

The Swiss Police

Mikhail Bakunin

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It appears that all the police of Europe have now put themselves in the service of the Russian government. Some very active searches continue, it is said, in Germany, in Switzerland, in France and even in England. Who are they seeking? Is it some political conspirators? No, doubtless, that would be too awkward, for excepting the governments of England, which have never ceased to conspicuously render service as gendarmes to the Czar of Russia, all the other governments of Europe are very careful not to compromise themselves on this point before their public. And the Russian government, assured of their good will, but understanding on the other hand the difficulties of their position, has suggested to them a very simple means of honorably rendering the service that it demands of them.

It is not a question of the pursuit and extradition of Poles or Russians guilty of political crimes. Absolutely not! It is only a question of simple murderers and forgers. But who are these murderers, these forgers? Naturally all those who, more than others, have had the misfortune of displeasing the Russian government, and who have had, at the same time, the good fortune of escaping its paternal investigations. They are neither murderers, nor forgers, and the Russian government knows it better than anyone, and the governments of the other countries know it as well as it. But appearances are preserved and the service is rendered.

This is how, roughly six or seven months ago, the Wurtemberg government delivered to the Russian authorities a young man studying at the University of *Tubingen*, on the simple demand of the cabinet of Saint Petersburg. That is how another young Russian student, studying at the university of Vienna, was just arrested in that city, and if he has not already been delivered to the muscovite authorities, he will not fail to be so soon.

And notice that it is a liberal, patriotic and ultra-Germanminister who renders that service to the Russian government. The government of Prussia, as we know, has always been the supplier for its neighbor and friend, the Bear of Saint Petersburg. It has never refused it victim, as soon as the ferocious quadruped had shown some taste for the flesh of the free Germans, it would probably have delivered a few dozen with great pleasure.

It should not be surprising. Germany has always been the true homeland of the cult of authority anyway, the classic land of the bureaucracy, of the police and governmental betrayals, that of the halfvoluntary servitude, embellished with songs, speeches and dreams. The ideal of all German Governments is enthroned at St. Petersburg.

What must surprise us more is that the Swiss republic itself today lends itself to the demands of the Russian police. We saw a few months ago the scandalous affair of Princess Obolenska. It was enough for the government of Saint Petersburg to express its desire for federal authorities to hasten to order it, and for the cantonal authorities to execute the cruelest and most revolting violation of the sacred right of a mother and that without any judgment and without even bothering to observe any of those legal forms that, in free countries, are considered the necessary guarantees of justice and the freedom of the citizens, with an abundance of brutality that could be envied by the Russian police itself.

At this time, continuing the same service of deference to the government of Saint Petersburg, the liberal and democratic authorities of Switzerland hounds, it is said, with the same zeal that made them bully Princess Obolenska and expel the illustrious Mazzini, and the Polish and Russian bandits who they are identified as such by their powerful friend from Saint Petersburg. The police of Geneva recently made a domiciliary visit to the home of Louis Bulewski, an émigré, one of the leaders of the Polish democracy, a friend of Mazzini, and incontestably one of the most honorable and most honored men of the emigration, under the pretext of searching his home for forged Russian bills. But what they sought above all, with a persistent tenacity and always to please the great master of Saint Petersburg, is ascertain Nechayev, who is apparently the chief of all these brigands in Poland and Russia.

This Mr. Nechayev – real being or not – appears to us as a kind of monstrous myth. A month ago almost all the newspapers of Europe were full of him. To believe the papers of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, he was the leader of the great conspiracy that was recently discovered in Russia and that, it appears, does not cease to interest and concern the government of the Czar. It was said he was dead, – not the Czar, but this Mr. Nechayev – now behold he is resurrected. He must be since they seek him, unless the Russian government pursues another person under the fantastic name of Nechayev. But let us suppose Nechayev living in the flesh and bone, he is a conspirator, so he is not a robber or a thief; his crime, if he is a criminal, is that of a political man. Why then seek him as a murderer and thief? But he has murdered, they say. Who says it? The Russian government. But wouldn't one have to be truly naive to believe what the Russian government said, or else perverse to give the air of belief?

But, in this way, the Russian government would only have to indicated to the liberal governments of Europe some Polish or Russian émigré as a murderer, a forger or a thief, in order to have them delivered! It would really be too convenient and too dangerous especially, because it would be the best means of applying to all of liberal and civilized Europe the barbaric system of muscovite government that has never stopped before slander or lies.

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