

BOOKS

Displaced Person



ALEXANDER HERZEN began work on his memoirs in London in October of 1852, having first glimpsed the "dirty white promontories" of England at day-break on the twenty-fifth of August. The initial five parts of "Byloye i Dumy" ("My Past and Thoughts") were completed by May of 1855. Sections of the work appeared at intervals in *The Pole Star* and *The Bell*, the two celebrated émigré periodicals printed and disseminated by Herzen's Free Russian Press, in London. During the winter of 1856-57, Herzen resumed work on his recollections; he added bits to the first part, and by the end of 1858 he had virtually completed Part VI, the brilliant, often satiric sketches of emigrant life in London between 1852 and 1855. A considerable pause ensued, during which Herzen worked on different bits and pieces, most of which have since been incorporated in Part VI. During 1860 and 1861, he prepared a definitive version of Parts I to IV for publication in book form. He took up the task once more in 1865, and the memoirs as we now know them were completed in December of 1867, fifteen years after their inception. Part VIII, fragments covering souvenirs of Italy, Switzerland, and France, appeared toward the end of 1868 in the eighth volume of *The Pole Star*. This was the last text edited by Herzen himself.

Constance Garnett's six-volume translation, delightful in format and typography but philologically often unreliable, appeared between 1924 and 1927. It was based on a Russian text published in Berlin in 1921. This text omitted a number of intimate or contemporaneously libellous sections that Herzen himself had left unpublished. The first genuinely complete and

authoritative edition is that of the "Collected Works" of Herzen in process of being issued, in thirty volumes, by the Soviet Academy of Sciences since 1954. "Byloye i Dumy," which takes up Volumes VIII to XI, was published in a less scholarly, less fully annotated three-volume set in Moscow in 1958. When it is completed, the "Collected Works" will wholly supersede M. K. Lemke's "Complete Works and Letters" (Petrograd, 1919-25). The edition of "My Past and Thoughts" now offered by Knopf in four volumes, at thirty dollars, consists of the Garnett translation revised by Mr. Humphrey Higgs. Mr. Higgs gives brief indications of the principles he has adopted in revising Mrs. Garnett, but it is difficult to say, without collating the two texts, how extensive or significant his revisions are. In a number of instances, his modernizations sacrifice something of the note of fuss and sensibility that Constance Garnett admirably caught. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that his translation is a far more reliable piece of work. The Knopf edition has footnotes, as well as brief notes at the end of each volume. The notes, which Mr. Higgs chooses

to call "copious," derive essentially, as the editor acknowledges, from the Soviet edition. He has also added footnotes of his own to those provided by Herzen, Mrs. Garnett, and the Moscow annotators. The body of annotation is helpful as far as it goes, but it is distinctly short of what is needed by the ordinary reader if he seeks to grasp the full wealth and incisiveness of Herzen's manner. More substantive are the claims made for this four-volume presentation in regard to new material. These are fifty-eight pages of "Notes of a Young Man," first published by Herzen in 1840-41 and subsequently reworked for the memoirs; a number of short prefatory passages to sections of "My Past and Thoughts" not included by Garnett; and some letters to Herzen from Belinsky, Carlyle, Proudhon, Granovsky, Chaadayev, and N. A. Polevoy. (The letter from Proudhon is particularly characteristic and *belle époque*.) Mr. Higgs has newly translated some two hundred and forty-five pages of the memoirs themselves. A number of the relevant passages had not been included by Herzen or Mrs. Garnett and are now for the first time available in English. Among



"Yeah, well, I happen to be weary, too, so why don't you try a little tenderness?"

and once finished second to Vaguely Noble, who was rated the best horse in Europe last season. The afternoon was not without an unhappy contretemps: The Heir, a full brother to Bold Lad and Successor, dropped dead after coming in second in a race—cerebral hemorrhage, the vets said. Earlier in the week, Rafale, the wonder horse of Argentina two years ago, ran next to last in a race won by Gay Matelda. In the next race on the card—the Mimosa—Nutty Donut beat Queen's Double, Ta Wee, and ten others in a driving finish. Shouting her home must have been a mouthful.

KEENELAND and Saratoga might well look to their laurels as marketplace for thoroughbreds. At last week's auction at Hialeah of two-year-olds in training, two hundred and thirty-one of them brought in \$3,525,000—an average of \$15,262 a head. The top price at the four-day session was \$225,000, for Rough Frolic—a chestnut colt by the late Rough'n Tumble out of Individuality—who was knocked down to Daniel Schwartz, a Californian. Especially in demand were colts and fillies by Rough'n Tumble, six of them bringing in \$379,000; when those of his son Dr. Fager come to the sale, there's no telling what they'll bring.

BOWIE also had a double feature last weekend—the Francis Scott Key Stakes, for three-year-olds, at six furlongs. Parchment won the first division, his fourth victory in succession. He is owned by Peter Fuller, whose Dancer's Image started a winning streak at Bowie that wound up with the Kentucky Derby, but, if I may say so, he's not another Dancer's Image. Mr. Coincidence won the second division.

BARBARA JO RUBIN, the Florida girl the jockeys refused to ride against at Tropical Park, finally rode against the boys—and beat them. She had to go to the Hobby Horse Hall racetrack at Nassau, in the Bahamas, to do it. Riding in a race at five furlongs there last week, she led all the way. Penny Ann Early didn't do so well in her match with Pineda in California. She was second from start to finish in the six furlongs. Also last week, the Florida State Racing Commission upheld the Tropical Park stewards who fined thirteen jockeys a hundred dollars each for the part they took in the demonstration against Miss Rubin.

—AUDAX MINOR



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them we find two exceedingly brief amorous episodes, excerpts relating to Herzen's fierce domestic crisis in 1851, parts of a conversation with Baron James Rothschild, who helped the exiled Russian recover much of his blocked Russian fortune, and some of the more acid of Herzen's vignettes of fellow-émigrés, especially Germans. It is, to be sure, good to have this material made available in English, but it adds fairly little. For anyone able to read German, these texts were already accessible, having been published in a three-volume edition of "My Past and Thoughts" edited by Eberhard Reissner and issued by Aufbau-Verlag, in Berlin, in 1962. I mention this edition, of which Mr. Higgins is, as far as I can make out, unaware, for its lack of pretension, its compactness, and its admirable apparatus of notes. Again and again, Mr. Higgins' identifications of the many contemporaries referred to in the memoirs are perfunctory or non-existent. Try to find out the required minimum about L. Charre, Count Chovansky, or Richard Cobden (I am merely perusing the entries under "C") and you will find either nothing or merely a set of dates of birth and death. In each instance, Reissner's edition gives help. And this is true throughout. What we have in this latest edition is a sumptuous package with a few interesting additions to the Garnett text and a more faithful translation, but not the truly comprehensive job hoped for or blazoned on the dust jacket. Sir Isaiah Berlin's introduction is stylish, yet it adds little to his own earlier glances at Herzen (i.e., in "From Another Shore," published in 1956). As Sir Isaiah himself notes, Professor Martin Malia's "Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism" (1961) remains indispensable.

The tedious details are worth getting right because the reader is dealing here with one of the great classics of human feeling. Herzen's psychological and argumentative re-creation of his own life is so rich, so active with the pressure of being, that it is difficult now to separate biography from imaginative fact. But even if we lacked these memoirs, if, like Byron's, they had been destroyed, Herzen's biography would remain fascinating. Born in April of 1812, a few months before the great fires that devastated Moscow and drove Napoleon into naked winter, Herzen was the illegitimate son of a Russian aristocrat and his German mistress (though the word scarcely conveys the palid, serflike dependence of Luiza Haag). The boy grew up in a morose,



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shadowy mansion, on the physical and psychological watershed between the Russia of the boyars and the Russia of radical awakening. When he was sixteen, Herzen, together with his lifelong intimate Nicholas Ogarev, stood on the Sparrow Hills above Moscow and swore to dedicate his life to the cause of emancipation and human rights for which the leaders of the Decembrist conspiracy had been hanged by the Czar. This "Hannibal oath," as the Romantics, remembering their Plutarch, called vows of vengeance, may have been an adolescent gesture, but Herzen never broke trust. By 1839, the university student with the socialist-utopian leanings and infectious style was an object of police surveillance. Exile to the borders of Asia followed almost as a matter of course. A clandestine marriage to his first cousin Natalie, like himself illegitimate and full of feverish sensibility nurtured during a solitary, despotically governed childhood, did not mend matters.

In 1840, Herzen was exiled to Novgorod. Although he was allowed to return to Moscow two years later, the young publicist knew himself a marked man. With remarkable courage and gusto, he continued his work: his historical essays, stories dealing with the "social question," articles in which he sought to spread among the Russian intelligentsia his passionate interest in French radical and utopian theory and in German idealism. If a subsequent, more extreme generation found the ground of Fourierism, Hegelianism, and Kantian idealism prepared, the credit was largely Herzen's. Already he had discovered his genius as a courier of ideas, as a messenger of feeling. But imperial Moscow was like a prison. On his father's death, in 1846, Herzen, now wealthy, decided to emigrate. Surprisingly, Nicholas I allowed him a passport. In January of 1847, Herzen, his family, and his domestic suite reached the frontier. What followed was one of those instants of private life on which the history of ideas and society turns:

The little Jew whipped up his horses, the sledge moved off. I looked back, the barrier had been lowered, the wind swept the snow from Russia onto the road and blew to one side the tail and mane of the Cossack's horse.

The nurse in a sarafan and a warm jacket was still looking after us and weeping; Sonnenberg, that comic figure from the days of childhood, waved his silk handkerchief—all around us was the endless steppe of snow.

"Goodbye, Tatyana! Goodbye, Karl Ivanovich!"

Here was a milestone and on it, cov-

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ered with snow, a thin, single-headed eagle with outspread wings... and that's a good thing: one head less.

But the Czarist and Prussian eagles were to keep their stifling grip. Herzen spent the rest of his life as an emigrant waiting for, divining, summoning a revolution that came later—and that would have horrified him. From 1847 to 1852, he divided his time mainly between France and Italy. The year 1849, when radicalism itself lay in shambles after the failure of revolution, brought on domestic crisis. Georg Herwegh, a German radical poetaster, batted on the Herzen household. Some kind of liaison developed between him and Natalie Herzen. By the time the ugly imbroglio was over, Natalie was a dying woman and Herzen had lost his mother and one of his children by drowning. He saw "night and ocean" closing over him.

In fact, his most productive years lay ahead. The political tolerance and emotional unreality of London proved ideal. The death of Nicholas I seemed a promise of dawn. *The Bell* achieved tremendous intellectual influence. Smuggled into Russia and read in liberal circles throughout Europe, it made Herzen a moral force to be reckoned with. His house became a focus for debate, conspiracy, and utopian dreams. Bakunin, Orsini, Ledru-Rollin, Owen—the roll call of Herzen's familiars and visitors is that of Russian and European radicalism. Malwida von Meysenbug, a remarkable woman who was to figure in the lives of Nietzsche, Wagner, and Romain Rolland, was governess to his children. In a curious sexual idyll, reminiscent of the anarchic, libertarian visions of the early Romantics, Herzen remained intimate with Ogarev while taking his wife as mistress. Events outstripped Herzen's pastoral politics. *The Bell* ceased, in Geneva, in 1867. Herzen returned to Paris, always the hub of the insurrectionary dream, in early 1870. He died before the outbreak of war and before the Commune had made history ripe for Marx. His generous hopes, his vivid sense of the dignity of man, were steadfast to the end.

Every major Russian writer, from Tolstoy to Pasternak, Nabokov, and Pastovsky, has had in him at least one outstanding memoir of childhood, as if the recurrent darkness of Russian history made of childhood a peculiarly privileged, ever to be recaptured oasis. This is so even when early years were cruel or constrained, as they proved for Gorky and Herzen. The

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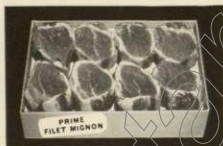


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latter's remembrances of his father are graphic:

A terrible dullness reigned in the house, particularly on the endless winter evenings—two lamps lit a whole suite of rooms; wearing high cloth or lamb's-wool boots... a velvet cap and a long, white lambskin coat, bowed, with his hands clasped behind his back, the old man walked up and down, followed by two or three brown dogs, and never uttering a word.

Only later, when he was returning from exile, did Herzen apprehend "the melancholy significance of this lonely, abandoned existence, dying out in the arid, harsh, stony wilderness that he had created about himself yet that he had not the will to change." But there were also times of delight: the lilac evenings of late summer on the estate, Herzen's discovery of Pushkin and Schiller, rapturous friendship with Ogarev, the sudden crunch of snow in the yard, "with a different sound from that made by town sledges," when Cousin Natalie came visiting from Tver. Herzen's account of his university days is a mixture of the macabre and the comic: fossilized professors amble down dusty corridors, seminarians kiss hands and ask for Father Rector's blessing. Yet winds of intellectual and political life were blowing through the barracks; by the time he completed his studies, the young Herzen had acquired, partly by clandestine means, a vital grounding in French socialist and German idealist doctrine.

Exiled to Vyatka for his dabbling in subversive texts and ideas, Herzen was put to work in the local bureaucracy. His memoirs of life in a tawdry hole on the borders of Asia are revealing—in what they tell us of the ways of autocracy in the vast and drear outposts of the empire and in what they exhibit, almost unconsciously, of Herzen's *clen*, of his commitment to the energies and fascination at being alive, however harsh the circumstances. Nor was the young radical ineffectual; his work and letters helped expose the local governor, an odious martinet. Herzen's elopement with Natalie is excellently told. Looking back, the writer evokes, with that humorous nostalgia that is the mark of his style, the fervid sentimentality and operatic flights of love in the eighteen-forties. "Here ends the lyrical part of our life," writes Herzen. "Ahead there are children, cares, struggle... further ahead still all will perish... on the one hand a grave, on the other loneliness and life in a foreign country!"

The portion of the memoirs called "Before the Revolution and After It"

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is full of grief. In their subtle compound of lucidity and self-deception, these extraordinary pages give us access to the truth of a marriage. Like Hazlitt's "Liber Amoris" and Flaubert's letters, Herzen's autobiography crystallizes one of the major changes in the history of personality: the passage from a classic reticence and image of common humanity to the distinctively modern absorption in individuality and the play of private consciousness. Exile, the cruel failure of the revolutions of 1848, Herzen's addiction to emotionally dramatized friendships, his very self-sufficiency as an intellectual being, undermined Natalie's confidence. Just because he was an infantile, publicly thwarted mountebank, Herwegh needed her as Herzen did not. "Byloye i Dumy" lets us follow the crisis step by step. Herwegh's dishevelled wife enters the quadrille; she duns Herzen for money so that her husband, who threatens suicide by fasting while at the same time he is purloining a fresh sausage, may take melodramatic flight; duels impend; the entire émigré world becomes involved. In the summer of 1851, Herzen and Natalie meet alone in a hotel in Turin. The episode of their "second wedding" is one of the most adult and fully rendered in modern literature, and strangely premonitory of the nocturnal in Joyce's "The Dead":

We walked gaily along the empty streets to the hotel. There everyone was asleep except the porter. On the table (laid for supper) stood two unlighted candles, bread, fruit, and a decanter of wine. I did not want to wake anyone; we lit the candles and, sitting down at the unoccupied table, looked at each other and at once both remembered our days at Vladimir.

She had on a white muslin dress or blouse, put on for the journey because of the blazing heat, and at that first interview of ours, when I had arrived from my place of exile, she had been all in white, too, and her wedding dress had been white. Even her face, though it bore clear-cut traces of profound shocks, anxieties, meditations, and sufferings, recalled by its expression her features at that time.... Through our horror and dull agony we had seen the more clearly how inseparably years and circumstances, children and life in foreign lands, had welded us together.

But the joys of reconciliation could not mend what was broken. Herzen finds images of a memorable precision: "The past is not a proof that can be corrected but a guillotine knife; after it has once fallen there is much that does not grow together again, and not everything can be set right. It remains as though cast in metal, exact in detail,

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unalterable, dark as bronze." In the moment of Natalie's death, as always in Herzen's life, the private and the political interact. A strange woman in black passes by with two children. They offer a Latin prayer for the deceased:

Then she says to me: "They, too, have no mother, and their father is far away. You were at the burial of their grandmother."

They were the children of Garibaldi.

In some decisive way, Natalie's death released the full range of Herzen's strength. The journalism he produced in London and the parts of "My Past and Thoughts" that deal with émigré politics reveal a trenchant ironist. Herzen had a quick ear for bombast; no one comes near him in registering the gamut of pathos and grand opera, mendacity and stoic bearing, dialectic and gossip in which Bakunin, Mazzini, the ostracized French socialist leaders, and what remained of the German radical movement led their frustrated lives. The pages buzz with the swarming and infighting of an unsettled hive. Herzen was a liberal—even in certain respects, a democrat—but he was also the son of a nobleman and a man of means. He could not conceal his amusement over the acrimonious snobberies of a milieu in which the burning question of the day was whether Kossuth should call on Ledru-Rollin or Ledru-Rollin on Kossuth.

And as the whale nears, the minnows scatter: when "the red Marx" stalks out of a committee room, only a handful follow, but those who stay behind drop out of history. Herzen despised the brutal, boorish sage. But we glimpse in Herzen's memoir of their rare, hostile meetings his realization, beautifully honest as always, that the world of radicalism he had helped create was passing into dust. How many are there like Mazzini—revolutionaries committed to the worth of the individual, "and who will come after them?"

Herzen's memoirs have a twofold relevance. They document, with complete psychological fidelity, the condition of tragic liberalism. I mean by that that Herzen strove all his life for revolution but came to know that such revolution would spell ruin for the civilization he himself embodied. The impulses that made him a rebel, that drove him into exile and unbroken resistance to autocracy, were generous and deep-seated, but they reflected the idiom and intellectual values of a privileged, high-bourgeois culture. When he spoke in the name of Kant and Schiller, of Plutarch and Rousseau,

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Herzen was necessarily enlisting a body of thought accessible only to the very literate. The ideal of human sensibility, of private judgment, which he opposed to the brutish monotony of life under political terror, was itself penetrated by middle-class reflexes and conventions of educated leisure. Such conventions would be swept away by revolution. The furnishings of the spirit among which Herzen moved and thought—the private library, the room for art or chamber music, the chance to travel among antiquities and lofty natural scenes, the domestic servants that made possible the creative leisure of an intelligentsia—all would be levelled in the populist whirlwind. What lay ahead was most likely a gray plateau, a mass society devoted to the crafts of survival. Herzen knew this; he sensed the philistinism, the vengeful monotonies that waited beyond the storm. Unlike so many New Left pundits and would-be bomb-throwers of today, Herzen never minimized the cost of social revolution in terms of culture. Stuffed into the dustbin of history would be not only injustice, exploitation, class snobberies, religious cant of every kind but a good measure of the fine arts, speculative insights, and inherited learning that were the peculiar glory of Western man. Herzen knew that the task of a radical intellectual elite was in a very precise sense suicidal. In preparing society for revolution it was inevitably digging its own grave. A revolutionary intelligentsia, be it in Czarist Russia, in the China of the nineteen-thirties, or in the United States today, is a group of middle-class men and women engaged in an eloquent auto-da-fé. Herzen embodies this paradoxical vocation in a manner sharply illuminating of our present affairs.

Secondly, Herzen is one of the first modern "refugees." His entire adult existence was conditioned by uprootedness, by the nervous stresses and elusive irresponsibilities that came with exile. Though financial good fortune cushioned him from many of the shocks and humiliations the refugee usually encounters, he experienced the curious sense of disembodiment, of borrowed identity, that visits anyone who is perennially a guest. "My Past and Thoughts" is prophetic of the unhoused, wandering estate that so many artists, intellectuals, and ordinary men have had to adopt in our time. Herzen sensed that the very condition of the intellectual, of the freethinker, is one of persistent exile, either inside his own community or, more commonly, in flight across its borders. That journey in January

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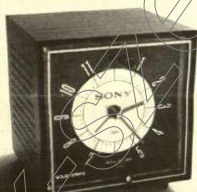
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