

The London Meeting of Herzen and Chernyshevsky in June 1859

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Preface

This article was written originally as a part of my thesis for St. Antony's College, Oxford in August 1969. And it was entitled "The Difference between the Political Views of Herzen and Chernyshevsky-Dobrolyubov in June 1859".

After I was invited by Dr. R. Pethybridge to give a lecture on Herzen and Russian social thought in the University College of Swansea in November 1969, I largely rewrote it, especially part I, for the lecture paper and changed the title into the present one.

I would like to thank the following people to whom I owe very much for their help.

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Introduction

In this short article, I intend to outline the course and contents of the polemic between Herzen and the '*Sovremennik*' (Contemporary) and the meeting of Herzen and Chernyshevsky in London in June 1859.

Herzen and Chernyshevsky met only once in their lives. Their meeting took place after the appearance in '*Kolokol*' of Herzen's indignant and aggressive article "Very Dangerous!!!", directed against the '*Sovremennik*' which was edited by Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov in St. Petersburg.

It is a remarkable episode in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement of the 19th century; and it is also very interesting to search for the differences of political opinion between two generations of Russian revolutionary groups in the dawn of the Reform of 1861. But it is not so easy to ascertain the contents of this conflict between the two Russian revolutionary centres, because Herzen and Chernyshevsky wrote very little themselves on this question.

They never made public the contents of their meeting in London. Herzen did not refer to it even in his famous autobiography. Chernyshevsky avoided discussion of the episode even with his friend, Antonovich who worked with him in '*Sovremennik*' at that time and wrote the most valuable memoirs on this matter.

Lack of material was one of the reason for the polemic between Prof. Koz'min and Academician Nechkina about the interpretation of this problem, 1952-1955, in Soviet historical journals. In this polemic the two Soviet authorities showed opposed views on this problem and in the end they could not reach complete agreement; but in the process of the argument, they produced some important material and ideas which helped to make this problem more clear. I owe very much to their works, mainly to Prof. Koz'min's. Furthermore, this polemic between Soviet historians was very useful for an understanding not only of the historical circumstances of Russia in 1859 but also of the situation of Soviet historiography in the year immediately after the death of Stalin.

There is no special work on this problem in English. But, we can find some short description or comments in English books on Russian social thought which I indicate in the following. The most useful books in English about this question are Dr. Lampert's works. They contain brief references and some important suggestions on this problem, but have no special chapter about the London meeting. (See. E. Lampert, *Studies in Rebellion*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957, pp. 254-255; *Sons against Fathers*, Oxford: OUP, 1965, pp. 183, 373)

Prof. Franco Venturi has also mentioned briefly this polemic between Herzen and '*Sovremennik*' in Chapter 4 of his work *Roots of Revolution* (English transla-

tion by F. Haskel, pp. 107-108).

In the introduction of the English translation of Chernyshevsky's "What is to be done?", Prof. E.H. Carr has given an accurate account of this episode describing it as a generation gap between Russian revolutionaries of the forties and the sixties.¹

Prof. L. Schapiro has given an interesting characterization of the political views of Herzen and Chernyshevsky in the chapter of "The Influence of the Great Reforms" in his recent work on Russian political thought.² But he does not allude to the conflict between them.

Sir Isaiah Berlin does not notice specially this meeting but only deals with the general difference between Herzen's disposition or idea from "the tough-minded younger radicals" of the sixties" in the introduction to the new English translation of Herzen's Memoirs.³

Dr. M. Malia's remarkable book on Herzen does not cover 1859, but mainly deals with the foundations of the ideas of Herzen's socialism up to 1855.⁴

In this paper, I wish to trace the course of the polemic between Herzen and 'Sovremennik', and the London meeting of Herzen and Chernyshevsky; and to consider the difference of their political views in section I. In section II, I shall trace the polemic between Prof. Koz'min and Academician Nechkina in 1952-1955 and finally give a short conclusion.

I. Herzen's attack on 'Sovremennik' and Chernyshevsky's journey to London.

(1)

Herzen and Chernyshevsky met in London in July 1859, after the publication of Herzen's article "Very Dangerous!!!" in 'Kolokol' (1 June, 1859). He started his article with the following sentences:

Recently in our journalism there have begun to appear certain putrid currents, certain sorts of *corruption* of thought. In no way do we recognize these trends as an expression of public opinion. We consider them to be inspired by the triumvirate of the official censorship officiously *directing* and *exhorting*.....⁵ (translated by Y.I.)

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1. N.G. Chernyshevsky, *What is to be done?: Tales about new people*, Introduction by E.H. Carr. (New York: Vintage Books, 1960) pp. x, xi.
 2. Leonard Shapiro, *Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian Nineteenth Century Political Thought* (New Heaven, Yale University Press, 1967)
 3. Isaiah Berlin, Introduction to A.I. Herzen *My Past & Thoughts*. translated by Constance Garnett. Vol. 1, p. xxxv. (London, 1968)
 4. Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism*. (New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1961)
 5. A.I. Herzen, *Complete Works*, Vol. XIV, p. 116 (Moscow, 1958)

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This article caused unexpected reactions among Russian readers. The conservatives, including the government, and the liberals welcomed it as a sign that Herzen had come round to their point of view, and radical readers including Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov were disappointed by it.

In the article, Herzen criticized the new radical tendency of '*Sovremennik*' edited by Chernyshevsky, and '*Svistok*' by Dobrolyubov, and tried to defend his own views on Russian politics.

Before comparing their opinions about Russian politics, I think it is useful to look briefly at the historical background of this conflict.

The Russian government hesitated for a long time to reform the old social system based on serfdom. But, after the miserable results of the Crimean War (1854-56), the government could not avoid improving the system of serfdom which was the fundamental basis of the old regime. Frightened by the increasing number of peasant uprisings and the growth of public opinion hostile to serfdom, Alexander II and the nobility were forced to start to consider the Reform, but they wanted to keep their old system of domination. In other words, they wanted to avoid a fatal crisis and any revolutionary changes. On 30th March 1856, while the Paris peace conference was still in progress, Alexander declared to representatives of the Moscow nobility his intention to reform serfdom from above, before it should be overthrown from below; and early in 1857 he set up the Secret Committee for the Reform.

At that time Herzen was not in Russia, but was recognized as a most influential leader of the Russian emancipation movement. Already in 1853 Herzen had organized the 'Free Russian Press' in London. Its first appeal was the famous article "July day! July day!" subtitled "To the Russian Nobility", in which he asked the Russian nobility to remember the Decembrists as the pioneers of the emancipation movement and to decide, of their own accord, to take the initiative in freeing the peasants. And, in March 1855, he wrote in the "*Polyarnaya Zvezda* (The Pole Star)", published by himself, an appeal to Alexander II and the Empress, encouraging them to realize the Reform from above. His '*Kolokol*' started from 1857 to intensify propaganda to Russia for the hastening of peasant emancipation. He intended to arouse Russian public including the liberals against serfdom.

On the other side, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov had grown up under the influence of Herzen's works, and regarded him as their great mentor in the Russian revolutionary movement. Following Herzen, they also tried to devote themselves to the realization of the emancipation of the Russian people from Tsarism.

After 1857, they succeeded in making '*Sovremennik*', the organ of their revolutionary propaganda. But in the process of their effort, there had been serious conflicts among the staff of '*Sovremennik*' from 1857. These conflicts resulted in A. Druzhinin and Turgenev, co-editors of '*Sovremennik*', leaving the journal, and one of the contributors, L. Tolstoy sent a hostile letter to Nekrasov, the editor in chief saying, "No! You have committed a major blunder in allowing our team to lose Druzhinin. With him one could hope for proper criticism in the '*Sovremennik*'; but what shall we do now, with this gentleman who smells of bugs? I can still hear his thin voice, uttering disagreeable stupidities....."¹ Under the name of "gentleman who smells of bugs", Tolstoy suggested Chernyshevsky. This conflict in the staff of '*Sovremennik*' was a sign of the split among the Russian progressive group in the 1850s into liberals and revolutionaries.

Nekrasov chose to stand up for Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, but Herzen was in a difficult situation between the two sides.

Herzen was less critical of the government and the liberals than were Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. When Herzen had expressed his hopes of reform through Alexander II, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov had already realized that the plans of the government would in fact create new pressures forcing the Russian peasantry once more under the control of the nobility, in another form. Their conclusions about the Reform had been reached as the result of actual observations and strict analysis of Tsarism after the Crimean War. Their attitude to this problem appears to stem from a non-noble point of view. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov believed that the real emancipation of the Russian peasantry could not be realized by the government and by the liberals. They believed in the necessity of revolutionary change from below, including the abandonment of Tsarism itself.

I think, it is relevant to add some comments on new leaders of 1850s' Russian political movement including Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, and the Serno-Solovevich brothers.

Respecting Herzen as their great teacher, they did not belong to the same generation and class as Herzen and Ogarev. They were new leaders of the post-1848 generation and of the non-noble class. Russian historians call them "*raznochinets intelligentsia*" which grew up mainly in the town under the influence of the development of commerce and industry in the 19th century: a non-noble and at the same time non-serf class. The *raznochinets intelligentsia* earned their living mainly as writers, teachers, lawyers, lower bureaucrats in the government,

1. E. Lampert, *Sons against Fathers*, p. 115.

or priests, but always without any hereditary estates. They were nearer to the common people, including the serfs, than to the nobility and so long as they had no hope of becoming nobles or of possessing their own landed property, they had the potential abilities to become more radical opponents of the old regime than the noble intelligentsia. Belinsky was a pioneer of the radical *raznochinets-intelligentsia* in Russian literature, but he himself appears not to have recognized this problem among the nobles. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov could approach the social problem as conscious representatives of the new generation and of the non-noble people. Already in 1858, Dobrolyubov wrote in his article "On the degree of popular participation in the development of Russian literature" that it was no longer possible to find the standard-bearers of Russian literature around him. Because, among those people who had inspired Russian literature of the forties, "Some are already gone, and the others are far away".¹ Of course, he was using these words to designate the leading writers of the forties including Belinsky, Herzen and Ogarev.

Before the Emancipation of Serfs in 1861, the gap between the new *raznochinets intelligentsia* and the noble intelligentsia had become rather remarkable. Trying to understand the new generation, even Herzen could hardly follow its radical iconoclasm. From his point of view, its self-confidence seemed to be the self-conceit of the unexperienced. So, when Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov criticized him, Herzen was angry and, according to his own words, which he used in a letter to a friend after attacking '*Sovremennik*', he tried to "scold them".² At this time, Herzen was already 47 years old, but Chernyshevsky was 31, and Dobrolyubov was only 23 years old.

(2)

Herzen's article "Very Dangerous!!" began with a defence of the political activities of Poerio. During the revolutionary situation of 1848 in Naples, Ferdinand II had appointed Poerio Minister of Education to appease the revolutionaries, and Poerio had accepted the appointment. But after the situation had settled down, the King had arrested him without legal justification. He had been imprisoned for 10 years. He had been welcomed to London in 1859 after being released on the condition that he left Naples.

Chernyshevsky dealt critically with Poerio in '*Sovremennik*'.³ He regarded Poerio's suffering as the inevitable result of liberal illusions with regard to a policy

1. A.S. Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, Ch. VIII, Paragraph LI. in N. Dobrolyubov. *Selected works*, Vol. 2, M.-L. 1962, p. 219.

2. In the letter to M.K. Reikheli on 20th May 1859.

3. '*Sovremennik*' 1859, Book 3, Politika, p. 154.

of compromise with a dictatorial government and said that Poerio bore the political responsibility for allowing himself to be deceived by the government and for misleading the people of Naples during the revolutionary situation of 1848.

Chernyshevsky regarded this case as a political lesson for the Russian revolutionary movement. He wanted to warn Russian readers against liberal illusions as to the Reform plans of Alexander II.

On the contrary, Herzen showed deep sympathy for Poerio's suffering, praised his political activities and called him his "comrade" when he arrived as a political *émigré* in London.

These conflicting evaluations of Poerio's case are the reflection of their different attitudes to the liberals during the revolutionary situation of 1859-1861 in Russia. Herzen considered the political activities of the some liberals as a positive element in the contemporary Russian political situation. But Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov regarded the liberals a completely negative element as the enemy of the Russian emancipation movement, because their illusions concerning Tsarism the liberals misled the revolutionary movement.

The second point of contention was the problem of an historical evaluation of the heroes of Russian literature at the 1840's, the so-called "Superfluous men" (*Lishinie lyudi*). Dobrolyubov wrote some critical articles on this problem in 1858, in 'Sovremennik' and its supplement, the satirical magazine 'Svistok'. His famous articles are "What is Oblomovschina?" (*Shto takoe oblomovshchina?*) ('Sovremennik' No. 5, 1859) and "Literary Trifles of Last Year" (*Literaturnie melochi proshlogo goda*), 1859. In these articles, he criticized the characters of the heroes including Onegin, Pechorin, Belitov as those who used to talk with romantic sympathy about the common people and about progress, but who lacked any practical sense or ability. He regarded these heroes as the original type of the contemporary aristocratic intelligentsia without practical abilities to solve political problems. He named such characteristics "*oblomovschina*" or "*manilovshchina*" and strongly denied their significance for contemporary Russia. They declared that such heroes of forties had become out-dated and that they no longer had a positive role. He even mentioned them as an obstacle to progress in Russian society. He called for the end of such characters and stressed the necessity to produce a new active personality for the hero of his period.

This is the most serious and severe criticism of the noble intelligentsia of the forties by the intelligentsia of non-noble birth belonging to the next generation.

Herzen had himself recognized even in "Very Dangerous!!!"¹ that "Super-

1. A.I. Herzen, *Complete Works*, Vol. XIV, p. 119.

fluous men" were out-dated. However, he could not agree with Dobrolyubov's opinion. When he read Dobrolyubov's criticism of the "Superfluous men", including not only Onegin and Pechorin but also Belitov of Herzen's own "Whose fault is it?, he was angry and replied to it defending them.

In "Very Dangerous!!!" he emphasized his positive evaluation of the heroes of the forties. He insisted on their innocence as victims of political circumstances under the regime of Nicholas I. He considered them too human to adapt themselves to such a dark age, and therefore isolated from surrounding society by their sensitiveness and good nature. In Herzen's opinion, they were doomed to ruin themselves, but they helped Russia to emerge from the political blindness of the dark age by their demoniac self-destructiveness. He recognized in them the heirs to the tradition of the Decembrists. And he believed that, if they had lived in the fifties, they could have contributed to the improvement of Russia's situation even as engineers. He emphasized their historical positive significance in the Russian political movement.

Herzen thought that the noble intelligentsia of the forties could become the future reformers. As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, Herzen's first appeal on the emancipation of serfs, issued from his 'Russian Free Press' in 1855, had the subtitle "To the Russian nobility". He considered that the intelligentsia of middle nobility to which he and his comrade Ogarev belonged were the main leading force of the future Russian reform. Even in 1859, being very sceptical of revolution from below, he expected reform to be achieved by the initiative of the nobility.

In contrast with Herzen's view on the future reform, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov did not believe in an initiative by the nobility in the emancipation movement.

The third difference between them concerned the evaluation of contemporary Russian "accusatory literature" (*oblichitel'naya literatura*). Both sides regarded "accusatory literature" as an important way to unmask the evils of Russian society, but in different ways. Dobrolyubov criticized the accusatory tendency of the 'Kolokol' in his article "Literary trifles of last year" (1859) which angered Herzen when it appeared. Herzen intended to expose the social evils of Russia, showing many cases of suffering among the peasants and the common people under the tyranny of provincial authorities, in the form of "accusatory literature". Exposing the condition of life among the lower classes in Russia, he aimed to arouse public opinion against serfdom and to appeal to the conscience of authority to improve them. This might be certain related to his own experience of working in local administration as an enthusiastic young official in the period

of his exile in Vyatka and Novgorod in 1835-1842.

Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov also attached great importance to the social efficiency of "accusatory literature" in Russia. However, Dobrolyubov demanded that "accusatory literature" should not pick out the unusual cases but should show all sides of the autocracy and serfdom, treating each case as the inevitable result of them. Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov thought that literature which aimed to expose isolated cases of tyranny and corruption among landowners or bureaucrats was only useful for maintaining the present political system without any substantial changes. For them, the task of contemporary literature lay in showing the necessity of adopting the correct way to complete emancipation of the people from Tsarism, that is, through struggle against Tsarism by the people themselves. To Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, the attitude of Herzen to this task looked very vague and rather moderate. In fact, Herzen cherished illusions about the reform plans of Alexander II, and would not co-operate with the revolutionary programme on which Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov insisted. This was the main cause of the conflict between them in 1859.

(3)

The public attack on '*Sovremennik*' by Herzen was completely unexpected by its staff, including Nekrasov, Antonovich, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. Antonovich wrote in his memoirs about the extremely bad impression produced among them by Herzen's article. On being informed by Nekrasov, Dobrolyubov wrote in his diary of his astonishment and sad disappointment with Herzen, because they had never intended to criticize Herzen himself, and trusted in him as a their own side.

Beside, at that time Herzen had great influence through his '*Kolokol*' among the Russian public. So Nekrasov was seriously worried about the negative effects of the article on '*Kolokol*' and '*Sovremennik*'. He hurried to resolve this serious conflict between the two Russian radical centres and so asked Chernyshevsky to go to London to talk with Herzen immediately.

Antonovich's memoirs tell us the attitude of Chernyshevsky to this trouble. Chernyshevsky was very critical of Herzen but was more calm in his judgment of the problem than his young colleague, Dobrolyubov. He expected that, as the result of Herzen's attack, the censorship of the '*Sovremennik*' would become less severe. Chernyshevsky did not agree at first to go to London on the mission to Herzen. But finally he left for London on 10th June 1859, by sea, and stayed there from 26th to 30th of June.

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Prof. Koz'min presumed that Chernyshevsky had several meetings with Herzen,¹ but N. Chernyshevskaya wrote that they had only two meetings.²

As I mentioned in the Introduction, they themselves wrote very little about this meeting. Probably they had to keep their discussions secret under the watchful eyes of the government. In addition, they appear to have had another reason for their silence: the unsuccessful and unpleasant result of this meeting.

Chernyshevsky tried his best to clear up Herzen's misunderstanding and explain the position of '*Sovremennik*', but Herzen held fast to his view. Later Herzen changed his attitude to his young opponents. However, the London meeting must have been an unfriendly exchange of words between the old and new generation.

Chernyshevsky's friend, T.E. Blagosvetlov reported Chernyshevsky's impression of Herzen in London in Chernyshevsky's own words:

What a clever man! What a clever man!— And how he has fallen behind! He really still seems to think he is continuing his witty conversations in the Moscow salons or wrangling with Khomyakov. But now time passes terribly quickly, so that one month now is worth ten years in the past. If you look carefully, you can see that inside him there still sits a Moscow landowner.³

We have other contemporary evidence supporting this conclusion. One such item is the record of S.G. Stakhevich, who was a comrade of Chernyshevsky in the penal colony. He heard about the London meeting from Chernyshevsky as follows:

I attacked Herzen for the pure accusatory character of '*Kolokol*'. If our government, I said to him, were a bit more clever, they would thank you for your exposures. These exposures give them the possibility of keeping their agents in the provinces to reasonably decent behaviour at the same time leaving the state structure untouched, but the substance of the problem is precisely in the structure and not in the agents. You should set out a specific political programme, for instance—constitutional or republican or socialist, and then all exposures would become the corroboration for the fundamental demands of your programme; you should repeat your own; *ceterum censeo*

1. B.P. Koz'min, "The journey of N.G. Chernyshevsky to London, 1859". *The News of the Soviet Academy of Sciences*, Vol. XIII, 1953, p. 139.
2. N.M. Chernyshevskaya, *Letopishi zhizn' i diyatelinosti N.G. Chernyshevskogo*, M. 1953, p. 173.
3. V.P. Batyurinskii, *A.I. Herzen. Ego dryzhia i znakom'e*, SPb., 1904, p. 103, quoted in B.P. Koz'min, *Poezdka N.G. Chernyshevskogo v London v 1859g*, p. 143.

Carthaginem delendam esse.....With the name of Carthage at that time he surely indicated autocracy.¹

These last words showed very clearly the political opinion of Chernyshevsky in that meeting. He asked Herzen to make clear the political programme of '*Kolokol*' and he demanded that Herzen support the overthrow of autocracy in Russia in any case.

As I mentioned, Herzen could not agree to this revolutionary conclusion. According to what Antonovich heard from Chernyshevsky, Herzen astonished him with his answer that "Yes, from your narrow party view, it would be understandable and perhaps right; but from the general logical point of view it deserves severe condemnation and cannot in any way be justified".² In this conversation we can see very clearly the difference between their political opinions in 1859. Chernyshevsky sent a letter to Dobrolyubov from London in which he reported his impression of the meeting:

Of course, I have not travelled in vain, but if I had known how dull this business is, I would not have undertaken it.....The negotiations that one has to conduct on business!.....Kavelin squared (*Kovelin v kvadrate*) That's all.³

K. D. Kavelin was one of the well-known representatives of the liberals in that period.

He returned to St. Petersburg 4th July 1859. Herzen's first public reflection on the meeting appeared in '*Kolokol*', No. 49 on 1st August 1859. In this short explanatory article he made clear that he had not intended to insult his Russian fellows with the extreme expressions in his "Very Dangerous!!!". In No. 83 of '*Kolokol*' on 15 October 1860, Herzen wrote another, larger article concerning this problem, entitled "Superfluous men and acrimonious men". In this article, he partly agreed with the '*Sovremennik*' criticism of the accusatory character of '*Kolokol*', and of "Superfluous men" as out-dated; but even then he apparently could not trust the "acrimonious men", which was the name he gave to the new generation of the fifties.

However, the real process of the Reform of 1861 dispelled Herzen's illusion and made him more radical against Tsarism. When Chernyshevsky was arrested

1. S.G. Stakhevichi, "Among political criminals", *Collected works 'N.G. Chernyshevsky'*, M-1928, quoted in Koz'min, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

2. *Shestidesyatuie godui*; M.F. Antonovich, *Vospominaniya*; G.Z. Eliseev, *Vospominaniya*, M-L. 1933, p. 90.

3. N.G. Chernyshevsky, *Complete works*, Vol. XIV, p. 379

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in 1862, Herzen protested most vehemently in '*Kolokol*' against this outrage on his comrade.

II. The Polemic between Prof. Koz' min and Academician Nechkina, 1952-55, concerning the London Meeting of Herzen and Chernyshevsky.

(1)

As I mentioned in the introduction to this paper the polemic between Koz'-min and Nechkina concerning the London meeting of Herzen and Chernyshevsky in June 1859 may be considered as one of the more interesting results of recent studies on the Russian revolutionary movement. So, by following the course of this polemic, we can recognize the situation of Soviet historical studies in this field at that time.

The late Prof. and academician B. P. Koz'min (1883-1958) was one of the most famous experts on nineteenth century Russian social thought, not only in the Soviet Union but outside also. He wrote many valuable works including studies on Belinsky, Herzen, Ogarev, Tkachov, Uspensky and the Populist movement.

Academician M. V. Nechkina (1901-) is also one of the most influential historians in the Soviet Union especially as an expert on the Russian revolutionary movement. She is well-known as the author of works on the Decembrists and the chief editor of the recent series of collective works on the revolutionary situation in Russia in 1859-1861.

The origin of the polemic was Nechkina's article "N.G. Chernyshevsky in the years of the revolutionary situation" (*Historical proceedings of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Institute of History*, No. 10, 1941), in which there were some critical comments on Koz'min's works concerning the London meeting of 1859. Twelve years after Nechkina's article appeared, Koz'min replied to her in *The News of the Soviet Academy of Sciences*, Vol. XII, 1953 in an article entitled "The journey of N.G. Chernyshevsky to London in 1859 and his negotiations with A. N. Herzen"; the article was severely critical of Nechkina's view of this problem. Nechkina tried to refute his criticism twice, in her articles "N. G. Chernyshevsky in the struggle for the unification of the forces of the Russian democratic movement in the years of the revolutionary situation (1859-1861)" (*Problems of History*, No. 7, 1953), and in "N. G. Chernyshevsky and A. I. Herzen in the years of the revolutionary situation (1859-1861)" (*The News of Soviet Academy of Sciences; Department of Literature and Language*. Vol. XIII, issued 1. 1954)

Finally, in Vol. XIV (1955) of *News of the Soviet Academy of Sciences* there appeared two conflicting articles, one from each side, "On the question of

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the aims and results of the journey of Chernyshevsky to A.I. Herzen in 1859", by Koz'min and "About the relations between the Petersburg and London centres of the Russian emancipation movement in the years of the revolutionary situation (1859-1861) (Answer to B. P. Koz'min)". The debate appeared unfinished, but since that time there has been no continuation of it.

(2)

In the article of 1941, in which Nechkina published some new interpretations of the materials, including her revised view on the London meeting of 1859, she dealt with problem of the revolutionary activities of Chernyshevsky in 1859-1861. Contrary to the popular view of this meeting, she insisted that the main aim of Chernyshevsky's journey to London was to discuss a common political programme with Herzen, rather than to remove his misunderstanding with Dobrolyubov. According to her new interpretation, the meeting had considerable positive significance as evidence of close co-operation on revolutionary activities between the two centres in 1859. And as one of the conclusions of her article, she wrote as follows:

The assertion, widespread in historical literature, that in the period of the revolutionary situation Herzen and Chernyshevsky stood on different sides of the barricades, does not stand up to criticism. Chernyshevsky and Herzen, for all their important divergences of opinion, realized that they were friends, "people of the same kind" belonging to the same—revolutionary—camp, fighting for a "common cause". Chernyshevsky attacked the liberal in Herzen, supported and educated the democrat in him, pulled Herzen forward towards advanced revolutionary positions.¹

Nechkina's article in 1941 was a very ambitious work, intending to change the whole established view of the revolutionary situation of Russia in 1859-1861 regarding the activities of Herzen, Ogarev, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. In this article, she asserted that there had been a revolutionary common plan between the Herzen-Ogarev group and the Chernyshevsky-Dobrolyubov group already in 1859 before the birth of *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Liberty) which was organized in 1862 and usually recognized as the first political organization of Russian revolutionary intelligentsia of this period.

And she mentioned the London meeting as the important starting point of such a plan of revolutionary action by Russian revolutionary democrats. In other words, the London meeting was recognized by her as the evidence for the com-

1. M.V. Nechkina, *op. cit.*, 1953, p. 39.

mon plan of revolution in 1859. After her article appeared, her opinions on this subject seemed to be authorized as the official view and in this sense her article might be called epoch-making. But so far as the problem concerns the London meeting, it is impossible to call it well-founded; it is merely a hypothesis.

Before the public criticism in his article of 1953, Koz'min had already published two important articles in 1950 and 1952. The first article has the title "A contribution to the problem of the struggle of Herzen and Ogarev against the supporters of 'pure art'". It deals with Herzen's article "Very dangerous!!!" and has rather the character of a preparatory work for the next article, entitled "The statement of Herzen against 'Sovremennik' in 1859", which was published in the same journal in 1952. Neither article has a polemical character, but both give us very clear explanations of the problems concerning "Very dangerous!!!" and an interpretation opposed to that of Nechkina.

After then, as I mentioned, Koz'min criticized Nechkina's view of the London meeting in his article of 1953, in which he described the aim and process of Chernyshevsky's journey to London and presented it, with much supporting documentation, as the result of conflicts in their views on the Russian political situation and of their unsuccessful negotiations for closer co-operation.

Koz'min admitted that Herzen and Chernyshevsky, generally speaking belonged to the same side of the barricade in the fight against Tsarism and serfdom, but he regarded the period of the London meeting as the time of Herzen's oscillation to liberalism. He wrote:

In 1859, they (Herzen and Ogarev: Y.I.) considered revolution in Russia not only improbable but unnecessary. Neither Ogarev nor Herzen at that time had yet seen revolutionaries in Russia, or lost their belief in the reforming activity of Alexander II.¹

Koz'min denied the probability of the existence of a common programme for revolutionary activities between the two centres in 1859. He attacked Nechkina strictly on the lack of evidence and the delusive interpretation in her 1941 conclusions on the aims and results of the London meeting, and he pointed out that the misconception in her article developed later and became "a fantastic construction, in flagrant contradiction with a series of facts whose correctness is beyond all doubt".² Against this criticism, Nechkina emphasized that her new interpretations were due to the results of the recent development of studies and the

1. Koz'min, *op. cit.*, 1953, p. 152.

2. *ibid.*

discovery of much new materials on this subject after Koz'min's first works, and that her mention of the London meeting in 1859 was only a small part of her article in 1941. However, in her 1941 article, there is a tendency to fit facts to theory. For instance, as regards Chernyshevsky's description of Herzen as "Kaverin squared" which used to be referred to as evidence of the conflict of their views, Nechkina treated it on inadequate grounds merely as an exaggerated reaction following on intensive political discussion, as something not to be taken seriously, and so in accordance with her interpretation.¹

As important proof of the existence on the Herzen-Ogarev side, before the London meeting of a plan for revolutionary activities, Nechkina referred to Ogarev's note entitled "Note about the Secret Society". Unfortunately it has no date, and the determination of the time of its composition is a crucial problem. She estimated it to have been written in 1857, and if this had been right, her view of the London meeting would be quite acceptable. Koz'min rejected her estimate, and pointed out its contradiction of the facts that Herzen and Ogarev had not considered the possibility of revolution in Russia at that time, and published their hopes of the "reform from above" in *'Kolokol'*.

Not only Koz'min, but the famous historian, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, N.M. Druzhinin also opposed her assumption and thought that the aim of the London meeting was to try to reconcile the opinions of both sides principally on literary problems and not on a practical plan of revolutionary activities.²

In general, compared with the strict attitude to historical documents of Koz'min, Nechkina seems rather too eager to draw a new picture of the revolutionary movement in 1859-1861, according to her own ideas.

As another example of such tendencies in the works of the two historians, we can see their different approaches to the "Letter from the provinces" published in *'Kolokol'* to the Tsar's reform plan. It was written by a Russian revolutionary, whose name was not given. For a long time this letter was considered as Chernyshevsky's, but in 1936 Koz'min reversed this common judgment on the basis of strict historical research. Nechkina returned to this discussion in her article of 1941. She admitted Koz'min's judgment, but at the same time she was not satisfied with his negative conclusion and set out her own hypothesis about

1. See, Nechkina, *op. cit.*, 1941, p. 37.

2. On 29th-30th June 1953, the scientific session for the 125th anniversary of the birthday of Chernyshevsky was held in Moscow. In this session there was a discussion about this problem between Nechkina and Druzhinin, after her report on the subject. See, *Problems of History*, No. 7, 1953, pp. 170-171.

the author of the letter, whom she ventured to consider to be Debrolyubov.¹ However, one cannot say that she had sufficient proof, as had been the case with Koz'min.

In the polemic with Koz'min, Nechkina's attitudes sometimes looked political rather than academic, and instead of producing enough evidence, she simply labelled some previous works on this subject, including works of M. Lewke, M. N. Pokrovsky, Y.M. Steklov and B.P. Koz'min, "as bourgeois-liberalistic".²

(3)

To understand more perfectly this debate between the two Soviet historians, I think it is useful to look at the back-ground to them. Replying to Koz'min, Nechkina voiced her dissatisfaction at his criticism of her 1941 article fully 12 years after its appearance. In fact, Koz'min began his first public criticism of Nechkina's view in his article of 1953. He pointed out that her view on the London meeting was completely opposed to the reasonable conceptions of previous works and led to wrong conclusions. And he wrote:

We must say further that, encountering no opposition in our literature, her conception had undoubted influence on some young researchers who have accepted it trustingly. And not only young researchers make use of her erroneous data, but even S.A. Pokrovsky (author of articles on this problem: Y.I.) has adopted Nechkina's point of view uncritically and without any argument.³

Koz'min noticed in the same article that Nechkina's misconceptions about this problem had even appeared in the text-book of Soviet history '*Istoriya SSSR*' Vol. 2, edited in 1949 by herself.⁴

Koz'min did not give the reason why he had kept silent over her misconceptions for so long; however, we know the character of the period from 1941, when Nechkina published her article, to 1953, when Koz'min criticized her.

1. M.V. Nechkina, *op. cit.*, 1941, p. 29.

2. Nechkina gave the following works among others as such examples: V.Y. Bogucharsky, *From the past of Russian society*, 1904; M.O. Gershenzon, *Social and political view of A.I. Herzen*, Moscow, 1906; M. Lemke, Comments in the *complete works of Herzen*, by his edition, Vol. X, p. 16; M.N. Pokrovsky, *Russian history from the oldest time*, Vol. IV, Moscow, 1934; Y.M. Steklov, *Herzen and Chernyshevsky*, Moscow, 1923; V. Evgeniev-Maksimov, '*Sovremennik*' under Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, Leningrad, 1936. See M.V. Nechkina, *Chernyshevsky in the revolutionary situation*, 1953, p. 49.

3. B.P. Koz'min, *Journey of N.G. Chernyshevsky to London in 1859*, 1953, p. 146.

4. *ibid.*, p. 155.

From the 1940s in the literature and historiography of the Soviet Union, there was a tendency to treat the Russian revolutionary tradition from Radischev to Chernyshevsky in increasingly ideological and nationalistic terms. The 1946–1947 speeches of A. Zhdanov about party policy on literature gave a formulation of this.¹ Zhdanov tried to refute traditional views on Russian revolutionaries as bourgeois views or distortions, and to establish the ideological category of “revolutionary democrats” in Russian social thought.² Obviously Nechkina’s articles reflected such a situation, and therefore her view could become authoritative, without any criticism. The works of Soviet historians which Nechkina named as examples of new Soviet historiography in that period had the same tendencies, which sometimes took on a rather dogmatic character.

It was not easy to criticize such official tendencies in that period, and this must be the reason why Koz'min started to criticize Nechkina's conceptions on the London meeting only after the death of Stalin in 1953. Nechkina herself still used rather ideological ways to criticize Koz'min's view, calling it “bourgeois-liberalism” even in her article of 1954. Koz'min replied to her with a strict analysis of documents and facts. His appeal to her in his article is very impressive; “One should never make history better or worse than fact”.³ We can say that Koz'min's criticism of Nechkina opened the way of Soviet historians to self-criticism after the death of Stalin. One example of this self-criticism is the leading article by the editor, entitled “About some problems of the history of Russian social thought at the end of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century” (*Problems of History*, No. 9, 1955), in which the author criticized “unhistorical” elements in Soviet historiographical treatment of Russian revolutionary democrats.

He alleged that some Soviet historians treated the Russian revolutionary democrats and movements of the 18th and 19th centuries so purely within the context of the Russian intellectual tradition and so isolated from Western influences and contemporary Russian moderate thinkers that sometimes they seemed to be separated from their own historical background.

The emphasis on the independence of Russian radical thought from Western ideas and the official concept of “Russian revolutionary democrats” have resulted not only in the welcome rejection of historical views which regard Russian revo-

1. For example, A. Zhdanov, *The speech for the discussion about G. F. Aleksandrov's book "The History of West European Philosophy"* 24th June 1947.

2. I mentioned this category in my article, “The political views of Belinsky in his later period” in *Studies on the Russian revolution*, edited by Prof. Eguchi, Tokyo, 1968, pp. 29–32. (in Japanese)

3. Koz'min *op. cit.*, 1953, p. 157.

lutionaries as mere Westernizers or the imitators of Western radicals, but also in the formation more dogmatic attitudes towards this problem.

Nationalistic and ideological treatment of Russian revolutionary democrats in Soviet historiography seemed to become official tendency corresponding to the so-called "Socialism in one country" under Stalin regime.

It is interesting for an evaluation of the official Soviet position to note the editor's comments on the polemic. The editors of *News of Soviet Academy of Sciences* remarked with reference to Nechkina's article of 1954 that Lenin had indicated 1859 as the period of Herzen's oscillation between democracy and liberalism, so that Koz'min's opinion was not an adaptation of bourgeois-liberalistic conceptions. Rejecting Nechkina's complaints against Koz'min, the editors also did not criticize her, and simply expressed the hope that she could be trusted to do further work on this problem.

The following year, commenting on the public polemic, the editors gave weight to Nechkina's intention to pursue her studies on the revolutionary situation of 1859-1861, and her positive view of the co-operation between the two centres against Tsarism and serfdom, though they pointed out her error in disregarding Lenin's statement on Herzen's deviation to liberalism and in identifying Herzen's political position with Chernyshevsky's.

While recognizing Koz'min's contribution to Soviet historiography with his strict historical research and careful regard for accuracy, the editors criticized his strong tendency to bookish and formal interpretation of evidence about the London meeting.¹ However they admitted that Koz'min's position with regard to the London meeting was correct; and after that Koz'min's interpretation appears to be accepted in Soviet writings.² In the same comment, we can find criticism of Koz'min's view as leading to neglect of the revolutionary-democratic elements and tendencies in Herzen's world outlook even before he went over completely to the side of the revolutionary democrats.

After this polemic, Nechkina is continuing her energetic editorial work on the series of the collective works on the revolutionary situation of 1859-1861, which contain some most remarkable articles by the Soviet historians. The main tendency of those works stems from Nechkina's idea to create new picture even if it has no longer retain its dogmatic character like before.

Koz'min died in 1958, and Nechkina appears now to be one of the most orthodox historians in the Soviet Union.

1. *News of Soviet Academy of Sciences; Department of literature and language*, 1955, Vol. XIV, issue 2, pp. 184-185.

2. See, I. V. Porokh, *Herzen and Chernyshevsky*, Saratov, 1963.

Conclusion

From the dispute between Koz'min and Nechkina, it is quite clear that the London meeting of June 1859 did not result in a complete agreement between Herzen and Chernyshevsky. As Koz'min emphasized in his works, the two men had different opinions about the Russian political situation and the tactics most suitable with regard to the emancipation of serfs at that time, even though they belonged to the same side of the barricades against the Russian old regime.

It might be very important to remember the fact that the London meeting was held 11 years after Herzen had been exiled from Russia in 1848. He could get some information from Russia through his correspondents and his old friends, but he had not been in Russia since. He no longer had close contact with the new revolutionary generation, and sometimes he could not help losing his common sense on Russian political problems, although he never went as far astray as a romanticist like Bakunin.

During those years, he had become rather sceptical of revolutionary method after witnessing some political tragedies in Europe, including the unsuccessful Revolution of 1848. He wished to realize the emancipation of Russian serfs without violence, by retaining the peasant commune, which he considered to be the real base of Russian Socialism in the future. He supported legal method for its realization, including even the plan of the Tsar himself.

Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov approached the Tsar's plan and that of the liberals more critically, and at that period were already starting to consider the necessity of a reform from below, including the overthrow of Tsarism, in other words, revolution by the people on the initiative of the non-noble intelligentsia. In such a sense, it can be said that the conflict of views at the London meeting related mainly to the problem of which political tactics were most likely to bring about the abolition of Russian serfdom: and in Lenin's view, "Chernyshevskyhad taken a huge step forward in comparison with Herzen".¹

Nechkina and most Soviet historians emphasized the necessity of recognizing the democratic or revolutionary elements in Herzen's ideas, and their similarity with Chernyshevsky's, even on the eve of the Reform of 1861. It seems quite reasonable, however, if we want to make clear the individuality of their political activities and ideas, that we should pay more attention to the differences between them. It is in general very important to examine the differences between generations over the political and social problems of their times. Other examples in

1. V. I. Lenin, *Complete works*, 4th ed. Vol. XX, p. 244.

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the Russian revolutionary movement are, for instance, the famous argument around Turgenev's "*Fathers and sons*", and the polemic between Pisarev and Antonovich in the 1860s.

I fully agree with those who consider it essential to approach Herzen's political views as a whole, because they were not fixed, but rather changeable following the historical situation. This is true not only in Herzen's case, but in Chernyshevsky's also, for as Chernyshevsky said of the period of the revolutionary situation in 1859-1860, "at present one month corresponds to ten years of the past".

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