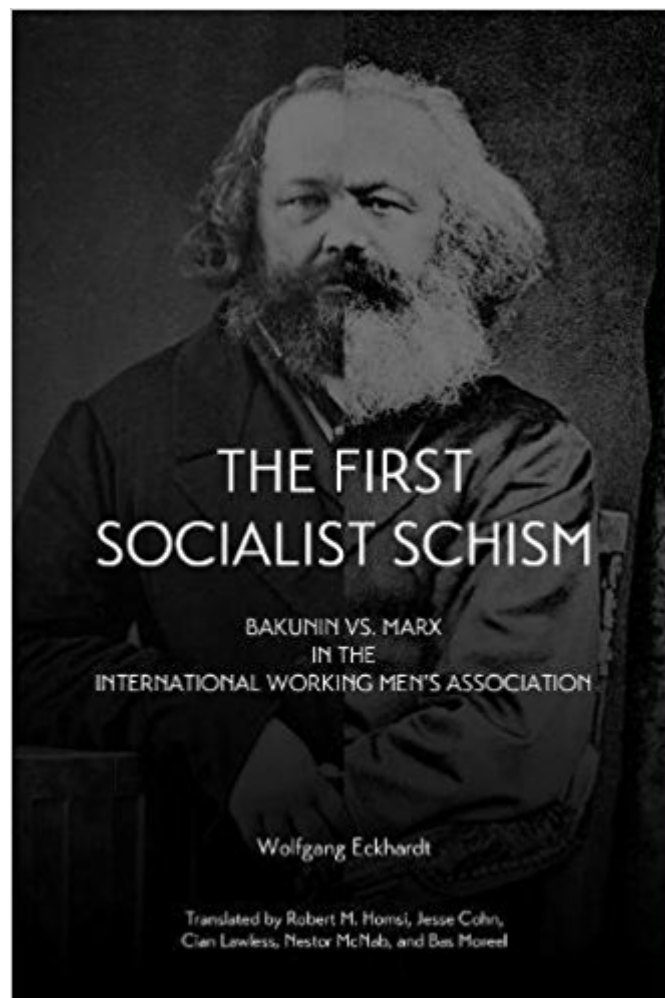




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# **The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin Vs. Marx In The International Working Men's Association**



## Synopsis

The First Socialist Schism chronicles the conflicts in the International Working Men's Association (First International, 1864–1877), which represents an important milestone in the history of political ideas and socialist theory. The separate movements in the International—which would later develop into social democracy, communism, and anarchism—found their greatest advocates in Mikhail Bakunin and Karl Marx. What made the conflict between Bakunin and Marx so important was that it heralded the first socialist schism between parliamentary party politics aiming to conquer political power and social-revolutionary concepts. Instead of focusing exclusively on what Marx and Bakunin said, many other contributions to this debate are examined, making this the first reconstruction of a dispute that gripped the entire organization. This book also provides the first detailed account of the International's Congress of The Hague (September, 1872), famous for the expulsion of Bakunin; including the background, the sequence of events, and international reaction. The book sets new standards when it comes to source material, taking into account documents from numerous archives and libraries that have previously gone unnoticed or were completely unknown.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Wolfgang Eckhardt has been doing outstanding research on Mikhail Bakunin and the First International for years, unearthing precious materials in archives across Europe and documenting them in various German-language publications. His work now being available in English means a tremendous contribution to the international historiography of the anarchist movement and its

origins. • "Gabriel Kuhn, editor, *Gustav Landauer: Revolution and Other Writings* Eckhardt provides an in-depth description of the development and political context of the conflict between Marx and Bakunin. The book sets a new standard, providing a detailed account of the context, background, and effect of the conflict. • "Jochen Schmück, *DadA-Web* (Database of German Language Anarchism) Eckhardt's historiographical and documentary presentation is more thorough and detailed than anything that has been published on this topic in recent years. His valuable contribution to both historiography and political discussion can scarcely be overestimated. • "Max Henninger, *Sozial.Geschichte* (Social History Online)"Eckhardt's book meticulously documents how Marx and his relatively small coterie of supporters tried to turn the International from a pluralist association of workers' organizations into a monolithic organization committed to the formation of political parties." • "Robert Graham, [robertgraham.wordpress.com](http://robertgraham.wordpress.com)"The book is not only an extremely thorough description of the infamous years of the First International, but also an important reminder of the heated debates around organizational principles." • "Marcin Anglart, *Syndikalisten*

Wolfgang Eckhardt works for the Library of the Free (Bibliothek der Freien) in Berlin and has been actively researching anarchism since the 1990s. His publications include the German-language *Bakunin Selected Works* series, of which six volumes have been published so far under his editorship (1995–2011).

The primary value of this book is as a convenient and detailed collection of excerpts from the letters, meeting minutes, pamphlets, and other written material relevant to the rifts that arose in the First International. Commonly oversimplified as Marx vs. Bakunin, this book does an excellent job of presenting the voices many other participants in the emergent conflict between socialism and anarchism. There is a substantial amount of material which has not previously appeared in any English-language works. To that extent, this book will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in the picking through the details of 19th-century socialism and anarchism. That said, I wish Eckhardt had done more to integrate this schism into the bigger picture. The book suffers from a lack of contextualization and insufficient analysis. How, for instance, does Marx's federalist goals of a stronger General Council and parliamentary action derive from, or feed into, his writing and thought outside of his activity in the International? Readers who are inadequately versed in Marx, Bakunin, or the First International might consequently find this work opaque. I would also say that the author demonstrates more favorable views of Bakunin than Marx, so if you have any personal political

stakes in Marx vs Bakunin, modulate your expectations accordingly. On the whole, if you are interested in the history of 19th-century labor movements, this would be a good addition to your library. On the other hand, if you are looking to the past primarily hoping to shed light on current events, the lack of context and analysis means this book might not have much to offer you.

This book though well written and researched is unapologetically pro-Bakunin, although Eckhardt's integrity allows for the backhanded recognition that Marx's suspicions regarding Bakunin were correct provided you read between the lines. However, only a well versed student of Socialism will be able to understand the political subtext that is frequently glossed over by Mr. Eckhardt.

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