



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
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"GREAT REFORMS":
ALEXANDER HERZEN AND
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RUSSIAN EMPIRE**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES
WP BRP 181/HUM/2019

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FROM SENTIMENTALISM TO THE "GREAT REFORMS": ALEXANDER HERZEN AND EMOTIONAL REGIMES OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE²

The article examines views of A.I. Herzen on emotions and their role in politics. Herzen's position on the issue of emotions traced back to the early socialist and romantic influences and interpreted in terms of "sentimentalist emotional regime" (W. Reddy). Two discussions that involved Herzen are scrutinized. The first one was a debate of the 1840s around rationality and morals in family life where Herzen advocated middle position between unrestricted capricious emotionality and moralistic rationalism represented by Hegelian T. Rötcher. It is argued that this debate noticeably influenced Herzen's later conceptions of politics and the public sphere that came to prominence during the reforms of Alexander II. The article shows that Herzen repeated some of his previous arguments against excessive rationalism and emotional restrictions attacking Russian Hegelian B.N. Chicherin. Herzen backed sincerity in the expression of one's emotions both in private life and in politics, challenging prevalent notions of rationality. Chicherin, on the contrary, was a strong proponent of the neutral and rationalized political sphere since he thought emotions would lead to disturbances and revolutions. Concluding remarks concern ambiguous heritage of Herzen's views on emotions that seem to be closer to his opponents than may be immediately apparent.

JEL Classification: Z.

Keywords: A. Herzen, Russian Empire, emotional regimes, Great Reforms, B. Chicherin

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² The article was prepared within the framework of the HSE University Basic Research Program and funded by the Russian Academic Excellence Project '5-100'.

Introduction

History of emotions³ deals with a wide range of topics including politics.⁴ It can be successfully applied, among other things, to the political and intellectual history of the Russian Empire in which emotions played a considerable role.⁵ Emotions' place in public affairs was changing and the reign of Alexander II was no exception: it experienced reshaping of many features of political life including the role of emotions in politics. This transformation of rules, conceptions, and attitudes was accompanied by the heated political arguments that involved a number of new approaches to emotions. One of the most significant contributors to the debates was Alexander Herzen (1812-1870), a prominent Russian writer, journalist, and political activist.

Herzen's contribution was not limited to the description of his personal attitudes to emotionality since his ideas concerning emotions had certain normative implications. He made his case for the particular *emotional regime* to use William Reddy's term. According to Reddy, our emotions are partially natural and partially socially constructed and thanks to this fact they have been changing throughout history. History of emotions is a succession of norms, attitudes, and ideas regarding emotions organized in emotional regimes. They affect how feelings are displayed, conceptualized and articulated. Also, they determine the way emotions influence human action. Sometimes emotional regime is manifested by more or less explicit rules but each regime also has more subtle means, *emotives*. *Emotives* are speech acts describing mental states and facial expressions while influencing them.⁶ Reddy describes a few emotional regimes including "sentimentalist" one, that was centered on sincerity and emotional liberty. In his understanding, "sentimentalism" was not confined to certain literary movement influenced by Rousseau, it covered a lot of different discourses on sensitivity conceived in the 18th century and continued its development in the 19th century.⁷

³ It is sometimes said that there is a difference between emotions and feelings. Emotions are more simple and fleeting so they can be theorized as an element of feelings or more or less separated phenomenon. Feelings in turn more sophisticated and more oriented towards cognition. But historians of emotions sometimes use these terms interchangeably. Plamper, J. (2015). *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.1. Sources also contribute to this terminological choice since 19th-century Russian authors vaguely spoke about feelings, the heart or passion without any analytic clarity. These words and expressions denoted strong desires and complex feelings and short-lived emotions as well.

⁴ Plamper, J. *The History of Emotions*, pp.277-281. Bailey, M. and Barclay, K. ed., (2017). *Emotion, Ritual and Power in Europe, 1200–1920. Family, State and Church*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵ Safronova, Iu. (2010). Smert' gosudaria. 1 marta 1881 goda: emotsional'nyi srez. In: J. Plamper, S. Schahadat and M. Elie, ed., *Rossiiskaia imperiia chuvstv: podkhody k kul'turnoi istorii emotsii*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, pp.166-184. Wortman, R. (2017). *The Power of Language and Rhetoric in Russian Political History: Charismatic Words from the 18th to the 21st Centuries*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, pp.19-47.

⁶ Reddy, W. (2001). *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.55.

⁷ Reddy, W. *The Navigation of Feeling*, pp.141-210.

Herzen, Romanticism, Goethe, and Rötcher

In his formative years, Herzen was keen on Rousseau, Schiller, Goethe, and George Sand. Thus he was influenced by the “sentimentalist emotional regime”; during this time naturalness of emotions and sincerity of their expression became key topics for him. It is possible that Herzen also was affected by the Saint-Simonianism and authors like a Saint-Simon follower Eugène Rodrigues whom Herzen read. He was aware of their so-called “rehabilitation of flesh” (réhabilitation de la chair) that presupposed justification of the human body and everything directly related to it including passions.⁸ Early French socialism and knowledge in natural sciences made him interested in the materialistic approach to feelings.⁹

Herzen strongly believed that it was crucial to be true to one’s feelings because they were important in terms of morality and practice. Feelings also had an epistemological significance for Herzen as they were a gateway to our genuine nature and true desires and motives. Given such a background, it’s no wonder that young Herzen wrote that he put any feeling ahead of thought and reason.¹⁰ A lot of his letters of the 1830s were devoted to the analysis of his inner world and of external events in his life. He saw his imprisonment, exile and also his marriage and friendships through the lenses of emotions he experienced because of them.¹¹

He wasn’t alone. This kind of norms and values played a great role in Herzen’s circle. Sometimes readiness for particular actions or behavior was obligatory. For example, Herzen got a chance to meet his friend N.P. Ogarev in 1839 for the first time in five years since the beginning of their persecution and exile. They both had got married during this time so they needed to introduce their wives to each other. They were deeply moved by their first meeting and overwhelmed by the feelings; it made them fall on their knees before the crucifix and pray fervently.¹² It came as a surprise for Herzen that Ogarev’s wife Maria appeared to be not as enthusiastic about the ritual as the rest of them. Maria thought this scene to be an exaggeration and a false pretense and she clearly didn’t want to join the community of soulmates. It eventually became one of the reasons for

⁸ Herzen, A. (1954). O meste cheloveka v prirode. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomax*. Volume 1. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.13. *Rehabilitation of flesh* was discussed in the book Herzen quoted in his own work. See Rodrigues, E. (1831). *Religion Saint-Simonienne: Aux artistes du passé et de l'avenir des beaux-arts*. Bruxelles: Louis Hauman et compagnie, p.160.

⁹ Sobol, V. (2006). Febris Erotica: Aleksandr Herzen's Post-Romantic Physiology. *Slavic Review*, 65(3), pp.512-521. Sobol examines Herzen’s understanding of materialism that took shape only in 1840s. On Herzen’s criticism of certain features of materialism, see Kelly, A. (2016). *The Discovery of Chance: The Life and Thought of Alexander Herzen*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.27, 529-530.

¹⁰ Herzen, A. (1961). Pis'mo N.A. Zakhar'inoi 25-28 iulia 1837 g. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomax*. Volume 21. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.190.

¹¹ These reflections eventually led to the lyrical style of his memoirs. See Chukovskaia, L. (1966). «*Byloe i dumy*» Gertsena. Moscow: Xudozhestvennaia literatura, p.50.

¹² Herzen, A. (1961). Pis'mo H. I. i T. A. Astrakovym. Mezhdru 15 i 18 marta 1839 g. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomax*. Volume 22. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.16.

quarrels and then for the breakup with the husband and his friends.¹³ Ogarev and Herzen took her skepticism to heart for it was a violation of certain norms that encouraged the display of particular emotions connected with love and friendship.

Moreover, the attitude of Maria wasn't in line with the ideals of love and friendship advocated by Schiller. Herzen and Ogarev read his "Letters on the Aesthetical Education of Man" and embraced his views of these two feelings as the antidote of egoism. Herzen and his best friend believed that love and friendship would lay the basis for proper social relations.¹⁴ In this case, Herzen's ideas on feelings already went beyond personal life.

In the 1840s Herzen came up with more explicit conceptions of emotions that he approached from theoretical and political perspectives. The move to theory in Herzen's case was triggered by personal issues and also by a book by a playwright and aesthetician Heinrich Theodor Rötcher on Goethe's "Elective Affinities". Herzen cheated on his wife; she found out and it nearly made her leave him. Finally, she managed to forgive her husband but only after they both had got through a painful personal crisis.¹⁵ Herzen's remorse and reflections coincided with the interest of his friends, fellow Moscow intellectuals, in Rötcher's book on the novel. Both Goethe and Rötcher were read by Ogarev and a famous critic Belinsky. Another friend of Herzen planned to translate "Elective Affinities" into Russian probably affected by the discussion around Rötcher.¹⁶

Russian debate around Goethe's novel of the beginning of the 1840s echoed the German one that had started after the publication of the "Elective Affinities" in 1809. The argument was caused by the plot of the novel that was quite unusual for that time.¹⁷ It narrates the story about the Weimar nobles Eduard and Charlotte. Their formerly happy marriage suffers destruction after Eduard has fallen in love with Otilie and Charlotte has fallen for Captain, a friend of her husband. Thus married couple and the two guests of their estate form a love square. In the end, Charlotte and Captain break up, Otilie commits suicide by starving herself to death, and Eduard perishes as well. Habitual conviction of adultery is nowhere to be found in the novel, and the dramatic plight of the two of the main characters doesn't make the story simplistic and explicitly didactic. Instead of moralizing,

¹³ Herzen, A. (1956). *Byloe i dumy*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 9. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.12.

¹⁴ Malia, M. (1965). *Alexander Herzen and the birth of Russian socialism*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, pp.29, 41.

¹⁵ Herzen, A. (1954). *Dnevnik 1842-1845*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 2. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp.214-215, 219. Herzen, A. (1956). *Byloe i dumy*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 9. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.96-98.

¹⁶ Belinsky, V. (1982). *Pis'mo V. P. Botkinu 11 dekabria 1840 g*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*. Volume 9. Moscow: Xudozhestvennaia literatura, pp.422-423. Herzen, A. (1961). *Pis'mo N.X. Ketcheru 1-4 marta 1841 g*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 22. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.102.

¹⁷ Tantillo, A. (2001). *Goethe's Elective Affinities and the critics*. Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, pp.1-45.

Goethe analyzes twisted and uneven relationships that he famously compares with chemical processes.¹⁸

The novel gave rise to allegations of immorality, but not all critics agreed with that. One of those who tried to justify the “Elective Affinities” in the eyes of the conservative audience was Rötcher. He held that passion (Leidenschaft) was dialectically defeated by the moral idea (sittliche Idee) of fidelity. He maintained that the moral idea of the novel underwent certain stages of development that he called dialectics. It started with a good marriage with proper relationships. Then it went through the temptation of adultery and finally resolved into genuine love. According to Rötcher, Charlotte and Capitain succumbed to their natural appetites but soon realized that it was impossible to reject morality. They repented and eventually ended their relationship. As a result, they got a chance to restore their inner freedom by obeying strict rules. Eduard and Otille faced a different fate, they realized the immorality of their actions but they couldn’t make themselves abandon their passions. Their weakness virtually led them to suicide. It shows that the moral idea is invincible and every person eventually accepts it one way or another.¹⁹

Herzen fiercely disagreed with Rötcher. He stated that the main theme of the novel by Goethe was the powerlessness of duty in the face of passion. There was no easy way or no way at all to resolve conflicts created by feelings. Herzen wrote that Rötcher’s analysis was boring and wrong because he had read the novel as a moral parable. The result of Rötcher’s dialectic was predictable and pretty simplistic: vice was punished and virtue was rewarded. Herzen reminded that the novel didn’t end with a triumph of marriage. He asked whether a person who commits suicide because of jealousy really wins over jealousy?²⁰

Herzen highlighted in his diary that Goethe’s novel gave examples of how a familiar romantic way to solve the moral conflict fails. One had to be sincere, but there everyone acted according to their authentic feelings and needs, and yet it was in vain. In fact, this sincerity only aggravated their conflicts. Charlotte and Otille, Eduard and Capitain were honest and there was nothing to do about it. In a word, Herzen was not satisfied with the possible romantic solution of the problem because he was aware that it was essential to be cautious in dealing with feelings.²¹ But nevertheless, he maintained that emotions too precious and enormously important, so they shouldn’t be hidden or repressed, it’s incompatible with the natural and proper order of things. In 1842 he published an article devoted to the play by French dramatists Arnould and Fournier called “Eight years older” where he developed his ideas on feelings. The play was a pretext of returning to

¹⁸ Goethe, J.W. (1872). *Elective Affinities: with an Introduction by Victoria C. Woodhull*. Boston: D.W. Niles.

¹⁹ Rötcher, H.T. (1838). *Die Wahlverwandschaften von Goethe in ihrer weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung: ihrem sittlichen und künstlerischen Werthe nach entwickelt*. Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, S.27-28. Tantillo, A. *Goethe's Elective Affinities*, pp. 53-57.

²⁰ Herzen, A. (1961). Pis'mo N.P. Ogarevu 11-26 fevralia 1841 g. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomax*. Volume 21. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp.100-101.

²¹ Herzen, A. *Dnevnik*, pp. 227-228.

Goethe and to “Elective Affinities”, Herzen drew some parallels with the French piece but in fact, the similarities were pretty remote.²²

Herzen attacked in his article moralists and rationalists who thought that feelings should be suppressed. Doing that, Herzen apparently combined an indulgence to human frailty with the harsh demand to be sincere and to follow one’s true feelings. In his view narrow-mindedness and moral weakness made strict rationalists look for easy answers and neglect emotionality. Herzen held that Rötcher personified this approach and that’s why he focused on his position. Herzen portrayed him as a cold critic who demanded too much from the ordinary people due to his heartlessness.²³ The approach of thinkers of his kind is grounded in a theory of duty. But human beings can’t be guided by reason and duty all the time, because “the heart is a beautiful and inalienable foundation of the spiritual development”.²⁴

To Herzen’s view, all human beings are divided into two categories. The first one is comprised of those who have sacrificed their emotions to the deontological rational norms. As he phrased it, they are prudent and cold as fish. Herzen is clearly not satisfied by this approach despite its apparent integrity. And there is another category of people who live full lives in which he included himself. He argues that their authenticity and life force redeem their inevitable mistakes.²⁵

The one who was tempted failed and raised again thanks to a guardian force, who defeated widely open passion just once, this person wouldn’t be cruel passing the sentence. He remembers the value of the victory, he remembers how he emerged from the fight exhausted broken and with a blooded heart. He knows the price to pay for the victories over passions and romantic interests. Attackers are cruel, they are always sober and always victorious, i.e. they are barely touched by passions. They do not understand what is passion. They are reasonable as Newfoundland dogs and cold-blooded as fish. They seldom fall and never raise, they are temperate in good as much as in evil.²⁶

This criticism doesn’t mean that Herzen’s position has nothing to do with rationalism. He wasn’t just an admirer of Rousseau, as a proponent of natural sciences and Hegelianism, he was a rationalist in a way. Herzen admits that reason is important, feelings and reason should be developed and should hold comparable influence. At the same time, Herzen didn’t seem to support

²² Arnould, A. and Fournier, L.P.N. (1837). *Huit ans de plus: drame en trois actes*. Paris: Imprimerie Dondey–Dupré. Herzen, A. (1954). *Po povodu odnoi dramy*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 2. Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp. 49-72.

²³ Herzen, A. *Po povodu odnoi dramy*, p.60.

²⁴ Herzen, A. *Po povodu odnoi dramy*, p.64.

²⁵ Herzen, A. *Po povodu odnoi dramy*, p.57.

²⁶ Herzen, A. *Po povodu odnoi dramy*, p.57.

the classical distinction between irrational private life and a public reason. He didn't support the development of the one thing at the expense of another. Herzen stated that the private was inseparable from the public; owing to this fact the same values and rules were applicable to both spheres.²⁷ It's noteworthy that in terms of the public-private dichotomy he was far from any form of classical liberalism whereas some authors endeavor to read Herzen as a liberal thinker.²⁸

Treating topics of marriage and adultery as starting points for the discussion of political issues, Herzen came to think about the sincerity and power of the feelings in politics. Issues raised by Rousseau and Schiller gave way to the reflection on revolutionary tradition and Jacobinism. Herzen was quite sympathetic to the revolutionary heritage, and he disagreed with those commentators of the French revolution who thought that its violence and destruction could be attributed to its rampant passions. They held that the very idea of free expression and cultivation of emotions was compromised to some extent. As a result ideal of the rational public sphere and political life came to prominence.²⁹ In response, Herzen tried to make a case for justification of revolution and also of emotions in politics.³⁰

However, Herzen was selective in his approval of the French revolution, he couldn't take completely seriously "fanatical dreamers" like Saint-Just who demanded to revoke citizenship from those who hadn't made any friends before they turned thirty. Thus they proved to be heartless and unworthy of citizenship.³¹ But Herzen's main point was not that it was immoral, cruel or inhumane practice. Rather he was worried about extreme collectivism of Saint-Just and other Jacobins. They praised love and friendship since they bound citizens together. And Herzen clearly developed a sort of distaste for this kind of ideas as they didn't chime with his search for the more nuanced and moderate approach to politics and emotions. He hoped that the liberation of feelings from the religion and the old hypocritical morals would lead to integrity, greater freedom and to the harmonious personal development of each individual.³²

²⁷ Chukovskaia, L. «*Byloe i dumy*», pp.26, 28. Ginzburg, L. (1957) «*Byloe i dumy*» Gertsena. Moscow: Xudozhestvennaia literatura, pp. 49-50. Malia, M. *Alexander Herzen*, p.201; Acton, E. (1979). *Alexander Herzen and the Role of the Intellectual Revolutionary*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, p.2.

²⁸ Strada, V. (2013) Gumanizm i terrorizm v russkom revoliutsionnom dvizhenii. In *Rossii kak sud'ba*. Moscow: Tri kvadrata, pp.209-267. Berlin, I. (1994). Herzen and Bakunin on Individual Liberty. In: H. Hardy and A. Kelly, ed., *Russian Thinkers*. London: Penguin, pp.83-87. Kelly, A. *The Discovery of Chance*, pp.382-451.

²⁹ Reddy, W. *The Navigation of Feeling*. pp.211–256. Maniquis, R. (1989). Holy Savagery and Wild Justice: English Romanticism and the Terror. *Studies in Romanticism*, 28(3), pp.365-395.

³⁰ See Odesskii, M. and Feldman, D. (2012) *Poetika vlasti. Tiranoborchestvo. Revoliutsiia. Terror*. Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia, pp.109-116. Gavrilichev, V. (1989). Velikaia frantsuzskaia revoliutsiia v publitsistike revoliutsionnykh demokratov A. I. Gertsena, V. P. Popova, D. I. Pisareva. In: A. Narohnitskii, ed., *Velikaia Frantsuzskaia revoliutsiia i Rossii*. Moscow: Progress, pp.374-389.

³¹ Herzen, A. (1954). Novye variatsii na starye temy. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomov*. Volume 2. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.99-100.

³² Herzen, A. Novye variatsii na starye temy, p.86–102.

Emotions in the Epoch of the “Great Reforms”

Herzen's ideas had little to no impact on the public and politics at that time since his theories had no practical use in the circumstances of censorship and the autocratic legitimist monarchy of the Nicolas I. The situation changed when the new czar Alexander II ascended the throne in 1855. He along with his government started to prepare reforms. Besides the emperor, his bureaucracy, nobility, educated public and other groups and even individual authors were allowed to participate in the preparations and came up with suggestions. The very idea of a loyal subject underwent certain changes. They were expected not just to obey but to take an active part and collaborate individually or as a part of a kind of a civic nation. In fact, the exact limits of these newly acquired liberties and capacities remained to be determined.

Issues of emotions, revolutions, and radicalism were discussed with renewed vigor. Diary entries, private letters, and articles written in Aesopian language gave way to the almost open discussion. The censorship-free press played a big part in it. In a way, Herzen's arguments remained more or less unchanged. He stressed the importance of feelings both in private life and politics. He used almost the same expressions and metaphors. In both cases, he mentioned constantly stammering or failing people, who face harsh sentences and indictments of rational formalists, whom Herzen called cold-blooded.

However, the context of his position drastically changed. Political matters overshadowed artistic issues or private ones like adultery. His rival was not Rötcher, an esthetician, but another Hegelian, Boris Chicherin. The dispute between Herzen and Chicherin has been examined by historians philologists and philosophers more than once.³³ But the topic of emotions seems to be overlooked. Herzen and Chicherin argued mainly about general principles of politics and about political means and ends, but all these questions had something to do with emotions.

By that time Herzen became a publisher and editor of the newspaper “Kolokol” (“Bell”), it was rather popular for a number of reasons. It was published in London and enjoyed freedom from any kind of censorship. The newspaper told about the facts without marked restrictions. There was a huge demand for this kind of journalism, although some pointed out that the “Kolokol” was emotionally charged. But none of his correspondents or collaborators saw it as a serious problem.³⁴

Chicherin's ideas chimed with these concerns but his position was a way more radical. Chicherin knew Herzen a little in Russia and then he visited Herzen after Herzen emigrated and

³³ Herzen, A. (1919). *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 22 tomakh*. Volume 9. Petrograd: Izdanie naslednikov avtora, Literaturnoe izdatel'stvo otdela Narkomata po prosveshcheniiu, pp. 406-424, 440-442, 484-495. Ginzburg, L. (1953). *Pis'mo A.I. Gertsena B. N. Chicherinu* In: *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*. Volume 61. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp.248-250. Porokh, I. (1965). *Polemika Gertsena s Chicherinym i otklik na nee «Sovremennika»*. In: *Istoriograficheskii sbornik*. Vypusk 2. Saratov: Izdatel'stvo Saratovskogo universiteta, pp.45-75. Kelly, A. (1977). «What is real is rational»: The political philosophy of B. N. Chicherin. *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*, 18(3), pp.195-222.

³⁴ See *Opozdavshie pis'my iz Peterburga*. 2 (1858). *Kolokol*. No 23-24. pp.188-190.

settled in London. They got along but the differences of opinions quickly became clear. Finally, Chicherin wrote an open letter to Herzen and asked him to publish it. Herzen agreed but it came out in “Kolokol” with his foreword and under the title “Indictment”, so he presented himself as a victim of ruthless prosecution of arrogant conservative.³⁵

Chicherin admitted that Herzen’s exposure of corruption and his attention to abuses of power were important but he was completely against the bright and catchy style of Herzen. Herzen aroused passions and toyed with the audience’s perception instead of developing a rational political program and solving urgent problems. He didn’t form a public opinion regarding upcoming reforms.

We hear from you not a word of reason but a word of passion. (...) You are a person thrown into a fight, you overflow with passionate faith and passionate doubts, you get exhausted by anger and indignation, go to extremes and stumble many times. These are your own words. Is it really required in politics? I used to think that careful consideration, clear and precise understanding along with a calm discussion of ends and means were necessary here. I used to think that the political figure who was overflowed with anger stumbling at every step and rushing back and forth before the wind undermines his credibility. I think that he ruins his cause by going to extremes.³⁶

Strictly speaking, Chicherin criticized Herzen not for the radical position he had taken but for the lack of position and definite views. He went so far as to say in his memoirs that Herzen even wasn’t a revolutionary because one needed a certain “tact” and “thought” to be one.³⁷ Chicherin refused to see “Kolokol” and other Herzen’s editions as genuinely political phenomena. For him, Herzen paid lip service to political debates, programs, and decisions to hide the fact that his activities were mainly about the expression of his volatile ambitions and aspirations.

According to Chicherin, “Kolokol” consisted of texts designed to evoke anger and indignation. It was almost impossible to reflect on them or stop them, so he compares their dissemination with the spread of disease. Herzen and his audience were dominated by passions, and it was the main reason why they couldn’t help but constantly changed their minds and wandered between the extremes. They couldn’t keep to the plan and have long-term goals. They were to

³⁵ Herzen, A. (1956). *Byloe i dumy*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomakh*. Volume 9. Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.248-249.

³⁶ Chicherin, B. (1858). *Obvinitel’nyi akt. Kolokol*. No 29. p.237.

³⁷ Chicherin, B. (2010) *Vospominaniia*. Volume 1. Moscow: Izdatel’stvo imeni Sabashnikovoykh, 2010, p.404.

perish as he puts it in a quote “fruitless rage”.³⁸ Thus Herzen was devoid of the capacity to act and condemned himself to a passivity at that very moment when the political situation required action.

The same is true for morality. Chicherin implies that moral reasoning is pivotal for it and reason lies at the bottom of every moral and political system. To his mind, excessive emotions are not compatible with ethics and morality.³⁹ Thus he points out an important moment in Herzen’s ideas. Herzen does use an appeal to feelings to debunk rational bourgeois good-looking morals but they are obviously not only weapons to attack outdated absurdities. According to Herzen, feelings are key elements of morality and they strengthen it. Emotions play a huge role in our motivation and structure of action in general. Emotions, in this sense, are not immoral, but profoundly moral.⁴⁰ This focus on the motivational power of emotions later became one of the central issues for Russian revolutionaries.

There were a few critical responses. Interestingly enough, their authors defended Herzen, at the same time admitting that Chicherin’s theoretical principles were right. Liberal proponents of Herzen didn’t challenge the basic premises of Chicherin, his calls for sobriety and rationality. At least in part, they agreed with him. They preferred to focus on the “tone” of Chicherin’s article, meaning his attitude and general character of his letter. His tone was rather sharp, so he could say the same thing more respectfully and keeping in mind the political consequences of such an attack on one of the most important supporters of the planned reforms. Chicherin's imprudent “Indictment” split the reformist camp and obviously, it was a good opportunity for conservatives to make use of it.⁴¹

Herzen chose other tactics. Defending himself, he attempted to go to the essence of his contradictions with Chicherin. Chicherin spoke about politics as a kind of ordered area with its established rules and mechanisms that reconcile different and hostile interests.⁴² Herzen laid emphasis on the fierce struggle of different groups, rather than on limitations and rules. Participation in politics so conceived quite naturally brings about emotions. Herzen stresses that emotionality doesn’t mean inactivity. Quite the contrary, cold rationality interferes with courage and determination.

French-style Doctrinaires or German-style Gelehrters lead investigations [emphasis added], make inventories, put everything in order; they are strong in positive religion and religious in

³⁸ Chicherin, B. Obvinitel’nyi akt, p.237.

³⁹ Chicherin, B. Obvinitel’nyi akt, p.237.

⁴⁰ Herzen, I (1958). Nas uprekaiut. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomov*. Volume 13. Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp.362–363

⁴¹ Panaev, V. (1859). Pis’mo k izdateliu «Kolokola». Panaev, V. (1902). Vospominaniia Valeriana Panaeva. *Russkaia starina*, 110(5), p.331. Chicherin, B. *Vospominaniia*, p.397. Pismo K.D. Kavelina B.N. Chicherinu 9 ianvaria 1859 g. [Letter] Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteki, Fond 334. Papka 2. Edinitsa khraneniia 22. Listy 16-17. Moscow.

⁴² Chicherin, B. Obvinitel’nyi akt, p.237.

positive science, they are deliberate and precise persons. They live to be old without going astray and without spelling or other mistakes. People thrown in a fight overflow with passionate faith and passionate doubts, they get exhausted by anger and indignation. They burn out quickly and go to extremes, they get carried away and die halfway stumbling over and over again.⁴³

Herzen repeated his thesis from the 1840s dividing the educated public into two categories. The first one comprises those who live full lives get almost everything their way. They also can “go astray” but it is compensated by their energy and sincerity. The second group consists of human beings who are not prone to making mistakes, yet they are passive and spiritually weak “Doctrinaires” dreaming of full rationalization of every human activity. This word in Russian, doktrinery, means self-righteous pedants, but Herzen obviously also referred to the French “Doctrinaires”, liberals of the Bourbon Restoration and the July monarchy. Probably it was an allusion to Chicherin’s interest in French-style strong central government and centralization in general. In Herzen’s eyes, Chicherin was both a conservative Hegelian and heir of French liberal tradition that Herzen disliked.

Herzen insists that human relationships and culture are emotional by their nature and every effort to conceal this fact is either political censorship or philosophical rejection of the realist principles for the sake of habitual and comforting fantasies. “Kolokol” had to give a voice not only to “thinking people of Russia” with their rational arguments as Chicherin suggested⁴⁴ but also to “people suffering in Russia” to their pain, hatred and their “soul-wrenching (...) cry”.⁴⁵

“Kolokol” sometimes published materials that couldn’t leave anybody indifferent. For instance, three months after Chicherin’s article, a story on the landowner named Gutzeit came out. He raped and constantly abused in other ways his 12-year-old peasant girl, she was his serf.⁴⁶ This outrageous story meant to cause indignation, clearly, it appealed not only to readers’ minds but to their senses. Another important point was that Herzen presented the story, not as a crime of a private person, it had obvious political connotations in his account. For Herzen, it was yet another example, though really shocking one, of ill-concealed violence on which the serfdom is based. Herzen directed his interpretation against the image of serfdom as patriarchal relationships between caring master and his or her loyal peasants.

⁴³ Herzen, A. *Nas uprekaiut*, pp.362-363.

⁴⁴ Chicherin, B. *Obvinitel’nyi akt*, p.236.

⁴⁵ *Kolokol* (1858). *Iz vtorogo pis’ma*. No. 40-41. p.329.

⁴⁶ Herzen, A. (1958). *Postel’naia barshchina prodolzhaetsia*. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridtsati tomov*. Volume 13. Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, pp.75.

This piece was published in the midst of the preparation of the Emancipation Reform. As we know the reform started two years later in 1861. There were heated disputes about the projects proposed by the nobility of the various provinces.⁴⁷ Herzen accused almost all of them of selfishness and gave an opinion that nobility was looking for ways to preserve the serfdom under a different name. Also, the story of Gutzeit was a convenient occasion to remind once again of Chicherin. Herzen wrote: “And they advise to have cold blood and calm amphibian breathing, to have angelic patience of the Saint Symeon the Stylite (...) and to meekly wait what will spawn serfs owners’ committees while our sisters and daughters are being whipped and forced to sleep with their masters...”⁴⁸

One could see here a resemblance with what he wrote before on Goethe’s “Elective Affinities”. In both cases, Herzen compares his opponents with cold-blooded animals. In fact, here we can spot an idiosyncrasy of Herzen’s style of writing. He takes a metaphor that could be dead and then revives or at least amplifies it by literalization sometimes with the help of natural sciences. Adjective “cold-blooded” (“khladnokrovnyy”) was fairly common and its metaphorical side had practically disappeared. But Herzen talks about actual cold-blooded animals, the topic that he knew quite well since he studied natural history and comparative anatomy.⁴⁹

Herzen’s supporters repeatedly accused his rivals of being too cold, they weren’t allegedly able or didn’t want to experience any feelings.⁵⁰ One of the authors went as far as to call Chicherin and his proponents “a movement of liberal eunuchs”.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Chicherin didn’t ever argue against feeling as such. He attacked only public display of emotions that could affect politics. In his article against Herzen, he even admitted that emotions had what he called a “poetic attraction”. But he thought it was better to keep them within the domains of art and personal life.⁵² Chicherin relied on the traditional liberal separation between the private and the public and maintained that there should be a neutral public sphere reserved for rational argumentation that could convince the government, the only capable and legitimate political agent according to Chicherin.

Even after his public letter, the “Indictment”, Chicherin continued his correspondence with Herzen. In his private letters, he tried to assure Herzen that his personal opinion of him remained as good as it had been before.⁵³ It seems that initially, Chicherin hoped that their personal meeting,

⁴⁷ See Zakharova, L. (1984). *Samoderzhavie i otmena krepostnogo prava v Rossii 1856-1861*. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, pp.136-231. Zaionchkovskii, P. (1968). *Otmena krepostnogo prava v Rossii*. Moscow: Prosveshchenie, pp.110-120.

⁴⁸ Herzen, A. *Postel'naia barshchina prodolzhaetsia*, p.75.

⁴⁹ Kelly, A. *The Discovery of Chance*, p.174.

⁵⁰ *Iz vtorogo pis'ma*, p.328.

⁵¹ *Pis'mo iz Rossii po povodu obvinitel'nogo akta g. Ch.* (1956). In: V. Vinogradov, ed., *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*. Volume 63. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.212.

⁵² Chicherin, B. *Obvinitel'nyi akt*, p.237.

⁵³ Chicherin, B. (1883). *Pis'mo A.I. Gertsenu 11 noiabria 1858 g. Vol'noe slovo*. No. 61-62, p.6.

when he would have a chance to explain himself, would settle everything.⁵⁴ But Herzen eventually refused to meet him, announcing a complete breakup with Chicherin in his response.⁵⁵ He compared them with the courteous officers of the two fighting armies greeting each other across the front line.⁵⁶

One of the key elements of the Herzen and Chicherin polemics is constant references to the recent political history and current events both in Russia and Western Europe. Historical examples were interwoven with reflections on the perspectives of social and political change in Russia. In order to warn against excessive emotionality, Chicherin employed the history of modern revolutions. He wrote that masses blinded by their feelings suffered disastrous consequences of their folly. Emotions are generally incompatible with the careful reflection, so those who are seized by them want to achieve the desired despite the possible dangers. Emotions oversimplify political matters and thus they set a stage for despotism inasmuch as it's the simplest political regime possible suggesting seemingly unmistakable policies.

Chicherin insists that passions are inherently connected with democratic regimes, especially with unlimited Jacobin-style despotic democracy. But he believed that there was no perspective of revolution in Russia. It's too conservative and it has a strong government. But we have to take into account another threat, keeping in mind that violence and despotism will probably come from another source. Strong feelings and emotions will inevitably lead to reckless decisions and actions, what he calls effervescence and "burning passions". It will end as a kind of political unrest and this, in turn, will make the government take all the necessary measures. Progressive reformism can give way to conservatism and oppression.⁵⁷

This turn to dictatorship is especially objectionable for Chicherin because he recognizes Russian reformist autocratic monarchy as a *Rechtsstaat*. Unlike radicals who implied that the czar was already a dictator, Chicherin believed there was something crucial to lose. In his view, the popular dictatorship was inferior and less acceptable than a monarchic one. To his mind, only the imperial government was capable of holding passionate radicalism back.

In his response, Herzen once again traced his position back to Rousseau and Jacobinism. He was aware of the political implications of these ideas on feelings and, in a sense, he viewed himself as a modern-day revolutionary. Elsewhere he compared Chicherin to a cold-minded Girondist⁵⁸ and

⁵⁴ Kollektivnoe pis'mo k K. Dm. Kavelinu (1892). In: M. Dragomanov, ed., *Pis'ma K. Dm. Kavelina i Iv. S. Turgeneva k Al. Iv. Gertsenu*. Geneva: Ukrainskaia tipografiia, p.43.

⁵⁵ Kavelin, K. (1892) Pis'mo A.I. Gertsenu 21 avgusta 1859 g In: M. Dragomanov, ed., *Pis'ma K. Dm. Kavelina i Iv. S. Turgeneva k Al. Iv. Gertsenu*. Geneva: Ukrainskaia tipografiia, p.14.

⁵⁶ Herzen, A. (1962). Pis'mo B.N. Chicherinu (chernovoe) 16 noiabria 1858 g. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 26. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.222.

⁵⁷ Chicherin, B. Obvinitel'nyi akt, p.238.

⁵⁸ Herzen, A. (1962). Pis'mo M.K. Reikhel' 6-7 apreliia 1859 g. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 26. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.252.

then reminded that those who “cooled every impulse” of the citizens and “cast doubts” were executed by revolutionaries.⁵⁹ Herzen held that the Jacobin version of the sentimentalist emotional regime, though it had feared by some contemporaries, had had its advantages. Some of the Herzen’s articles written at the beginning of the 1860s, in fact, were not moderate and reasonable. They show that he was fairly close to full-blown radicalism. For instance, in one of his articles of that time, he praised the first French republic of 1792-1794 because it managed to unleash the passion of its citizens and thus facilitate their liberation and self-realization. He maintains that impassionate revenge of the enraged citizens that lay at the base of the republic is superior to what he called “routine justice”.⁶⁰

Herzen suggested a vision of activist and democratic “hot” politics. And Chicherin advocated a “cold” political sphere ruled or at least supervised by the monarch and his bureaucratic government. As he wrote to Herzen “society should buy [from the government] a right to be free”.⁶¹ Some of his ideas are at odds with the natural rights theory and other conceptions important to the different versions of liberalism. Chicherin was seriously influenced by Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right” and he took its conservatism at a face value. He followed Hegel putting his faith into a monarch and his rational bureaucracy.⁶²

Chicherin’s position became more and more popular, while Herzen’s radical democratic ideas gradually went out of fashion.⁶³ Hopes gave way to disappointment since reforms turned out not so rewarding and virtually nobody was willing to compromise. Furthermore, both the public and the government were scared by the growth of radicalism. So almost everyone except a few turned to one or another kind of conservatism looking for the plausible restrictive measures. As the authorities launched a propagandist campaign against Herzen, Chicherin was allowed to republish his letter in the legal edition to make it easily available to the Russian reading public.⁶⁴

Conclusion

It might seem that the situation is clear. On the one side, there are iconoclasts and radicals driven by rage and fury and other bad passions. They want to satisfy their lust for power and that’s

⁵⁹ Herzen, A. (1959). Pis'ma k puteshestvenniku. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 18. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.369

⁶⁰ Herzen, A. (1959) 1831-1863. In: *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. Volume 17. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, p.105.

⁶¹ Chicherin, B. Obvinitel'nyi akt, p.238.

⁶² Kelly, A. The *Discovery of Chance*, pp.385-391.

⁶³ Chicherin’s victory was recognized by one of the most influential liberal newspapers, “St. Petersburg News”. Article about it was written in Aesopian language. *Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti* (1862). No. 259. p.1095.

⁶⁴ Chicherin, B. (1862). Pis'mo izdateliu «Kolokola». In: *Neskol'ko sovremennykh voprosov*. Moscow: K. Soldatenkov, pp.9-19.

why they provoke the same base passions in the dim populace. On the other side, there is czar, his bureaucracy and their allies from the educated public. They are cautious and genuinely rational. But the picture is much more complicated.

Influenced by socialism and positivism, Herzen and many of his successors had the ambition to establish a rigorous social science. A lot of Russian revolutionaries looked for a rationally conceived social theory and some of them like Peter Lavrov were clearly dismissive of emotions.⁶⁵ Furthermore, advocates of careful planning and cautious reforms readily use emotionally colored language. The writing style of the liberals was not substantially different from the Herzen's and Chicherin himself was not as impassive as he suggested any public figure should be.

For all the talk about rationality, public life in the Russian Empire was quite emotional. Its emotionality can be connected to an emerging nationalism since collective emotions are an important tool for the national unification along with political representation and shared history or culture.⁶⁶ Possibly monarchism was another source of public feelings. The monarch was, inter alia, a person to praise, to adore or to hate. It was especially important in the 19th century when kings and emperors gradually came down to the ground and religious elements of their images lost their color.

The emotional aspect of monarchial loyalty in Russia usually varied depending on the social status of the subjects. There was a certain difference between the common people and privileged classes who had more nuanced and subtle discourses and practices. For instance, noblemen were expected to cry from tenderness during certain ceremonies during the reign of Nicholas,⁶⁷ whereas repertoire of the lower orders included kneeling before the czar, shouting with joy and throwing hats in the air.⁶⁸ During the reign of Alexander the II, emotions were on the rise, public reaction to political events of the 1850 and 1860s didn't show any signs of rationalization. On the contrary, Richard Wortman called this period an apogee of the sentiment.⁶⁹ From any perspective, it was a far cry from a moderate and rational approach to politics.

A point to be stressed is that proponents of sober rationalism didn't have a problem with these forms of loyalty. It seems that emotions themselves and their strength were not a central concern; one can assume that uncontrollability and potentially radical political implications were far more important. Condemning passions conservatives meant democracy and radical social change

⁶⁵ Lavrov, P. (1965). Istoricheskie pis'ma. In: *Filosofia i sotsiologiya: v dvukh tomakh*. Volume 2. Moscow: Mysl', p.105.

⁶⁶ See Beyer, M. and Von Scheve, Ch. and Ismer, S. (2014). The social consequences of collective emotions: National identification, solidarity and out-group derogation. In: G. Sullivan, ed., *Understanding Collective Pride and Group Identity: New Directions in Emotion Theory, Research and Practice*. London: Routledge, pp.67-79.

⁶⁷ Pushkin, A. (1978). Dnevnik. In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 10 tomakh*. Volume 8. Leningrad: Nauka, p.36.

⁶⁸ Wortman, R. (2013). *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.90, 217.

⁶⁹ Wortman, R. (2013). *The Power of Language and Rhetoric in Russian Political History: Charismatic Words from the 18 to the 21st Centuries*. 2017. P. 44-46

and Herzen was among those who drew sharp criticism for the political side of his ideas. Even if Herzen was not a full-blown radical, he did want to bring about social change in one way or another and emotions were really important in this regard.

Herzen was one of those who popularized the idea of deploying of feelings in the political struggle against the existing order. It had a lot of followers, particularly in the developing revolutionary movement, although their views of feelings were not unequivocal.

Revolutionaries had to be passionate, but paradoxically enough display of the feelings sometimes considered to be a sign of weakness. Self-expression and naturalness were way less important than mastery over one's feelings and disregard of self. Revolutionary discourse laid emphasis on emotional discipline starting with Rakhmetov, one of the main characters of the novel by N. Chernyshevsky "What is to be done?", who famously slept on nails in order to mortify his flesh and master his feelings.⁷⁰ At times discipline was accompanied by sacrifices and self-punishment.⁷¹

Another telling example of revolutionary emotionality is a genre of death notes or letters sent from prisons by revolutionaries awaiting their execution. One of their main features was Socratic tranquility in the face of death blended with the claims to moral superiority along with the final exhortations for comrades, family or for the general public.⁷²

Self-pity was strictly forbidden, but the restriction of the emotions concerning oneself was usually accompanied by the encouragement of compassion for others and especially the people. This particular kind of pity became a central topic for many revolutionaries. One of them was Vera Figner who vividly described in her memoirs service as a nurse at a rural hospital where she had a chance to get acquainted with the miserable life of peasants. As Figner wrote, "tears dripped right into the potions and drops I was preparing for these unfortunates".⁷³

In a sense, Herzen wasn't himself coherent in his attacks of excessively restrictive emotional regimes, with all his fascination with Jacobins and revolutionary tradition in general. He was not that far from Chicherin and other rationalists because they similarly looked for the way to combine reason with emotions, and certain freedom with rules. Herzen was not sympathetic to traditional liberal private/public dichotomy but he also embraced a selective pragmatic approach to feelings. The sentimentalist emotional regime that he outlined had non-liberal principles in its basis, but it was not sufficiently freer. Those who came after Herzen took his emotional pragmatism to a whole new level.

⁷⁰ Chernyshevsky, N. (1986). *What is to be done?* New York: Ardis Publishers, p.286.

⁷¹ See Mogilner, M. (1999) *Mifologiya podpol'nogo cheloveka*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 1999. pp.44-48.

⁷² Fastovskii, V. (2018). «Èto moia vera!» Religiozno-konnotirovannaia leksika v ègo-dokumentakh narodnichestva kontsa 1870-kh – nachala 1880-kh godov. *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 1, pp.52-73. See Kaliaev, I. (1905). Pis'ma k materi. In: *Ivan Platonovich Kaliaev (otdel'nyi ottisk iz «Revoliutsionnoï Rossii»*). St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Partii sotsialistov-revoliutsionerov, pp.45-46.

⁷³ Figner, V. (1964). *Zapechatlennyi trud: vospominaniia v dvukh tomakh*. Volume 1. Moscow: Mysl', p.154.

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