

## Ancestors (5):

# Alexander Herzen

NOT many Americans have read Alexander Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*. Few have even heard of the author—many people confuse him with Herzl, the founder of Zionism, or Hertz, the physicist. The two main American indices to periodical literature have, from 1920 to date, exactly four references to Herzen.

This neglect is odd because Herzen's memoirs are, as I think these extracts will show, not only great political writing and an autobiography which ranks with the best, but also extremely entertaining reading. Trotsky's *My Life* is the nearest parallel that occurs to me, and even that brilliant work is thin compared to Herzen. It is also strange because Herzen was the first great Russian revolutionary—and a special favorite of Lenin—and because American intellectuals have long paid more attention to Russian politics than to their own.

There were, of course, reasons why in the thirties we were not interested in Herzen. Then the outrages of rationality and human feeling which we read about every day in the newspapers—that we read about them in the papers rather than experiencing them in our own lives was, and is, symptomatic of the quality of American intellectual life, but this is a point that cannot be developed here—these outrages were stimulating more than they were depressing, since they showed how absurd and hateful (therefore intolerable, therefore soon to be overthrown) the status

quo was, and since we knew very well both the kind of social system that should replace it and how to go about the replacing. Marx was our man then—the systematic genius who had with Titanic labor worked out History's "law of motion," the great Believer in the workingclass proletariat as our savior and redeemer. But now we are a world war and a few aborted revolutions the wiser, now we don't much believe in Titans and even suspect Historical Laws. We are, in fact, in much the same state of mind as Herzen was after 1848: despair and doubt ravage us, the Marxian dream has turned into the Russian nightmare (or the British doze), and we can appreciate the unsystematic, sceptical, free-thinking, approach of Herzen. His disenchantment, mingled with humor and a lively response to human values, seems to us (or to me, at least) more sympathetic than Marx's optimistic, humorless and somewhat inhuman doctrine of progress through the historical dialectic. In short, if Marx was our man in the thirties, Herzen may be our man in the forties. It may be objected that he had no program, no "message" which retains much meaning today. That is true, if a positive program is meant: Herzen was a critic, an analyst, a "negativist." All we can learn from him is what certain historical events mean to the mind—and the heart—not what to do about them. But this objection is just another way of stating why Herzen is relevant today. In a period like this, when mankind seems to be in an *impasse*, such a thinker, precisely because he is free, uncommitted, is better able to make us aware of our real situation than a thinker like Marx. I think, for example, that Herzen's reactions to the 1848 debacle must appear to the objective reader today more "to the point," more historically valid than Marx's. 1848 was the turning-point in both Marx's and Herzen's intellectual development. It drove Marx to a mighty effort of system-building which today seems ethically sterile and intellectually over-optimistic (how much more sympathetic and "to the point" the pre-1848 Marx is than the Marx of *Capital*!). It threw Herzen into a permanent state of depression and disenchantment, and now that we can see what the failure of the workingclass to make a revolution in 1848 really meant, about both the workingclass and Western society, Herzen's despair seems less self-indulgent, more realistic than Marx's optimism. Certainly it is more sympathetic; we recognize ourselves—*de te fabula narratur*!

ALEXANDER Herzen was born on March 25, 1812, in Moscow a few months before Napoleon's troops entered the city.\* His father, Ivan Yakovlyev, was a

\* The following is taken from these books and articles in English or French in the N. Y. Public Library: D. S. Mirsky: "A History of Russian Literature"; "Herzen, the Founder of Russian Liberalism" by C. Hagberg Wright (*Fortnightly Review*, 1920, New Series, Vol. 108); "Alexandre Herzen" by A. Soulange-Bodin (*La Revue Hebdomadaire*, April 1918); "A Synthetic Russian" by Alexander Kaun (*The Freeman*, Feb. 6, 1924); "Alexander Hertsen" by Semen Rapoport (*The Socialist Review*, July-Sept. 1919); two articles on "My Past and Thoughts" by V. S. Pritchett in *The New Statesman and Nation* of June 12 and June 19, 1943; E. H. Carr: "The Romantic Exiles."



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wealthy landowner who belonged to one of the most aristocratic families of Russia. His mother was Henriette Haag, a German-Jewish girl whom Yakovlyev had met, when she was sixteen, in her native city of Stuttgart and had taken back with him to Russia. Although he never married her, he treated her as his wife and brought up their son, to whom he gave the name "Herzen" ("dearest heart" in German) as his heir. Herzen attended the University of Moscow, where he read and discussed Saint-Simon (extra-curricular) becoming enough of a radical to write, at 19, in a letter which the police later used against him: "Constitutional parties lead nowhere; all constitutions are simply contracts between a master and his slaves. The problem is not to improve the condition of the slaves, but to eliminate that condition altogether." He was framed up and arrested by the secret police in 1834 and exiled to the provinces, where he remained for six years as a government clerk. In 1838, he married his first cousin, Natalie Yakovlyev, also illegitimate. He was allowed to return briefly to St. Petersburg in 1840, but was exiled soon again. In 1842, he was permitted to return to Moscow, where he became the center of a group of "Westernized" intellectuals which opposed the Slavophiles and which included Granovsky, Belinsky, and Bakunin. The death of his father in 1847 made Herzen a rich man. Getting permission, with difficulty, to travel abroad, he left Russia that year, never to return. From 1847 to 1852, he lived in Italy, France, and Switzerland. He was active politically in 1848, gravitating naturally toward the anarchists; he financed Proudhon's newspaper, the *Voix du Peuple*, for which he also wrote; and he supported his old friend, Bakunin, in his revolutionary activities. The 1848 failure was for Herzen a personal as well as a political catastrophe: he wrote two important books about it, neither of which has been translated: *Letters from France and Italy* and what most critics consider his masterpiece: *From the Other Shore*. In 1852, he settled permanently in London, where he founded the first Russian printing press outside Russia. In 1857, he and his lifelong friend, the poet Nicholas Ogarev, started a weekly called *Kolokol* ("The Bell"). The paper—whose motto was, after Pushkin, "Vive la Raison!"—at once became an enormous success. "Between 1857 and 1861," writes Mirsky, "*The Bell* was the principal political force in Russia. It was read by every one and not least by those in power." *Kolokol's* political program was liberal rather than socialist: a constitution, a free press, and the freeing of the serfs (which was in fact done by the new czar, partly because of Herzen's influence). In the Polish uprising of 1862-3, Herzen, partly out of loyalty to Bakunin, supported the Poles in *Kolokol*; this practically killed the paper, as the Russian liberals became ultra-nationalistic in the face of the revolt. The younger generation, on the other hand, considered Herzen an old fogey, much too mild and sentimental for their nihilistic-materialistic tastes. The paper lost its influence as rapidly as it had gained it. When Herzen died in 1870, he had become, politically, a "superfluous man." He left no followers, no school—though his agrarian socialism later became the basis of the powerful Social Revolutionary party. But he did leave his memoirs.\*

D.M.

\* The indefatigable Constance Garnett (to whom all English-speaking readers owe an enormous debt for devoting her life to translating the Russian classics) has translated *My Past and Thoughts*. It was brought out over here by Knopf in 1924 in six attractive small volumes (from English plates), from which edition the present excerpts, with permission, are taken. The book



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*Who is entitled to write his reminiscences?*  
Every one.

*Because no one is obliged to read them.*

*In order to write one's reminiscences, it is not at all necessary to be a great man, nor a notorious criminal, nor a celebrated artist, nor a statesman. It is quite enough to be simply a human being, to have something to tell, and not merely to desire to tell it but to have at least some little ability to do so.*

*Every life is interesting; if not the personality, then the environment, the country are interesting, life itself is interesting. Man likes to enter into another's existence, he likes to touch the subtlest fibres of another's heart, and to listen to its beating. He compares, he checks it by his own, he seeks in himself confirmation, justification, sympathy. ...*

*The fact is that the very word "entitled" to this or that form of composition does not belong to our epoch, but dates from an era of intellectual immaturity, from an era of poet-laureates, doctors' caps, peddling savants, certificated philosophers, diplomaed metaphysicians and other Pharisees of the Christian world. Then the act of writing*

was not a publishing success. At least, I recall seeing it remained in the drugstores, in the early thirties, at 49c a volume; I did not buy them (and have since got them, with difficulty, at \$2.50 a volume) because I was as ignorant as every one else about Herzen; I am indebted to Meyer Schapiro for "putting me on to" Herzen several years ago. Readers should be warned, by the way, about the Yale University Press's edition (1924): not only is it limited to the first two volumes, but the translator, Mr. J. D. Duff, for some obscure reason—or perhaps not so obscure?—chose to use the 1913 Russian edition, which was heavily censored by the Czarist authorities, although, a complete edition published in Geneva was then available. Miss Garnett used the complete Geneva edition.



*was regarded as something sacred; a man writing for the public used a high-flown unnatural choice language, he "expounded" or "sang."*

*We simply talk. For us, writing is the same sort of secular pursuit, the same sort of work or amusement as any other.* (Vol. 2, P. 63)

"**V**ERA Artamonovna, come tell me again how the French came to Moscow," I used to say, rolling myself up in the quilt and stretching in my crib, which was sewn round with linen that I might not fall out.

"Oh, what's the use of telling you, you've heard it so many times. Besides, it's time to go to sleep! You had better get up a little earlier tomorrow," the old woman would usually answer, although she was as eager to repeat her favorite story as I was to hear it.

"But do tell me a little bit. How did you find out, how did it begin?"

"This was how it began. You know what your papa is—he is always putting things off; he was getting ready and getting ready, and much use it was! Every one was saying, 'It's time to set off, it's time to go; what is there to wait for, there's no one left in the town.' But no, your Uncle Pavel Ivanovitch and he kept talking of how they would go together, and first one wasn't ready and then the other. At last we were packed and the carriage was ready; the family sat down to lunch, when all at once our head cook ran into the dining room as pale as a sheet, and announced: 'The enemy has marched in at the Dragomilovsky Gate!' Our hearts did sink. 'The power of the Cross be with us!' we cried. Everything was upside down. While we were bustling about, sighing and groaning, we looked and down the street came galloping dragoons in such helmets with horses' tails streaming behind. The gates had all been closed, and here was your papa left behind for a treat and you with him; your wet nurse Darya still had you at the breast, you were so weak and delicate."

And I smiled with pride, pleased that I had taken part in the war.

"At the beginning, we got along somehow, for the first few days, that is; it was only that two or three soldiers would come in and ask by signs whether there was something to drink; we would take them a glass each, and they would go away and touch their caps to us, too. But then, you see, when fires began and kept getting worse, there was such disorder, plundering and all sorts of horrors. At that time we were living in the lodge at the Princess Anna Borissovna's and the house caught fire; then Pavel Ivanovitch said, 'Come to me, my house is built of brick, its stands far back in the courtyard and the walls are thick.'

"So we went, masters and servants all together, there was no difference made; we went into the Tverskoy Boulevard and the trees were beginning to burn. We made our way at last to the Golohastovs' house and it was simply blazing, flames from every window. Pavel Ivanovitch was dumb-founded, he could not believe his eyes. Behind the house there is a big garden, you know; we went into it thinking we would be safe there. We sat there on seats grieving, when, all at once, a mob of drunken soldiers were

upon us; one fell on Pavel Ivanovitch, trying to pull off his travelling coat; the old man would not give it up, the soldier pulled out his sword and struck him on the face with it so that he kept the scar to the end of his days. The others set upon us; one soldier tore you from your nurse, opened your baby-clothes to see if there were any bank-notes or diamonds hidden among them, saw there was nothing there, and so the scamp purposely tore your clothes and flung them down. As soon as they had gone away, we were in trouble again. Do you remember our Platon who was sent for a soldier? He was dreadfully fond of drink and was very much under the influence that day; he tied on a sabre and walked around like that. The day before the enemy entered, Count Rastoptchin [Governor of Moscow in 1812] had distributed all sorts of weapons at the arsenal; so that was how he had got hold of a sabre. Towards the evening, he saw a dragoon ride into the yard; there was a horse standing near the stable; the dragoon wanted to take it, but Platon rushed headlong at him and, catching hold of the bridle, said: 'The horse is ours. I won't give it to you!' The dragoon threatened him with a pistol, but we could see it was not loaded; the master himself saw what was happening and shouted to Platon: 'Let the horse alone, it's not your business!' But not a bit of it! Platon pulled out his sabre and struck the man on the head, and he staggered, and Platon struck him again and again. 'Well,' thought we, 'now the hour of our death is come; when his comrades see him, it will be the end of us.' But when the dragoon fell, Platon seized him by the feet and dragged him to a pit full of mortar and threw him in, poor fellow, although he was still alive; his horse stood there and did not stir from the place, but stamped its foot on the ground as though it understood; our servants shut it in the stable; it must have been burnt there. . . . Then I took a piece of green baize from the billiard table and wrapped you in it to keep you from the night air; and so we made our way as far as the Tverskoy Square. There the French were putting the fire out because some great man of theirs was living in the governor's house; we just sat in the street; sentries were walking everywhere, others were riding by on horseback. And you were screaming, straining yourself with crying, your nurse had no more milk, no one had a bit of bread. Natalya Konstantinova was with us then, a wench of spirit, you know; she saw that some soldiers were eating something in a corner, took you and went straight to them, showed you and said, 'Mangé for the little one.' At first they looked at her so sternly and said, 'Allez! Allez!' but she fell to scolding them. 'Ah you cursed brutes,' said she, 'you this and that.' The soldiers did not understand a word, but they burst out laughing and gave her some bread soaked in water for you and a crust for herself. Early in the morning an officer came up and gathered together all the men and your papa with them, leaving only the women and Pavel Ivanovitch who was wounded, and took them to put out the fires in the houses nearby, so we remained alone till evening; we sat and cried and that was all. When it was dusk, the master came back and with him an officer. . . ."

Allow me to take the old woman's place and continue

her narrative. . . . Mortier remembered that he had known my father in Paris and informed Napoleon; Napoleon ordered him to present himself next morning. In a shabby, dark blue, short coat with bronze buttons, intended for sporting wear, without his wig, in high boots that had not been cleaned for several days, with dirty linen and unshaven chin, my father—who worshipped decorum and strict etiquette—made his appearance in the throne room of the Kremlin at the summons of the Emperor of the French. . . .

After the usual phrases, abrupt words and laconic remarks, to which a deep meaning was ascribed for thirty-five years, till men realized that their meaning was often quite trivial, Napoleon blamed Rastoptchin for the fire, said that it was vandalism, declared as usual his invincible love of peace, maintained that his war was against England and not Russia, boasted that he had set a guard on the Foundling Hospital and the Uspensky Cathedral, complained of Alexander, said that he was surrounded by bad advisers and that his (Napoleon's) peaceful dispositions were not made known to the Emperor.

My father observed that it was rather for a conqueror to make offers of peace.

"I have done what I could; I have sent to Kutuzov; he will not enter into any negotiations and does not bring my offer to the attention of the Tsar. If they want war, it is not my fault—they shall have war."

After all this comedy, my father asked him for a pass to leave Moscow. . . . Napoleon thought a moment, and suddenly asked:

"Will you undertake to convey a letter from me to the Emperor? On that condition, I will give you a permit to leave the town with all your household."

"I would accept your Majesty's offer," my father observed, "but it is difficult for me to guarantee that it will reach him."

"Will you give me your word of honor that you will make every effort to deliver the letter in person?"

*"Je m'engage sur mon honneur, Sire."*

"That is enough. I will send for you. . . ."

At four o'clock one morning, Mortier sent an adjutant to summon my father to the Kremlin.

The fire had attained terrific proportions during those days; the scorched air, murky with smoke, was insufferably hot. Napoleon was dressed and was walking about the room, looking careworn and out of temper; he was beginning to feel that his singed laurels would before long be frozen and that there would be no escaping with a jest, as in Egypt. The plan of campaign was absurd; except Napoleon, every one knew it: Ney, Narbonne, Berthier, and officers of lower rank; to all objections, he had replied with the cabalistic word, "Moscow"; in Moscow, even he guessed the truth.

When my father went in, Napoleon took a sealed letter that was lying on the table, handed it to him and said, bowing him out: "I rely on your word of honor."

On the envelope was written: "*A mon frère l'Empereur Alexandre.*"

(Vol. I, pp. 1-8)

VODKA and tea, the tavern and the restaurant, are the two permanent passions of the Russian servant; for their sake, he steals; for their sake, he is poor; on their account, he endures persecution and punishment and leaves his family in poverty. Nothing is easier than for a Father Matthew from the height of his teetotal intoxication to condemn drunkenness, and sitting at his own teatable, to wonder why servants go to drink tea at the restaurant instead of drinking it at home, although at home it is cheaper. . . .

How can a servant not drink when he is condemned to the everlasting waiting in the hall, to perpetual poverty, to being a slave, to being sold? He drinks to excess—when he can—because he cannot drink every day. . . . The savage drunkenness of the English workingman is to be explained in the same way. . . . It is not surprising that, after spending six days as a lever, a cogwheel, a spring, a screw, the man breaks savagely on Saturday afternoon out of the penal servitude of factory work, and in half an hour is drunk, for his exhaustion cannot stand much. The moralists would do better to drink Irish or Scotch whiskey themselves and to hold their tongues, or with their inhuman philanthropy, they may provoke terrible replies.

Drinking tea at the restaurant has a different significance for servants. Tea at home is not the same thing for the house-serf: at home everything reminds him that he is a servant; at home he is in the dirty servants' room, he must get the samovar himself; at home he has a cup with a broken handle, and any minute his master may ring for him. At the restaurant, he is a free man, he is a gentleman; for him the table is laid and the lamps are lit; for him the waiter runs with the tray; the cup shines, the teapot glistens, he gives orders and is obeyed, he enjoys himself and gaily calls for pressed caviare or a turnover for his tea.

In all of this there is more of childish simplicity than of immorality. . . . This resemblance between servants and children accounts for their mutual attraction. Children hate the aristocratic ideas of the grownups and their benevolently condescending manners; they are clever and understand that in the eyes of grownup people they are children, while in the eyes of servants they are people. Consequently they are much fonder of playing cards or lotto with the maids than with visitors. Visitors play for the children's benefit with condescension, give way to them, tease them and throw up the game for any excuse; the maids, as a rule, play as much for their own sakes as for the children's, and that gives the game interest. Servants are extremely devoted to children, and this is not a slavish devotion but the mutual affection of the weak and the simple.

(Vol. I, pp. 31-33)

IN the Vatican there is a new gallery in which Pius VII, I believe, has placed an immense number of statues and busts dug up in Rome and its environs. The whole history of the decline of Rome is there expressed in eyebrows, lips, foreheads. . . . On one hand, there is sensual and moral degradation, low brows and features defiled by vice and gluttony, bloodshed and every wickedness in the

world, petty as in the hetaira Heliogabalus, or with sunken cheeks like Galba. . . . But there is another—the type of military commander in whom everything social and moral, everything human has died out, and there is left nothing but the passion for domination; the mind is narrow and there is no heart at all. They are the monks of the love of power; force and austere will is manifest in their features. Such were the Emperors of the Pretorian Guard and

of the army, whom the turbulent legionnaires raised to power for an hour. Among their number I found many heads that recalled Nicholas before he wore a mustache. I understand the necessity for these grim and inflexible guards besides what is dying in frenzy, but what use are they to what is youthful and growing?

(Vol. I, p. 64)

## Russia Under Nicholas I

ON the day after we left Perm, there was a heavy unceasing downpour of rain from dawn, such as is common in forest districts; at two o'clock we reached a very poor village in the province of Vyatka. . . .

A short, elderly officer with a face that bore traces of many anxieties, petty cares, and fear of his superiors, met me with all the genial hospitality of deadly boredom. He was one of those unintelligent, goodnatured soldiers who work in the service for twenty-five years without promotion and without reasoning about it, as old horses serve, who probably suppose that it is their duty at dawn to put on their harness and drag something.

"Whom are you taking and where?" I inquired.

"Oh don't ask, for it is heart-rending. Well, I suppose my superiors know all about it. It is our duty to carry out orders and we are not responsible, but, looking at it as a man, it is an ugly business."

"Why, what is it?"

"You see, they have collected a crowd of cursed little Jew boys of eight or nine years old. Whether they are taking them for the navy or what, I can't say. At first the orders were to drive them to Perm, then there was a change and we are driving them to Kazan. I have taken them over a hundred versts. The officer who handed them over said it was dreadful, and that's just what it is—a third were left on the way" (the officer pointed to the earth). "Not half will get there," he added.

"Have there been epidemics or what?" I asked, deeply moved.

"No, not epidemics, but they just die off like flies. A Jew boy, you know, is such a frail, weakly creature, like a skinned cat; he is not used to tramping in the mud for ten hours a day and eating dried bread. Then again, being among strangers, no father nor mother nor petting; well, they cough and cough until they cough themselves into their graves. And I ask you, what use is it all to them? What can they do with little boys?"

I made no answer.

"When do you set off?" I asked.

"Well, we ought to have gone long ago, but it has been raining so heavily. . . . Hey, you there! Tell the small fry to form up."

They brought the children and formed them into regular ranks. . . . Pale, exhausted, with frightened faces, they stood in thick, clumsy soldiers' overcoats, with standup collars, fixing helpless pitiful eyes on the garrison soldiers who were roughly getting them into ranks. The white lips, the blue rings under their eyes looked like fever or chill.

And these sick children, without care or kindness, exposed to the icy wind that blows straight from the Arctic Ocean, were going to their graves.

And note that they were being taken by a kind-hearted officer who was obviously sorry for the children. What if they had been taken by a military political economist?

What monstrous crimes are buried in the archives of the infamous reign of Nicholas! We are used to them. they are committed every day, committed as though nothing were wrong, unnoticed, lost in the terrible distance, noiselessly sunk in the silent bogs of officialdom or shrouded by the censorship of the police.

(Vol. I, pp. 270-272)

OF course, there is a small group of cultured landowners who are not knocking about their servants from morning to night, are not thrashing them every day, but . . . the rest have not advanced beyond the stage of the American planters.

Rummaging about [in the files of the military government of Novgorod, where Herzen held a post during his second exile] I found the correspondence of the provincial government of Pskov concerning a certain Madame Yaryzkin. She flogged two of her maids to death, was tried on account of a third, and was almost completely acquitted by the Criminal Court, who based their verdict among other things on the fact that the third one did not die. This woman invented the most surprising punishments—beating with a flat iron, with gnarled sticks, or with a washing bat. . . .

In *Property in Serfs*, I have told the story of the man flogged to death by Prince Trubetskoy and of the *Kammerherr* Bazilevsky who was thrashed by his own servants. I will add one more story of a lady.

A serf-girl in the family of a colonel of gendarmes at Penza was carrying a kettle full of boiling water. Her mistress's child ran against the servant, who spilt the boiling water, and the child was scalded. The mistress made the punishment fit the crime: she ordered the servant's child to be brought, and she scalded its hand from the same samovar. . . .

In the servants' quarters and in the maid's rooms, in the villages and the police cells, perfect martyrologies of terrible crimes lie buried. The memory of them haunts the soul and in course of generations matures into bloody and merciless vengeance. . . . Staraya Russa, the military settlements! Terrible words! . . . The beating with sticks and scourging with lashes went on for months together.



The blood was never dry on the floors of the rural offices. Every crime that may be committed by the people against their torturers on that tract of land is justified beforehand. (Vol. II, pp. 198-201)

**"I** WILL abolish bribe-taking," said Senyavin, the Governor of Moscow, to a grey-headed peasant who had lodged a complaint against some obvious injustice. The old man smiled.

"What are you laughing at?" asked Senyavin.

"Excuse me, sir," answered the peasant, "It reminds me of one fine young fellow who boasted that he would lift a cannon, and he really did try, but he did not lift it for all that."

(Vol. I, pp. 296-297)

**B**EFORE the end of my time at Vyatka [this was Herzen's first exile] the Department of Crown property was stealing so impudently that a commission of inquiry was appointed. What things it was my lot to read! Melancholy, and amusing, and disgusting. The very headings of the cases moved me to amazement:

RELATING TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE HOUSE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL, NO ONE KNOWS WHERE, AND TO THE GNAWING OF ITS PLAN BY MICE.

RELATING TO THE RE-ENUMERATION OF THE PEASANT BOY VASSILY AMONG THE FEMININE SEX.

This last was so strange that I at once read the case from cover to cover.

The father of this supposed Vassily wrote in his petition to the governor that fifteen years ago he had a daughter born whom he had wanted to call Vassilisa; but that the priest, being drunk, christened the girl Vassily and so entered it on the register. The circumstance apparently troubled the peasant very little. But when he realized, years later, that he would have to furnish a recruit and pay the poll tax, he reported on the matter to the mayor and the rural police superintendent. The case seemed very suspicious to the police. . . . The peasant went to the governor, who arranged a solemn examination of the boy of the feminine sex by a doctor and a midwife. At this point, a correspondence sprang up with the Consistory, and the priest, the successor of the one who had been too drunk to tell a boy from a girl, appeared on the scene. The case dragged on for years, and the girl was left under suspicion of being a man until the end.

Do not imagine that this is an absurd figment of my fancy. Not at all—it is quite in harmony with the spirit of the Russian autocracy.

In the reign of Paul, some colonel of the Guards in his monthly report entered an officer as dead who was dying in the hospital. Paul struck him off the list as dead. Unluckily, the officer did not die, but recovered. The colonel persuaded him to withdraw to his country estate for a year or two, hoping to find an opportunity to rectify the error. The officer agreed, but his heirs, who had read of their kinsman's death in the *Army Gazette*, refused on any consideration to acknowledge that he was living and, inconsolable at their loss, insisted on bringing the matter before the authorities. When the living corpse saw that

he was likely to die a second time, not merely on paper but from hunger, he went to Petersburg and sent in a petition to Paul. The Czar wrote with his own hand on the petition: "*Forasmuch as a decree of the Most High has been promulgated concerning this gentleman, the petition must be refused.*"

This is even better than my Vassilisa-Vassily. Of what consequence was the crude fact of life beside the decree of the Most High? Paul was the poet and dialectician of authority!

(Vol. I, pp. 314-316)

**T**CHAADAYEV and the Slavophiles alike stood facing the unsolved Sphinx of Russian life, the Sphinx sleeping under the overcoat of the soldier and the watchful eye of the Tsar. Both were asking: "What will come of it?" To live like this is impossible: the oppressiveness and absurdity of the present position is obvious and unendurable—where is the way out?"

"There is none," answered the man of the Petersburg period of exclusively Western civilization, who, in Alexander's reign, had believed in the European future of Russia. He mournfully pointed to what the efforts of a whole age had led. Culture had only given new methods of oppression, the church had become a mere shadow under which the police lay hidden; the people bore all, endured all, the government crushed all, oppressed all. "The history of other nations is the story of their emancipation. Russian history is the development of serfdom and autocracy." Peter the Great's upheaval has made us into the worst that men can be made into—enlightened slaves. . . .

The mistake of the Slavophiles lies in their imagining that Russia once had an individual culture, obscured by various events and finally by the Petersburg period. Russia never had this culture, never could have had it. . . . Only the mighty thought of the West, to which all its long history has led up, is able to fertilise the seeds slumbering in the patriarchal mode of life of the Slavs. The workmen's guild and the village commune, the sharing of profits and the division of fields, the mir meeting and the union of villages into the self-governing *volosts*, are all the cornerstones on which the temples of our future, freely communal existence will be built. But these cornerstones are only stones, and without the thought of the West our future cathedral will not rise above its foundations.

This is what happens with everything truly *social*: it inevitably draws the nations into mutual interdependence. Holding themselves aloof, cutting themselves off, some remain at the barbaric stage of the village commune, others get no further than the abstract idea of communism, which, like the Christian soul, hovers over the decaying body.

The receptive character of the Slavs, their femininity, their lack of initiative, and their great capacity for assimilation and adaptation, make them pre-eminently a people that stands in need of the other peoples; they are not fully self-sufficing. Left to themselves, the Slavs readily "lull themselves to sleep with their own songs," as a Byzantine chronicler observed. Awakened by others, they go to the farthest consequences. . . .

To be formed into a princedom, Russia needed the Varangians;\* to be formed into a kingdom, the Mongols. Contact with Europe developed the kingdom of Muscovy into a colossal empire ruled from Petersburg.

"But for all their receptiveness, have not the Slavs shown everywhere a complete incapacity for developing a modern European political order without continually falling into the most absolute despotism, or hopeless disorganization?"

This incapacity and this incompleteness are great *talents* in our eyes.

All Europe has now reached the inevitability of despotism in order to preserve the existing political order against the pressure of social ideas striving to create a new order, towards which Western Europe, for all its terror and resistance, is being carried with incredible force. There was a time when the half-free West looked proudly at Russia crushed under the throne of the Czars, and cultivated Russia, sighing, gazed at the happiness of its elder brothers. That time has passed. The equality of slavery prevails. We are present now at an amazing spectacle; even those lands in which free institutions have survived are striving for despotism. Humanity has seen nothing like it since the days of Constantine when free Romans sought to become slaves to escape civic burdens.

Despotism or socialism—there is no other alternative. Meanwhile Europe has shown a surprising incapacity for social revolution. We believe that Russia is not so incapable of it, and in this we are at one with the Slavophiles. On this, our faith in its future is founded. This is the faith which I have been preaching since the end of 1848.

Europe has chosen despotism, has preferred imperialism. Despotism means military discipline, empires mean war, the Emperor is the Commander-in-Chief. Every one is under arms, there will be war, but where is the real enemy? At home—down below in the depths—and yonder beyond the Niemen.

The war now beginning [i.e., the Crimean War] may have intervals of truce but will not end before the beginning of the general revolution which will shuffle all the cards and begin a new deal. It is impossible that the two great historical powers, the two veteran champions of all Western European history, representatives of two worlds, two traditions, two principles—of state and of personal freedom—should not crush the third, which, dumb, nameless, and bannerless, comes forward so opportunely with the rope of slavery around its neck and rudely knocks at the doors of Europe and the doors of history, with an insolent claim to Constantinople, with one foot in Germany and the other on the Pacific Ocean.

Whether these three will try their strength and crush each other in trying; whether Russia breaks up into pieces or Europe, enfeebled, sinks into Byzantine decay; whether they are reconciled and go hand in hand forward into a new life or slaughter each other endlessly—one thing we have discovered for certain and it will not be rooted out of the consciousness of the coming generations: *the free and rational development of Russian national existence is at one with the ideas of Western socialism.*

(Vol. II, pp. 271-278)

## 1848

FROM the middle of the year 1848 I have nothing to tell of but agonizing experiences, unavenged insults, undeserved blows. My memory holds nothing but melancholy images: my own mistakes, and other people's; mistakes of individuals, mistakes of nations. . . . Alarmed by the Paris of 1847, I had opened my eyes to the truth for a moment, but was carried away again by the current of events seething about me. All Italy was "awakening" before my eyes! I saw the King of Naples tamed and the Pope humbly asking the alms of the people's love. The whirlwind set everything in movement; it carried me, too, off my feet. All Europe took up its bed and walked—in a fit of somnambulism which we took for awakening. When I came to myself, all was over; la Somnambula, terrified by the police, had fallen from the roof. . . .

(Vol. III, pp. 19-20)

I LEFT Italy in love with her and sorry to leave her; there I had met not only great events but also the very nicest people—but still I went. It would have seemed faithless to all my convictions not to be in Paris when there was a republic there. Doubts are apparent in the lines I

have quoted, but faith got the upper hand, and with inward pleasure I looked in Civita at the consul's seal on my visa on which were engraved the imposing words: "*République Française*." I did not reflect that the very fact that a visa was needed showed that France was not a republic.

(Vol. III, p. 10)

ON leaving the steamer at Marseilles, I met a great procession of the National Guard, which was carrying to the Hôtel de Ville the figure of Liberty, i.e., of a woman with immense curls and a Phrygian cap. With shouts of "*Vive la République!*" thousands of armed citizens were marching in it, and among them workmen in blue blouses who had been enrolled in the National Guard. I need hardly say that I followed them. When the procession reached the Hôtel de Ville, the general, the mayor, and the commissaire of the Provisional Government, Démosthène Ollivier, came out into the portico. Démosthène, as might be expected from his name, prepared to deliver an oration. An immense circle formed about him. The crowd, of course, moved forward; the National Guards pressed it back; the crowd would not yield. This offended the armed workmen; they lowered their guns and, turning around, began with the butt-ends

\* The Varangians were Scandinavian and Norman tribes whose rulers were, according to tradition, summoned in 862 by the Northern Slavs to rule over them. (Translator's Note)

hitting the toes of the people who stood in front; the citizens of the "one and indivisible republic" stepped back.

This proceeding surprised me the more because I was still completely under the influence of the manners of Italy, and especially of Rome, where the proud sense of personal dignity and the inviolability of the person is fully developed in every man—not merely in the *facchino* and the postman, but even in the beggar who holds out his hand for alms. In Romagna such insolence would have been greeted with twenty *coltellate* (dagger stabs). The French drew back—perhaps they had corns?

This incident made an unpleasant impression on me. Moreover when I reached the hotel, I read in the newspapers what had happened at Rouen.\* What could be the meaning of it? Surely the Duc de Noailles was not right? But when a man wants to believe, his belief is not easily uprooted, and before I reached Avignon, I had forgotten the butt-ends at Marseilles and the bayonets at Rouen.

In the stagecoach with us there was a thickset, middle-aged abbé of dignified deportment and attractive exterior. For appearance's sake, he took up his breviary, but to avoid dropping asleep, put it back soon afterwards in his pocket and began to talk charmingly and intelligently. . . .

I wanted to taunt the abbé with the republic, but I did not succeed. He was very glad that liberty had come without excesses, above all without bloodshed and fighting, and looked upon Lamartine as a great man, somewhat in the style of Pericles.

"And of Sappho," I added, without, however, entering upon an argument. I was grateful to him for not saying a word about religion. So talking, we arrived at Avignon at eleven o'clock at night.

"Allow me," I said to the abbé as I filled his glass at supper, "to propose a rather unusual toast: 'To the Republic, and to those churchmen who are republicans.'" The abbé got up and concluded some Ciceronian sentences with the words: "*A la République future en Russie.*"

"*A la République universelle!*" shouted the conductor of the stagecoach and three men who were sitting at the table. We clinked glasses.

A Catholic priest, two or three shopmen, the stagecoach conductor, and a party of Russians—we might well drink to the universal republic!

But it really was very jolly.

"Where are you bound for?" I inquired of the abbé as we took our seats in the stagecoach again. "For Paris," he answered. "I have been elected to the National Assembly." . . .

A fortnight later came the fifteenth of May, that sinister *ritournelle* which was followed by the terrible June Days. That all belongs not to my biography but to the biography of mankind.

\* At the elections for the Constituent Assembly, the Socialist candidates were heavily defeated; suspecting some fraud, the workmen assembled, unarmed, before the Hotel de Ville. They were attacked by soldiers and National Guards; eleven were killed and many wounded. (Translator's Note)

I have written a good deal about those days. I might end here like the old captain in the old song:

*Ici finit tout noble souvenir,  
Ici finit tout noble souvenir.*

But with those accursed days the last part of my life begins.

(Vol. III, pp. 14-17)

ON the evening of the 24th of June, coming back from the Place Maubert, I went into the Quai d'Orsay. A few minutes later, I heard a discordant shouting, and the sound came nearer and nearer. I went to the window: a grotesque comic *banlieu* marched in from the suburbs to the support of order—clumsy, rascally fellows, half peasants, half shopkeepers, a little bit drunk, in wretched uniforms and oldfashioned casques, they moved rapidly but in disorder, with shouts of "*Vive Louis-Napoleon!*"

It was the first time I heard that ill-omened shout. I could not restrain myself, and when they reached the café I shouted at the top of my voice, "*Vive la République!*" Those standing near the windows shook their fists at me; an officer muttered some words of abuse, fingering his sword. For a long time I could hear the shouts of welcome to the man who had come to strangle half the revolution, to destroy half the republic, to inflict himself upon France as a punishment for forgetting in her hysteria both other nations and her own proletariat.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 26th of June, Annenkov and I went out to the Champs Elysées. The cannonade we had heard in the night had ceased; only from time to time there was an interchange of shots and the beating of drums. The streets were empty, and the National Guards stood on each side of them. On the Place de la Concorde there was a detachment of the *Garde Mobile*; near them some poor women with brooms, some ragpickers and concierges from nearby houses were standing. The faces of all were gloomy and horror-stricken. A lad of seventeen leaning on his gun was telling them something; we joined them. He and all his comrades, boys like himself, were half drunk, their faces blackened with gunpowder and their eyes bloodshot from sleepless nights and drink; many were dozing with their chins resting on the muzzles of their guns. "And what happened then there's no need to describe." After a pause, he went on. "Yes, and they fought well, too, but we paid them out for our comrades! What a slaughter! I stuck my bayonet up to the hilt in five or six of them; they'll remember us," he added, trying to assume the air of a hardened criminal. The women were pale and silent; a man who looked like a concierge observed: "Serve them right, the blackguards!" But this savage comment evoked not the slightest response. They were all of too ignorant a class to be moved to pity by the massacre and by the wretched boy whom others had turned into a murderer.

Silent and depressed, we went on to the Madeleine. Here we were stopped by the National Guards. After searching our pockets, they asked us where we were going, and let us through: but the next cordon beyond the Madeleine refused to let us through and sent us back; when we went back to the first cordon, we were stopped again. "But you



saw us pass here just now!" "Don't let them pass!" shouted an officer. "Are you laughing at us or what?" I asked. "It's no use your talking to me," answered the shopman in uniform rudely. "Take them to the police. I know one of them" (pointing to me); "I have seen him at meetings. I dare say the other is the same sort too; they are neither of them Frenchmen, I'll answer for it—march!" Two soldiers in front, two behind, and one on each side escorted us.

The first man we met was a *représentant du peuple* with the silly badge in his buttonhole: it was DeTocqueville, the writer on America. I appealed to him and told him what had happened. It was no joke—they kept people in prison without any sort of trial, threw them into the cellars of the Tuilleries, and shot them. De Tocqueville did not even ask who we were; he very politely bowed himself off, delivering himself of the following: "The legislative authority has no right to interfere with the executive." He might well be a minister under Napoleon III!

(Vol. III, pp. 22-24)

**T**HE shamelessness of attacking an unarmed crowd aroused great resentment. [Refers to the demonstration of June 13, 1848, in which Herzen took part.] If anything really had been prepared, had there been leaders, nothing would have been easier than for fighting to begin in earnest. Instead of showing itself in its full strength, the *Montagne*, on hearing how absurdly the sovereign people had been dispersed by horses, hid itself behind a cloud. Ledru-Rollin carried on negotiations with Guinard. Guinard, the artillery commander of the National Guard, wanted to join the movement, wanted to give men, but would not on any consideration give ammunition—he seems to have wished to act by the moral influence of cannons. . . . The most foresight was shown by some young men who built their hopes on the new regime. They ordered themselves prefects' uniforms, which they declined to take after the movement failed, and the tailor had to put them up for sale. . . .

But the dilatoriness of Ledru-Rollin, the pendency of Guinard—these were the external causes of the failure, and were as "historically necessary" as are decisive characters in more fortunate circumstances. The internal cause was the poverty of the republican idea in which the movement originated. An idea that has outlived its day may hobble about the world for years—may even, like Christ,

appear after death once or twice to its devotees; but it is hard for it ever again to lead and dominate life. Such ideas never gain complete possession of a man, or gain possession only of incomplete people. If the *Montagne* had been victorious on the 13th of June, what could it have done? It would have been an insipid reproduction of the gloomy Rembrandt or Salvator Rosa picture of 1793 without the Jacobins, without the war, without even the naive guillotine. . . .

(Vol. III, pp. 52-53)

**I**N my misery, I turned hither and thither, restlessly seeking distraction—in books, in noise, in solitude, in company—but always there was something lacking. Laughter did not make me merry, wine only made me heavy, music cut me to the heart, and lively talk almost always ended in gloomy silence. Everything within was outraged, everything was turned upside down, all was chaos, full of glaring contradictions; again I was pulling everything to pieces, again there was nothing. The principles of one's moral existence, worked out long ago, were turned again into questions; facts had risen sullenly on all sides to refute them. Doubt trampled underfoot the little we had gained: it was now tearing in shreds not the vestments of the Church nor the robes of learned doctors, but the flags of the revolution. . . .

And here at one's side, simple-hearted friends shrug their shoulders, wonder at one's poor-spiritedness, at one's impatience, look forward to the morrow, and forever fussing, forever busy with the same thing, see nothing, stop before nothing, go on forever and are never a step forwarder. They judge you, comfort you, scold you—oh wearisome insufferable infliction! "Men of faith, men of love" (as they call themselves in contradistinction to us "men of doubt, men of negation") do not know what it is to tear out by the roots the cherished convictions of a lifetime. They know nothing of the sickness of truth. . . . And so the gnawing despair of others seems to them caprice, the self-indulgence of a too well-fed mind, idle irony. They see that the wounded man laughs at his crutch, and conclude that the operation meant nothing to him. It does not enter their heads to wonder why he is prematurely old and whether the stump aches at the change of weather and the blowing of the wind.

(Vol. IV, pp. 15-17)

## Bakunin

**T**HE first days after the February Revolution of 1848 were the happiest days in the life of Bakunin. Returning from Belgium, to which he had been driven by Guizot for his speech on the Polish anniversary of the 29th of November 1847, he plunged head over ears into all the depths and shallows of the revolutionary sea. He never left the barracks of the *Montagnards*. He slept with them, ate with them, and preached, preached continually—communism and *l'égalité du salaire*, levelling-down in the

name of equality, the emancipation of all the Slavs, the destruction of all the Austrias, the revolution *en permanence*, war to the extinction of the last foe. Caussidiere, the prefect from the barricades engaged in "bringing order out of chaos," did not know how to get rid of the precious orator, and plotted with Flocon to send him off to the Slavs in earnest, with a brotherly *accolade* and a conviction that there he would break his neck and be no more trouble. "*Quel homme! Quel homme!*" Caussidiere

used to say of Bakunin. "On the first day of the revolution, he is a treasure, but on the day after, he ought to be shot!"\*

... Disappearing from Prague, Bakunin appeared again as military commander of Dresden. The former artillery officer taught the art of war to the professors, musicians and chemists who had taken up arms, and advised them to hang Raphael's Madonna and Murillo's pictures on the city walls and so guard them from the Prussians, who were *zu Klassisch gebildet* to dare to fire on Raphael.

Artillery was always his stumbling block. On his way from Paris to Prague, he came somewhere in Germany upon a revolt of peasants. They were shouting and making an uproar before a castle, not knowing what to do. Bakunin got out of his conveyance, and without wasting time on finding out what was the subject of dispute, formed the peasants into ranks so skillfully that by the time he took his seat again to continue his journey the castle was burning on all four sides. . . .

As soon as Bakunin had looked about him and settled down in London—that is, had made the acquaintance of all the Poles and Russians there—he set to work.\*\* To a passion for propaganda, for agitation, for demagoguery, to incessant activity in founding, organizing plots and conspiracies, and establishing relations, to a belief in their immense significance, Bakunin added a readiness to be the first to carry out his ideas, a readiness to risk his life, and reckless daring in facing all the consequences.

His was an heroic nature, deprived of complete achievement by the course of events. He sometimes wasted his strength on what was useless, as a lion wastes his strength pacing up and down in the cage, always imagining that he will escape from it. But Bakunin was not a mere rhetorician, afraid to act upon his own words, or trying to evade carrying his theories into practice.

Bakunin had many weak points. But his weak points were small, while his strong qualities were great. Is it not in itself a sign of greatness that wherever he was flung by destiny, as soon as he had grasped two or three characteristics of his surroundings, he discerned the revolutionary forces and at once set to work to carry them on

\* "Tell Caussidiere," I said in jest to his friends, "that the difference between Bakunin and him is that Caussidiere, too, is a splendid fellow, but it would be better to shoot him on the day before the revolution." Later on, in London in 1854, I reminded him of this. The prefect in exile merely smote with his huge fist upon his mighty chest and said: "I carry Bakunin's image here, here!" (Author's Note)

\*\* Bakunin arrived at the Herzens' house in London at the end of 1861, after twelve years of prison and exile in Austria and Russia. He had escaped from Siberia by way of Japan and the United States. In *The Romantic Exiles*, E. H. Carr quotes one of those present when Bakunin burst into his friend's house after so many years. After admonishing Natalie, Herzen's wife, who was lying on a couch, exhausted from recent childbearing, "Get well! We must work, not lie down!", Bakunin asked what was new. "Only in Poland there are some demonstrations," replies Herzen. "And in Italy?" "All quiet." "Austria?" "All quiet." "Turkey?" "All quiet everywhere, and nothing in prospect." "Then what are we to do?" asks Bakunin in amazement. "Must we go to Persia or India to stir things up? It's enough to drive one mad. I cannot sit and do nothing."

further, to fan the fire, to make of it the burning question of life? . . .

In London, Bakunin first of all set to revolutionizing the *Kolokol*. . . . He thought us much too moderate, unable to take advantage of the position at the moment, and not sufficiently inclined to resolute measures. He did not lose heart, however, but was convinced that in a short time he would set us on the right path. While awaiting our conversion, Bakunin gathered about him a regular circle of Slavs. Among them there were Czechs . . . Serbs. . . . Wallachians who did duty for Slavs, with the everlasting "esko" at the end of their names, a Bulgarian who had been an officer in the Turkish army, and Poles of every shade—Bonapartist, Miroslavist, Czartoryszkist: democrats free from socialistic ideas and of a military tinge; socialists, catholics, anarchists, aristocrats, and men who were simply soldiers, ready to fight anywhere in the northern or southern states of America, but by preference in Poland.

With them, Bakunin made up for his years of silence and solitude. He argued, lectured, connived, shouted, gave orders, decided questions, organized and encouraged all day long, all night long, for days and nights together. In the brief minutes he had left, he rushed to his writing-table, cleared a little space from cigarette ash, and set to work to write ten, fifteen letters to Semipalatinsk and Arad, to Belgrade and Constantinople, to Bessarabia, Moldavia and Byelaya-Krinitza. In the middle of the letter, he would fling aside the pen and bring up to date the views of some oldfashioned Dalmatian, then, without finishing his exhortations, snatch up the pen and go on writing. This, however, was made easier for him by the fact that he was writing and talking about one and the same thing.

His activity, his laziness, his appetite, his titanic stature, the everlasting perspiration he was in—everything was on a superhuman scale. He was a giant himself, with his leonine head and the mane that stood up around it. At fifty, he was exactly the same vagrant student, the same homeless bohemian from the Rue de Bourgogne, improvident, careless of money, flinging it away when he had it, borrowing it indiscriminately right and left when he had not, as simply as children take from their parents, careless of repayment; as simply as he himself would give his last shilling to any one, only keeping what he needed for cigarettes and tea. This manner of life did not worry him; he was born to be a great vagrant, a great nomad. . . .

There was something childlike, simple and free from malice about him, and this gave him an extraordinary charm and attracted both the weak and the strong, repelling none but the stiff petty-bourgeois. . . . When carried away in argument, Bakunin poured on his opponent's head a noisy storm of abuse for which no one else would have been forgiven. Every one forgave Bakunin, and I among the first. . . .

That he ever came to get married, I can only put down to the boredom of Siberia. He preserved intact all the habits and customs of his fatherland, that is of student life in Moscow. Heaps of tobacco lay on his table like stores of forage; cigar-ash covered his papers, together



with half-finished glasses of tea; from morning onwards, clouds of smoke hung about the room from a regular chorus of smokers, who smoked as though against time, hurriedly blowing it out and drawing it in—as only Russians and Slavs do smoke, in fact. Many a time I enjoyed the amazement, accompanied by a certain horror and embarrassment, of the landlady's servant, Grace, when at dead of night, she brought boiling water and a fifth basin of sugar into this hotbed of Slav emancipation.

Long after Bakunin had left London, tales were told at No. 10 Paddington Green of the way he went on, which upset all the accepted notions and religiously observed forms of English middleclass life. Note at the same time both the maid and the landlady were passionately devoted to him. . . .

He used to receive every one, at all times, everywhere. Often he would be asleep like Onyegin, or tossing on his bed, which creaked under him, while two or three Slavs would be in his bedroom, smoking with desperate haste. He would get up heavily, souse himself with water, and at the same moment proceed to instruct them. He was never bored, never tired of them; he could talk without weariness, with the same freshness of mind, to the cleverest or the stupidest of men.

This lack of discrimination led to very funny incidents.

Bakunin used to get up late—he could hardly have done otherwise, since he spent the night talking and drinking tea. One morning at eleven o'clock, he heard some one stirring in his room. (His bed stood curtained off in a large alcove.)

"Who's there?" shouted Bakunin, waking.

"A Russian."

"What is your name?"

"So-and-so."

"Delighted to meet you."

"Why is it you get up so late and you a democrat?"

Silence; the sounds of splashing water; cascades.

"Mihail Alexandrovitch!"

"Well?"

"I wanted to ask you, were you married in church?"

"Yes."

"You did wrong. What an example of inconsistency! And here is T. having his daughter legally married. You old men ought to set us an example."

"What nonsense are you talking?"

"But tell me, did you marry for love?"

"What has that to do with you?"

"They are saying you married because your bride was rich."

"Have you come here to cross-examine me? Go to the devil!"

"Well now, here you are angry, and I really meant no harm. Goodbye. But I shall come and see you again all the same."

"All right, all right. Only be more sensible next time."

Meanwhile, the Polish storm was drawing nearer. . . . Bakunin grew younger; he was in his element. He loved not only the uproar of the revolt and the noise of the club, the market-place and the barricade; he also loved the preparatory agitation, the excited and at the same time restrained life, spent among conspiracies, consultations, sleepless nights, conferences, agreements, rectifications, invisible inks and cryptic signs. Any one who has taken part in rehearsals for private theatricals, or in preparing a Christmas tree, knows that the preparation is one of the nicest, most delightful parts of the entertainment. But though he was carried away by the preparations for the Christmas tree, I had a gnawing at my heart. I was continually arguing with him and reluctantly doing what I did not want to do.

(Vol. V, pp. 133-146)

## The Darkness

**D**ISILLUSIONMENT in our sense of the word was not known before the Revolution; the 18th century was one of the most religious periods of history. I am not speaking now of the great martyr Saint-Just or of the apostle Jean-Jacques; but was not the pope Voltaire, blessing Franklin's grandson in the name of God and Freedom, a fanatic of his religion of humanity?

Scepticism was proclaimed together with the republic of the 22nd of September 1792.

The Jacobins and the revolutionaries in general belonged to a minority separated from the life of the people by their culture. They formed something like a secular clergy ready to shepherd their human flocks. They represented the *highest* thought of their time, its *highest* but not its *common* consciousness, not the *thought of all*.\*

\* Later, Herzen extends this observation from the Jacobins to the European intelligentsia in general: "We know nothing but the top, *cultured* layer of Europe, which conceals the heavy substratum of popular life formed by the ages, and evolved by instincts and by laws that are little understood in Europe itself. European culture does not penetrate into those foundations in

This new clergy had no means of coercion, neither physical nor supernatural. From the moment that the governing power dropped out of their hands, they had only one weapon—conviction. But for conviction to be right is not enough; their whole mistake lay in supposing so. Something more was necessary: *mental equality*.

So long as the desperate conflict lasted to the strains of the hymn of the Huguenots and the hymn of the Marseillaise, so long as men were burnt at the stake and blood was flowing, this inequality passed unobserved. But at last the oppressive edifice of feudal monarchy fell, and slowly the walls were shattered, the locks torn off the gates—one more blow struck, and the brave men advance, the gates are flung open and the crowd rushes in. But

which, as in the works of the Cyclops, the hand of man is indistinguishable from that of nature and history passes into geology. The European states are welded together of two different peoples whose special characteristics are maintained by utterly different educations. There is here none of the Oriental unity which makes the Turk who is a Grand Vizier and the Turk who hands him his pipe just like each other."

it was not the crowd they expected. Who are these men? To what age do they belong? These are not Spartans, not the great *populus Romanus*. *Davus sum, non Oedipus!* An overwhelming wave of filth flooded everything. The inner horror of the Jacobins before this flood was expressed in the Terror of 1793 and 1794. They saw their mistake and tried to correct it with the guillotine; but however many heads they cut off, they still had to bow their own before the might of society that was rising to the top. Everything gave way before it. It overpowered the Revolution and the Reaction, it filled up the old forms and submerged them because it made the one effective majority of its day. Sieyes was more right than he thought when he said that the petty-bourgeoisie was *everything*...

We are angered, moved to fury by the absurdity, by the injustice of this fact. As though some one (apart from ourselves) had promised us that everything in the world should be just and beautiful and go easily. We have marvelled enough at the abstract wisdom of nature and of historical development; it is time to perceive that in nature as in history there is a great deal that is fortuitous, stupid, unsuccessful, and confused. . . . We know as a rule far more of the successes in nature, history and in life. We are only now beginning to feel that all the cards are not so well shuffled as we thought, because we ourselves are a losing card, a failure.

It mortifies us to find that the idea is impotent and that truth has no compelling force over the world of actuality. A new sort of Manichaeism takes possession of us. We are led *par dépit*, to believe in rational (that is, purposive) evil, as we used to believe in rational good. That is the last tribute we pay to idealism.

(Vol. III, pp. 133-135)

**T**HIS discordance and disharmony, of which Byron as a poet and genius was conscious forty years ago, has after a succession of painful experiences . . . overwhelmed many of us today. And we, like Byron, do not know what to do with ourselves. . . . Byron's epilogue, his last word, if you like, is *The Darkness*. . . .

Two enemies, hideously disfigured by hunger, are dead; they are devoured by some crablike monsters; a ship is rotting; the tarred rope sways in the muddy waters in the darkness; there is fearful cold; the animals are dying out; history has already perished and the place is cleared for new life: our period will be reckoned as the fourth formation—that is, if the new world arrives at being able to count up to four.

Our historical vocation, our work lies in the fact that by our disillusionment, by our sufferings, we reach resignation and humility in the face of the truth, and spare following generations from these troubles. With us, humanity is regaining sobriety, with us recovering from its drunken orgy. . . .

We know how Nature disposes of the individual. . . . The polypi die without suspecting that they have served the *progress* of the reef. We, too, shall serve something. Entering into the future as an element in it does not mean that the future will fulfil our ideals. Rome did not carry out Plato's idea of a republic nor the Greek idea in general.

The Middle Ages were not the development of Rome. Modern Western thought will pass into history and be incorporated into it, will have its influence in its place, just as our body passes into the composition of grass, of sheep, of cutlets, and of men. We do not like that kind of immortality, but what is there to be done about it?

Now I am accustomed to these thoughts; they no longer terrify me. But at the end of 1849, I was overwhelmed by them; and in spite of the fact that every event, every meeting, every contact, every person seemed bent on tearing away the last green leaves, I still frantically and obstinately sought a *way of escape*. That is why I prize so highly the courageous thought of Byron. He saw that there is *no escape* and proudly said so.

I was unhappy and perplexed when these thoughts began to haunt me. I tried by every means to run away from them. Like a lost traveller, like a beggar, I knocked at every door, stopped every one I met and asked my way. But every meeting and every event led to the same result—to *humility* in the face of the truth, to meek acceptance of it.

(Vol. III, 137-139)

#### THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

MARIE OLSON IS GOING PLACES NOW! . . . During the war, Marie was a schoolgirl in Denmark. She worked with the underground, was caught and tormented by the Gestapo. . . . Then, in March of 1946, she came to America. And here she began to believe in the American dream. Marie dreamed of being a model. But she weighed 147½ pounds; her figure, posture and grooming were poor, according to American standards. Then some one sent her to the DuBarry Success School. . . . She learned . . . poise . . . a charming hair-do and a make-up with DuBarry preparations. . . . She lost 29¼ pounds. . . . A famous model agency has offered her a contract. "America," says Marie, "is heaven. The Success School has given me a new life." What about You? The Success School may well give *you* a new life, too.

—Advertisement in "The New Yorker" for the DuBarry Success School, 693 Fifth Ave., New York City.

#### LIFE AMONG THE REALISTS

The fourth International Congress for Microbiology, meeting today in Copenhagen, unanimously adopted a resolution "condemning in strongest possible terms all forms of bacteriological warfare." . . . The Congress . . . "trusts that all microbiologists throughout the world will do everything in their power to prevent the use of such barbaric methods." . . .

It was universally agreed in the discussions that the outright refusal by scientists to lend their efforts towards bacteriological developments for warfare would be "unrealistic." Scientists, they pointed out, are also citizens, and in the absence of a universal agreement outlawing bacteriological warfare, no group in any one country could take unilateral action calculated to place their country's defenses at a disadvantage.

—"N. Y. Times," July 27, 1947.

#### THE CHANGING "TIMES"

The Japanese would like the world to believe that had it not been for the atomic bomb, they could have fought on indefinitely. . . . Revelations by their surrender envoys provide the answer to that fallacy. They were well licked before the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima.

—"N. Y. Times" editorial, Aug. 23, 1945.

The Japanese had been gravely weakened but they were still determined to fight to the death. . . . That is the justification for the bomb's use.

—"N. Y. Times" editorial, Jan. 28, 1947.



# BOOKS

## The Kinsey Report

THOSE radicals who have been prone to pride themselves on the quantity, variety or eccentricity of their sexual lives have a let-down in store in the recently published report on the sex behavior of five thousand American males interviewed by three staff members of Indiana university. As did a well-known wise man who also possessed considerable research experience in the field, the Kinsey report on *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*\* tells us, in brief, that there is nothing new under the sun. Furthermore, after burrowing through the 800-odd pages of data on the American male's sexual encounters with self, his own sex, the other sex, and various non-human species of the animal kingdom, the reader is forced to conclude that, sexually speaking, there isn't even anything rare enough to be unusual.

Widely ballyhooed by advance magazine and press releases, the first of the nine-volume series planned by the Indiana research group justifies its advance claims. It is undoubtedly the most valid and complete survey yet made in its field. What is more, the scope of this report, the carefulness and precision of its methods, and the rare insight of the authors into matters both within and outside their technical fields, make the Kinsey study a landmark in the whole history of social research.

The raw material consisted of 5,300 standardized personal interviews conducted largely by the senior author, Alfred C. Kinsey, and his associates, Wardell B. Pomeroy and Clyde E. Martin. The analysis of the raw material falls into two main sections. First the variations in sex behavior by age, marital status, age of adolescence, social level, rural-urban background and religious membership are carefully analyzed. Then the data are broken down in terms of the nine major forms of sexual "outlets" [sic]: masturbation, nocturnal emissions, heterosexual petting, pre-marital intercourse, marital intercourse, extra-marital intercourse, intercourse with prostitutes, homosexuality and intercourse with animals.

The Kinsey report effectively explodes a number of old wives' tales which have for many a year been palmed off on perhaps not so unsuspecting youth by laymen and "experts" alike. The findings bear out Freud in showing that sexual responsiveness and the mechanisms for complete and specific genital sexuality operate practically from birth. Genital orgasms unmistakably resembling adult orgasm have been documented in children as young as four months; and the authors estimate that in an uninhibited society, half of the males could reach full orgasm by three or four years of age. The human male reaches his highest sexual capacity not, as many believe, at 30, but in the adolescent and pre-adolescent years. The notion that there is a fixed quantity of sexual capacity ("a man has just so much in him"), and that the youth should therefore "save" himself for later activity, is contradicted by data which show that males beginning adolescence and

sex life earliest are sexually active at least as long as, and in some cases longer than, males who begin activity late. The widespread myth that seminal emissions will "take care" of the sexual problem for the abstinent male receives scant support from the findings, which show little if any relationship between the frequency of other types of sexual activity and the number of emissions. Many of the most sexually active males have a high number of emissions, and some inactive ones have practically none. With regard to the possibility of sublimating sexual energy, the Kinsey report attests that "among the many males who have contributed to the present sample, sublimation is so subtle, or so rare, as to constitute an academic possibility rather than a demonstrated actuality."

### Kinds of Experience

In analyzing how total sexual activity is distributed among the various "outlets," the study finds that 92 percent of the male population at one time or another engage in masturbation which leads to orgasm. There is no evidence that, apart from the reactions of other people, masturbation at any age is harmful. This held true, in the survey, even for those highest-rating males who masturbated on an average of 23 times a week. No doubt the most surprising finding with regard to masturbation is that among married men who have attended college, 69 percent masturbate after marriage. (This is the highest masturbation rate for married men; as we shall see later, the college-educated, professional group are society's most active masturbators.)

Undoubtedly one of the most revealing parts of the study is the analysis of homosexuality. Previous estimates of its frequency have ranged from 5 percent of the population down to one-tenth of one percent. The Kinsey survey finds that "at least 37 per cent of the male population has some homosexual experience between the beginning of adolescence and old age." This, we must bear in mind is overt homosexual experience with actual orgasm, and the figure does not include pre-adolescent homosexuality. (This does not mean, of course, that 37 percent of American males find their chief—or even an important—sexual outlet in homosexuality; on the contrary, among the males studied, only 6.3 percent of the total orgasms were derived from homosexual contacts, as against 69.4 percent from heterosexual sources.)

From these findings, the authors draw several inferences. The data demonstrate the complete meaninglessness of a dichotomy between "heterosexual" and "homosexual" persons. It is, of course, possible to speak of heterosexual and homosexual experiences; but inasmuch as at least half of the population have overt experiences—or by their own admission consciously desire overt experiences—of both kinds, the old two-fold classification of people is useless. Hetero—and homosexuality, the authors conclude, can be conceived of only in terms of a continuum, i.e., how much heterosexuality and how much homosexuality have entered into the individual's overt or covert behavior? The old stigmatization (or glorification) of homosexuality further breaks down in light of the fact that there is no conclusive evidence that tendencies in either direction are inherited, or that any distinguishable homosexual type exists. It appears that the homosexual as a visibly distinct biological entity is, from the standpoint of science, going to go the same way the so-called Jewish "race" has gone.

The frequency of pre-marital intercourse varies with

\* By Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia; \$6.50.