

This letter, originally written in French, is from a collection of letters that Kropotkin wrote to Marie Goldsmith between 1897 and 1917. This letter appears on pages 440-441. I have included the original notes and translated them from the French. Translated by Christopher Coquard.

Confino, M. (1995). *Anarchistes en exil: Correspondance inédite de Pierre Kropotkine à Marie Goldsmith (1897-1919)*. IRENE et Institut d'études slaves, Paris, France. ISBN : 0765-0213; ISBN : 2-7204-0217-6

9 Chesham Street
Brighton. January 23 1913.¹

My very dear friends²,

You will excuse me, I hope, so that in order to recuperate my strength, still quite fragile, that I write to the two of you together, so that I may avoid writing two letters that would be practically identical.

When you wrote me, my dear James, on December 22nd, to offer your help for the translations related to the publication of the Works of Bakunin – in order to help you, dear friend, in the difficult passages that could present themselves; and that, in a related manner, the initiator of this edition informed that that he could allocate a certain budget to pay for the translations, I wrote to you, or rather I had someone write for me, on the 26th, a letter addressed to you, my dear friend Marie (I was already feeling sick), to inform you that in these conditions - that is to say, in having you Marie for a translator – helped, in case of need, by you, James – I could continue to be the editor responsible for this publication and to give the last revision to the totality of the work.

Since then, dear friends, I have had a serious illness that has diminished even more by capacity to work, and I feel completely incapable to take upon myself any responsibility concerning this publication, neither to give any work that could be useful to bring this project to term.

I have thus written to the initiator of this edition to give him the authority that he gave to me, and I asked him, to whom should he give the money (500 Rubles) that was spent in this endeavor.

Henceforth forced to dedicate the few hours that I could to finish the works that I had begun, and therefore forced, contrary to my intentions, to even renounce my part in this collaboration and my responsibilities concerning this edition, of which I have already written to you, dear Marie, in my letter of the 26-27 December, I do not believe that I have the right to take any decision concerning the organization of this publication.

¹ The address and date are written in ink; the text of the letter is a carbon copy, addressed to Marie Goldsmith, the original was sent to James Guillaume.

² This letter is addressed to James Guillaume and Marie Goldsmith.

This right belongs to the initiator of this edition and I give him all the rights that he had conferred onto me.

However, since during several months I thought seriously about what should and could become of the proposed edition, and that our friend Nettlau – after long conversations with me and an exchange of letters – elaborated a detailed plan of a publication in 5 (and in 12) volumes, I think it my duty to communicate to you, and to the initiator of this project, the conclusions to which I have arrived.

Only having the funds for 4 volumes, there can be no question that the works of Bakunin should not be published. It would take 12 volumes to make a complete edition, worthy of him.

Also the first question that Nettlau asked me, when we had to stop at 4 volumes, was knowing: Would we publish 4 volumes that represented *a smaller part of a larger publication* strictly bibliographic, that could be one day (fragments, I would say); or would it be a publication *per se*³ of *Chosen words* of Bakunin?

My response was precise. It is not a fragment of a future edition that we should do now, but an edition of *Selected works*, that would give the reader a general and correct idea, not only of a specific moment in Bakunin's life, but of all of his activities over 30 or 35 years.

It must represent the Russian and Slavic Bakunin of 1846-49, the Bakunin before the International and in the International and the Bakunin of 1870-1876. It was in this direction of thinking that the plan of 5 volumes was elaborated.

I will place myself, furthermore, in a more practical perspective, and I think that this should be a publication that targets readers that are *expatriated Russians*, whom I know well, and who are almost the only ones upon which we should count upon for sales. It must be an edition for these readers, whom in buying the 4 volumes for which we have the money, would give us the means to pay for a 5th volume.

It is the edition which several thousand readers (several hundred buyers) *need* at this moment, that must be done at this moment in my opinion.

Concerning a bibliographic edition, you, my dear James, you have rendered your service as a friend towards Bakunin. You have published, unedited in the language in which the manuscripts of Bakunin were written, with pious fidelity. It is done and it will remain.

And as soon as the works of Bakunin could be published in Russia, there would be Russian librarians, who, being in possession of the letters written by Bakunin et

³ A Latin term – *per se* means 'in and of itself – intrinsically.

biographical documents, would know how to publish an edition worthy of his memory, like that which was done for Herzen and Byélin'sky. The French edition that you have done would be therefore of an *immense* utility; while the 4 or 5 Russian volumes, *published in the West*, would have for them no value. Evidently, we would not amuse ourselves in importing them to Russia: we will print them over there, and we would do better that anything that we could do here.

I will thus conclude in saying that what must be done, is an edition of *Chosen Works*, which, done in 5 volumes, would be a publication of enormous value.

That is the opinion at which I have arrived, *as a Russian* having some experience with our readers and after serious study of this subject.

I will send a copy of the letter to the initiator of this project.⁴

I would really like to promise you, dear friends, to help you with my advice in case of need, but this would be impossible, unless it is related to a matter of detail. For the plan of the work, etc. you have to be in agreement directly with the one who initiated this publication. All that I can say is to advise you to accept as is the plan upon which we finished with Nettlau. I say this after having seriously reflected on your letter of December 30, dear James, where you detail exactly the opposite plan (fragments of a future edition), and I re-read your *Avant-propos* and your *Avertissement* of the 2 and 3 volumes of your edition. But this is only friendly advice. The definitive decisions will belong to those who will be in charge of publication; and, as I can no longer assist because of the current status of my health, I will not insist.

From all my heart I embrace the two of you and I hope I can see you briefly if we stop to pass the night in Paris.

Pierre (Peter)

Dear Marie, James tells me that he has copied the 5-volume plan (from the writing of Nettlau). Did you send it back to me? In not finding it, I ask myself if I did not misplace it during my illness. Or not send it to me. I would like to have it, before sending it to 'the initiator.'

⁴ Armand Ross (Sažin).