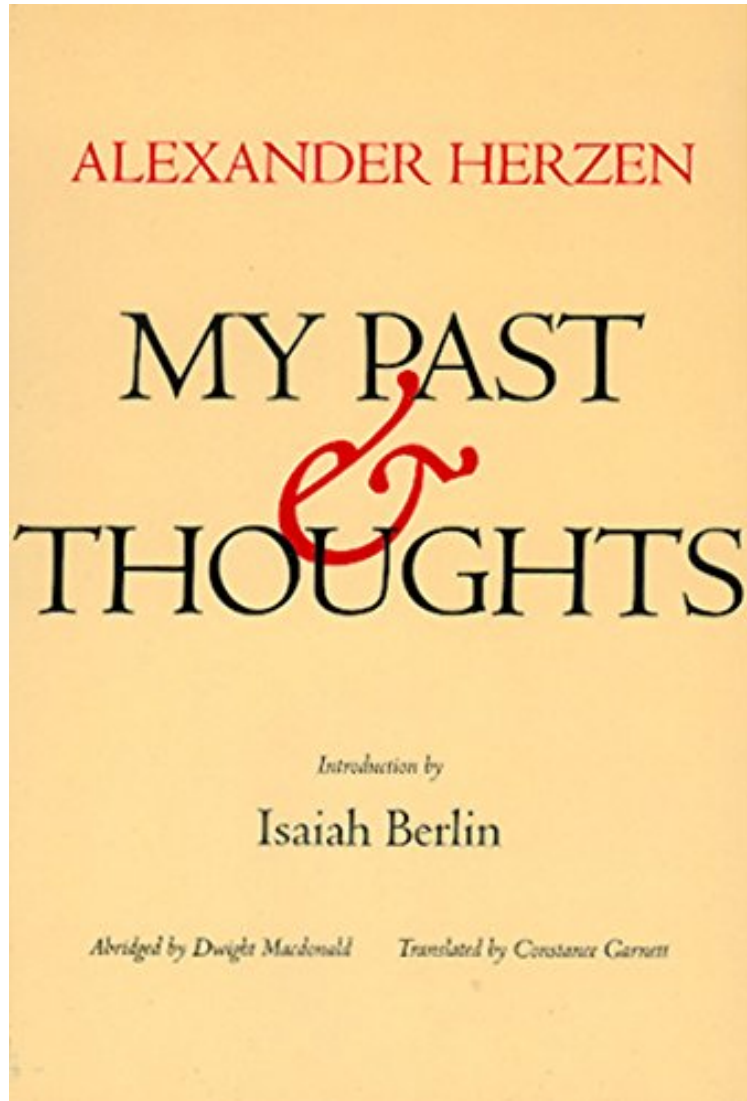


(Download pdf) My Past and Thoughts

## My Past and Thoughts

Alexander Herzen

ebooks | Download PDF | \*ePub | DOC | audiobook



 Download

 Read Online

#680554 in Books 1982-04-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 1.44 x 5.48 x 8.23l, 1.83 #File Name: 0520042107752 pages | File size: 54.Mb

**Alexander Herzen : My Past and Thoughts** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised My Past and Thoughts:

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Herzen in BriefBy Philip BrantinghamThere is no question that it is good to have this edition of Alexander Herzen's autobiography, "My Past and Thoughts," though it is considerably abridged. The work is deservedly praised as one of the great autobiographies of the West. Well written and colorful, it acquaints us with the mind and spirit of one of the most important political figures of the nineteenth century. Herzen, darling of radicals and nemesis of conservatives (wrongly, I believe), is a seminal thinker and activist of his

time. Herzen, a Russian by birth but an internationalist in spirit, knew most of the radicals of the era, Bakunin, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Louis Blanc. Yet he was in a way not one of them. He was too hardheaded and too reasonable--he knew what worked and what didn't. Raised in autocratic Russia, he had experienced prison, exile--and fame as a writer. This edition has been abridged by Dwight MacDonald, unfortunately leaving out some crucial parts, for example his relations with his wife, Natalie, and other more domestic issues. However, the original appeared in five volumes, and something had to be excised to make this edition manageable. Those who wish to read the complete autobiography should look up the Knopf four-volume edition of 1968. Nonetheless, this edition will do for most of us. It's a gem. Philip Brantingham Chicago, IL 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Cornelia Seckel Excellent gave me much to think about 42 of 46 people found the following review helpful. Herzen is the Culmination of Russian Romantic Thought By A reader in Tucson, AZ In the years before Lenin and the harsh, bleak application of socialist thought to autocracy there existed a group of philosophers who believed in the beauty of the commune and its cooperation with a Republican government. Britain had Robert Owen and his factory town, the French had Fourier (the phalanstery) and Proudhon among others, and the Russians had Herzen. Here existed a time where the leading academics saw folly in violent revolution, and Herzen was by no means a demagogue willing to mobilize the Russian peasants in a siege of Moscow like a simple Pugachev or a Decembrist. This perhaps explains Herzen's stern dislike of Marx and Engels, for he saw too much of the Robespierre in them and their ideas. Herzen believed in democracy almost in a modern American sense. Indeed, much of the work is laced with arguments in disfavor to the flowering of socialism in Europe, citing particularly the cruelty of the police in France during 1848: "The Latin world does not like freedom, it only likes to sue for it." Certainly the tendencies of the Germans were no more progressive either. Instead at one point in the text the author suggests that those who "can put off from himself the old Adam of Europe and be born again a new Jonathan had better take the first steamer to some place in Wisconsin or Kansas." The selections and abridgement of the text emphasize Herzen's basic belief about reform: revolution is gradual. One has to breed engrained stupidity out of the ruling class and make laws that better everyone, like the English and Americans. Laws make a better society, not people: "The Englishman's liberty is more in his institutions than in himself or his conscience. His freedom is the 'common law.'" The text covers the demise of Herzen, culminating in his rejection on his deathbed by the new revolutionary ("terrorist") camps in Russia, headed ideologically by Chernyshevsky and best seen in the widespread incendiary and murderous practices of Sergei Nechaev. These are all topics of the years after Herzen's death, the tragic history of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the prelude to the pall of 1917.

Alexander Herzen's own brilliance and the extraordinary circumstances of his life combine to place his memoirs among the greatest works of the modern era. Born in 1812, the illegitimate son of a wealthy Russian landowner, he became one of the most important revolutionary and intellectual figures of his time: as theorist, polemicist, propagandist, and political actor. Fifty years after his death, Lenin revered him as the father of Russian revolutionary socialism. Tolstoy said he had never met another man "with so rare a combination of scintillating brilliance and depth." His monumental autobiography is an unparalleled record of his—and his century's—remarkable life. Herzen's story of his privileged childhood among the Russian aristocracy is lit with the insight of a great novelist. With a trained historian's sense of the interaction of people and events, he limns the grand line of revolutionary development from the earliest stirrings of Russian radicalism through the tumultuous ideological debates of the international. His close friends and enemies—Marx, Wagner, Mill, Bakunin, Garibaldi, Kropotkin—are brought brilliantly alive. Dwight Macdonald's knowledgeable and fluent abridgment makes this great work readily available to the modern reader.

Language Notes Text: English, Russian (translation) From the Inside Flap "A literary masterpiece to be placed by the side of the novels by Herzen's contemporaries and countrymen, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky."—Sir Isaiah Berlin "Herzen's memoirs are one of the great nineteenth-century monuments, an essential document as well as a noble piece of literature."—Philip Toynbee