



## **M.N. CHERNYSHEVSKY'S DIARY IS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE ON THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article deals with information from the diary of MN Chernyshevsky, who at the end of the 19th century studied the possibility of laying the Alexandrov-Gai – Chardzhou railway line. Being a member of the expedition, M.N. Chernyshevsky visited the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and in his diary left valuable information on the history and ethnography of the peoples of the South Aral Sea. Together with the information, he captured in the pictures the sights of the cities and nature of the Southern Aral Sea.

### **KEYWORDS**

Diary, railway, photographs, expedition, Chardzhou, Aleksandrov-Gai..

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Russia there is a diary entitled "Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia." The author of this diary is M.N. Chernyshevsky. The manuscript of his diary contains 145 pages of travel description and 8 pages of afterword.

He was a man worthy of his father. It is to Mikhail Nikolayevich that we owe the fact that both the

correspondence and the literary heritage of Chernyshevsky have come down to us. At that time, when it was forbidden to mention the name of Chernyshevsky in the press, his son published anonymous one-volume editions of his works. At the beginning of the 20th century, he began to publish the first complete works of Chernyshevsky. Until his death (1924), he continued to promote the literary heritage



of his father, became the creator of the Chernyshevsky house-museum in Saratov.

Museum-estate of N.G. Chernyshevsky is a unique literary and memorial complex. The memorial house, which has been preserved since 1826, is the only museum of N.G. Chernyshevsky in modern Russia. Here, from 1920 to this day, original documents, books, and personal belongings of the Chernyshevsky family are kept. The museum in memory of the Russian writer and public figure Nikolai Gavrilovich Chernyshevsky was opened on September 17, 1920. The founder and first director was the writer's youngest son, Mikhail Nikolaevich Chernyshevsky. It was he who stood at the origins of the formation of museum funds.

The main fund includes exhibits related primarily to the life and work of N.G. Chernyshevsky, as well as his relatives: these are personal items, manuscripts, books, photographs.

It should be noted that the museum's funds are one of the main repositories of photographs by N.G. Chernyshevsky; have rare and unique photographic portraits, illegal photographs. The work begun by M.N. Chernyshevsky on the formation of the museum collection was continued by his daughters - Nina Mikhailovna and Marianna Mikhailovna Chernyshevsky.

M.N. Chernyshevsky was a highly educated man of his time, spoke Greek, French and German, studied English and Spanish on his own. N.G. Chernyshevsky at one time helped his son get a job at the Board of the Trans-Caspian Railway. In the future, MN Chernyshevsky goes to serve in the department of railway affairs [1.85].

Even during his father's lifetime, he began serving in the Department of Railway Affairs of the Ministry of Finance and therefore was directly involved in laying

new routes designed to connect the Central Asian outskirts with Central Russia.

For many years, his work was connected with the railway (assistant to the head of the Commercial Department V.V. Urzhumtsev on the board of the Transcaucasian Railway Society, head of the Department of Railway Affairs, officer of Special Assignments of the Department of Railway Affairs, head of the Department of Special Assignments). At the same time, photography entered his life. Information has been preserved that on April 24, 1893, M.N. Chernyshevsky was elected an indispensable member of the 5th department "Photography and its application" of the Imperial Russian Technical Society, where he received a certificate for the right to free photography. Mikhail Nikolaevich was allowed to take photographs of buildings and landscapes both in the capital and in other places in Russia, as well as to acquire the necessary instruments and reagents without special administrative permission. A year later, following the results of the meeting of the department, on February 9, 1894, he was elected the clerk of the department. In 1897, M.N. Chernyshevsky joined the Russian Photographic Society in St. Petersburg and for twenty years was an active participant in its meetings, where he made presentations on the development of photography in Russia and repeatedly exhibited his own work.

M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote down his impressions of his travels in Central Asia in his travel diary. This diary is still in the St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Here is how M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote in 1899 in his diary "Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia" about the main tasks of the expedition, who visited Central Asia on the problem of building a railway: "In 1899, the government raised the question of the need to connect our Central Asian possessions of a continuous



rail track with the railways of central Russia. Two routes were planned: one was supposed to go from Orenburg to Tashkent, and the other - from the Alexandrov Gai station to the Chardzhui station of the Transcaspian railway. For a more thorough clarification of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of both directions, a special interdepartmental Commission was established from the representatives of the Ministry of Communications, Military and Finance. These persons had to drive along the marked lines themselves and collect all the necessary data on the ground. I was appointed as a representative from the Ministry of Finance and, together with a party of engineers who carried out railway surveys, travel all the way from Aleksandrov Gay to Chardzhui" [2.1].

The expedition organized in 1899 led by L.A.Shtukenberg, in addition to M.N. Chernyshevsky, included: military engineer V.K.Felt, engineers S.V. Trubetskoy, I.V.Palmgren, topographer A.V.Zun, mining engineer A.N.Ryabinin and 7 technicians, a doctor, a paramedic, a translator and 100 hired workers.

A member of this expedition, mining engineer A.N. Here is how he wrote about this in his article "On the Caspian steppes and Ustyurt - from the Ural River to the mouth of the Amu Darya" (travel observations of 1899) published in 1905 in the "Mining Journal": "The issue of water supply was especially important for the road. almost waterless summer time of the part of the steppe from the springs of Ushkan to Cape Myn-sualmas ", for almost 80 versts, the general question of the possibility of obtaining artesian water in Ustyurt - this rocky desert, which, however, is the most convenient of all other paths for the ancient nomadic peoples in their invasions of southeastern Europe" [3.12].

On September 10, 1899, members of the expedition consisting of 100 workers, 130 camels, 27 carts, 33 horses set off from Uralsk on their long journey.

1700 verst distance from Aleksandrov Gai to Chardzhou, members of the expedition passed through the steppes of Kazakhstan, the Ustyurt plateau, the territories of Karakalpakstan, the Khiva and Bukhara khanates.

Here is how M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote in 1899 in his diary "Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia" his impressions of traveling in Central Asia: "Indeed, a journey through the steppe can be compared with a journey by sea - also an immense space without shelter. In St. Petersburg, sitting in an office, one cannot even imagine all the delights of such a journey, which even seemed to be just some kind of pleasant walk, the only unpleasant side of which was its duration. But, it turned out to be far from the case. Now you just pray to God that you get there alive. You have to be a man of iron health and especially adapted to work outdoors at any time of the day or night, in storms, rain, snow, frost, etc. [2.56].

Autumn that year was unusually difficult. The cold came early, then it snowed, then it rained. And Chernyshevsky sometimes made his diary entries with his hand stiff from frost. M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote about this in his diary "Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia": "... I myself lie wrapped up on a bed in a tent and write little by little, otherwise my hand without a glove is cold, I will pee, pee, and again put on a glove" [2.109].

The way from Aleksandrov Gay to Chardzhuy through Ust-Urt was passed by them in 2 months. The slowness of the journey, made on camels at a speed of 3 versts per hour, is explained both by the fact that almost half of the way, before climbing to Ust-Urt, they had to go along with a party of technicians who made the leveling, and by extremely unfavorable weather and



the bad state of the road, especially from Kungrad to Chardzhui. The autumn of 1899 was especially unfavorable in terms of weather and travelers had to experience all sorts of hardships, remaining around the clock without shelter during rain, snow, storms, frosts and terrible without shelter during rain, snow, storms, frosts and terrible winds.

Here is how M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote in 1899 in his diary "Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia" about the state of the road in Central Asia: "What a road! All the time in such a terrible tension that there is hardly enough strength. The heartbeat is terrible, the head hurts. God forbid, only to endure, there is not enough strength. Every day or night passed is worth a whole year of life" [2.115].

He went where Russian explorers had rarely been before him. His travel diary contains interesting notes on the ethnography of the local peoples of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, descriptions of many ancient monuments, information on the economy of the region.

In the diary of M.N. Chernyshevsky there is a mention of the area Churuk, which was located on the height of Ustyurt: "On October 24 at 11 o'clock we stopped for breakfast at the wells of Churuk in a wagon with some Kyrgyz. Good kubitka. Many curious Kirghiz gathered. The owner played an instrument like a guitar, the hostess fed the child only in scrofula. A big sensation was made by our treating them with alberts and chocolate. To take the owner - the foreman, collects taxes - 7 rubles 45 k. From each wagon and take them to Kungrad. Yesterday in this aul, where we stopped, there were supposed to be races for prizes for 40 versts. Today they have a holiday. Here is an aul of several wagons, more than 100 camels, a thousand sheep." [2.80]

Further, the members of the expedition led by L.A. Shtukenberg stopped at the Beleuli fortress on the Ustyurt hill. About this in his diary, M.N. Chernyshevsky writes the following: "Beleuli is a ruined fortress from the time of Tamerlane, the only stone building throughout Ust-Urta. Only the gate has been preserved, which of course I removed" [2.81].

On November 2, 1899, the members of the expedition reached Kungrad, where they stayed in the apartment of a Cossack officer. In the diary of M.N. Chernyshevsky about the city of Kungrad, he writes: "The city is very original (rather not a city, but just a large village, village), a large bazaar, some covered streets, original shops. There is only one Russian shop (Schapova) and there is only one Russian resident - the clerk in this shop, not counting the Cossack hundreds and four officers. Goods to be transported either from Chardzhuy or Orenburg, through the Pamir, fruit - 30-50 kopecks. Esaul Sokolov. There are remains of a fortress wall in the city" [2.90].

On November 5, 1899, they reached Khodjeyli and stopped at the house of the local bek. The following is written about this in the diary: "Here, in front of the Bekov (Khojeyli) house, there is a large aryk, planted with dense poplars, it is very beautiful. Bek's house is also beautifully surrounded by a high clay wall, like a fortress with a gate in the middle. There were a lot of people and horses inside, some khan's people arrived which we appear to have survived from the rooms. Their horses are all in a hat made of felt, felt and even carpets. A large courtyard, in the middle of which there is a large round depression lined with six large spreading trees, around several wagons interspersed with carts and our tarantasses and horses. On both sides of the courtyard there are two primitive building systems, in one of which we also settled down for the night, in a huge room with five beds and windows. Windows also belong to the sights, since most houses





are without windows. They ate wonderful Khiva melons” [2.95].

The members of this expedition were received in Khiva by Seid Mohammed Rakhimkhan. About this meeting

Chernyshevsky in his diary “Through Ust-Urt to Central Asia” wrote: “Khan received us in his palace on the inner terrace. With the help of a Russian translator, we talked with the khan for about 10 minutes about the proposed road, and the khan was very sympathetic to the connection of Central Asia by a continuous rail track with European Russia.

Technical studies of the track were carried out simultaneously from two sides - from Aleksandrov-Gai to Kungrad and from Chardzhuy to Kungrad. The results of the study were previously reported to a special commission in Tashkent along with the results of studies of the Orenburg-Tashkent railway line and then presented to St. Petersburg for final consideration in higher instances to choose one direction or another, which should connect Central Asia with a continuous rail track with European Russia [4].

But by this time, out of the two presented projects of the railway connecting Central Asia with Russia, the direction Orenburg-Tashkent had already been chosen. On this occasion, M.N. Chernyshevsky wrote in his diary: “In Orenburg, they are also sure that the issue of the railway not to Alexandrov-Gai - Chardzhui, but to Orenburg-Tashkent has already been resolved, so that even sleepers are being prepared and that the construction of the road along given to some Danish company at the request of Empress Maria Feodorovna” [2.144].

Mikhail Chernyshevsky captured his research in Kazakhstan and Central Asia not only with a pen. Excellent with a camera, a member of the Russian

Photographic Society in St. Petersburg, he took many pictures on the way. The author of travel notes, M.N. Chernyshevsky, was a great lover of photography. By the time of his travels in Central Asia, he had seven years of passion for photography under his belt.

For 20 years he has always been a member of the Russian Photographic Society in St. Petersburg.

Mikhail Nikolaevich was passionate about the photographic process, and wherever he went, he took photographic equipment with him and could shoot even on the road.

Mikhail Nikolayevich's interest in photography ultimately contributed to the formation of a collection of more than 500 photographs. It should be noted that photographs of M.N. Chernyshevsky are kept not only in the museum, but also in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences (formerly the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences), in the private collection of V.V. Kolpakov, the great-grandson of A.N. Pypin. In general, the photographs of M.N. Chernyshevsky testify to the atmosphere of the late 19th - early 20th centuries.

As a specialist not only in the railway business, but also in photographic skill, M.N. Chernyshevsky was invited to participate in a historical expedition to Central Asia in connection with the laying of a new branch of the railway.

It should be noted that directly during the trip, which took place in a particularly harsh season, Mikhail Nikolayevich developed and printed films. M.N. Chernyshevsky's memories of this difficult expedition, directly related to his photographic activity, remained. So, in his diary, he wrote: “The sun is not visible for the second day, it's annoying, you can't shoot today's crossing and the river itself with reeds 42 arshins high.”



The author took many photographs throughout the route.

It is known that an album of photographs in the amount of 52 items is in the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, as well as a diary. Half of the pictures recorded nature and sights on the territory of Karakalpakstan and the Khorezm region. The rest of the photos refer to Western Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Until that time, his name was mainly associated exclusively with the popularization of his father's legacy. But Mikhail Nikolayevich went down in history as a remarkable photographer who left behind a large

meaningful collection of photographs that needs further more detailed study.

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