

follower of Bakunin, and the alienation of some of Bakunin's closest associates.

In view of these disputes, it is ironic to read of Bakunin's refusal to speak to a law professor who came to Locarno from Russia to meet him, on the grounds that he could have nothing in common with a jurist (p. 467n). Bakunin's followers might well have profited by placing some of their relations on a legal, contractual footing. When it came to practical, and especially financial activities, the spirit of comradeship proved too weak a cement to hold them together. If this committed little band of anarchists could not govern their personal relations on the basis of fraternal solidarity alone, could this principle prove sufficient for the larger society that was to take shape after the anarchist revolution?

The members of the Ralli group were so disillusioned with Bakunin that even though they upheld many of his ideas they began to belittle his significance as a revolutionary. The tsarist authorities, they asserted in a publication of 1875, exaggerated Bakunin's importance: »his influence on the Russian revolutionary movement was always very weak, even trifling« (p. 484). After all the turmoil and disappointment in his relations with the émigrés in Switzerland, Bakunin voiced an understandable note of resignation in a letter to Ogarev at the end of 1874. He had withdrawn from all »practical activity«, he told his old friend, and was now spending much of his time reading. »Enough of teaching, my friend, in our old age let us once again take up learning, it is more cheerful« (p. 228).

Marshall S. Shatz

Anthony Masters, Bakunin. The Father of Anarchism, Sidgwick & Jackson, London 1974, XXIII, 279 S., Ln., £ 5.95.

Popular history – history written by non-scholars for a broad audience – is much like the proverbial »little girl who had a little curl«: when it is good, it is very good, but when it is bad, it is horrid. When done well, it can convey the historical color and drama that scholarly studies tend to stifle, and it often possesses a literary flair which most academics lack; it lends itself particularly well to biography and is adept at bringing to life the striking personalities of history. These qualities can compensate for the conceptual shallowness and scantiness of documentation which are common failings of the genre. Anthony Masters' attempt at a biography of Michael Bakunin suffers painfully from all the defects of popular history without displaying any of its redeeming virtues. Roderick Kedward, in his Foreword, terms the book an »exciting biography« which makes »a substantial contribution to the reappraisal of Bakunin« both as a thinker and as an activist. Alas, the book is neither exciting nor substantial, and it makes little contribution to our understanding of Bakunin.

Judging from the footnotes and bibliography Masters does not read Russian, and he has relied on secondary works for most of his material. In consequence, he draws heavily on standard interpretations, principally E. H. Carr's biography, which are badly in need of rethinking. In addition, the author lacks the historical perspective to deal adequately with a figure who swam, at one time or another, in nearly every intellectual, political, and revolutionary current of mid-nineteenth century Europe. The result is a cliché-ridden image of Bakunin set against a very hazy historical background.

The book gets off on the wrong footing from the start with its Prologue, a description of what Bakunin (or »Michael«, as the author insists on calling him throughout) might have been thinking and feeling as he visited his family on his way to Siberian exile in 1857. This sort of fictionalized history is as irritating as it is useless. Masters' explanation of Bakunin's development as a revolutionary rests on the familiar assertion that Bakunin was sexually impotent, or at least indifferent, and that his political commitment provided a kind of emotional substitute for sexual activity. He finds in Bakunin an »inner loneliness«

which was filled by the enormous drive and energy that so impressed those around him. Although the notion that Bakunin was sexually deficient appears to be based on the flimsiest of evidence, the author accepts it uncritically and makes it the peg on which he hangs his reconstruction of Bakunin's personality and political career.

Masters is no more at home with Bakunin's anarchism than he is with Bakunin's personal development. Bakunin's ideas, and their place in Russian and West European political thought, are very inadequately treated. On Bakunin's relationship with Nechaev, the author asserts that »in many ways Nechaev and Michael were kindred spirits«, without explaining what those ways were, while the chapter entitled »The Battle with Marx« deals mostly with the Nechaev affair. Any reader not previously informed would be hard put to determine just what the »battle« between Marx and Bakunin was all about.

The book's numerous technical defects compound its other inadequacies. The writing is at best conventional, at worst murky. (»Michael's continuous interference in his family's motivation and his bullying domination of their minds were symptomatic of the state of insecurity and flux in his own«.) In a single paragraph we are told that Paul Pestel, one of the leaders of the Decembrist conspiracy, wanted a federal republic modelled on the USA (Pestel in fact advocated a centralized state modelled on Jacobin France); and that Pestel and two of his fellow revolutionists were hanged in 1820 (Pestel and four others were hanged in 1825). And should the reader trustingly turn to the back of the book in search of Part Two, footnote 9, he will find a blank space.

This book does serve to raise one of the central issues that studies of Bakunin have hitherto failed to resolve. As Masters relates, Bakunin started out as a rebel within his own family, challenging the traditional patriarchal authority of his father. As time went on, his rebellion broadened to include social, religious, and political authority. What was the relationship between that early domestic rebellion and his later political philosophy? Was there nothing more to the latter than the displaced energy of a sexual neuter? (Even if that were the source of Bakunin's revolutionary ideology, it would not sufficiently explain either the political insights his ideology contained nor the following it attracted.) Did the familial origins of his rebellion color his perception of established authority and his vision of the new society that was to replace it? These are some of the questions about Bakunin that need to be asked, and they can be answered only by effectively integrating his colorful biography with a serious study of his revolutionary anarchism.

Marshall S. Shatz

Leonard Nelson, *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Studienausgabe, hrsg. und eingel. von Heinz-Joachim Heydorn, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, Frankfurt/Köln 1974, 270 S., kart., 18 DM.

Fast 50 Jahre sind vergangen, seit Hellmuth Frankenfeld in seiner Darstellung des theoretischen Lebenswerks von Leonard Nelson in den Kantstudien als Fazit der Erwartung Ausdruck gab: »Wir haben alle Ursache anzunehmen, daß dereinst nicht nur die Geschichte der Philosophie, sondern auch die Geschichte der Erziehung und die Geschichte der Politik Leonard Nelsons Namen mit großen Buchstaben in ihre Tafeln schreiben wird«. Für keines der genannten Gebiete hat sich diese Erwartung, obwohl sie sicher nicht unbegründet war, bis heute auch nur annähernd erfüllt. Auch heute gilt noch, was Willi Eichler, der wirksamste Schüler Nelsons, vor anderthalb Jahrzehnten feststellen mußte, »daß der Philosoph Nelson weitgehend unbekannt geblieben ist«.

Nach Maßstäben der Vernunft geurteilt, mit denen Nelson selbst zu messen pflegte, ist dies eine erstaunliche Bilanz, kann er doch als derjenige Denker angesprochen werden, der am umfassendsten und mit bewundernswürdiger Folgerichtigkeit am Auffüllen der großen