On "God and the State"

James Guillaume

1909

In 1877, the various unpublished manuscripts that Bakunin had left were sent to me so that I could, in concert with my friends from the Jura Federation of the International, see to the publication of that which appeared worthy of printing. It was not possible then to gather the financial resources necessary for the printing of a volume; and when I left Switzerland in May 1878, I passed the little case containing these manuscripts, Élisée Reclus, by way of Kraftchinsky (Stepniak), into the hands of Élisée Reclus. Four more years would pass, and finally in 1882 there appeared in Geneva, from the Imprimerie Jurassienne, a booklet of VIII-100 pages petit in-16, in which had been printed, in a very incorrect manner,—with numerous reading errors, some changes (of which some were grammatical corrections, but the greater part of which were alterations of the text that were not at all useful), some deletions and interpolations, — the contents of pages 149–210 et 214–247 of the manuscript of February-March 1871. In a Foreword, les the editors of that booklet, Carlo Cafiero and Elisée Reclus, said: "Bakunin's correspondence was most extensive; he passed entire nights in preparing long letters to his friends in the revolutionary world, and some of these letters took on the proportions of veritable volumes.... The memoir that we publish today is really only a fragment from a letter or report. Composed in the same manner as most of Bakunin's other writings, it has the same literary faults, the lack of proportions; moreover, it breaks off abruptly: all the searches made to discover the end of the manuscript have been in vain." That last assertion is incomprehensible to me, for the end of the manuscript (pages 248–340) was found, along with the part published by Reclus and Cafiero, in the case passed by me to Élisée Reclus; that case also contained pages 139–148, which Reclus and Cafiero have not included, a proof of pages 139–148, and a proof of pages 149–210; the second of these proofs bore corrections of style and some deletions in the hand of Reclus and in one other hand; I find it still more difficult to explain, in view of that circumstance, that the editors of 1882 could have called this piece "a fragment from a letter or report." This little literary artifice— for that is probably what it is — was not necessary to make the reader appreciate the high value of those pages. Whatever the case, the editors of 1882, not suspecting that they were in the presence of one part of what would have formed, if the money had not been lacking to print it in 1871, the second book of *L'Empire knouto-germanique*, would give their booklet a title of their own invention and baptize it: *Dieu et l'État*. I hope that from now on we will no longer publish this mutilated and shaken-up fragment separately, in isolation from the rest of the manuscript and under a title not chosen by Bakunin: in the present volume, the reader will find it placed

back its context, from which it should never have been separated, and scrupulously restored to its original form.

James Guillaume, *Oeuvres*, Tome III (1908): xviii-xx.

[From a letter to Max Nettlau:]

Paris, December 23, 1909

As for the new edition of *God and the State*, I find that one certainly has the right to publish that fragment in a separate booklet, provided that you preface it, as you have done, with an introduction explaining to what larger work it belongs, and provided that you also restore the original text. I have seen with pleasure that on page 38 of the booklet you have [marked] the gap of three lost pages, and that you have not plugged it with the 23 lines of apocryphal text invented by Réclus. On page 49, you have kept the contents of the 6 pages, foreign to the work, that the editors of 1882 have inserted in that place; [this was] your right from the moment that [ ]. But I do not know why you speak of a *bifurcation of the text*. There is no bifurcation here, as have divided other places in the manuscript, where Bakunin had abandoned a composition he had started, and interrupted the [work] in order make another. There is an *interpolation* and that interpolation is not the work of the author, but of the editors, who, finding among Bakunin's papers 6 sheets belonging to another manuscript that the author had broken up perhaps to use the fragment, pages on which Bakunin had written the word *Religion*, have arbitrarily placed that bit in this place where all it has to do is to interrupt its sense.—So if later there is a new printing of this edition, I would urge you to rewrite the note on page 49 in this way.

NOTE: The "23 lines of apocryphal text invented by Réclus," which appear on pages 34–35 of the Tucker edition, read:

> ...they can take interest in nothing except generalities, absolute laws, and have no consideration for anything else.
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> Real and living individuality is perceptible only to another living individuality, not to a thinking individuality, not to the man who, by a series of abstractions, puts himself outside of and above immediate contact with life; to such men it can exist only as a more or less perfect example of the species, — that is, of a definite abstraction. If it is a rabbit, for instance, the finer the example, the more joyfully will the savant dissect it in the hope of determining by this very destruction the general nature, the law, of the species.
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> If there were no one to oppose it, should we not find, even in these days, a number of fanatics capable of performing the same experiments upon man? And if, moreover, the naturalists do not dissect living man, they are stopped from doing so, not by science, but by the omnipotent protests of life. Although they pass three-fourths of their existence in study and in the existing organization form a sort of world apart, — which impairs at once the soundness of their hearts and of their minds, —

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