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Letter to R-S

“Revolutionary action can never be based on vile and
base passions”

Mikhail Bakunin

21 October 1874

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21 October 1874, Lugano

I received your letter. As for friendship, R-S, let's not talk about it. After all you've cooked up against me (I now know about this to the tiniest detail) to call ourselves friends would be a horrific lie on both of our parts. You did all you could to kill me physically, morally, and socially by pretending up to the bitter end to be my friend, and if you didn't succeed in doing so it wasn't for lack of trying.

The perspicacious and intelligent Cafiero was nothing but an instrument in your hands, and you were the one who used him. I'd like to believe that you fooled yourself by taking the inspiration of your impatient and immoderate ambition for devotion to the cause. It's undeniable, and you must admit this at least, that you acted towards me like the worst of my enemies. And despite this I continue to believe in your devotion to the Russian cause, in believing you capable of serving it, and because of this, and on this level I am still ready to extend my hand to you.

You are now preparing yourself to take a decisive step, one on which you're your entire future, and even more importantly, your career as a revolutionary, will depend. Allow the old man that I am to tell you some truths, probably the last ones I will express to you.

Try to force yourself to bring to all the relations with the new men with whom you will find it useful and possible to join with all the truth, all the sincerity, and all the affection which your not very prodigal nature is capable of. Try to understand that nothing solid or viable can be built on Jesuitical lies; that revolutionary action can never be based on vile and base passions, and that the revolution can only emerge triumphant if it has an elevated, humane goal. In this sense and direction I wish you total success

M. Bakunin