ALEXANDER HERZEN:
A STUDY

by

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I am no teacher; I am a seeker...I do not presume to tell them what is needed; the best I can hope to do is to show them fairly accurately what is not needed. The conflict, the dissatisfaction which you detect in me is, of course, absent in doctrinaires, as in all religious people...But if I have no doctrine, if I do not proclaim precepts from a mount, nor issue decrees from a chancery, why should I not shout about the slavery of man?...Why should I not preach the freeing of thought and conscience from all the lumber that has not passed through the purifying fire of the mind?

Alexander Herzen

INTRODUCTION

Russia's nineteenth century revolutionary movement had few more influential and distinguished figures than Alexander Herzen. He became a social radical at an early age but tended consistently to avoid the well-worn paths of his contemporaries. His social and political thought is rare and complex for its time and place. It combines a devotion to the absolutes of human freedom and justice with a realistic perception and acknowledgment of human limitations. It is the resulting interaction of idealism and realism that lends Herzen's thought its arresting and distinctive quality.

This study will first examine the philosophical views underlying Herzen's social and political thought, then trace the development of his revolutionary thinking through three successive stages---an early period of attraction to liberalism and radical revolution, a middle span of disillusionment as to the efficacy of revolutions and the values of Western civilization, and a final period centered upon his Russian homeland and marked by the hope that through the transformation of the individual the lot of mankind could truly be improved---and conclude with some comments on the nature of the society he hoped the future would see. The interplay of idealism and realism upon Herzen's intellectual processes, his persistent refusal to abandon conveniently one frame of reference in favor of the other, serves both to motivate his mental odyssey and to make it highly difficult to chart. No student of Herzen has failed to point out the

inconsistencies in his thinking, and these inconsistencies do indeed exist, but they are subordinate to his continual and consistent demand that the absolute value of human freedom be recognized together with the evident limitations of the human being. How this one consistency affected the various stages and emphases of Herzen's thought will be made evident.

Herzen was born in Moscow on March 25, 1812, the illegitimate son of a father who hailed from an ancient, wealthy and aristocratic family. His youth followed the pattern of the son of a rich nobleman, his early education being entrusted to a succession of tutors and his reading consisting mainly of the major European writers. Voltaire, Schiller and Goethe were his early favorites. He entered the University of Moscow in 1829; he studied philosophy, literature and natural science, led a Bohemian life, and became increasingly interested in social and political problems. Admiration of the writings of the French Enlightenment and the French socialists made him advocate left-wing views, and he defended them with wit and fervor in the Moscow literary salons.

Nicholas I then reigned in Russia, and Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality became the official creeds of the government. Herzen did not escape their grip. For opposition to the spirit of the government and for revolutionary opinions, he was arrested in 1834 and sentenced to imprisonment and

exile. Being an aristocrat, his punishment was mild; it amounted chiefly in condemnation to great boredom and separation from friends, in service to a government which he abhorred, and in subjection to the sights and sounds of the thrashings, beatings, and wailings of the less fortunate peasant victims about him.

Herzen was permitted to return to Moscow in 1840. There he found German Idealism, then being preached by Belinsky and Bakunin, the rage among his contemporaries. Against their abstractions and passivity, Herzen continued to sing the praises of revolution and socialism. The Secret Police were soon pursuing him again. He was arrested in 1841 and experienced exile for a second time. This time the sentence was brief and he was soon allowed to return to Moscow, remaining under police supervision until 1847, when he managed to obtain a passport to go abroad. These last six years in Russia were filled with exciting and rewarding intellectual activity, including the writing of novels and his two most important philosophical dissertations---"Dilettantism in Science" and "Letters on the Study of Nature." Yet these same years were also painful for him. Craving self-expression, he felt increasingly stifled by Russia's oppressive atmosphere. Also the 1840's marked the beginning of a series of personal tragedies for Herzen: the death of many dear friends and of many of his children, the drowning of his mother, first the

infidelity and then the death of his wife. No doubt these disasters contributed to the pessimistic social and political views he was to develop during the later 1840's and early 1850's.

Herzen's life in Europe after 1848 was both one of rich experience and one of humiliation and despair. Without roots or possessions he wandered from Paris to Nice, Geneva, Venice, Rome, and finally to London. My Past and Thoughts, his brillant and vivid memoirs, provide a wonderful source of information on Herzen's private life, his encounters with the great political figures of his day and his involvement in the political movements of Europe.

A most significant turning point in Herzen's European exile was his entrance into the social and political life of Russia. A man of wealth, he established the Free Russian Printing Press in London and found himself the first independent publicist in Russia's history. The issues of his Bell and Polar Star, containing ideological articles and accusatory documents, some written by Bakunin and other political exiles, but mostly from the pen of Herzen himself, poured into Russia in great numbers. During a crucial period for Russia---her defeat in the Crimean War, her realization of the necessity for reforms, the death of Nicholas I and the advent of Alexander II's liberal era, Herzen exerted influence in behalf of radicalism and liberalism upon both

the young generations of intelligentsia and upon the regime itself. He became known as Iscander or the "Spark" and was alternately called Russia's "new terror," her "new conscience" and her "new idol."

Despite his heavy impact on Russian life and politics, and scarcely less so on letters, Herzen was rejected in the end by those whom he had inspired. After 1865, when the Russian revolutionary movement became more and more one of "blood and iron" and the regime reacted in kind, there was no longer an audience for Alexander Herzen. A dejected figure, yet tragic and heroic, he died in Paris in 1870.

HERZEN'S DUALISTIC PHILOSOPHICAL OUTLOOK

The philosophical views underlying the social and political thought of Alexander Herzen revolve around a number of contradictions---matter and spirit, rationality and irrationality, freedom and necessity. Herzen arrived at these contradictions by way of rebellion against German Idealism. Motivated by a passionate love of man and a desire to abolish the suffering, injustice and oppression that burdened his world, Herzen sought to overthrow the despotic and one-sided vision of the universe he found in German Idealism and to establish man's ability to effect radical alterations upon social and political conditions. As the dualistic outlook at which he arrived had great bearing upon his revolutionary thought, it is necessary to point out the essentials of the philosophy he developed in opposition to the then prevalent Idealism.

Against German Idealism and its assertion that Spirit is the prime reality, Herzen posed a materialist philosophy which was, however, a materialism that retained much of the "spirit" of German Idealism. He objected to a materialism that turns "living man into a corpse"[1] in the same manner as he objected to an idealism that absorbs all of reality into spirit. He desired to restore a living wholeness to the universe and to human nature and thus welcomed in materialism

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[1] E. Lampert, Studies in Rebellion (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 199.

the "redemption of the flesh,"[1] but then saw a need to "rehabilitate matter,"[2] to recognize both matter and spirit as equally legitimate realities and thus to recreate the integral image of man. Indeed, he conceived of matter not as something passively inert but as

> ...moved by an inherent repugnance against its obtuse and heavy inertia; it is self-corroding, it ferments so to speak, and this fermenting process, this perpetual transformation in the dark regions of life, denies material extension, strives to free itself from it and at last is freed in the spirit of man.[3]

Life then is neither matter nor spirit but is action: legitimate antagonism between matter and spirit. "Life is the eternal unrest of active and intense substance which seeks equilibrium only to lose it again."[4]

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[1]Alexander Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), I, 189. (Note: In the remainder of this paper My Past and Thoughts will be referred to as Memoirs).

[2]Lampert, loc. cit.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Alexander Herzen, "From the Other Shore," Selected Philosophical Works, trans. L. Navrozor (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956)p. 420. (Note: In the remainder of this paper, Selected Philosophical Works will be referred to as SPW).

Against the assertion of German Idealism that irrationality is the rule of natural and historical processes, Herzen asserts the absolute irrationality of all development. Rather than rational spirit which may be comprehended by man, he sees at the basis of all development an intangible life-giving force which must forever elude human comprehension. "Every branch of natural science," he asserts, "keeps us painfully aware that there is in nature something intangible,"[1] some vital force which man cannot grasp. Not predetermination then, but spontaneity and improvisation characterize all life. Chaos and irrationality are the only rules of the universe.

Herzen sees history as a "passionate dramatic epic" determined by a "thousand accidental clashes."[2] Not principles of universal logic nor the conscious action of man moves history but human passion, love, hatred, instinctive strivings, time, circumstance and sheer chance.

> Historical development takes place by a combination of thousands of conditions both necessary and fortuitous and by human will...it profits by every chance... making use of every accident and knocking simultaneously at a thousand doors, and no one can say whether they will open or not.[3]

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[1] "Letters on the Study in Nature," SPW, p. 101.

[2] Ibid., p. 135.

[3] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 375.

> In history everything is unpremeditated, everything is free, everything is ex tempore. There are no limits ahead, no itineraries. There are merely the conditions, the fire of life, the sacred unrest, and the everlasting challenge to the combatants to test their strength and to take any road they please.[1]

Historical development is a furious battle between creation and destruction. Everything in life "strives for what is new, thrashes about and never marches in a straight line,"[2] while at the same time everything that already exists strives to preserve itself.

> Conservatism in the historical world is as true an element of life as is perpetual motion and renewal; historic development moves in obedience to both forces.[3]

This mad struggle of history is directed toward no purpose other than its own immediate activity. Every historic moment is complete in itself; each generation becomes its own end.[4] The external world offers man no purpose in life except life itself; it assures him of nothing in the future.

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[1] Ibid., p. 135.

[2] Ibid., p. 360.

[3] "Letters on the Study of Nature," SPW, p. 213.

[4] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 361.

> What is the purpose of the singer's song? Sounds, nothing but sounds. Sounds that fade away the moment they escape the singer's lips. If, instead of enjoying these sounds, you search for something else in them, wait for something else, you will find yourself at the end of the song with memories and regrets that, instead of listening, you stood waiting for something... You are misled by categories not adopted to catch the flow of life. The purpose of the singer is the song; the purpose of life is life itself.[1]

Man is also unable to discern any Absolute Truth in the external world. Within the fury and madness of development, there is no compelling force of truth. The "truth of the past and the truth of the present" are merely "relative truths with no right to eternal existence."[2] Nothing is held sacred in the process of development and man will find in the external world "no ready libretto to follow."[3]

Thus Herzen denied any absolute rationality, spirit, purpose or truth in the external world. The result is an outlook which holds nature and history to be brutal or indifferent to the needs, desires and sufferings of man, to possess a great power over man, who cannot even comprehend these forces. Herzen has therefore, it seems, moved only to

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[1] Ibid., pp. 361-362.

[2] "Letters on the Study of Nature," SPW, p. 243.

[3] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 364

a position similar to that of German Idealism against which he rebelled, a position which maintained the impotence of man before nature and history. However, he insists upon rejecting German Idealism's concept of man's subordination to the forces of the external world and upon justifying man's struggle against them. He seeks to establish man's ability to implement radical change in the existing social and political world.

Herzen begins boldly by asserting the absoluteness of human personality. Man is the very summit of nature's strivings, the unique, the new and autonomous in nature.

> Man is the acme of all aspirations, all the efforts of nature. It is towards him they strive and into him they fall...All that is not developed and is wanting in nature, exists and is developed in man..Man completes the elevation of nature into thought.[1]

And it is not man in the abstract that Herzen holds to be absolute, but every living individual.

> All that is ultimately valuable are the particular purposes of particular individuals; to trample on these is always a crime because there can be no principle of higher value than the ends of the individual.[2]

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[1] "Letters on the Study of Nature," SPW, p. 133.

[2] Isaiah Berlin, "Herzen and Bakunin on Liberty, Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, ed. Ernest J. Simmons (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) p. 498.

> The death of a single person is no less an absurdity than the destruction of the entire race.[1]

Herzen thus arrives at an absolute human personality by abstracting German Idealism's Reason and spirit from the external world and making them the essence of man. He sees man as a creature of consciousness, of will and of moral independence. In the face of an utterly indifferent and purposeless universe, man's only resources for shaping his existence are those within himself. "When all outside is changing," asserts Herzen, "there is no haven except in ourselves, in the consciousness of our limitless freedom and sovereign independence."[2] Man must create his own truth, his own purpose, his own sense of right and justice.

Herzen then proceeds to suggest a natural antagonism between the reason, spirit and natural morality of man and the irrationality and inhumanity of the external world. He deems it inevitable that man shall be in disharmony with the fate that broods indifferently over him. Developing along with the consciousness in man, he perceives "a sense of his own dignity, a striving to preserve the autonomy of personality" and "a need to arrest something of his own from the vortex of chance."[3] The spirit of man is tormented by its alienation

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[1] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 366.

[2] Lampert, op. cit., p. 208.

[3] Vasily V. Zenkovsky, A History of Russian Philosophy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), I, 296.

from the material world and "becomes engaged in a struggle for withdrawal from the phenomenal world to the world reigning over phenomena."[1] Man becomes a conscious power which necessarily pits itself against the chaos of the external world.

Herzen is certain that man is free to exert the forces of his existence against the madness of reality. However, when he proceeds to ask whether man can truly succeed in radically altering the reality of the world, in abolishing suffering, oppression and injustice, Herzen looks again at that irrationality which man is fighting and discovers that man is actually fighting not the external world but himself. Indeed he is fighting that opposing force which creates the struggle and antagonism that for Herzen is the very essence of life.

Any realistic study of human personality, Herzen was compelled to add, would show man to be composed as much of the irrational as the rational; and it is from the human qualities of passion, love, hatred and instinct that history derives its madness. Herzen sees the masses of mankind as "capricious, clamorous and inconstant,"[2] desiring not freedom but merely revenge upon their oppressors. Their passionate

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[1] "Letters on the Study of Nature," SPW, p. 139.

[2] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 395.

strivings only increase suffering and misery within the world. Even among the thinking minority an overwhelming irrationality exists. There is a fear of reality, a reluctance to face the fury of the world and the precariousness of one's own existence. "Fear of the truth leads many to prefer suffering to analysis. Suffering distracts, occupies, consoles."[1] Furthermore, even if man faces the fury of the world and engages in battle against it, he becomes impatient, filled with revenge and hatred. In essence he is overcome by his own irrationality, and thus his struggle only adds to misery and anguish.

Thus Herzen's rebellion against the one-sided and despotic vision of German Idealism and his attempt to restore a dualism to the universe succeeded only in making more difficult his quest for a philosophical justification of social transformation. He recognizes a struggle between matter and spirit, irrationality and rationality, conscious action and instinct, as legitimate in the universe and in man himself. At the same time he realizes that the suffering and injustice against which he is rebelling is the very product of a struggle which he has recognized as necessary and legitimate. He comes finally to perceive that the problem of altering society is no less than the problem of altering the nature of man which in turn leads logically to the abolition of the very essence of life.

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[1] Ibid., p. 349.

Herzen approaches the problem of social transformation with an acute awareness of these contradictions. He refuses, however, to waver in his devotion to the absoluteness of human personality and in his determination that suffering and injustice must be abolished. At the same time, he never loses sight of the limitations placed upon human personality by its own dual nature. This paradox makes for endless inconsistencies and contradictions in his social and political thinking, counterbalanced by an underlying consistency and singlemindedness which is seldom discerned in a social radical.

LOOKING TO THE WEST:
ENTHUSIASM FOR RADICAL REVOLUTION

Alexander Herzen's first observations of the social and political scene led him to advocate radical revolution as the means to establishing liberty, justice and equality for man. His thinking during his early period, from 1825 to 1848, often seems, in its outer manifestations, quite inconsistent with that of his later years. Yet this is not entirely so. In exploring the complex elements underlying his belief in radical revolution and in taking note of mounting doubts as to its efficacy one may discern in his early thinking, much of the same Herzen as in the later years.

Herzen was attracted to radical revolution at the time of the 1825 Decembrist revolt, the first modern manifestation of the Russian revolutionary movement. It was then that Herzen, a boy of thirteen, was first awakened to the stark injustice and brutality of the Russian autocracy. The cruelty dealt the revolutionaries in their arrest, trial, hanging and exile moved Herzen profoundly. He recalls the experience in his Memoirs:

> The horror...made a deep impression on me. A new world which became more and more the center of my moral existence was revealed to me...though I had no understanding of what it all meant, I felt that I was not on the same side as the grapeshot and victory, prison and chains.[1]

Provoked by hatred of the victors and sympathy with those whose lives had been sacrificed, Herzen vowed to devote his

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[1] Memoirs, I, 61.

own life to a continuation of the Decembrists' struggle by revolting against all forms of tyranny---political, social, religious and moral.

Identifying himself thus with the Decembrist martyrs, Herzen turned to their source of inspiration, the ideals of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. "Political dreams absorbed me day and night," he wrote, and "The history of the Revolution came to the foreground in my reading."[1] At this point, however, the youth was far from the struggle. "My ideas were confused," he recalls and "not distinguished by any particular insight."[2]

Upon entering the university in 1829, Herzen soon became the leader of a circle of students who studied current ideas of Western Europe with great enthusiasm and followed closely the social and political ferment there. Nevertheless, his interest in Western ideals and his devotion to radical revolution seem at this point less a real conviction or understanding than an emotional attraction, provoked by the increasing incompatibility of his freedom-loving nature with the oppression and injustice about him and his consequent mounting hatred of the Russian autocracy. Viewed from the atmosphere of stagnation and corruption he found in his own

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1 Ibid., p. 64.

2 Ibid.

land, the struggle and vitality of revolution seemed a glorious thing, the certain means to destruction of all forms of arbitrary rule and social injustice. Herzen poignantly recalls this early enthusiasm in his Memoirs. Upon receiving the news of 1830's July Revolution in Paris, Herzen writes, "I read the Journal of the Debats over a hundred times and got to know them by heart."[1]

> It was a glorious time...We followed step by step every event, the bold questions and abrupt answers, the doings of General Layafette, and the doings of General Lamarcque; we not only knew every detail concerning them but loved all the leading men (the Radical ones, of course) and kept their portraits, from Manuel and Benjamin Constant to Dupont de l'Eure and Armand Carrel.[2]

Then, in the midst of this ferment came the news of the Polish uprising in Warsaw:

> We rejoiced at every defeat of Dibitch; refused to believe in the failures of the Poles, and I at once added to my shrine the portrait of Thaddeus Kosciuszko.[3]

This youthful enthusiasm soon started to fade; radical revolution began to lose its magic power over Herzen.

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[1] Ibid.,p. 153.

[2] Ibid.,p. 154.

[3] Ibid.,p. 155.

The crushing of the Polish insurrection by Nicholas I, followed closely by the failure of the July uprising in France was evidence that revolution was not succeeding in its task.

> We began with inward horror to discover that in Europe...to which we looked for our political watch-word and battle-cry, things were not going well; we began to look upon our theories with suspicion.[1]

"The period which followed educated us rapidly," Herzen recalls.[2]

It was during the early 1830's that Herzen came upon the doctrines of Saint-Simon. In studying Saint-Simonism, extolling reason and science, and at the same time viewing more maturely the crude and ignorant world about him, Herzen began to discern vaguely that the roots of tyranny and injustice were not found in political institutions. It is at this time that Herzen turns to socialism as the only true means to the establishment of liberty, justice and equality. How a socialistic society might come about in a world pervaded by authoritarianism became his pressing concern.

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[1] Ibid., p.188.

[2] Ibid.

During the 1840's Herzen arrived at a tentative conclusion. He was then studying German Idealism and developing his concept of history as a mad and furious struggle between creation and destruction. He proceeded to this outlook with his dreams of a Saint-Simonist world, arriving at the conclusion that a socialistic society could come about only after a period of long and furious struggle which would consummate in total destruction of the old authoritarian world.

> Out of the gates of the temple of knowledge humanity will emerge proudly, inspired by knowledge... to build the kingdom of God...But how will this come to pass? The question of how belongs to the future... When the time comes the lightning of events will split the clouds, will burn all obstacles and the future, like Pallas Athene, will be born in full armor.[1]

To illustrate how the "lightning of events splits the clouds," Herzen points to the transition from the ancient to the Christian world, as a period of great struggle before its ultimately successful resolution.[2]

Herzen is simultaneously attracted and repelled by this revolutionary destruction as a means to social transformation. With its sponteneity, vitality and creativity, he is emotionally attracted to it as a time for living. In

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[1]"Dilettantism in Science," SWP, p. 96

[2]"Letters on the Study of Nature," SWP, pp. 214-220.

addition, because of a deepening conviction of historical necessity and of man's impotence against its irrationality, it now seems that he is increasingly compelled to accept destruction as a legitimate means to social change. He sees the impending cataclysm as inevitable, and indeed as the only means by which his new world might be born. He thus feels compelled to accept it. At the same time, however, his sensitivity to human individuals is repelled by the misery and suffering which must accompany the period. Ironically, Herzen sees the individual in whose capacities he so firmly believes as totally impotent, as a mere victim of external necessity during the period of struggle.

> The last period preceding a new phase of life is hard, unbearable, for every thinking person; all questions become disagreeable and people are ready to take the most absurd decisions so as to reassure themselves. Fanatical beliefs persist beside cold lack of faith, mad hopes beside despair. People are tormented by forebodings; there is a craving for events, and yet, seemingly nothing happens. It is a dull, underground work, a tiring pregnancy, a time of afflictions and suffering...These poor transient generations usually perish in the middle of the way, exhausted by their feverish condition. These are generations doomed to extinction, not belonging to this or any other world.[1]

Thus we see in the Herzen of the 1840's something of the complex point of view which is being formed by his belief

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[1] Ibid., p. 216.

in the absoluteness of human personality, his determination that liberty and justice must be established, and at the same time his realistic perception of the power of historical necessity and of man's limitations in the face of it.

Before 1848, however, Herzen could still maintain his belief in radical revolution as the means to social transformation. His mounting hatred of Russian despotism, and of the inequities about him, his intense craving for a new social order and very possibly his failure to perceive the full implications of revolutionary violence enabled him to do so. He later maintains that his ideas were still quite confused during this period:

> We preached in every place and at every time... exactly what it was we preached it is hard to say. Our ideas were vague: we preached the Decembrists and the French Revolution; then advocated Saint-Simonism and the same Revolution...most of all we preached hatred of every form of violence, for every sort of arbitrary tyranny practiced by governments.[1]

Thus firm in his hatred of tyranny and in his devotion to human freedom, Herzen became possessed by the urge to assert his convictions more freely and with greater effect than in the stifling atmosphere of his own land. Already Herzen had twice experienced exile for spreading revolutionary

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[1] Memoirs, III, 258.

ideas and the doctrines of Saint-Simon, first during the later 1830's and again briefly during the early 1840's. He had returned to Moscow in 1842, no longer in a mood of vague radicalism but now deeply and bitterly hating the Russian autocracy. He craved freedom of speech and revolutionary action and therefore looked toward the social and political ferment of Western Europe during the later 1840's with great longing. In 1847, confused as to positive ideas, yet clear in what was not wanted and optimistic that tyranny could be destroyed, Herzen left his homeland to become himself a part of the struggle for freedom and justice.

DISILLUSIONMENT AND PROTEST

Herzen arrived in Europe on the eve of the Revolutions of 1848. He lived through the violence of the revolutions, the harsh reaction that followed and the tyranny of the bloody June Days; he emerged profoundly impressed by the implications of revolutionary destruction. He protested once and for all against such action; yet at the same time he predicted a still more violent and destructive revolution in the making. Herzen has been interpreted by many as having become during 1848 a wholehearted advocate of Radical Revolution. The inaccuracy of such a view can be discerned by analyzing his sentiments toward the revolution which he foresaw and by examining the task which he advocated for man in the face of the coming destruction. From the Other Shore was written by him just after 1848 in a mood of bitterness and despair, yet with a deep sense of rationality. The book clearly reflects the complex social attitude which Herzen by then had developed: it is the product of a revolutionary repelled by the reality of revolution, of an idealist bitter at the impotence of his own ideals, and of a realist strong enough to stare reality in the face, humble enough to bow before it, and stubborn enough to curse it and to find something in which to believe despite it. Encompassing all these qualities in Herzen is the rebel who will not compromise his basic convictions and who will fight tyranny wherever he finds it.

Radical revolution was abhorrent to Herzen first of all because of the stupidity of what it attempted. A thinking minority was endeavoring to force rational theory and abstract ideals into historical reality. History, however, was only a universal chronic madness, shaped not by logic but by the blind passions and instincts of the masses. A thinking minority was incapable of altering its overall course.

> In history man labors under the delusion that he is free and unhampered to do whatever he chooses... historical evolution...does not coincide with the ways of thought...or the abstract standards set up by pure reason.[1]

Revolutionaries were blinded to this reality by their overwhelming love of mankind and their desire that man must be free. They never questioned who this "mankind" was. The majority of mankind, Herzen maintained, did not want liberty nor were they capable of achieving it.

> The masses want to stay the hand which impudently snatches from them the bread which they have earned... They are indifferent to individual freedom, liberty of speech; the masses love authority. They are still blinded by the arrogant glitter of power, they are offended by those who stand alone. By equality they understand equality of oppression...they want a social government to rule for their benefit and not like the present one, against it. But to govern themselves does not enter their heads.[2]

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[1] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 394.

[2] Ibid.,p. 451.

Thus revolutionaries ridiculously sacrificed their own lives trying to force upon the masses that which they neither desired nor understood. Not until the passivity, ignorance and instinct of the masses were transformed into rational protest, understanding and conscious action could any degree of liberty and justice be established for society.

Herzen's second reason for asserting the illegitimacy of revolution lay in his conviction that it created a tyranny as great as the one it attempted to abolish. Revolution wished to destroy the present in the name of a future which in reality did not exist. Upon the altar of some "common cause"---Freedom, Justice and Equality in the abstract, and Progress, the great "Moloch of depersonalization"[1]--millions of concrete individuals were slaughtered. Liberty, Equality and Justice had meaning for Herzen only insofar as they were attained or attainable by human persons living in the present. To sacrifice one single individual in the name of any abstraction for the future seemed sheer absurdity.

Thirdly Herzen protested radical revolution because it had been insufficiently radical. He conceived that European civilization---with its courts, its police, its law codes, its established churches, its despotism of property and its concept of the sovereign state---was still infected by authoritarianism. Past revolutions had failed to free Europe from these burdensome shackles of tyranny;

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[1] Ibid., p. 362.

they had merely modified old forms of authority: deism had replaced theism; constitutionalism and republicanism had replaced monarchism, but the transcendent state and external pressures still remained. If a new world order were really to succeed, no institutions from the old could remain.

> The forms of European civics, politics, and civilization, its good and evil developed and conform to an essence different from the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity. These ideals are incompatible with the essence of monarchism and Catholicism. The old forms were modifiable to some degree, but only to a certain degree...Now any realization of the ideals will mean destruction of present European life, a civilization, Christian and aristocratic.[1]

Despite Europe's inability to shake off the burdens of authoritarianism by "little revolutions, little changes, and half-freedoms,"[2] Herzen saw two means by which she might yet succeed in freeing herself. One was cataclysmic destruction, the other what he termed "negative action" and "spiritual activity."[3] The remainder of this chapter will concern itself with Herzen's views on the nature, consequences and legitimacy of these two alternatives.

Herzen deemed inevitable a cataclysmic destruction which would abolish the old world of authority. A thinking minority had failed to give bread to the masses and to ease

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1 Ibid., p. 362.
2 Ibid., p. 382-3
3 Ibid., p. 439.

their suffering: Now the masses themselves, the true rulers of history, would accomplish the task. The "terrible name freedom," had begun to penetrate the world of instinct and passion; among the masses it was a dangerous concept.[1] The social ideal had begun to take hold and now no one would be able to convince the people that they should suffer hunger and poverty while the existing scheme of society was undergoing gradual change. Neither laws, republics, education nor philanthrophy would now be able to save the old world. Not protesting in behalf of freedom and justice but instinctively craving to cast off suffering and to reap revenge on their oppressors, the masses would swarm over the earth and destroy without discrimination.

> West Europe will rise up like the phoenix in a baptism of fire...The good and the evil, the right and the wrong will perish alike.[2]

Herzen sees this approaching destruction as a prospect filled with splendor yet at the same time one of great horror. The intensity of his disillusionment and bitterness against the European world, a world in which he found nothing but bloodshed and violence, compelled the passionate Herzen to glory in the thought of a destructive orgy which would

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[1] Ibid., p. 439.

[2] Memoirs, VI, 38.

reap revenge upon the madness about him. It mattered little to him what lay beyond cataclysmic destruction; that it would destroy the existing brutality was sufficient.

> What will be the outcome of this bloodshed?--- who knows? But whatever it is, it is enough that in this fury of madness, of revenge, of conflict and retribution, the world which stands in the way of the new man, preventing him from living and establishing the future, will fall. And this is splendid! So long live chaos and destruction! Vive la mort! And let the future come.[1]

At the same time, the idealist in Herzen gloried the prospect of destruction because he could hope that his Utopia lay beyond it, that "the spring would burst forth" upon the ruins of the old world.[2] Just as Herzen had earlier found some relief from the bleak Russian reality by looking toward Europe, now he found some refuge in looking toward a regenerated world of the future.

Perhaps a more significant motive driving Herzen to accept and at times even to advocate the coming destruction was his sense of realism. Refusing to permit ideals concerning the Rationality, the Freedom, and the Justice of human beings to cloud his vision, he stared straight in the face of Man in a time of revolution. The horror and savagery of what he saw overwhelmed him. He acknowledged that no cure

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[1] "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 377.

[2] Ibid., p. 437.

was possible for mass madness, that freedom and justice could never become a reality, and that revolutionary destruction could never cease to be both necessary and inevitable.

It is these conflicting outlooks which lead Herzen in From the Other Shore to protest revolutionary destruction on one page and to consider its advocation on the next. "Sensivity to the agony of this world will not alone solve its problems," he cries, "sorrow and pity are justified, but action is necessary."[1] He curses his generation for lack of passion and activity:

> We seem to be soulless speechmakers; our blood is cold; it is only our ink which flows hot. Our thoughts run to anonymous irritation, and our tongues to impassioned words that cannot affect the issues. When it is needful to strike, we meditate; and when we ought to be carried away by emotion, we deliberate...Modern man simply horrifies me. What insensibility and narrowmindedness, what lack of passion and indignation, what feebleness of mind! How soon his ardor is cooled! How quickly his energy and faith in his own cause is spent!
>
> What are you doing, you revolutionaries afraid of revolution?[2]

Yet it is quickly apparent that Herzen also views revolutionary destruction as a horror to be avoided if at all possible, that he cannot truly advocate this means to social transformation. This may be seen first of all in his own vision of what this cataclysm will mean.

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[1] Ibid., p. 399.

[2] Ibid., pp. 435-436.

> Cities taken by storm and looted will fall into poverty, education will decline, factories will come to a stop, villages will be emptied, the country side will remain without hands to work it...exhausted and starving people will submit to everything and military rule will take the place of law and of every kind of orderly adminstration. Then the victors will begin to fight for their loot...communism will swarm across the world in a violent tempest, dreadful, bloody, unjust, swift; the new Commandments will be enunciated...the new Symbols of Faith...The institutions and structure of our own time and civilization will perish...You regret the death of civilization? I, too, I am sorry. But the masses will not regret it, the masses to whom it gave nothing but tears, want, ignorance and humiliation.[1]

Additional evidence of Herzen's rejecting the legitimacy of cataclysmic destruction stems from an alternate means he begins to advocate that might enable Europe to liberate itself. Herzen had already concluded that free life, if feasible at all in society could come about only by means which do not themselves contradict freedom and justice. Given man's irrationality, he proceeds to conclude the freedom and justice sought for society can come about only by a revolution within individuals. The individual who wishes to save the world must first of all begin with himself.

> Were people to desire to save themselves instead of the world, to deliver themselves instead of mankind, how much they could do for the salvation of the world and the emancipation of mankind.[2]

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1 Herzen, "Letters from France and Italy," Berlin. op. cit., p. 486.

2 "From the Other Shore," SWP, p. 446

And this emancipation of one's self must begin with the acknowledgment of one's own enslavement.

> Unfortunately it is not within our power to change the historical relation between the individual and society...But it is within our power to be abreast of the time, to be in accord with our development... and to shape our conduct according to circumstances.[1]

For the man of Herzen's time this will mean total negation of all ideas, institutions, values and beliefs associated with the old world that is inevitably approaching its death. Herzen urges the individual also to leave the noisy thoroughfare of life, to refuse to exchange one form of slavery for another---to "refuse to vote for a Louis Napoleon or a Caviagnac since both are worse"[2]---to retreat into the consciousness of his own freedom and independence and to refuse to allow the universal madness to nullify his own convictions of human right and justice. Only then can the individual begin to contribute to the freedom of others. He can do this only by propaganda and persuasion however since it is more important to destroy the idea of monarchy than the monarch himself.

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[1] Ibid., p. 457.

[2] Ibid., p. 413

What should be preached is the "message of death."

> We are called upon to execute institutions, to destroy beliefs, to deprive people of all hopes, to break down prejudices, to lay hands upon everything sacred without mercy or reservation.[1]
>
> Preach the message of death, show the people every fresh wound on the bosom of the old world, every success of destructions...Point to the impotency of its enterprise, the pettiness of its aspirations. Show that it cannot recover...Preach the message of death as the holy message of impending redemption.[2]

According to Herzen, concern for what will lie in the future results only in futility. There have already been too many formulas for a new world and too many sacrifices in the name of them. Since man cannot be certain that a new world will be built according to his plan, better that he spend his time towards emancipation from the past than "fritting away his energies" in concern with the future.[3]

And what will be the consequence of this individual emancipation, this sincerity to one's convictions, and this appeal to reason and understanding: Herzen is too realistic to think it will lead to freedom and justice for the masses. But neither will radical revolution, he maintains; it can accomplish nothing. At least the alternate approach will bring a degree of freedom to the individual and a degree of compassion to a world seeped in inhumanity.

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1 Ibid., p. 413.
2 Ibid., p. 404.
3 Ibid., p. 459.

LOOKING TO RUSSIA: BELIEF IN GRADUAL PROGRESS

The final period of Herzen's revolutionary thinking, that stretching from his reaction to the events of 1848 to the end of his life, finds him an advocate of gradual progress as the only legitimate means to social transformation. Disillusioned with Western Europe, he turned toward his homeland and there perceived a revolutionary situation in which reason and understanding, as he saw it, could lead to a free and just society. In the despotic, half-savage and lawless land of Russia, Herzen saw potentiality for social development that was totally lacking in the fully organized and exhausted civilization of Western Europe. It will be seen that in making this comparison Herzen's idealism somewhat clouded his vision. Yet he never lost complete sight of reality in Russia, at times referring to his gradual progress as an "empty dream."[1] Revolutionary action never ceased to attract Herzen and he never lost sight of its necessity and of its inevitability. His great strength lay in never submitting completely to his passion nor to his realistic perceptions, but in remaining true to his ideals at a time when all others were turning toward tyranny as a means to abolishing tyranny. In this last period of his life Herzen finds himself advocating means which he knows to be impossible. Yet he can accept no other. Therefore he continues his battle against the tyranny from above and

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[1] Lampert, op. cit., p. 250.

proceeds to launch a simultaneous struggle against those engaging in tyranny from below.

In contrast to Western Europe's principle of monarchy, Herzen concluded, Russian authoritarianism had never infected the entire social structure.[1] He separated the state and the people, seeing the autocracy as a deplorable historical necessity existing solely for its own sake and making no pretense of existing for the people. The people, on the other hand, were innate rebels and anarchists who had never acknowledged the tyranny of the state or any other authoritarianism in the reality of life as legitimate. The Russian had no "Roman Law, Catholicism, Book of Christian Law nor Civil Law Code to govern his every action; he knew nothing of contracts or written agreements."[2] His own nature was his only law. Even though the outer person of the Russian was enslaved, no web of tyranny had crushed the vital resources of his inner being.

Not only had the absence of pervasive authoritarianism preserved the inner freedom of the Russian; the lack of cultural, social or political achievements in the past provided the Russian with greater independence. "The thinking man in Russia," asserts Herzen "is the most independent man in the world."[3] He is more independent because he possesses

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[1] "The Russian People and Socialism," SPW, pp. 478-487.

[2] Ibid., p. 489.

[3] Ibid., p. 496.

nothing. He is more capable of negation because there is no past to stop him. Therefore no desire to preserve civilization and order would ever cause the Russian to halt before the half-freedoms of the West. Herzen was certain that the Russian would never make a revolution with the aim of "getting rid of Tsar Nicholas and of replacing him with tsar-representatives, tsar-judges, and tsar policemen."[1]

Russia's greatest advantage was that she already had the cornerstone upon which a socialist world might be built. Whereas the Western world possessed only socialist theory while its social structure was pervaded by competition and founded on the "absolute despotism of property," Russia already possessed socialist reality in the village mir or commune.[2] Only a vague sense of property had been acquired by the Russians while the partition of the fields, sharing of profits, and self-government of the mir had preserved collectivism. Herzen acknowledged a great defect in the system, that individuality in the mir was effaced by collectivism. He was sure however that with the restoration of the land to the peasants and with emancipation from serfdom an ideal balance between collectivism and individualism would be produced.

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[1] Ibid., p. 486.

[2] Memoirs, II, pp. 275-276.

The rural life of the peasant, Herzen noted, had preserved a simplicity, spontaneity, creativity and innate morality that was lacking in the rational and scientific West. At present, he acknowledged, this made for crudeness and irresponsibility among the peasants. It would prove a virtue for the future, however, as the reason and science of the West could be assimilated by the Russian---his very receptivity and passivity, Herzen saw as a virtue in this case---[1]and society based on an ideal interplay of passion and reason could be created.

Herzen believed that, making use of these potentialities, the social transformation could be carried out in Russia without violent upheaval. By means of education, propaganda and persuasion, socialist development could occur within the existing political framework. A society could be achieved within which freedom and justice would exist for the masses. He proceeded to detail the means by which this might be accomplished.

The intelligentsia and the peasant must work together, combining western knowledge and science with the innate Russian virtues. The intelligentsia must go among the people. He must help raise the peasant to a higher level of consciousness, enabling him to discriminate between

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[1] Memoirs, II, pp. 275-276.

the virtues and vices of his world, to develope a concept of liberty and a sense of protest against despotism. The instinctive striving of the peasant must be replaced by conscious action. Only in this manner could he further the development of his socialistic institutions and at the same time avoid those conflicts with the government which would mean only greater suffering for him.

The intelligentsia must not only teach but learn from the peasant. He must complement his theories with a knowledge of the existing social reality of peasant life. He must study the attitudes, habits, customs, desires, inclinations and attitudes of the peasant. Only by understanding the popular consciousness would he be able to combat that which was crude and irresponsible and consequently abolish that which impeded further socialistic development. Without understanding, asserted Herzen, we may "oppress the people, we may enslave them, but we cannot set them free."[1]

Meanwhile the intelligentsia and the people might manipulate the autocracy to their advantage. Through persistent yet tactful protest, Herzen thought it possible to encourage or threaten the autocracy into emancipation of the peasants and other liberal popular reforms.

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[1] Ibid., VI, 98.

It seems that Herzen has here abandoned himself to utopian dreams for Russia's future. It cannot be denied that his tactics fail to consider the immense obstacles in the path of socialistic development. But he has not completely lost sight of reality; one finds Herzen even in this, his most utopian period, still shouting on occasion for the short and destructive way of revolution and stressing its necessity and inevitability in a world of irrationality.

Herzen is aware that in reality the narrow mind and stone heart of despotism do not often yield to knowledge, love and understanding. Although he had greeted the Tsar as the great liberator upon the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, he like others, soon concluded that this was a feeble attempt at reform which had not in fact brought freedom to the peasant. Herzen begins to demand stronger action. At times he refers to his own means as mere wishful thinking, asserting that "nothing can be expected from the government."[1] He abhors those who write "with milk and honey," those who have slackened their anger," and "those who have surrendered to sedative despair."[2] He becomes angry, impatient and

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[1]Lampert, op. cit., p. 250. (Note: Lampart quotes Herzen from issues of the Bell and Polar Star in this and the following four references).

[2]Ibid., p. 251

frustrated with the omnipresent government. "Terror," he shouts "is as necessary to us as genius is to the world today."[1] He advises the peasant:

> Sharpen the axe, go to it lads---squash serfdom from below! Put your hand to it!---You have been waiting long enough![2]

Herzen, despite such passionate cries and despite his awareness that terror can rarely be avoided in combatting terror, cannot resign himself to the path of violence. Though he is not sure that his own course can accomplish what he desires, he remains certain that the bloodshed, violence, and destruction of revolution can accomplish nothing but greater suffering and misery. Therefore he joins battle against Russia's gathering revolutionary movement, the tyranny brewing from below.

In turning to fight the revolutionaries of Russia, Herzen clearly reverses the position taken against the European revolutionaries of 1848. Nevertheless, there is a consistency that governs this change. Herzen is playing his ceaseless role of saying what he thinks must be said in a particular situation in order to avoid its pitfalls. In the face of the Western revolutionaries who clung desperately to the past, Herzen advocated indiscriminate negation. Now in the face of the reality of that extreme among the Russian

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[1] Ibid., p. 250.

[2] Ibid.

nihilists, he advocates moderation and discrimination, asserting that such complete rejection can only degenerate into crude disrespect and ultimately result in the enslavement of the self to the passion to destroy. He described the nihilists as the "bilious ones" who "know nothing of space and freedom, nothing of frank speech," but possess a "passionate rigidity;" they "flog to death ideas, the arts, humanity, past leaders, anything you like."[1] Herzen asserts that something in the past must be preserved, that if one destroys without selectivity he will find himself, in the midst of ruin and rubble, stumbling upon broken treasures.

Herzen insisted that consideration be given to "constructive ideas."[2] It will be remembered that when the West Europeans called for the sacrifice of the present in the name of formulas for the future, Herzen had asserted the sufficiency of destruction. Now in the face of sheer nihilism, without any positive aims, he detects the danger of arriving at the brink of the future with nothing to replace what one has destroyed. He asserts that the victory of those who rebel without constructive ideas, can lead only to "ruin, stagnation, and starvation."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 254.

[2] "To An Old Comrade," SPW, p. 595.

[3] Ibid., p. 577.

In one essential way Herzen has not reversed his position, neither implicitly nor explicitly. He maintains that terror, violence and physical destruction are futile in abolishing the real roots of oppression and injustice, that they succeed only in making matters worse. He shouts to the advocates of systematic terror and violence that "apostles rather than sappers of destruction" are Russia's greatest need.[1] He maintains that terror can only "drive forms, customs and traditions inward, suspending their operation for a while;"[2] it cannot abolish their inner contents, however. Ignorance and prejudice would continue to exist and some form of authority would inevitably present itself to fill the great chasm created by them. "The eyes of the people should be opened rather than gouged out."[3] Authoritarianism would continue to exist until the majority had matured.

> The wise man has no need of the law: his mind is his only law. Well then, let us begin by making ourselves and others wise.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 577.

[2] Ibid., p. 594.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Thus despite Herzen's mounting doubts as to the efficacy of gradual progress, he does not waver in his basic conviction that it is the only legitimate course. He detects the necessity of revolutionary action as the means to destroy the autocracy yet he continues to point to its impotence as a means toward a different future, and he cannot submit to it for the sake of its immediate expediency.

HERZEN'S UTOPIA

The social and political form his new world would take was not at all clear to Herzen. Formulas for the future were not his primary concern. A description of the nature of the society he sought must be derived primarily from what he denied in other systems and from the basic ideals he held. The progress of his ideas of a future world follow the same development as those on the means to social transformation, from an enthusiasm for Western ideals, through a period of disillusionment with them, and finally to a somewhat more positive vision of a new world within his homeland.

During the period of Herzen's attraction to radical revolution, he also accepted liberalism, democracy, constitutionalism, and republicanism while admitting he was not certain as to their meaning. It seemed to be more the idealistic aspects of these doctrines which appealed to him than their concrete application to the social and political framework. The word "republic," he asserted, had a "moral meaning for me."[1] The attractiveness of liberalism lay in its creeds extolling science, reason, the innate goodness of man and the infinite freedom of human individuals to shape their own destinies. The doctrines of laissez-faire economics were expectedly appealing to a man who valued so highly the free play of individual temperament within society.

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[1]Zenkovsky, op. cit., p. 275.

Herzen's devotion to these ideals, like his belief in radical revolution, was shaken at the time of the July Revolutions in 1830. "The childish liberalism of 1826," he asserted, "lost its magic power over us."[1] Liberalism was replaced in Herzen's mind by socialism, but what attracted him to the latter doctrine was not its application to political, social, or economic institutions, but rather its bold denunciation of the existing order and its vision of a Utopia, a secular, rationally organized, and humane society which exalted both the community of man and each individual and promised an ideal relationship between social responsibility and individual right. The doctrines of Saint-Simon, he stated, were a "revelation to me."[2]

> Grand words, involving a whole world of new relations between human beings; a world of health, a world of spirit, a world of beauty, the world of natural morality, and therefore of moral purity...the religion of life had come to replace the religion of beauty to replace the religion of castigation and mortification.[3]

Herzen had strong doubts as to the exact social and political forms needed to create this world of health and beauty. In most concrete applications of socialism, he saw a tyranny as

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[1] Memoirs, I, 188.

[2] Ibid., p. 189.

[3] Ibid.

great as monarchy or laissez-faire economic competition, and he vigorously opposed the various specific patterns of socialism. He objected to the emphasis Saint-Simonism placed on the state and tended to favor Fourier's plan for phalansteries. But the phalanstery too was repulsive to him. He could not accept its "ready-made organization, the obligatory regulations, and almost barrack-like discipline."[1] In Cabet's socialistic settlements in Icaria, he saw a "strict discipline and subordination which was certainly no less severe than the monastic rule of the Benedictines."[2] He called these settlements "forced labor camps" in which "a free man cannot breathe," in which "one side of life is permanently repressed for the benefit of others."[3] Neither could he accept the "Egyptian slave labors" of Louis Blanc.[4] Communism was rejected as merely a "leveling movement, the despotism of frenzied mobs, of Committees of Public Safety involving the security of the people---always a monstrous slogan as vile as the enemy they seek to overthrow." Later he was to refer to Communism as "autocracy turned upside down."[5]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 234.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Berlin, op. cit., p. 485.

[5] Ibid.

Upon arriving in the West in 1848, Herzen vigorously denounced other European ideals. Liberalism was too abstract, unrealistic and cowardly for him; the liberals, he asserted, had understood the people only "bookishly," giving little thought to the "daily crust of bread." [1] They had called upon the people to overthrow the monarchy and the feudal system for the "sake of equality, the tears of the wretched, the suffering of the oppressed and the starvation of the destitute;" yet when the proletarian in "stark reality" rather than the proletarian found in books began to demand his freedom, his liberty, and his equality, the liberals halted and took up arms against their "brother" in the streets of Paris. The very people who had proclaimed the republic had become the "hangmen of freedom."[2] The ideals of 1848 had produced

> ...not one constructive idea...economic blunders which lead to ruin, stagnation, and a hungry death ...and the arithmetical pantheism of universal suffrage and superstitious faith in republics.[3]

Herzen called unbridled democracy "a razor" with which France nearly cut its throat. Democracy and republics among people

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[1] "From the Other Shore," . SPW, p. 409.

[2] Ibid., p. 381.

[3] "To An Old Comrade," SPW, p. 577.

not ready to govern themselves were no more agreeable to him than monarchy.

Parliamentary government, in the manner of England, was no better. It can

> merely defend the rights of property, exile men in the interest of public safety, and keep under arms men who are ready, without asking why, to fire instantly as soon as ordered.[1]

The civilization of Western Europe, based on science and reason, was as distasteful to Herzen as its social and political ideals. In this civilization, "founded on the absolute despotism of property,"[2] individuality had degenerated into crude individualism and freedom had become the freedom to have rather than the freedom to be. For the money-craving masses of the bourgeoisie science had become merely an instrument of practicality. Reason had become stagnant and corrupt and human creativity was stifled in the mad rush for "things." Art, Herzen observed "withers in the West ern world like a green leaf in chlorine."[3] Everything in the West had been reduced to the level of practicality

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1 Berlin, op. cit., p. 485.

2 Memoirs, VI, 11.

3 Ibid.

and such "external decoration" as "wall paper and furniture," "photography replaces the artist."[1] In summary

> Window dressing, buying at half price, passing off rubbish for the real thing, show for reality, seeming instead of being, behaving properly instead of behaving well, keeping up external respectability instead of inner dignity. Everything is a stage sham and the greatest ignorance prevails...Everything---the theatre, holiday-making, books, pictures, clothes---everything has gone down in quality and gone up terribly in numbers...Everything has a wholesale, ready-made, conventional character but does not allow of aesthetic distinction or personal taste...this is the all-powerful crowd of conglomerate mediocrity.[2]

Thus Herzen announced a plague upon the entire Western world. Turning again toward his homeland, he began to envision a future which could avoid the tyranny and one-sidedness of Western monarchy or republicanism or democracy or socialism of Western civilization in its entirety. Herzen still produces no formulas for a new world, but in his new ideas one can detect more positively what he sought. For the future of Russia he envisioned an Anarchist Utopia in which individuality and collectivity, personal rights and social responsibility, the right to land and the right to life would all be reconciled.

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

[2] Ibid., p. 15.

> To keep the commune and to give freedom to the individual...to develop individual freedom without letting the right to the land be lost, to limit the sovereign right of each man to individual possession.[1]

Such a society would be possible by combining the Western principle of the dignity of the individual with the already existing communal principle of the Russian and by combining the rationality of the West with the innate morality and anti-authoritarian mentality of the Russian peasant.[2] The realization of this would result essentially in the creation of Herzen's "new man," and the need for external authorities would no longer exist. The achievement of equality and justice would require neither the state nor the bureaucracy and rigid organization of Western socialism. An inevitable harmony and fraternity would exist in a world of rational and innately moral individuals. This society's only cementing force would be self-governing communes spontaneously banded together. Liberty for the full flowering of individual personality would exist along with security, happiness and freedom for the community as a whole.

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[1] Ibid., p. 96.

[2] Ibid., p. 95.

Herzen's realism never allowed him to regard the creation of his Anarchist Utopia as more than a hope. He "saw the chance,"[1] but no more. He continued to work for the increase of freedom, justice and equality in the present world and constantly advised against blind faith in the future.

> It does not follow that we should believe blindly in the future. Every seed has a right to development but not every one develops...When I talk of possible development I am not talking of its inevitability. What part of all that is possible will be accomplished I do not know.[2]

Herzen in fact knew that his Utopia would never be established; that the conflict between the individual and society would never be resolved. He acknowledged his disbelief in the "Perfectibility of Humanity."[3] He felt certain that an age of socialism was approaching, but knew that its exact form would depend entirely upon the interaction of time, circumstance, human passion, conscious power, and sheer chance. No matter what its form would be, he knew that it

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[1] Ibid., p. 95.

[2] Ibid., p. 96.

[3] Ibid., p. 95.

would not produce eternal social harmony. On the contrary, socialism would merely be another "volume of history"[1] in the eternal and relentless struggle of life:

> Socialism will develop in all its phases, to the extreme consequences, to absurdities; and then a shout of protest will break forth from the titantic breast of the revolutionary minority and a deadly struggle will begin anew, in which socialism will take the place of present day conservatism and be vanished by a future revolution unknown to us.[2]

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1 "From the Other Shore," SPW, p. 437.

2 Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The combination of idealism and realism in Alexander Herzen made him a social radical who in the end could accept only gradual and moderate means to social change. He rejected Radical Revolution because physical force and violence were incapable of achieving the profound transformation that he sought. He advocated a revolution that went beyond the altering of social and political forms; he worked for a revolution within individuals. Herzen could never concern himself with the abstract principles of freedom and justice as much as with their reality for living persons. He could never commit himself to any system---social, political, religious or moral---as each required a reconciliation of the concrete into the abstract and a compromise with one's ideals in an attempt to achieve them, Herzen admitted, "I have no system and no interests except truth and I speak of it as it occurs to me."[1] He did not claim to possess any final answers, acknowledging that in fact there were none. He considered it more important to point out what was not needed, to formulate the problem carefully and understand it deeply than give hasty and expedient answers.

Herzen's prime contributions to the social and political scene were his single-minded devotion to freedom and justice, his keen awareness and humility before reality,

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1 "From the Other Shore," SPW, p.426.

and his sensitivity to time, to circumstance, and most of all to people. He possessed a remarkable ability to protest without antagonizing. This he could do because he sought first to understand and afterward he could neither accuse nor blame. Believing that "the real sense and understanding of anything lies precisely in stopping short before the extreme,"[1] Herzen in any given situation endeavored to achieve moderation. This made for endless contradictions and inconsistencies: In the face of German Idealism, Herzen called for Radical Revolution; in the face of Radical Revolution, he preached humility, patience and waiting. In his half-civilized and uncultured homeland, he advocated the science and reason of the West; in the one-sided civilization of science and rationality, he pointed to the virtues of half-savage, unorganized and irrational Russia. In the face of socialism's communal principle, he advocated the individuality and freedom of liberalism; in the face of unbridled freedom and individualism, he pointed to the virtue of collectivity. Before the conservatism of the West, he preached indiscriminating rejection of the past; to the radical nihilists of Russia, he advised moderation and reserve. Basically Herzen was not inconsistent because what he wanted was all of these, each in its proper time, place and degree.

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[1] Memoirs, III, 261.

Alexander Herzen's contribution to the Russian revolutionary movement can hardly be overestimated. He laid the path between a generation steeped in philosophical speculation divorced from the social and political world and the one devoted to the abolition of autocracy. From his London exile, he waged ceaseless battle against tyranny. The essays in his Bell and Polar Star inspired a generation of the intelligentsia. In his call to the nobility to "go among the people" the Populist movement originated. Populism was to govern the Russian revolutionary movement for the remainder of the century. The Bell found its way into the Ministerial Cabinets and the Winter Palace as well as into the centers of revolutionary agitation. Herzen, exercising for himself the right both to support and to protest as the situation warranted, advised, encouraged and threatened the Tsar. It was Herzen who first caused Alexander II to realize that the alternative to emancipation from above was revolution from below, and he contributed in no small way to the emancipation of the peasants in 1861 and the other liberal reforms of the period.

Herzen later found it necessary to take up his pen against those same young radicals whom he had inspired. He foresaw the consequences of the revolution they preached, one which fought tyranny with tyranny, and he did all that he could to curtail them. But this time Herzen fought a losing battle. The younger generation took no heed of his

calls for moderation, perhaps because they were first-hand witnesses to Tsarist oppression and were inevitably more impatient and irritated by it than the distant advisor, but more significantly because they lacked Herzen's sensitivity to human freedom and justice and lacked also his strength, character and persistence.

Herzen's influence upon Russia transcends the realm of social and political thought. He was listened to not only for what he said but also for the manner in which he said it. His fiery imagination, his sensitivity to life, and his moral passion combined with a remarkable verbal skill enabled him to produce a brilliantand distinguished prose style. He ranks among Russia's great writers and his Memoirs remain the autobiographical masterpiece of Russian literature. Dostoevsky recognized him as a poet, and Tolstoy was later to write:

> What a prodigious writer! Russian life in the last twenty years would have been different if this writer had not remained concealed.[1]

Upon reading a particular passage of the Memoirs, Turgenev exclaimed,

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[1] Lampert, op. cit., p. 171.

> It is written in tears and blood. It burns and sears. He alone among Russians could write like this.[1]

In the final analysis Herzen was great not only for what he said or the manner in which he said it but for what he was, one of Russia's wisest, most generous and most understanding sons. As his contemporary, Annenkov, put it:

> ...the moral impulses of the heart, to him were the only unquestionable truth of life. Any noble, passionate enthusiasm, however misplaced, was held in great esteem by him and was never the object of his sarcasm...in all that he did and thought there was no grain of falsehood, not the slightest sign of calculation or buried resentment. Despite his grim scepticism and unrestrained, stinging wit, his heart was that of a child. He knew how to be tactful and tender...and when he had dealt a particularly cruel blow to his antagonist, he knew how to ask forgiveness instantly.[2]

Herzen was rejected by the younger generations of the Russian intelligentsia as a "poet, a painter, an artist." They were ironically correct. Herzen was an artist in the true sense of the word---one whose transcending aim was to expand the beauty and truth of life itself.

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[1] Ibid., p. 181.

[2] Ibid., pp.193-194.

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These are found in:
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2. Books with an extensive coverage of Herzen's life and thought.

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