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Mikhail Bakunin
Bourgeois Oligarchy
July 1871

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Bourgeois Oligarchy

Mikhail Bakunin

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It is obvious that liberty will not be restored to the world and that the real interests of society, of all the groups, of all the local organizations, as well as all the individuals who form society, could find real satisfaction only after the abolition of the State. It is obvious that all the so-called general interests of society, that the State is supposed to represent, and that, in reality, are nothing but the general and constant negation of the positive interests of the regions, provinces, communes, associations and the majority of individuals subject to the State, constitute an abstraction, a fiction, a lie. The State is like a vast butcher's shop, like an immense cemetery where, under the sway of that abstraction, all the *general* men, all those who make the living strength of a country, come foolishly to let themselves be sacrificed and buried. Now, no abstraction exists by itself, no abstraction having either the arms to create, or the stomach to digest that mass of victims that we serve up to it, it is obvious that the religious or celestial abstraction, God, represents, in reality, the very positive, very real interests of a privileged class, the *clergy*: it is equally obvious that its terrestrial complement, the political abstraction, the *State*, represents the no less positive and real interests of the class today principally, if not exclusively exploiting,

and which, besides, tends to include all the others, the *Bourgeoisie*. And as the clergy is always divided and today tends to divide still more into a very powerful and very rich minority, and a majority very subordinate and quite miserable, just so the bourgeoisie and its various social and political organizations, in industry, in agriculture, in the bank and in commerce, as well as in the administrative, financial, judiciary, university, police and military functions of the State, tend to split more each day into a really dominant oligarchy and a counter mass of creatures, more or less vain and more or less defeated, living in a perpetual illusion, always more cast off in the proletariat by an irresistible force, that of the present economic development. The wretches are inevitably reduced to serving as blind instruments of that all-powerful oligarchy.