic demands” (39) then this was the situation throughout Europe for the rest of the century – and usually well into the 20<sup>th</sup>. However, Musto’s assertion is just

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted by Rucker, 77

<sup>47</sup> *Bakunin on Anarchism* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980) , Sam Dolgoff (ed.), 293

<sup>48</sup> *Bakunin on Anarchism*, 294