

James Guillaume

Michael Bakunin
A Biographical Sketch

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James Guillaume, Bakunin's friend and comrade-in-arms, edited the last five volumes of the six-volume French edition of his collected works. Guillaume's biographical sketch of Bakunin, originally appeared in his introduction to Volume II of that edition.

This sketch is a primary source not only on the life of Bakunin, but also on the most significant events in the socialist movement of that period. It incidentally contributes valuable background information for many of the other selections in the present volume. Guillaume, who did not limit himself to recording events but also took part in shaping them, had been inclined toward anarchism even before he met Bakunin in 1869. Earlier, he had been one of the founders of the First International in Switzerland, where it held its first congress, in Geneva, in 1866. He attended all its congresses, and eventually published a four-volume history of the International. Guillaume also wrote widely on libertarian theory and practice and edited a number of periodicals. His extensive writings on cultural subjects included substantial contributions to the theory of progressive education as represented particularly by the early-nineteenth-century Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi.

I

Michael Alexandrovich Bakunin was born on May 18, 1814 on his family's estate in the little village of Premukhino, in the province of Tver. His father was a career diplomat who, as a young attache, had lived for years in Florence and Naples. Upon his return to Russia, he settled down on his paternal estate where, at the age of forty, he married an eighteen-year-old girl from the prominent Muraviev family. Given to liberal ideas, he was for a while platonically involved with one of the Decembrist' clubs. After Nicholas I became Tsar, however, Bakunin gave up politics and devoted himself to the care of his estate and the education of his children, five girls and five boys, the oldest of whom was Michael.

At fifteen, Michael entered the Artillery School in St. Petersburg where, three years later, he was commissioned a junior officer and sent to garrison in the provinces of Minsk and of Grodno, in Poland. He arrived in the latter post shortly after the Polish insurrection of 1832 had been crushed. The spectacle of Poland terrorized shocked the gently bred young officer and deepened his hatred of despotism. Two years later, he resigned from the army and went to Moscow, where he lived for the next six years, spending some summer vacations on the family estate.

In Moscow, Bakunin studied philosophy and began to read the French Encyclopedists. His enthusiasm for the philosophy of Fichte, shared with his friends Stankevich and Belinsky, led Bakunin to translate, in 1836, Fichte's *Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar). From Fichte, Bakunin went on to immerse himself in the philosophy of Hegel, then the most influential thinker among German intellectuals. The young man wholeheartedly embraced Hegelianism, bedazzled by the famous maxim that "Everything that exists is rational" — even though it also served to justify the Prussian state. In 1839 he met Alexander Herzen and the latter's friend Nicholas Ogarev, who had returned from exile to Moscow; but their ideas and his were too divergent at the time for a meeting of minds.

In 1840, aged twenty-six, Bakunin went to St. Petersburg and thence to Germany, to study and prepare himself for a professorship in philosophy or history at the University of Moscow. When, in the same year, Nicholas Stankevich died in Italy, Bakunin still believed in the immortality of the soul (letter to Herzen, October 23, 1840). In the course of his intellectual evolution, however, he came to interpret the philosophy of Hegel as a revolutionary theory. As Ludwig Feuerbach, in his *The Essence of Christianity*, arrived at atheism by means of Hegelian

doctrine, so Michael Bakunin applied Hegel to his own political and social ideas and arrived at social revolution.

From Berlin, Bakunin moved in 1842 to Dresden. There he collaborated with Arnold Ruge in publishing the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* ("German Yearbooks"), in which he first began to formulate his revolutionary ideas. His article "Reaction in Germany: A Fragment by a Frenchman" concluded with the famous declaration:

Let us put our trust in the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternally creative source of all life. The desire for destruction is also a creative desire.

Herzen believed at first that the article had actually been written by a Frenchman, and wrote in his personal diary that "this is a powerful and firm appeal, a victory for the democratic party. The article is from beginning to end bound to arouse wide interest."

The illustrious German poet Georg Herwegh visited Bakunin in Dresden, and the two men formed a lasting friendship. A resident of Dresden who also became Bakunin's devoted friend was the musician Adolf Reichel.

Within a short time the Saxon government became overtly hostile toward Ruge and his collaborators, and Bakunin and Herwegh left Saxony for Switzerland. There Bakunin came into contact with the German communists grouped around Wilhelm Weitling. In Bern during the winter of 1843–44, a lifelong friendship developed with Adolf Vogt, who later became professor of medicine at the University of Bern. When the Russian government demanded that the Swiss authorities deport Bakunin to Russia, he left Bern in February 1844, stopping first in Brussels and then in Paris, where he remained until 1847.

II

In Paris Bakunin again met Herwegh, the latter's wife, Emma Siegmund, and Karl Marx, who had arrived there in 1843. Marx at first collaborated with Arnold Ruge, but he and Engels soon went their own way and began to formulate their own ideology. Bakunin saw much of Proudhon, with whom he held night-long discussions, and was also on friendly terms with George Sand. The years in Paris were the most fruitful for Bakunin's intellectual development — it was then that the basic outlines of the ideas underlying his revolutionary program began to take shape, though it was not until much later that he freed himself entirely of metaphysical idealism. Bakunin himself informs us, in a manuscript written in 1871, of his intellectual relations with Marx and Proudhon during this period. He recalls that:

As far as learning was concerned, Marx was, and still is, incomparably more advanced than I. I knew nothing at that time of political economy, I had not yet rid myself of my metaphysical aberrations, and my socialism was only instinctive. Although younger than I, he was already an atheist, a conscious materialist, and an informed socialist. It was precisely at this time that he was elaborating the foundations of his system as it stands today. We saw each other often. I greatly respected him for his learning and for his passionate devotion — though it was always mingled with vanity — to the cause of the proletariat. I eagerly sought his conversation, which was always instructive and witty when it was not inspired by petty hate, which alas! was only too often the case. There was never any frank intimacy between us — our temperaments did not permit it. He called me a sentimental idealist, and he was right, I called him vain, perfidious, and cunning, and I also was right.

Bakunin offers the following characterization of Engels in his book *Statism and Anarchy*:

In 1845 Marx was the leader of the German communists. While his devoted friend Engels was just as intelligent as he, he was not as erudite. Nevertheless, Engels was more practical, and no less adept at political calumny, lying, and intrigue. Together they founded a secret society of German communists or authoritarian socialists.

In a French manuscript of 1870, Bakunin evaluates Proudhon, comparing him to Marx:

As I told him a few months before his death, Proudhon, in spite of all his efforts to shake off the tradition of classical idealism, remained all his life an incorrigible idealist, immersed in the Bible, in Roman law and metaphysics. His great misfortune was that he had never studied the natural sciences or appropriated their method. He had the instincts of a genius and he glimpsed the right road, but hindered by his idealistic thinking patterns, he fell always into the old errors. Proudhon was a perpetual contradiction: a vigorous genius, a revolutionary thinker arguing against idealistic phantoms, and yet never able to surmount them himself. . . . Marx as a thinker is on the right path. He has established the principle that juridical evolution in history is not the cause but the effect of economic development, and this is a great and fruitful concept. Though he did not originate it — it was to a greater or lesser extent formulated before him by many others — to Marx belongs the credit for solidly establishing it as the basis for an economic system. On the other hand, Proudhon understood and felt liberty much better than he. Proudhon, when not obsessed with metaphysical doctrine, was a revolutionary by instinct; he adored Satan and proclaimed Anarchy. Quite possibly Marx could construct a still more rational system of liberty, but he lacks the instinct of liberty — he remains from head to foot an authoritarian.

On November 29 1847, at a banquet in Paris commemorating the Polish insurrection of 1830, Bakunin delivered a speech in which he severely denounced the Russian government. At the request of the Russian Ambassador, Kiselev, he was expelled from France. To counteract the widespread protests of those who sympathized with Bakunin, Kiselev circulated the rumor that he had been employed by the Russian government to pose as a revolutionary, but that he had gone too far. (This is related by Bakunin in a letter to Fanelli, May 29, 1867.) Bakunin then went to Brussels, where he again met Marx. Of Marx and his circle Bakunin wrote to his friend Herwegh:

The German workers, Bornstadt, Marx, Engels — especially Marx — poison the atmosphere. Vanity, malevolence, gossip, pretentiousness and boasting in theory and cowardice in practice. Dissertations about life, action, and feeling — and complete absence of life, action, and feeling — and complete absence of life. Disgusting flattery of the more advanced workers — and empty talk. According to them, Feuerbach is a “bourgeois,” and the epithet BOURGEOIS! is shouted *ad nauseam* by people who are from head to foot more bourgeois than anyone in a provincial city — in short, foolishness and lies, lies and foolishness. In such an atmosphere no one can breathe freely. I stay away from them and I have openly declared that I will not go to their

Kommunistischer Handwerkerverein [Communist Trade Union Society] and will have nothing to do with this organization.

III

The revolution of February 24, 1848, opened the doors of France once again to Bakunin. Just as he was about to return to Paris, however, events in Vienna and Berlin caused him to change his plans, and he left for Germany in April. He was also then hoping to participate in the Polish insurrectionary movement. In Cologne, he again met Marx and Engels, who had begun publication of their *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. It was at this time that the “Democratic Legion of Paris” organized an expedition to Germany to stage an insurrection in the Grand Duchy of Baden. The attempt was a disastrous failure. Marx and Engels violently attacked Bakunin’s friend Herwegh, who together with other German exiles was one of the leaders of this ill-fated expedition. Bakunin came to his defense. Much later in 1871 — Bakunin wrote that “I must openly admit that in this controversy Marx and Engels were in the right. With characteristic insolence, they attacked Herwegh personally when he was not there to defend himself. In a face-to-face confrontation with them, I heatedly defended Herwegh, and our mutual dislike began then.”

Later, in June 1848, Bakunin went to Berlin and Breslau and then to Prague, where he tried to influence the Slav Congress in a revolutionary democratic direction. After participating in the week-long insurrection, which was brutally suppressed, he returned to Breslau. He was still there when the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* — controlled by Marx — published in its July 6 issue a letter from a Paris correspondent which read, in part:

In regard to pro-Slav propaganda, we were told yesterday that George Sand possesses documents which greatly compromise the Russian exile Michael Bakunin and reveal him as an instrument or newly enrolled AGENT OF RUSSIA, who played a key part in the arrest of the unfortunate Poles. George Sand has shown these documents to some of her friends. [See *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of 3rd August 1848]

Bakunin immediately protested this infamous slander in a letter published in the *Allgemeine Oder Zeitung* of Breslau, and reprinted in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on July 16. He also wrote to George Sand asking for an explanation. She replied in an open letter to the editor of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*:

The allegations of your correspondent are entirely false. There are no documents. I do not have the slightest proof of the insinuations that you make against M. Bakunin. I have never had, nor have I ever authorized any one

else to cast, the slightest doubt on his personal integrity and devotion to his principles. I appeal to your sense of honor and to your conscience to print this letter immediately in your paper.

Marx printed her letter together with the comment: "We have fulfilled the obligation of the press to exercise strict vigilance over prominent public individuals and at the same time given M. Bakunin the opportunity to dispel suspicions which have been current in certain Paris circles."

It is useless to elaborate on the singular theory that it is the duty of the press to publish false and libelous accusations without attempting to verify the facts!

The next month Bakunin and Marx met again in Berlin, and a reluctant reconciliation was effected. Bakunin recalled the incident in 1871: "Mutual friends induced us to embrace, and during our conversation Marx remarked, half-smilingly, 'Do you know that I am now the chief of a secret communist society, so well disciplined that had I said to any member, "Kill Bakunin," you would be dead?'"

Expelled from Prussia and Saxony, Bakunin spent the rest of the year 1848 in the principality of Anhalt. There he published, in German, the pamphlet *Appeal to the Slavs: By a Russian Patriot, Michael Bakunin, Member of the Slav Congress*. In this work he proposed that revolutionary Slavs unite with the revolutionaries of other nations — Hungarians, Germans, Italians — to overthrow the three major autocracies of the time: the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Kingdom of Prussia; this would be followed by the free federation of the emancipated Slavic peoples. Marx criticized these ideas in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of February 14, 1849:

Bakunin is our friend, but this does not prevent us from criticizing his pamphlet. Apart from the Russians, the Poles, and perhaps the Turkish Slavs, no Slavic people has a future, for the simple reason that they lack the indispensable historical, geographical, political, and industrial conditions for independence and vitality.

Regarding the difference between Marx's and his own views on the Slavic question, Bakunin wrote, in 1871:

In 1848 we disagreed, and I must admit that his reasoning was more correct than mine. Carried away, enraptured by the atmosphere of the revolutionary movement, I was much more interested in the negative than in the positive aspect of the revolution. Nevertheless, there is one point on which Marx was wrong, and I was right. As a Slav, I wanted the emancipation of the Slavic race from the German yoke, and as a German patriot he did not admit

then, nor will he admit now, the right of the Slavs to free themselves from German domination. He thought then, as he does now, that the mission of the Germans is to civilize — that is to say, Germanize — the Slavs, for better or for worse.

In January 1849 Bakunin secretly arrived in Leipzig. There, together with a group of young Czechs from Prague, he occupied himself with preparations for an uprising in Bohemia. In spite of the growing reaction in Germany and France, hope still lived, for there was more than one place in Europe where the revolution had not yet been crushed. Pope Pius IX, expelled from Rome, had been replaced by the Roman Republic, headed by the triumvirate of Mazzini, Saffi, and Armellini, with Garibaldi in command of the army. Venice, its freedom regained, heroically repulsed the siege of the Austrians; the Hungarians, rebelling against Austria under the leadership of Kossuth, proclaimed the defeat of the Habsburgs. And on May 3, 1849, a popular rebellion broke out in Dresden, provoked by the refusal of the King of Saxony to accept the constitution of the German Empire approved by the Frankfurt Parliament. The King fled, and a provisional government was proclaimed. For five days the rebels controlled the city. Bakunin, who had left Leipzig for Dresden in the middle of April, became one of the leaders of the rebellion and inspired the highest measure of heroism in the men defending the barricades against the Prussian troops. A gigantic figure of a man, already renowned as a revolutionary, Bakunin became the focus of all eyes. An aura of legend soon enveloped him. To him alone were attributed the fires set by the rebels; about him it was written that he was “the very soul of the Revolution,” that he initiated widespread terrorism, that to stop the Prussians from shooting into the barricades he advised the defenders to take the art treasures from the museums and galleries and display them from the barricades — the stories were endless.

On May 9 the rebels — greatly outnumbered and outgunned — retreated to Freiberg. There Bakunin pleaded in vain with Stephen Born (organizer of the Arbeiter Verbruderung, the first organization of German workers) to take his remaining troops to Bohemia and spark a new uprising. Born refused, and disbanded his forces. Seeing that there was nothing more to be done, Bakunin, the composer Richard Wagner, and Heubner — a democrat, very loyal to Bakunin — went to Chemnitz. There, during the night, armed bourgeois arrested Heubner and Bakunin and turned them over to the Prussians. Wagner hid in his sister’s house and escaped.

The role of Bakunin in this rebellion had been that of a determined fighter as well as a leading strategist. Even the hostile Marx felt obliged to acknowledge his outstanding contribution in one of his letters, some years later, to the New York

Daily Tribune (October 2, 1852), entitled “ Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany ”:

In Dresden, the battle in the streets went on for four days. The shopkeepers of Dresden, organized into “community guards,” not only refused to fight, but many of them supported the troops against the insurrectionists. Almost all of the rebels were workers from the surrounding factories. In the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin they found a capable and cool-headed leader.

IV

Conducted to the Königstein fortress, Bakunin spent many months in detention, and eventually was condemned to death, on January 14, 1850. In June his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment, and the prisoner was then extradited to Austria, at the request of the Austrian authorities. Bakunin was first jailed in Prague and then, in March 1851, transferred to Olmutz, where he was sentenced to hang. Once again his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was brutally treated in the Austrian prisons: his hands and feet were chained, and in Olmutz he was chained to the prison wall.

Shortly thereafter, the Austrians handed Bakunin over to Russia, where he was imprisoned in the dreadful dungeons of the Fortress of Peter and Paul. At the beginning of his captivity, Count Orlov, an emissary of the Tsar, visited Bakunin and told him that the Tsar requested a written confession, hoping that the confession would place Bakunin spiritually as well as physically in the power of the Russian Bear. Since all his acts were known, he had no secrets to reveal, and so he decided to write to the Tsar:

You want my confession; but you must know that a penitent sinner is not obliged to implicate or reveal the misdeeds of others. I have only the honor and the conscience that I have never betrayed anyone who has confided in me, and this is why I will not give you any names.

When the Tsar, Nicholas I, read Bakunin's letter, he remarked, "He is a good lad, full of spirit, but he is a dangerous man and we must never cease watching him."

With the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, the Fortress of Peter and Paul was exposed to bombardment by the English, and Bakunin was transferred to Schlüsselberg prison. There he was attacked by scurvy, and all his teeth fell out. Let me now interject what I myself wrote the day after Bakunin died, stating only what he personally told me about the last period of his imprisonment:

The atrocious prison diet had completely ruined his stomach (scurvy) so that anything he ate caused nausea and vomiting, and he could digest only finely chopped sour cabbage. But if his body was debilitated, his spirit was indomitable. It was this above all he feared, that prison life would break his spirit; that he would no longer hate injustice and feel in his heart the passion for rebellion that sustained him; that the day would come when he would pardon his tormentors and accept his fate. But he need not have feared: not

for a single moment did his spirit waver, and he emerged from the purgatory of his confinement as he entered, undaunted and defiant . . .

He recounted to us, also, that to distract his mind from his long, loathsome solitude, he found pleasure in mentally re-enacting the legend of Prometheus the Titan, benefactor of mankind. who while chained to the Caucasian Rock by order of Olympus, heard the sweet plaintive melody of the ocean nymphs bringing consolation and joy to the victim of Jupiter's vengeance.

It was hoped that with the death of Nicholas I Bakunin's situation would be to some extent alleviated. However, the new Tsar, Alexander II, personally crossed Bakunin's name off the amnesty list. Much later, Bakunin's mother went before the Tsar and begged him to have mercy on her son; but the autocrat answered, "Madame, while your son remains alive, he will not be freed." One day Alexander, while reading the letter that Bakunin had written his predecessor in 1851, remarked to his aide, Prince Goncharov. "But I don't see the least sign of repentance."

In 1857 Alexander was at last induced to relent, and Bakunin was released from prison and sentenced to perpetual exile in Siberia. He was given permission to reside in the Tomsk region. In the latter part of 1858 he married a young Polish girl, Antonia Kwiatkowski. Somewhat later — through the intervention of a relative on his mother's side, Nicholas Muraviev, Governor General of Eastern Siberia — Bakunin was permitted to move to Irkutsk. There he was at first employed by a government agency, the Amur Development Authority, and later in a mining enterprise.

Bakunin had expected to be freed quickly and allowed to return to Russia. But Muraviev, who was trying to help him, lost his post because he opposed the bureaucracy, and Bakunin realized that he could regain his liberty in only one way: escape. Leaving Irkutsk in mid-June 1861 on the pretext of business — alleged commercial negotiations and a government-authorized study — Bakunin arrived in Nikolaevsk in July. From there he sailed on the government vessel *Strelak* to Kastri, a southern port, where he managed to board the American merchant ship *Vickery*, which took him to Hakodate, Japan. He went next to Yokohama, then in October to San Francisco, and in November to New York. On December 27, 1861, Bakunin arrived in London, where he was welcomed like a long-lost brother by Herzen and Ogarev.

V

I will briefly summarize Bakunin's activity during the six years after his return to Western Europe. He soon realized that despite his personal friendship with Herzen and Ogarev, he could not associate himself with the political line of their journal, *Kolokol* ("The Bell"). During the year 1862, Bakunin expounded his current ideas in two pamphlets: *To My Russian, Polish, and Other Slav Friends and Romanov, Pugachev, or Pestel?*

The outbreak of the Polish insurrection of 1863 found Bakunin trying to unite all men of action to render effective aid and deepen the revolution. But attempts to organize a Russian legion failed, and the expedition of Colonel Lapinski came to naught. Bakunin then went to Stockholm — where he was reunited with his wife — hoping to get help from Sweden. His plans all failed, however, and he returned to London. He next went to Italy, and in the middle of 1864 returned to Sweden. Thence he went back once more to London, where he again saw Marx, and then to Paris, where he was reunited with Proudhon. Finally he went back to Italy.

As a consequence of the war of 1859 and Garibaldi's heroic expedition of 1860, Italy then stood on the threshold of a new era. Bakunin remained there until 1867, living first in Florence and then in and around Naples. It was during this period that he conceived the plan of forming a secret organization of revolutionaries to carry on propaganda work and prepare for direct action at a suitable time. From 1864 onward he steadily recruited Italians, Frenchmen, Scandinavians, and Slavs into a secret society known as the International Brotherhood, also called the Alliance of Revolutionary Socialists. He and his friends also combated the devoutly religious followers of the republican Mazzini, whose watchword was "God 2nd Country." In Naples, Bakunin established the journal *Libertà e Giustizia* ("Liberty and justice"), in which he developed his revolutionary program.

In July 1866 he informed his friends Herzen and Ogarev about the secret society and its program, on which he had been concentrating all his efforts for two years. According to Bakunin, the society then had members in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, England, France, Spain, and Italy, as well as Polish and Russian members.

In 1867 bourgeois democratic pacifists of many lands (though preponderantly French and German) founded The League for Peace and Freedom and convened a congress in Geneva which aroused wide interest. Although Bakunin had few illusions about the new organization, he hoped to propagandize its members in favor of revolutionary socialism. He attended the congress, addressed the

delegates, and became a member of the Central Committee of the League. For a whole year he tried to induce the Committee to adopt a social revolutionary program. At the second congress of the League, in Bern in 1868, Bakunin and his colleagues in the Alliance of Revolutionary Socialists tried to persuade the congress to adopt unambiguously revolutionary resolutions. After several days of heated debate, however, the resolutions were voted down. The minority faction of revolutionary socialists then resigned from the League, on September 25, 1868, and that same day founded a — new, open — not secret — organization, called the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy. The Alliance’s Declaration of Principles was written by Bakunin; a summary of his ideas, it was the product and culmination of the long period of ideological development he had begun in Germany in 1842. Among other things, it stated that:

The alliance declares itself atheist; it seeks the complete and definitive abolition of classes and the political, economic, and social equality of both sexes. It wants the land and the instruments of labor (production), like all other property, to be converted into the collective property of the whole society for utilization by the workers; that is, by agricultural and industrial associations. It affirms that all the existing political and authoritarian States, which are to be reduced to simple administrative functions dealing with public utilities in their respective countries, must eventually be replaced by a worldwide union of free associations, agricultural and industrial.

The New Alliance affirmed its desire to become a branch of the International, whose statutes it accepted.

just a few weeks earlier (September 1) the first issue of a Russian-language journal, *Narodnoye Dyelo* (“Public Affairs”), had appeared, under the editorship of Bakunin and Nicholas Zhukovsky, and had published a “Program of Russian Socialist Democracy” — a program that coincided, in the main, with that of the Alliance. With the second issue, however, the editorship changed hands: the paper fell under the control of Nicholas Utin, who gave it an entirely different orientation.”

VI

The International Workingmen's Association was founded in London on September 23, 1864, but its structure and its constitution were not formally adopted until the first congress convened in Geneva, September 3–8, 1866. In October 1864 Bakunin again met Marx, whom he had not seen since 1848. Marx requested this meeting to re-establish friendly relations with Bakunin who had been estranged when, in 1853, Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* [*Neue Rheinische Zeitung* was closed down in 1849. The newspaper which published the accusation was unconnected with Marx] repeated the old libel that Bakunin was a Russian agent. Mazzini and Herzen defended Bakunin, who was at that time in a Russian prison. Later in 1853 Marx had declared in the English paper *Morning Advertiser* that he was Bakunin's friend and had personally assured Bakunin that this was still the case. At their reunion in 1864, Marx invited Bakunin to join the International, but Bakunin preferred to return to Italy to devote himself to his secret organization. Bakunin's decision was understandable. At that time the International, outside of the General Council in London and a few Mutualist workers from Paris, could hardly be considered an international organization, and no one could foresee the importance it later assumed. It was only after the second congress at Lausanne in September 1867, the two strikes in Paris, and the great strike at Geneva (1868) that it drew serious attention and its revolutionary capabilities could no longer be ignored. In its third congress, in Brussels in 1868, the theories of cooperativism and Proudhonist Mutualism were seriously challenged by those of revolution and collective ownership.

In July 1868 Bakunin became a member of the Geneva section of the International, and after resigning from the "League for Peace and Freedom" at its Bern Congress, he settled in Geneva in order to participate actively in the labor movement of the city. Intensive propaganda sparked the growth of the International. A trip to Spain by Fanelli (an Italian revolutionary socialist and coworker of Bakunin) resulted in the establishment of the International in Madrid and Barcelona. The French sections of French-speaking Switzerland united into a federation under the name "Romance Federation of the International" and in January 1869 launched their official organ, the magazine *L'Égalité*. *L'Égalité* attacked the false socialists of the Swiss Jura (mountains) and won the enthusiastic support of a majority of the region's workers for revolutionary socialism. On various occasions, Bakunin came to the Jura to denounce what he called "collaboration between workers and employers, alliances — masked as cooperation — with bourgeois political parties and reactionary groups," gradually forming a lasting friendship with the

militant workers. In Geneva itself, a conflict took place between construction workers, who were instinctively revolutionary, and the better-paid and highly skilled watch and jewellery workers, who called themselves “Fabrica” and who wanted to participate in election campaigns with the bourgeois radicals. Those of a revolutionary tendency had the powerful encouragement of Bakunin, who, in addition to his public addresses, formulated his program and exposed the opportunists in a series of notable articles such as “The Policy of the International” [see selection in present volume], printed in *L'Égalité*. As a result, the Bakuninists won out — although this victory proved, regrettably, temporary. Nonetheless, since the Belgian, Spanish, French, and French-Swiss sections of the International all favored collectivism, its adoption by a large majority at the next congress was assured.

The General Council of London refused to admit the Alliance as a branch of the International because the Alliance would constitute what amounted to a second international body in the International, thereby causing confusion and disorganization. Unquestionably one of the motives for this decision was Marx's ill will toward Bakunin, whom the German regarded as a schemer aiming to “break up the International and convert it into his own tool.” But in any case, irrespective of Marx's personal sentiments, Bakunin's idea of forming a dual organization was unfortunate. When this was explained to him by his Belgian and Swiss comrades, he recognized the justice of the General Council's decision. The Central Bureau of the Alliance, after consulting the members, dissolved the Alliance and the local group in Geneva became a simple section of the International which was then admitted to membership by the General Council in July 1869.

The fourth general congress of the International (Basel, September 6–12, 1869) almost unanimously endorsed the principle of, collective property, but it soon became evident that the delegates were divided into two distinct ideological groups. The Germans, Swiss-Germans, and English were state communists. The opposing group — Belgians, Swiss-French, French, and Spaniards — were antiauthoritarian communists, federalists, or anarchists who took the name “Collectivists!” Bakunin, naturally, belonged to this faction, which included the Belgian De Paepe and the Parisian Varlin.

The secret organization founded by Bakunin in 1864 was dissolved in January 1869 because of an internal crisis, but many of its members kept in touch with each other. The intimate circle attracted new friends, Swiss, Spaniards, and Frenchmen, Varlin among them. This free contact of men united for collective action in an informal revolutionary fraternity was continued in order to strengthen and give more cohesion to the great revolutionary movement which the International represented.

In the summer of 1869, Borkheim, a friend of Marx, repeated in the Berlin journal *Zukunft* ("The Future") the old libel that Bakunin was a Russian agent, and Wilhelm Liebknecht, a founder of the German Social Democratic party, at various times continued to spread this falsehood. When Bakunin met Liebknecht at the Basel Congress, he challenged him to prove his charges before an impartial "court of honor." Liebknecht explained that he had never personally slandered Bakunin, but had only repeated what he read in the papers, primarily the *Zukunft*. The court of honor unanimously found Liebknecht guilty and signed a statement to that effect. Liebknecht admitted that he was wrong and shook hands with Bakunin, who then set fire to the statement, using it to light his cigarette.

After the Basel Congress, Bakunin moved to Locarno, where he could live cheaply and where he would not be distracted while making a number of Russian translations for a St. Petersburg publisher (the first was of volume one of Marx's *Das Kapital*). Unfortunately, Bakunin's departure from Geneva left the field open for the political machinations of a group headed by the Russian immigrant Nicholas Utin. In a few months they disrupted the Russian section of the International, occupied the key posts, and seized control of its organ, *L'Égalité*. Marx entered into an alliance with Utin and his camarilla of pseudosocialists of the "Temple Unico," the old Masonic hall used as a meeting place for the Geneva International. Meanwhile, on March 28, Marx addressed his notorious "Confidential Communication" to his German friends in order to stir up hatred among the German Democratic Socialists against Bakunin. He represented him as an agent of the pan-Slavist party, from which, Marx declared, Bakunin received twenty-five thousand francs per year.

In April 1870, Utin and his Geneva conspirators engineered a split of the Romance Federation into two factions. The first faction, which took the name "Jura Federation," was in agreement with the Internationalists of France, Belgium, and Spain. They adopted a revolutionary antiauthoritarian position, declaring that "all participation of the working class in the politics of bourgeois governments can result only in the consolidation and perpetuation of the existing order." The other, the Temple Unico faction, backed by the London General Council as well as by the Germans and Swiss-Germans, believed in "electoral action and workers' candidates for political posts."

Bakunin was at that time preoccupied with Russian events. In the spring of 1869 he became friendly with the fiery young revolutionist Sergei Nechaev. Bakunin still believed at that time in the possibility of a vast peasant uprising in Russia, much like that of Stenka Razin. The second centennial of this great revolt of 1669 seemed almost like a prophetic coincidence. It was then that Bakunin wrote in Russian the manifesto *Some Words to My Young Brothers in Russia* and the pamphlet *Science and the Present Revolutionary Cause*. Nechaev soon returned

to Russia, but was forced to flee again after the arrest of almost all his friends and the destruction of his organization. He reached Switzerland in January 1870. Nechaev then prevailed upon Bakunin to abandon the translation of Marx's *Das Kapital* which he had already begun, and to concentrate entirely upon Russian revolutionary propaganda. Nechaev also succeeded in obtaining money for his alleged "Russian Committee" from the remainder of the Bakhmetiev Fund for Russian revolutionary propaganda, which was administered by Ogarev.

Bakunin also wrote, in Russian, the pamphlet *To the Officers of the Russian Army*, and, in French, *The Bears of Bern and the Bear of St. Petersburg*. He edited a few issues of the new series of *Kolokol* and engaged in feverish activity for many months. In July 1870, when Bakunin realized that Nechaev was using him to attain a personal dictatorship by Jesuitical methods, he broke off all relations with the young revolutionist. He had been the victim of excessive trustfulness and of his admiration for Nechaev's savage energy. Bakunin wrote to Ogarev on August 21, 1870:

We have been pretty fine fools. How Herzen would have laughed at us if he were still alive, and how right he would have been!! Well, all we can do is to swallow this bitter pill, which will make us more cautious in the future."

VII

When the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 broke out, Bakunin passionately followed the course of battle. To his friend Ogarev he wrote in a letter dated August 11, 1870, “You are only a Russian, but I am an Internationalist.” To Bakunin, the crushing of France by feudal, militarist Germany would mean the triumph of the counterrevolution; and this defeat could only be avoided by calling upon the French people to rise en masse and throw out both the foreign invader and their own domestic tyrants who were holding them in economic and political bondage. To his socialist friends in Lyons, Bakunin wrote:

The patriotic movement is nothing in comparison with what you must now do if you want to save France. Therefore, arise my comrades to the strains of the *Marseillaise* which today is once again the true anthem of France palpitating with life, the song of liberty, the song of the people, the song of humanity. In acting patriotically we are (also) saving universal liberty. Ah! if I were young again, I would not be writing letters. I would be among you!

A correspondent of the *Volksstaat* (Wilhelm Liebknecht’s paper) had reported that the Parisian workers were “indifferent toward the war.” Bakunin felt that it was perverse to accuse the workers of an apathy which, if actually present, would be criminal on their part. He wrote to the workers that they could not remain indifferent to the German invasion, that they must absolutely defend their liberty against the armed gangs of Prussian militarism.

If France were invaded by an army of German, English, Belgian, Spanish, or Italian proletarians, holding high the banner of revolutionary socialism and proclaiming to the world the final emancipation of labor, I would have been the first to cry to the workers of France: “Open your arms, embrace them, they are your brothers, and unite with them to sweep away the rotten remains of the bourgeois world!” . . . But the invasion that today dishonors France is an aristocratic, monarchic, military invasion. . . . If they remain passive before this invasion, the French workers will betray not only their own liberty, they will also betray the cause of the workers of the world, the sacred cause of revolutionary socialism.

Bakunin’s ideas about the situation facing French workers and the means that should be employed to save France and the cause of liberty were expressed by

him in a small pamphlet which appeared anonymously, in September 1870, under the title *Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis*.

Bakunin left Locarno on September 9, 1870, and arrived in Lyons on the fifteenth. On his arrival, a Committee for the Salvation of France, whose most active and determined member was Bakunin, was immediately organized to mount a revolutionary insurrection. The program of the movement was printed on a huge red poster and was signed by the delegates of Lyons, St.Étienne, Tarare, and Marseilles. Although Bakunin was a foreigner and his position therefore more precarious, he did not hesitate to add his signature to those of his friends, thus sharing their perils and their responsibilities. The poster proclamation first declares that "The administrative and governmental machinery of the State having become impotent is abolished," and that "The people of France [have] regained full control over their own affairs. ' . ." It then immediately proposes the formation in all the federated communes of Committees for the Salvation of France, and the immediate dispatch to Lyons of two delegates from each committee in the capital of each department of France, to form the Revolutionary Convention for the Salvation of France.

On September 28, a popular uprising put the revolutionists in possession of the Lyons City Hall; but the treason of General Cluseret, in helping to suppress an uprising he had endorsed, and the cowardice of some of those who had betrayed the trust of the people caused the defeat of the revolutionists. Bakunin, against whom the prosecutor of the Republic, Andrieux, had issued an order of arrest, fled to Marseilles where he remained in hiding for some time, trying to prepare a new uprising. In the meantime, the French authorities spread the rumor that Bakunin was a paid agent of Prussia and that the Government of National Defense could prove it. On its part, Liebknecht's *Volksstaat*, commenting on the twenty-eighth of September and the red poster proclamation, declared that "Not even the Berlin [government's] press could have better served Bismarck's plans."

On October 24, Bakunin, in despair over events in France, sailed from Marseilles on a ship returning to Locarno by way of Genoa and Milan. The day before his departure he had written the following to the Spanish Socialist Sentinon, who had come to France hoping to participate in the revolutionary movement:

The French people are no longer revolutionary at all. . . . Militarism and Bureaucracy, the arrogance of the nobility and the Protestant Jesuitry of the Prussians, in affectionate alliance with the knout of my dear sovereign and master, the Emperor of all the Russias, are going to command all Europe, God knows for how many years. Goodbye to all our dreams of impending Revolution!!

The uprising that broke out in Marseilles on October 31, only seven days after Bakunin's departure, confirmed his pessimistic prediction: the Revolutionary Commune which had been established when news of the capitulation of Bazaine reached Marseilles held out for only five days before surrendering to Alfonso Cent, who had been sent by Gambetta.

In Locarno, where he spent the winter in seclusion, battling against poverty and despair, Bakunin wrote the continuation of his Letters to a Frenchman, an analysis of the new situation in Europe. It was published in the spring of 1871 with the characteristic title, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*. News of the Parisian insurrection of March 18, 1871 (the Paris Commune) lightened his pessimism. The Paris proletariat, at least, had lost neither their energy nor their spirit of revolt. But France, exhausted and defeated, could not be galvanized by the heroism of the people of Paris. The attempts in various provinces to spread the communalist movement (self-governing communes) failed, and the Parisian insurrectionists were finally crushed by their innumerable enemies. Bakunin, who had gone to stay with friends in the Jura to be nearer the French frontier, was unable to help and was compelled to return to Locarno.

But this time Bakunin did not give way to discouragement. The Commune of Paris, upon which all the reactionary forces concentrated their furious, venomous hatred, kindled a spark of hope in the hearts of all the exploited. The proletariat of the world saluted the heroic people whose blood ran in torrents for the emancipation of humanity. "The modern Satan, the great rebellion, suppressed, but not pacified!" exclaimed Bakunin. The Italian patriot Mazzini added his voice to those who cursed the Commune and the International. Bakunin wrote the *Response of an Internationalist to Mazzini* which appeared in August 1871 in both Italian and French. This work made a deep impression in Italy, and produced among the youth and the workers of Italy a climate of opinion which gave birth, toward the end of 1871, to many new sections of the International. A second pamphlet, *The Political Theology of Mazzini and the International*, even further consolidated and extended the International. Bakunin, who by sending Fanelli to Spain had created the International there, was by his polemic with Mazzini also the creator of the International in Italy. Now he threw himself passionately into the struggle not only against the domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat, but against the men who were trying to install the principle of authority in the International Workingmen's Association.

VIII

The split in the Romance Federation (French-speaking Switzerland), which could have been healed if the London General Council had so desired and if the agents of that Council had been less perfidious, was aggravated to the point of irreversibility. In August 1870 Bakunin and three of his friends were expelled from the Geneva section because they had declared their sympathy for the Jura Federationists. Soon after the end of the Franco-Prussian War Marx's agents came to Geneva to revive the discords. The members of the now-dissolved Geneva section of the Alliance believed that they had given sufficient proof of their friendly intentions by dissolving their section. But the party of Marx and Utin did not cease its harassments: a new section, called "Propaganda and Revolutionary Socialist Action," formed by refugees from the Paris Commune and including old members of the Alliance section, was promptly refused admission to the International by the General Council. Instead of a general congress of the International, the General Council, controlled by Marx and his friend Engels, in September 1871 convened a secret conference in London, attended almost entirely by partisans of Marx. The conference adopted resolutions destroying the autonomy of the sections and federations of the International and giving the General Council powers that violated the fundamental statutes of the International and the conference. At the same time it tried to promote and organize, under the direction of the General Council, what it called "the political [parliamentary] action of the working class."

Immediate action was necessary. The International, a vast federation of groups organized to fight the economic exploitation of the capitalist system, was in imminent danger of being derailed by a little band of Marxist and Blanquist sectarians. The sections of the Jura; together with the "Propaganda and Revolutionary" section of Geneva, met in Sonvilier (November 12, 1871) and established the Jurassian Federation of the International. This association sent a circular to all the federations of the International urging them to jointly resist the usurpations of the General Council and to energetically reconquer their autonomy. The circular, among other things, declared:"

If there is an undeniable fact, attested to a thousand times by experience, it is the corrupting effect produced by authority on those who manipulate it. It is absolutely impossible for a man who wields power to remain a moral man. . .

The General Council could not escape this inevitable law. These men, accustomed to march at our head and to speak in our name, have been led by the

very demands of their situation to desire that their particular program, their particular doctrine, should prevail in the International. Having become in their own eyes a sort of government, it was natural that their own particular ideas should appear to them as official theory, as they had the sole “freedom of the city” [unlimited power] in the Association whilst divergent views expressed by other groups appeared no longer the legitimate expression of opinions With rights equal to their own, but as veritable heresies . . .

We do not impugn the intentions of the General Council. The persons who compose it found themselves the victims of an inevitable necessity. They wanted in good faith, and for the triumph of their particular doctrine, to introduce into the International the principle of authority. Circumstances appeared to favor their doctrine, and it appears to us quite natural that this school, whose ideal is THE CONQUEST OF POLITICAL POWER BY THE WORKING CLASS, should have believed that the International was going to alter its original structure and transform itself into a hierarchical organization directed and governed by the General Council . . .

But while we understand these tendencies we feel obliged to fight them in the name of that Social Revolution whose program is “Emancipation of the workers by the workers themselves.” . . .

The future society must be nothing else than the universalization of the organization that the International has formed for itself. We must therefore strive to make this organization as close as possible to our ideal. How could one expect an egalitarian society to emerge out of an authoritarian organization? It is impossible. The International, embryo of the future society, must from now on faithfully reflect our principles of federation and liberty, and must reject any principle tending toward authority and dictatorship.

Bakunin enthusiastically welcomed the Sonvilier circular and devoted ‘all his energies to actively propagating its principles in the Italian sections of the International. Spain, Belgium, most of the French sections (secretly reorganized in spite of the Versailles reaction following the defeat of the Paris Commune), and most of the United States sections declared themselves in agreement with the Swiss-Jura Federation. It was soon certain that the attempts of Marx and his allies to capture the International would be repulsed. The first half of 1872 was marked by a “confidential circular” issued by the General Council, written by Karl Marx and printed as a pamphlet entitled *Les prétendues scissions dans l’Internationale* (“The Alleged Splits in the International”). Prominent Federalist militants and others

seeking independence from the General Council were personally slandered, and the widespread protests against certain acts of the General Council were depicted as sordid intrigues by members of the old International Alliance of the Social Democracy (the Alliance) who, directed by “the Pope of Locarno” (Bakunin), were working for the destruction of the International. Bakunin gave his reaction to this circular in a letter: “The sword of Damocles that hung over us so long has at last fallen over our heads. It is not really a sword, but the habitual weapon of Marx, a heap of filth.”

Bakunin passed the summer and autumn of 1872 in Zurich, where on his initiative a Slavic section was founded, composed almost entirely of Serbian and Russian students, which joined the Jura Federation of the International. Since April Bakunin had been in contact with Russian emigre youths in Locarno who organized themselves into a secret action and propaganda group. The most militant member of this group was Armand Ross (Michael Sazhin). In intimate contact with Bakunin from the summer of 1870 to the spring of 1876, Ross was the principal intermediary between the great revolutionary agitator and Russian youth.

Bakunin’s propaganda during this period was an inspiration to the young Russians in the following years. Bakunin’s dictum that the youth must “GO TO THE PEOPLE” had become an axiom within the populist movement. In Zurich, Ross established a Russian-language printing plant which in 1873 published *Istoricheskoye Razvitiye Internatsionala* (“ne Historical Development of the International”), a collection of articles translated from Swiss and Belgian socialist papers, with explanatory notes by different writers, and a chapter on the Alliance written by Bakunin. In 1874 Ross’s press printed *Gosudarstvennost i Anarkhiya* (“Statism and Anarchy”). A conflict with Peter Lavrov and personal dissensions among some of its members led to the dissolution of the Zurich Slav section of the International in 1873.

in the meantime the General Council decided to convene a general congress for September 7, 1872. It chose to meet at The Hague for two main reasons: it was a location close to London, and thus allowed many delegates who agreed with Marx’s policies or held fictitious credentials to get to the congress easily; at the same time, the location made it more difficult for delegates representing remote or legally ‘banned federations to attend; there was no possibility, for example, of Bakunin’s attending. The newly constituted Italian Federation refused to send delegates. The Spanish Federation sent four, the Jura Federation two, the Belgian Federation seven, the Dutch Federation four, the English Federation five. These twenty-two delegates, the only ones truly representing constituents of the International, made up the core of the minority. The majority of forty who, in reality, represented only themselves had already pledged themselves in advance to faithfully carry out the orders of the clique headed by Marx and Engels. The

only decision of the congress with which we deal here is the expulsion of Bakunin [Guillaume was also expelled] from the International. This action was taken on the last day of the congress, September 7, after one-third of the delegates had already gone home, by a vote of twenty-seven for and seven against, with eight abstentions. A mock inquiry by a five-member commission, held behind closed doors, found Bakunin guilty of the charges made by the Marxist clique, and he was expelled on two grounds:

1. That a draft of principles and letters signed "Bakunin" proves that said citizen has tried to establish, and perhaps has succeeded in establishing, a society in Europe named "The Alliance" with rules on social and political matters entirely different from those of the International.
2. That Citizen Bakunin has made use of deceptive tricks in order to appropriate some portion of another person's fortune, which constitutes fraud; that further he or his agents resorted to threats lest he be compelled to meet his obligations.

The second Marxist accusation refers to the three hundred rubles advanced to Bakunin for the translation of Marx's *Das Kapital* and the letter written by Nechaev to the publisher Poliakov.

A protest against this infamy, immediately published by a group of Russian immigrants, made these points:

Geneva and Zurich, October 4, 1872. They have dared to accuse our friend Michael Bakunin of fraud and blackmail. We do not deem it necessary or opportune to discuss the alleged facts on which these strange accusations against our friend and compatriot are based. The facts are well known in all details and we will make it our duty to establish the truth as soon as possible. Now we are prevented from so doing by the unfortunate situation of another compatriot who is not our friend, but whose persecution at this very moment by the Russian government renders him sacred to us. [This refers to Nechaev, who was arrested in Zurich on August 14, 1872, and extradited to Russia via Switzerland on October 27, 1872.] Mr. Marx, whose cleverness we do not, like others, question, has this time at least shown very bad judgment. Honest hearts in all lands will doubtless beat with indignation and disgust at so shameful a conspiracy and so flagrant a violation of the most elementary principles of justice. As to Russia, we can assure Mr. Marx that all his maneuvers will inevitably end in failure. Bakunin is too well

esteemed and known there for calumny to touch him. Signed: Nicholas Ogarev, Bartholomy Zaitsev, Vladimir Ozerov, Armand Ross, Vladimir Holstein, Zemphiri Ralli, Alexander Oelsnitz, Valerian Smirnov.

The day after the Hague Congress of September 5, 1872, another congress of the International — comprising delegations from the Italian, Spanish, Swiss-Jura federations, as well as representatives from American and French sections — convened in St.-Imier Switzerland. The congress stated that it unanimously:

Rejects absolutely all resolutions of the Hague Congress and does not recognize to any extent the powers of the new General Council named by it. [The General Council had been transferred to New York.]

The Italian Federation had already affirmed, on August 4, 1872, the resolutions of the St.-Imier Congress, which the Jura Federation also adopted at a special meeting held the same day as that of the congress. Most of the French sections hastened to express their complete approval. The Spanish and Belgian federations endorsed the resolutions at their congresses held respectively in Cordoba and Brussels during Christmas week of 1872. The American Federation did likewise at its meeting in New York City on January 12, 1873. The English Federation, which included Marx's old friends Eccarius and Jung, refused to recognize the decisions of the Hague Congress and the new General Council.

On June 5, 1873, the General Council in New York, exercising the powers vested in it by the Hague Congress, suspended the Jura Federation, declaring it subversive. As a result, the Dutch Federation, which had been neutral, joined the other seven federations of the International, declaring on February 14, 1873, that it refused to recognize the "suspension" of the Jura Federation.

The publication by Marx and the little group that still remained faithful to him of a pamphlet filled with gross lies, entitled *The Alliance of the Social Democracy and the International* [written in French in the second half of 1873], only provoked the disgust of all those who read this product of blind hatred.

On September 1, 1873, the sixth congress of the International opened in Geneva. The Belgian, Dutch, Italian, French, English, and Swiss-Jura federations were represented and the Lasallean socialists of Berlin sent a telegram of greetings. The congress concerned itself with the revision of the statutes of the International, pronounced the dissolution of the General Council, and made the International a free federation without any directing authority over it:

The federations and sections comprising the International each reclaims its complete autonomy, the right to organize itself as it sees fit, to administer

its own affairs without any outside interference, and to determine the best and most efficient means for the emancipation of labor. [Article 3 of the new statutes]

His lifelong battles had left Bakunin exhausted. Prison had aged him before his time, his health had seriously deteriorated, and he now craved repose and retirement. When he saw the International reorganized in a way that fulfilled the principle of free federation, he felt that the time had come to take leave of his comrades. On October 12, 1873, he addressed a letter to the members of the Jura Federation:

I beg you to accept my resignation as a member of the Jura Federation and the International. I no longer feel that I have the strength needed for the struggle: I would be a hindrance in the camp of the Proletariat, not a help . . . I retire then, dear comrades, full of gratitude to you and sympathy for your great cause — the cause of humanity. I will continue to follow, with brotherly anxiety, all your steps and I will greet with joy each of your new victories. Till death I will be yours. [For full text, see p. 351.]

He had but three years to live.

His friend, the Italian revolutionist Carlo Cafiero, invited him to stay in his villa near Locarno. There Bakunin lived until the middle of 1874, apparently absorbed by his new life, one in which he had at last found tranquillity, security, and relative well-being. But he still regarded himself as a soldier of the revolution. When his Italian friends launched an insurrectionary movement, Bakunin went to Bologna in July 1874 to participate. But the insurrection, poorly planned, collapsed and Bakunin returned in disguise to Switzerland.

At this time Bakunin and Cafiero became estranged. Cafiero, having sacrificed his entire fortune for the cause of the revolution, found himself ruined and was forced to sell the villa. Bakunin, unable to stay in Locarno, settled in Lugano where, thanks to his paternal inheritance sent to him by his brothers, he was able to support himself and his family. The temporary coolness between Bakunin and Cafiero did not last long, and friendly relations were soon re-established. But Bakunin's illness progressed, ravaging both spirit and body, so that by 1875 he was only a shadow of his former self. Hoping to find relief, Bakunin left Locarno for Bern to consult his old friend, Vogt, to whom he said, "I have come to be restored to health or to die." He was taken to a hospital, where he was affectionately attended by Dr. Vogt and another close friend, the musician Reichel.

In one of his last conversations, recalled by Reichel, Bakunin in speaking of Schopenhauer remarked:

All our philosophy starts from a false base; it begins always by considering man as an individual, and not as he should be considered — that is, as a being belonging to a collectivity; most of the philosophical (and mistaken) views stemming from this false premise either are led to the conception of a happiness in the clouds, or to a pessimism like that of Schopenhauer and Hartmann.

In another conversation, Reichel expressed his regret that Bakunin could never find time to write his memoirs. Bakunin replied:

And why should you want me to write them? It is not worth the effort. Today the people in all lands have lost the instinct of revolution. No, if I get a bit of strength back again, I would rather write an ethic based on the principles of collectivism, making no use of philosophical or religious phrases.

He died at noon on July 1, 1876.

On July 3, socialists from all parts of Switzerland arrived in Bern to pay their last respects to Michael Bakunin. At his graveside, eulogies were offered by some of his friends from the Jura Federation: Adhemar Schwitzguebel, James Guillaume, Elisee Reclus; by Nicholas Zhukovsky, representing the Russians; by Paul Brouse for the French Revolutionary Youth; by Betsien for the German proletariat. At a meeting after the funeral all were moved by one sentiment: to forget, upon the grave of Bakunin, all personal bickering, and to unite on the basis of liberty and mutual tolerance all the socialist factions in both camps. The following resolution received unanimous approval:

The workers gathered in Bern on the occasion of the death of Michael Bakunin belong to five different nations. Some are partisans of a Worker's State, while others advocate the free federation of groups of producers. But all feel that a reconciliation is not only very essential and very desirable, but also easy to establish on the basis of the principles of the International, as formulated in Article 3 of the revised statutes adopted at the Geneva Congress of 1873.

Therefore this assembly, meeting in Bern, calls upon all workers to forget the vain and unfortunate dissensions of the past and to unite on the basis of strict adherence to the principles enunciated in Article 3 of the above-mentioned statutes [autonomy of the sections].

Do you want to know how this moving appeal to forget past hatreds and to unite in liberty was answered? The Marxist Tagwacht of Zurich on July 8 printed the following:

Bakunin was regarded by many fair-minded men and good socialists as a Russian agent. This suspicion, doubtless erroneous, was aroused by the fact that Bakunin greatly harmed the revolutionary movement; it was the reaction which benefited most from his activity.

Similar malevolent accusations vented by the *Volksstaat* of Leipzig and the Russian-language *Vpered* of London compelled the friends of Bakunin to conclude that his enemies did not intend to desist from their campaign of hatred. Hence the Bulletin of the Jura Federation on September 10, 1876, faced with hostile manifestations, declared:

We desire, as our conduct has always established, the most complete reconciliation possible of all socialist groups: we are ready to extend our hand in friendship to all those who sincerely wish to struggle for the emancipation of labor. But we are at the same time determined not to allow anyone to insult our dead.

Will the time come when posterity will assess the personality and achievements of Bakunin with the impartiality that we have a right to expect? Further, can one hope that the wishes expressed by his friends on his freshly covered grave will someday be realized?

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James Guillaume
Michael Bakunin
A Biographical Sketch
August 1907

From *Bakunin on Anarchy*, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971.
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