



V.G. BELINSKY

**SELECTED
PHILOSOPHICAL
WORKS**

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The *Selected Philosophical Works* of V. G. Belinsky comprise the author's more important articles, reviews, letters and excerpts from essays dealing with philosophical and sociological problems.

All these works give a clear idea of Belinsky's philosophical and political evolution to materialism and revolutionary democratism, and reveal his role as the predecessor of Russian Social-Democracy.

The present publication is a translation from the Russian edition of Belinsky's *Selected Philosophical Works* (State Publishers of Political Literature, Moscow, 1941).



A GREAT RUSSIAN THINKER

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY*

BY

M. YOVCHUK

June 7, 1948 marked the centenary of the death of Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky (1811-1848).

The peoples of the Soviet Union are legitimately proud of Belinsky, one of the finest sons of the Russian people, a great revolutionary democrat, eminent thinker and literary critic.

Comrade Stalin, in stating that the great Russian nation is the nation of Plekhanov and Lenin, Belinsky and Chernyshevsky, Pushkin and Tolstoy, Glinka and Chaikovsky, Gorky and Chekhov, Sechenov and Pavlov, Repin and Surikov, Suvorov and Kutuzov, paid tribute to the role Belinsky played in the history of the Russian people and of all the peoples inhabiting our country. Belinsky, along with the other famous sons of the Russian nation, is the personification of the spiritual greatness and might of our people, of its powerful talent and vital strength.

Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky has gone down in the history of Russian revolutionary thought, in the history of Russian democratic culture of the nineteenth century, as an original and versatile thinker. Belinsky represented an astonishing combination of many talents. He was not only a great literary critic and publicist; he was an outstanding Russian philosopher, a classical representative of Russian materialist philosophy of the nineteenth century, a talented sociologist, historian of Russian literature and founder of modern, revolutionary democratic aesthetics. In addition to all this, Belinsky was, first and foremost, an indomitable fighter

* This introductory essay is based on the supplemented and revised preface to the 1941 Russian edition of the *Selected Philosophical Works* of V. G. Belinsky.—M.Y.

against tsarism and serfdom, one of the initiators of the revolutionary-democratic movement in Russia in the nineteenth century.

Lenin paid a high tribute to the role Belinsky played in the Russian emancipation movement against tsarism and serfdom. Emphasizing in his work, *What Is To Be Done?*, the historical importance of the struggle Belinsky, Herzen, and Chernyshevsky waged for a correct revolutionary theory, Lenin called them the precursors of Russian Social-Democracy.

In the early period of the revolutionary movement in Russia revolutionaries from the nobility predominated in it; but, after the Reform of 1861 (the emancipation of the serfs), the democratic intelligentsia among the commoners began to play the leading role in the revolutionary movement. Belinsky stands on the borderline between these two periods in the social development of Russia. Lenin said: "A precursor of the complete elimination of the nobility by the commoners in our emancipation movement, while serfdom still existed, was V. G. Belinsky. His famous 'Letter to Gogol,' which summed up Belinsky's literary activities, was one of the best of the writings that appeared in the uncensored democratic press, and it has retained its tremendous, living significance to this day."*

This appraisal of Belinsky by Lenin provides the key to the scientific solution of the problem concerning the character of Belinsky's activities and world outlook, the problem which has exercised the minds of numerous students of the work of Belinsky for a century since the death of the great thinker.

* * *

The period that Belinsky lived in, the second quarter of the last century, was a period of disintegration of the system of serfdom. Capitalism began to grow in autocratic-feudal Russia. Year after year, the number of factories and mills in the country, and the number of wageworkers, increased. Russia's home and foreign trade, particularly the grain trade, steadily expanded. Gradually, a home market was formed for both manufactured goods and agricultural produce. But the economy of serfdom still pre-

* Lenin, "From the History of the Labour Press in Russia," *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., Moscow 1938, Vol. XI, p. 59.

dominated in Russia's national economy. Like heavy shackles, it fettered the economic development of the country and hindered the creation of large-scale industry and the formation of a proletariat.

That period in Russia witnessed a steady aggravation of the antagonism between the two main classes in feudal society—the landlords and the peasants; the spontaneous anger of the peasantry steadily grew and ever more often found expression in peasant revolts against the landlords.

But there was still no force in Russia capable of leading the masses of the people to a victorious fight against tsarism and serfdom. There was still no proletariat as a class. The Russian bourgeoisie was never a revolutionary force; it cringed before the ruling landlord class, and the bulk of the bourgeoisie supported the landlord state. Disunited and unorganized, still lacking political consciousness, the peasants from time to time rose in revolt against the landlords and satraps of the tsar, but did not yet set themselves the revolutionary aim of overthrowing the serf system of society and the autocratic state. Revolutionary ideas fermented in the minds of the more advanced peasants, but as yet did not reach the consciousness of the broad masses of the peasants.

At that time, the political emancipation movement against tsarism and serfdom was represented mainly by progressive individuals among the nobility who began to realize how disastrous the backward social relationships of the autocratic-feudal regime prevailing in Russia were for the country, protested against serfdom and demanded its abolition. "Serf Russia was downtrodden and immobile," wrote Lenin concerning life in Russia in the period after the defeat of the Decembrists. "Protests were raised by an insignificant minority of nobles who, lacking the support of the people, were impotent. But the finest men among the nobility helped to rouse the people."*

In the forties of the nineteenth century a new social stratum entered the arena of the emancipation movement in Russia, in addition to the noblemen revolutionaries, namely, the commoners. The commoners came from different social groups: from among

* Lenin, "The Role of the Estates and Classes in the Emancipation Movement," *Collected Works*, 3rd Russ. ed., Vol. XVI, p. 575.

the burghers, the clergy, the merchants, the civil service, and in individual cases they were peasants who had pushed their way into "educated society."

The revolutionary commoners stood much closer to the people than the revolutionaries from the nobility. They were the initiators of the democratic movement in Russia, the vehicles of democratic ideology.

Concerning the commoners Maxim Gorky wrote that at that time "...men already appeared possessing proud and self-reliant strength; they marched forward along their own road without stumbling over the ruins of the past—and at that time there could be only one road for them—the road to the people, to the masses of the peasants, hence, primarily—against serfdom...."

"In transitional periods two types of men always stand out with exceptional brilliance—one completely personifying all that is moribund, all that is obsolete—... the other type is inspired solely by a striving towards the future, is totally alien and hostile to the past—for us these are Bel(insky), Dobr(olyubov), Cher(nyshevsky)."*

V. G. Belinsky was the initiator of the democratic movement of the forties of the last century, the ideological inspirer of the struggle against the landlord-autocratic system in the reactionary reign of Nicholas I. His activity played a major role in the struggle of the Russian people for emancipation, the struggle against serfdom and the autocracy. Belinsky's views reflected the sentiments of the peasants who were rising to the struggle against serfdom, their protest against it. But Belinsky, like the other ideologists of Russian revolutionary democracy of the middle of the nineteenth century, did not, and could not, become the leader of the revolutionary movement of the masses of the people. The revolutionary theory which he worked out was now shared not just by single individuals as was the case among the revolutionaries from the nobility, the Decembrists; but its hold extended to only a narrow circle of democratic intellectual commoners. It did not reach the broad masses of the people, the lowly peasants.

* Maxim Gorky, *History of Russian Literature*, Russ. ed., Moscow 1939, p. 153.

One of the most real and effective weapons in the fight against the system of autocracy and serfdom, and against the ideology which sanctified it, was literature, primarily publicist literature and literary criticism.

It was no accident that Belinsky devoted all his efforts to literary criticism and publicist writing, and that he used these in his struggle against the landlord-feudal policy and the officio-reactionary ideology of "autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality." Like Herzen, Belinsky continued and extended the ideological struggle against the landlord-serf system, the struggle that was initiated by Radishchev and the Decembrists; in the 1840's he accepted and developed the progressive traditions of Russian materialist philosophy that were begun by Lomonosov and Radishchev.

Belinsky's whole conscious life was devoted to the search for a correct revolutionary theory, for the right way to bring about the social transformation of Russian life in the interests of the masses of the people who were groaning under the yoke of serfdom.

S. M. Kirov, in the splendid article "A Great Seeker," which he wrote in 1911, on the centenary of Belinsky's birth, said of him:

"He was the incarnation of the whole protest against the surrounding 'infamous reality' and exercised all the greatness of his genius in the search for truth.

"Tell me what truth is!' he cried in appeal to penetrating reason. Into the search for truth he hurled himself, ardently, tirelessly and passionately, and his mighty voice resounded in that gloomy epoch like a clarion call, summoning all that was virile and best.... All his writings—from the tragedy *Dmitri Kalinin* which he wrote in his youth to his letters written just before his death—were marked with this ardent search."

* * *

Vissarion Grigoryevich Belinsky was born in 1811. He spent his childhood in the town of Chembar (now Belinsky), Penza Gubernia, where his father was a country doctor. In 1829 Belinsky entered the Moscow University, but was expelled in 1832 "because of unsound health, and also because of limited capabilities." The real reason for his expulsion, however, was the desire of the University authorities to get rid of the young radical who in that

period had written the drama *Dmitri Kalinin*, in which serfdom and landlord tyranny were sharply criticized.

In 1833 Belinsky started on his career as a literary critic. From 1833 to 1836 he contributed to the magazine *Teleskop* and to its literary supplement *Molva* (*Common Talk*), in 1838-1839 to the magazine *Moskovski Nablyudatel* (*Moscow Observer*), from 1839 to 1846 to the magazine *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (*Fatherland Notes*) and from 1846 to the end of his life to the magazine *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*).

Already in the 'thirties, Belinsky wrote important literary works of profound theoretical significance: "Literary Reveries," "On the Russian Novel and the Novels of Mr. Gogol," a critical essay on the works of Fon-Vizin and Zagoskin, and a number of others.

Belinsky's talent as a literary critic and publicist reached full bloom in the forties of the nineteenth century. In that period he wrote scores and scores of essays and reviews, particularly outstanding among which are his essays on the works of Pushkin, Derzhavin, Lermontov and other Russian writers, his "Thoughts and Notes on Russian Literature," reviews of works on history by N. Markevich, F. Lorentz and S. Smaragdov, reviews of books on Peter I, and also his yearly reviews of Russian literature in 1846 and 1847. His famous letter to Gogol was written in 1847.

By his splendid essays Belinsky won enormous prestige among the progressive strata of Russian society and incurred the vicious hatred of the ruling classes of tsarist Russia.

Herzen, in his *My Past and Thoughts*, splendidly described the enthusiasm with which all progressive people in Russian society welcomed every issue of the magazine that contained an essay by Belinsky; Belinsky's essays simply shattered the obsolete views and the former authorities.

"... this retiring man, this feeble body," wrote Herzen, "was inhabited by a powerful, gladiatorial spirit! Yes, he was a powerful fighter..."*

Belinsky's essays cultivated among the non-aristocratic, democratic intelligentsia a hatred for serfdom and for all it engendered;

* A. I. Herzen, *Selected Philosophical Essays*, Russ. ed., 1946, Vol. II, p. 183.

they exposed the serf-owners' ideas contained in the slogan "autocracy, orthodoxy and nationality" and the mystical theories of the Slavophiles and other forms of reactionary ideology; and they imbued progressive people in Russian society with sympathy for the people and a desire to rouse the masses to fight their oppressors.

The enemies of revolutionary democracy were aware of the tremendous influence V. G. Belinsky was exercising upon progressive people in Russia. Bulgarin, an agent of the Third Department (the Secret Police), and other writers who were "loyal subjects" of tsarism, more than once sent in reports against Belinsky and informed the government that he was a rebel writer who, "finding no room in the market place to sow sedition," did so in the columns of the magazines. Fyodorov, a member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, collected all the articles in *Otechestvenniye Zapiski*, including Belinsky's, cut out passages from them, piled these clippings in seven baskets each bearing a label with an inscription: "Against God," "Against the Government," "Against Morality," etc., and sent these baskets to the Third Department.

One day one of the tsar's satraps whom Belinsky happened to meet told him that "a cosy little casemate" had already been prepared for him in the Fortress of St. Peter and Paul.

Constant want, privation and persecution soon undermined Belinsky's health. He contracted consumption and in 1847 he went to take a cure in France and Germany; but the disease had gone too far to enable him to benefit from this. While abroad, in Salzbrunn, on July 3 (15), 1847, Belinsky wrote his famous letter to Gogol, which, as Herzen quite justly stated, became Belinsky's testament for several generations of revolutionaries in Russia.

On May 26 (June 7), 1848 Belinsky died and was buried in St. Petersburg.

Tsar Nicholas' satraps very much regretted that Belinsky had passed away when the members of the Petrashevsky circle, who had read and copied Belinsky's letter to Gogol, were arrested. Dubelt, the Chief of the Third Department, said: "We would have put him in the fortress and let him rot there."

For several years the press was prohibited from mentioning Belinsky's name, and his letter to Gogol was banned right up to

the time of the 1905 revolution. But in spite of this "conspiracy of silence" which the reactionaries instituted, Belinsky's name and his works won nation-wide fame and became unforgettable.

* * *

The development of Belinsky's political and philosophical ideas proceeded along a devious path. To him fully applies what Lenin said in his book "*Left-Wing*" *Communism, An Infantile Disorder*: "For nearly half a century—approximately from the 'forties to the 'nineties—advanced thinkers in Russia, under the oppression of an unparalleled, savage and reactionary tsardom, eagerly sought for the correct revolutionary theory and followed each and every 'last word' in Europe and America in this sphere with astonishing diligence and thoroughness."*

Belinsky, like Radishchev, the Decembrists, Herzen and other Russian revolutionary thinkers, was influenced by the progressive trends in West-European philosophical and socio-political thought which reflected the historical experience of the bourgeois revolutionary movement in Western Europe. There can be no doubt that one of the sources of Belinsky's philosophical and sociological views is to be traced to the achievements of West-European philosophical and social thought at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century as expressed in the French Enlightenment and, particularly, in the revolutionary bourgeois democracy of the period of the French bourgeois revolution, utopian socialism, the dialectical method contained in the systems of the German idealist philosophers of the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, and Feuerbach's materialist philosophy.

But Belinsky never became an obedient disciple, and still less a blind imitator, of any West-European philosophical system or socio-political doctrine.

Belinsky strove to generalize the historical experience of Russia and Western Europe in order to find an answer to the theoretical and political problems posed by the entire course of social development. He proceeded from the historical conditions of Rus-

* Lenin, *Selected Works*, Two-Vol. Eng. ed., Vol. II, Moscow 1947, p. 575.

sia's development, from the matured need for social change in Russia, from the interests of her toiling classes, primarily the peasants. This was the foundation on which Belinsky, while accepting—with many a grain of critical salt—the progressive ideas of the philosophical and socio-political doctrines of the West, which he worked over and assessed from the standpoint of revolutionary democracy, built his own world outlook, his own, independent system of philosophical and socio-political views.

In the thirties and forties of the last century there was not yet in Russia such a firm materialist tradition as there developed in the latter half of the century thanks to the theoretical activities of Herzen, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov. Nevertheless, already at that time, the moulding of Belinsky's world outlook was largely influenced by the progressive trends in Russian social and scientific thought represented by Lomonosov, Radishchev, the Decembrists and Herzen.

From Radishchev and the Decembrists Belinsky inherited the ideas of liberty and of opposition to serfdom, their hatred for the autocracy and serfdom, their faith that the abolition of serfdom would lead to the well-being of the people.

From Lomonosov, the founder of Russian science and of Russian materialist philosophy, Belinsky inherited the passionate striving to promote Russian science and Russian literature and to implant education in Russian soil.

Following in the footsteps of Radishchev, Belinsky held that serfdom, being contrary to human reason and incompatible with human nature, could not be tolerated any longer.

Belinsky was strongly influenced by the works of the great national poet A. S. Pushkin. He insisted that literary productions—in line with the beginning made by Pushkin—must provide a comprehensive, profound and truthful reflection of Russian realities; along with Pushkin, he was a determined champion of realism in Russian literature, but went much farther than Pushkin and his idea of an "enlightened nobility." He viewed Russian literature, as he viewed Russian life as a whole, with the eyes of a revolutionary democrat.

In the middle of the 'thirties, Belinsky joined Stankevich's circle and practically played the leading role in it. The "credo"

of Stankevich's circle, its program, was the conviction that it was necessary to spread education throughout Russia with the object of preparing for the abolition of serfdom. This program of enlightenment appealed to young Belinsky who joined Stankevich's circle not as a timid disciple, but as a convinced and passionate follower of Radishchev's enlightened ideas, a follower who shared his opposition to serfdom.

The philosophical views of Stankevich, of young Belinsky, and of the other members of the circle were basically idealistic. Unable to perceive the reactionary nature of German idealism, the members of Stankevich's circle, including Belinsky, at first appraised it as a progressive modern doctrine.

But, unlike Stankevich, Belinsky did not rest content with philosophical idealism. He passionately sought for a correct revolutionary theory. Contrary to Stankevich, who was a nobleman and merely an enlightener, aloof from political strife, Belinsky came forward, already in the 'thirties, as a determined foe of serfdom, as a revolutionary enlightener.

An important factor in Belinsky's philosophical development in the beginning of the 'forties was his intellectual communion and collaboration with A. I. Herzen, who at that time had already formed a materialist world outlook. When they met, Belinsky and Herzen discussed problems of philosophy; they also discussed philosophical problems in their correspondence (their letters, which they jocularly called "dissertations," have unfortunately not been found). The beneficial influence of Herzen's materialism helped Belinsky, in the beginning of the 'forties, to "take his leave" as he put it, "of Yegor Fyodorovich's [Hegel's] philosophical cap," that is to say, to take a negative attitude towards Hegel's idealism and soon, in 1843-1845, to arrive at materialism.

For a long time this process of Belinsky's theoretical development was misrepresented in the historical and philosophical literature. The bourgeois liberal historians of Russian public thought (Pypin, Bogucharsky and others) depicted Belinsky as an idealist of the German persuasion, as a lifelong follower of West-European idealistic systems. The Narodnik Socialist-Revolutionary historians of Russian public thought (Mikhailovsky, Ivanov-Razumnik, and others) depicted Belinsky's philosophical development as

a transition from objective idealism to subjective idealism, and in particular, to positivism and subjective sociology.

G. V. Plekhanov, who highly appraised V. G. Belinsky's literary works and activities, nevertheless, shared the mistaken view about his philosophical and political evolution. Plekhanov, and many other students of Belinsky's works who followed him, wrongly divided Belinsky's philosophical and political development into the "Schellingian," "Fichtean," "Hegelian," "Left-Hegelian" and "Feuerbachian" periods.* This approach to Belinsky's philosophical and political development caused these writers to lose sight of the independence and originality of Belinsky's philosophical and political views at every stage of his literary and theoretical development, caused them to forget that Belinsky took as his point of departure not this or that doctrine, but primarily the interests and needs of the masses of the people of Russia, the needs of the social development of the country. Belinsky, who at every stage of his development had critically assessed all the achievements of West-European philosophy and socio-political thought, was depicted by Plekhanov as a disciple and follower of first one and then another German philosophical system. In his analysis of Belinsky's philosophical and political evolution, Plekhanov also failed to take into account the continuity of the revolutionary tradition in Russia herself. He attached no importance to the fact that an enormous factor in the moulding of Belinsky's world outlook was Russian progressive social and philosophical thought, the materialist and emancipatory ideas of which had been handed down from generation to generation.

The profound utterances of Lenin and Stalin on questions concerning the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and of theoretical thought in Russia enable us to understand and properly to appraise the independence of the philosophical and political path pursued by Belinsky, correctly to appraise his theoretical searchings.

* * *

* I regret to say that this erroneous point of view was to some extent reflected in my introductory essay to the first, 1941, edition of Belinsky's *Selected Philosophical Works*.—M.Y.

The evolution of the great critic's philosophical and political ideas represented an intricate course of development from idealism to materialism, from the mentality of an enlightener to revolutionary democracy. The philosophical and political path traversed by Belinsky comprised the genesis and shaping of his materialist world outlook, which took place in the process of critically surmounting philosophical idealism and contending against it.

In the first years of his literary activities—1830-1837—Belinsky, on joining the ideological struggle against serfdom, became, in his socio-political convictions, a revolutionary enlightener of the democratic trend; at the same time he was a dialectical idealist in his philosophical views.

He remained an enlightener in the subsequent period from the end of 1837 to the end of 1839. But, since he saw no tangible conditions for the abolition of serfdom in Russia, he temporarily abandoned the struggle against the Russian feudal realities. In his philosophical convictions, he was still a dialectical idealist.

In 1840-1841, influenced by the class battles that were maturing in Western Europe and in Russia, he became a utopian socialist and revolutionary democrat. In the field of philosophy he gradually passed, in 1841-1844, from idealism to materialism and at the same time made a notable effort critically to revise the idealistic dialectical method.

In the last years of his life—1845-1848—he became more and more strongly entrenched in his position as a revolutionary democrat, became a confirmed materialist and strove to revise Hegel's dialectics on a new, materialist basis, to convert it into an "algebra of revolution."

In the thirties of the last century Belinsky was an idealist in his philosophical convictions. He believed that the universe surrounding us is nothing but the manifestation of an eternal absolute idea. But, unlike the German idealists Schelling and Hegel, with whose theories he was familiar, Belinsky, in that initial period of his development, did not incline towards mysticism and was least of all disposed to worship mysterious supernatural forces. According to Belinsky, the relation of "God," regarded as the sole world substance, to particular manifestations of nature bears a character different from what the advocates of the idealistic religious conception of the world imagined. Nature is in constant motion,

development. It is a process of eternal and never-ending creation. In his "Literary Reveries" (1834) Belinsky wrote: "The whole infinite, beautiful, divine world is nothing but the breath of a single, eternal *idea* (the idea of a single, eternal God) manifesting itself in innumerable shapes as a great spectacle of absolute unity in infinite diversity."*

Belinsky was attracted to idealism not by its mystical system, but by the idea of dialectical development.

"...for this idea," he wrote, "there is no repose: it lives perpetually, that is, it perpetually creates in order to destroy, and destroys in order to create. It is incarnate in the radiant sun, in the magnificent planet, in the errant comet; it lives and breathes in the turbulent ebb and flow of the ocean tides and violent desert storms, in the murmuring of leaves and the babbling brook, in the roar of the lion and the tears of the babe, in the smile of beauty, in the will of man, in the harmonious creations of genius..."**

In the period in which he wrote "Literary Reveries" Belinsky's philosophical views coincided in a number of points with the idealism of Schelling, which contained elements of dialectics. But Belinsky the enlightener could not limit himself to Schelling's views on surrounding reality, *i.e.*, to "serene contemplation" and the lauding of all that exists. Still more remote was Belinsky from that worship of landlord-aristocratic reaction that was characteristic of Schelling. Reflecting on the realities around him, Belinsky tried to work out an ideal of a just and rationally organized society, which, in his opinion, would have nothing in common with the feudal social order that existed in Russia and Germany at that time. But while denouncing the tyranny of the feudal and police state and the feudal backwardness of tsarist Russia, Belinsky was not yet then, in the thirties of the last century, convinced of the inevitability of a revolutionary overthrow of the old autocratic feudal order. He pinned his hopes primarily on the progress of morality and education, on the transformation of the social consciousness of men. In the early years of his activity he believed that education and the perfection of morals were the road to change in social relationships. But all the time he bore in mind the neces-

* See p. 13 of this volume.

** See p. 14 of this volume.

sity of enlightening the broad masses of the people who were oppressed under the system of serfdom. He never sought to "enlighten" the serf-owning landlords or to "persuade" them of the necessity of social change. In the 'thirties Belinsky was not yet a revolutionary democrat: his social and political views were the views of a revolutionary enlightener opposed to serfdom, but still having no program for a revolutionary-democratic reformation of society.

Belinsky sharply criticized serfdom in the works he wrote in the period from 1830 to 1836. But he did not at that time openly come forward with the demand for the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy by revolutionary means. In his censored articles we find assertions to the effect that education in Russia might develop thanks to "the vigilant tutelage of a wise government." At the end of his "Literary Reveries" we even find a favourable opinion of the three principles of tsarism in the field of ideology, namely, "orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality." In all probability, such statements, which contradict Belinsky's entire way of thinking and are at variance with the spirit of his essays, which were directed against the official, autocratic and feudal-landlord trend in Russian literature (Kukolnik, Bulgarin, Grech, etc.), were urged by censorship considerations, or may even have been inserted in the text of Belinsky's essays by Nadezhdin, the editor of *Molva*.

In 1836-1837 Belinsky studied the philosophy of Fichte. At first it seemed to him to be a "philosophy of action," capable of providing the theoretical grounds for, and translating into life, the ideal he had formed of a rationally ordered and just society. In this short period, surrounding reality, real life, seemed to Belinsky to be a phantom, a vacuum, a nothingness. For him real life was solely the ideal life, the life of the "thinking Ego," which, in his opinion, was capable of critically rejecting surrounding reality and of mentally creating an ideal reality.

But at this time too he subordinated the idealistic philosophical theory to his enlightener's ideal, and from the idealistic doctrine of the primacy of reason he drew the conclusion of the necessity for the unlimited development of the human mind, morality and education. "Every man," he wrote, "must love mankind as the idea of the full development of the mind, which constitutes his own goal too; consequently, every man must love in mankind his