

Michail Bakunin

Appeal to my Russian Brothers

1867

Bakunin wrote this in response to the failed Polish uprising of 1867, encouraging Russians to support Poland against the Russian government.

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Friends and brothers,

These lines, which your friend Nicholas Platonovitch Orageff just wrote regarding the Polish insurrection, have reached me devoted sincerely and unlimitedly to the great cause of our national bondage and the general emancipation of enslaved people. One must recognize that the partial, premature insurrection of the Polish people threatens to arrest the evolution of progress in all slave states, especially Russia. The state of one's spirit in these countries, as in all of Europe, leaves us with only vague hopes for success of this revolution; the defeat of the revolting party in Poland must inevitably lead to the temporary triumph of the despotism of the Tsar in Russia. On the other hand, the situation of the Polish people is unbearable; it is admittedly punishment to make them patiently wait out their disadvantage.

By a cruel, systematic repression, as well as by infamous means, the Russian government seems to want to provoke insurrection in Poland; for this reason, it will be just as useful for the Polish people as for the Russians to restrain themselves. This adjournment to a more favorable time will be just as beneficial for both countries. We must therefore concentrate all our efforts on this point without, however, denying the Polish people either their sacred rights or their national dignity. Do your best to persuade them to wait, as circumstances permit, but nevertheless, don't waste time; make an active propaganda campaign and organize yourselves so that you're ready when the critical moment arrives. When, at the end of their patience, your unfortunate Polish brothers rise up, you will rise up as well, not to fight them, but to march with them; you will rise up in the name of the honor of Russia, in the name of your duty to Slavs, in the name of the national Russian cause, crying, "Long live Earth and Liberty!" If you should succumb during this fight, if you should die, it will be a service to the common cause. And God knows! Maybe, contrary to all predictions, your heroism will be crowned with success . . .

I take my leave of you.

Goodbye until we meet again,

M.B

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Bakunin, Michael, translated by Marie Stromberg, 1896, Correspondance, Paris
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