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## A REVIEW OF AND REFLECTION ON THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN HISTORY IN CHINA (1878–2015)<sup>1</sup>

Born at the same time as the nation state and shaped by the world situation, the discipline of Russian history in China has, from its early days taken on three missions: scholarly interest, national responsibility, and academic duties. If we take *A Brief Russian History*, edited and translated by Lujiang Qijiren in 1878, as its starting point, this discipline has already had a history of 140 years in China. If we date this history back to *Russian History*, written by Lou Zhuangxing and published by Zhonghua Book Company in 1933, it is 85 years old. This 100-year period was a splendid era, when the discipline of Russian history forged ahead. While cherishing the arduous course of the discipline of Russian History<sup>2</sup>, it is indeed necessary to review and reflect on this century-old academic field and the research it has produced.

*Keywords: Discipline of Russian history, Chinese Russian Studies, first generation, second generation, third generation, Sino-Russian relations.*

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\* Professor Jianhua Zhang follows the traditional way of using Chinese names in his essay (i.e., the surname first, the given name second). The References reflect the English use. (Editor's note.)

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2 In Chinese academia the division of the subject into Russian History (ending in March 1917) and the History of Soviet Union (March 1917-December 1991) is common. These periods are conventionally called Russian History both in European-American academia and in contemporary Russia (История России). For reasons of convenience, Russian History in the paper includes the History of the Soviet Union, but whenever necessary, the two periods will be separated.

## THE EARLY ACCUMULATION OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OF RUSSIAN HISTORY AND ITS TARGET ORIENTATION

### Before the 20th Century

Except for the era of the Golden Horde between the 13th and 15th centuries when China and Russia enjoyed a close relationship, during the centuries that came after, the two countries were far apart, almost isolated, and knew little about each other. The governments of the Ming and Qing Dynasties regarded the Russians for a long time as the descendants of the Golden Horde, calling the Russian tsar “Kipchak Khan” and “Golden Khan”. After signing the Qiaketu Treaty in 1727, however, the Qing government began to call him “Russian monarch”.

When, in the 1740s, Russia pushed its eastern border to the west coast of the Pacific, China and Russia came into contact and conflict with each other in the region of the Ergun River, the Stanovoy Range and the Heilongjiang River. Russia became the main threat to northern China, and the Cossacks became the main enemy that Qing troops had to face. Consequently, the Chinese government and society were increasingly eager to know more about Russia, her national character and history. As a result, some writings about Russia arose in the form of travel notes, diaries, and notes, whose authors were mostly Qing officials, travelers, or businessmen and professionals. Therefore, the information they provided was basically public knowledge, including official politics, geography (mountains and rivers), and strange customs. It would be more accurate to describe these as scattered records rather than research achievements.

In 1688 (the 27th year of Emperor Kangxi), the Qing government sent the Suo’etu delegation to Russia, and the accompanying member Zhang Penghe compiled the *Record of the Delegation Tour to Russia*, also known as the *Diary in Mobei* or the *Diary of Delegation to Russia*, while Qian Liangze authored the *Summary of Exit from the Frontiers*, both of which were the earliest accounts about Russia in Chinese literature. In addition to that, Yu Zhengxie (1775–1840) wrote books including *An Examination of Russian Zuoling*, *Russian Affairs*, *A Long Manuscript and Postscript of Russian History*, *Luocha*, etc. The *Exotic Records* (1723) by Tu Lichen, *A Brief History of Longsha* by Fang Shiji (around 1716), and *A Brief History of Suifu* by Song Jun (1752–1835) are also related to Russia.

After the Opium War, the geographer He Qiutao (1824-1862) wrote a six-volume book entitled *Compilation of the Northern Frontier*. On this basis he accomplished a monumental 80 volume- collection with detailed picture illustrations, which was given the name *Suofangbeicheng* by Emperor Xianfeng. This is the first monograph in modern China to talk about the relationship between China and Russia. He Qiutao also revised *Russian Affairs* by Yu Zhengxie. The famous contemporary historian, Bai Shouyi praised He Qiutao, along with Zhang Mu, Lin Zexu and Wei Yuan for opening up a new research atmosphere and a new research field, as well as reflecting the pulse of the times in cultural studies, the impact of which was rather considerable.<sup>3</sup> In 1878, an author named Lujiang Qijinren, took excerpts from various books written by Russians, translated them and compiled them into *A Brief Russian History*. He highlighted his aim in doing this in his editorial note, i.e., to awaken the Chinese people and make them appreciate the importance of foreign affairs, calling attention to the fact that “the eastern boundary of Russia is north-western China.” He added, “Without a vigilant defense, it will be difficult to deal with the events that may happen in the future, once something is open to them.”<sup>4</sup>

Along with the western craze in the second half of the 19th century, Lin Zexu presided over the translation of *A Russian Primary Chronicle* which was included in *Records and Maps of the World* by Wei Yuan. Liang Qichao wrote a preface for a book called *War Records in Russia* (1897), translated by Tang Rui. In 1902, the *History of the Cossacks' Oriental Invasion* was translated from its Japanese version, as was the *History of Russian Encroachment in Asia*, the first part of which was written by Sata Hiroshi and the second by the British in Shanghai. In 1903, a two-volume *Russian History* written by Yamamoto Rikio was translated and published in Shanghai. In its foreword, the translators stated, “Today, those who know current affairs must say that the Russian is a tiger and a wolf”, “It’s better to draw back and bow than to hide from tigers”, “...with the coming of the Siberian railway, the powers moved southward, and China is the first to be assaulted. If you are ignorant of the situation of the country and the people, defense is in vain”<sup>5</sup>.

3 BAI SHOUYI (ed.), *Outline of General History of China* (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1980), 402.

4 LUJIANG QIJIREN (trans.), *A Brief Russian History* (Hong Kong: China Printing Bureau, 1878), 85–86.

5 YAMAMOTO RIKIO, MAI DINGHUA (trans.), *Russian History* (Shanghai: Guangzhi Book Company 1903), 1–3, 4.

The above-mentioned travel notes, writings and translations mainly focus on the issues of frontier politics and the security questions of foreign affairs with a strong administrative aspect and are characterized by their selectivity. Their content basically covers the Sino- Russian border, and most of the authors had personal experience regarding outer Mongolia or the Siberia region. No one was truly exploring European Russia, the political, economic, and cultural centers of the Russian Empire, much less focusing on the two major capitals, Moscow and St Petersburg, therefore there is a lack of an in-depth introduction to and reflection on Russian culture and society.

Bin Chun (1804–1871) a man with real experience in the European-Russian region, left a more detailed record and he is known as the first person from China to visit western countries. In 1866, he accompanied Chief Customs Officer Hurd for an almost four-month visit to Europe. Regarding the Russian capital, St Petersburg, he wrote: “...because of the various people, the broad streets, the 50-mile circumference, the high pavilions, the brilliant palace, and the population of 536,000, it could be called the crown of the capitals of all countries...”<sup>6</sup> Russia described by Bin Chun is the first official record about the Russian “national image” by a Chinese scholar.

### **The First Part of the 20th Century**

During the 20th century, with the revolutionary wave between China and Russia surging, progressive Chinese and all sectors of society turned their eyes to the Russian Empire, an empire which was no longer unfamiliar to them. After the publication of *A Biography of Three Heroes of the Russian Nihilist Party* and *A Biography of the Slayer of Russian Emperor Alexander* in Shanghai in 1903, a number of articles praising Russian radical revolutionaries such as Sophia Belovskaya were published one after the other. The two revolutionary political parties in China, the Nationalist Party and the Communist Party suggested a range of ideas as to how China could respond to events in Russia: Russia could be China’s teacher, or be China’s friend, China could become Russia’s ally, could join Russia and the Communists, the Russian Revolution of 1917 could be considered as the path of a future China, and the Soviet system could be seen as a model or reference for China’s future state and political system.

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6 BIN CHUN, *Chengcha Notes* (Changsha: Yuelu Press, 1985), 40–41.

From 1928 to 1930, the *A History of the Russian Revolution* by Yamauti Housuke and *A Comprehensive History of Russia* by Pokrovsky were translated and published in Shanghai.

In 1933, *A Modern Russian History* by G. Vernadsky was published in the monthly journal *Mainland* in Shanghai. The translator, Tao Yue, emphasized in the preface that this book aimed neither to obliterate the advantages of the Soviet system nor to hide its shortcomings.<sup>7</sup> In 1937, the *Commercial Press* published Vernadsky's *A Russian History* which was included in the *Universal Library* edited by Wang Yunwu, and Cai Yuanpei was invited to preface it, stating: "...if we want to know present-day Russia, it is extremely necessary to read the history of Russia."<sup>8</sup>

However, nobody at the universities and research institutions during the Republic of China studied Russian history or gave a course on it in the early days. In 1932, the History Department of Tsinghua University was the first to set up a course on Russian modern history, and John Jan Gapanovitch was the lecturer. Mr. He Zhaowu, a student of Tsinghua University at that time, mentioned Rostovzeff, a person of authority in the history of the ancient world, as the teacher of Mr. John Jan Gapanovitch and wrote of him: "After the October Revolution, he went to the United States... When the first European war broke out, John Jan Gapanovitch was enlisted as a soldier. After the October Revolution, he went to teach at Vladivostok University in the Far East... ...Later he came to China and taught Western History and Russian History in Tsinghua university around 1930. He also lectured on European overseas colonization and war history. Mr. John Jan Gapanovitch couldn't speak Chinese, so taught all the lessons in English".<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it can be assumed that occasionally he talked about Russian history, and his majors were Western history and historiography.

Universities in the Republic of China first appointed someone to teach Russian history in 1936, launching a course on Russian history at the History Department of Peking University; the lecturer was Lu Mingde. In August 1937, the National Central University moved westward to Sichuan. After finishing his studies at London University, Shen Gangbo returned to China and taught history courses, among them Russian history.

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7 GEORGE VERNADSKY (trans. TAO YUE), *Modern Russian History* (Shanghai: Liming Book Company 1933), 1–2.

8 GEORGE VERNADSKY (trans. ZHOU XIN), *Russian History* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1937), 1.

9 HE ZHAOWU, *School Records* (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2006), 121.

Edited collections of articles on Russian history by scholars in the Republic of China began with the publication of *Russian History* by Zhonghua Book Company in 1932, the editor being the famous international expert, Lou Zhuangxing. In response to the controversy in Chinese society over whether to hate the Soviet Union or join it, Lou Zhuangxing proposed that an assessment could be made only through a careful examination of the process of the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> Professor Gu Guyi at Zhejiang University edited and published *An Outline of Russian History* in 1935. He Hanwen, who had studied at Sun Yat-Sen University in Moscow, published a two-volume *Russian History* with Commercial Press in 1939, addressing young Chinese students as its readership. In 1942, Yang Youjiong edited and published *The History of the Founding of the Soviet Union*. The author emphasized in his preface that, “China today presents a new opportunity to establish the nation, ... the author’s intention, in writing this book, was to provide a brief description of the characteristics of the Soviet revolution and the building of this nation as a reference for China...”<sup>11</sup>

In September 1945, *The Outline of History of the Soviet Union* written by the Soviet historian Shesdakov was translated and published by Zhang Zhongshi at the headquarters of the Chinese Communist Party, and was even renamed as *The Speeches of Soviet Union History*. This book, published in the Liberated Areas, was the most precious and important publication of Soviet history besides *The History of the (Bolshevik) Communist Party: A Concise Course* (то есть Краткий курс истории ВКП (Большевик)).

During this period, the purpose of translations about Russian history was obvious. Progressives were trying to steal the Soviet-Russian revolutionary fire, hoping, for the country and the nation, to transplant the Russian revolution to China, but not Russian history itself. The expression “revolutionary fire” refers to public awareness of Russian history and Soviet-Russian politics at a mass level, when scholars of Russian history had not yet appeared. Moreover, quite a large part of the information in these works addressed to the Chinese people came not from original sources, i.e., not directly from Russia, but through translations from Japanese, English, or French works. The information, therefore, was often corrupted.

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10 LOU ZHUANGXING, *The Russian History* (Shanghai: Zhonghua Book Company, 1935), 1.

11 YANG YOUJIONG, *History of the Founding of the Soviet Union* (Nanjing: Zhengzhong Book Bureau, 1942), 1.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE OF RUSSIAN HISTORY AFTER THE FOUNDING OF NEW CHINA.

### **First-Generation Scholars and the Study of Russian History before the 1980s**

From August 1951 to August 1964, China sent a total of 8,357 people to study in the Soviet Union.<sup>12</sup> During their study abroad, they received systematic and rigorous professional training in the study of history. After returning to China, they were assigned to workplaces at universities and research institutes and were the first generation of professionals in the field of Russian history in New China.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education organized course seminars on Russian history at China Renmin University in Beijing and Northeast Normal University in Changchun, and invited history experts from the Soviet Union to give lectures and guide thesis writing. A group of young students received rigorous professional training and joined the ranks of the first-generation professionals in Russian history in New China after the end of their studies.

During this period, the main purpose of domestic historians of Russia was to translate the works of Soviet scholars, also to compile and publish monographs on general and economic history.<sup>13</sup> These translations played an important, enlightening role for the first and second generations of scholars of Russian history.

In the mid-1960s, due to changes in Sino-Soviet relations and the international situation, the Central Committee of the Chinese Party of Communists proposed putting more emphasis on the research of world history and international issues. Consequently, research institutions were established to focus on the study of the history of the Soviet Union and the

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12 GEORGE VERNADSKY (trans. ZHOU XIN), *Russian History*, 1.

13 Zhang Rongchu and other scholars translated the three-volume *General History of the Soviet Union* written by A. M. Pankratova (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1955). The Compilation Office of Renmin University of China organized and translated the two-volume *History of the National Economy of the Soviet Union*, written by P. I. Lyashchenko (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1954, 1959). Qin Wenyun and other scholars translated *Notes on the History of the National Economy of the Soviet Union*, written by F. Ya. Polyansky (Beijing: Sanlian Book Store, 1964). Shuming translated *The Abolition of Russian Serfdom* by P. A. Zayonchkovsky (Beijing: Sanlian Book Store, 1957). Guang Qidong and other scholars translated *A History of Soviet History* by M. V. Nechkina (Beijing: Sanlian Book Store, 1957, 1959)

history of Sino-Soviet relations. In 1964, the Institute of World History was established at the Chinese Academy of Science, so too was the Research Office of Socialist History (later renamed as the Research Office of the History of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe). In 1977, the Institute of World History was renamed as the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In 1965, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the International Department of the Central Committee of the C.P.C jointly established the Institute of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe led by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1981. Professional institutions for the study of the Soviet Union were established one after the other by, among others, The Academy of Sciences in the north-east and north-west provinces, in autonomous regions and in Shanghai, some universities in Beijing, the north-east region, Shanghai, the Party School of the Central Committee of the C.P.C, the Party School of Heilongjiang Provincial Committee of the C.P.C, the Party School of Jilin Provincial Committee of the C.P.C, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, the Ministry of Culture and the International Department, and the Central Committee of the C.P.C.. With changes in Sino-Soviet relations, the research institutions above mainly served national interests and diplomatic strategies. By the end of the 1970s, typical works in the study of the Soviet Union and Russian History included the four-volume *Russian Invasion into China*, published by People's Publishing House in 1976-1978, hosted by the Institute of Modern History, the two-volume *History of Tsarist Russia's Aggression and Expansion*, published by People's Publishing House in 1979 and 1980 both edited by the History Department of Peking University, together with other works about the Russian invasion into China.<sup>14</sup> Besides these, works translated from Russian and English were published as reference books

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<sup>14</sup> Workers, peasants and soldiers majoring in world history at the History Department of Peking University collectively compiled *A Brief History of Tsarist Russian Aggression and Expansion* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1976). LI JITANG, *Tools for Tsarist Russia's Aggression against China in the Middle East Railway* (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1979). The Amateur Group of the Workers, Peasants and Soldiers in Heihei Region of Heilongjiang Province and the History and Geography Group of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences compiled *The History of Blood and Fire: Atrocities of Tsarist Russia Occupying 64 Counties in Jiangdong* (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1977). SHI DAQING, *Evidence of Tsarist Russia's Occupation Over More than One Million Square Kilometers of North-East China* (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1977). The book, *Tsarist Russia and the North-East*, although its writing began in the 1970s, was edited by Tong Dong in 1985.

for internal distribution.<sup>15</sup> In November 1978, China established the Sino-Russian History Society.

The achievements listed above constituted the first climax of the first generation of scholars of Russian History after 1949. However, the study of Russian History in this period was clearly characterized by the assumption that the role of academia was to provide a service for national politics. The fact that academic research was organized around team work also to some extent shaped the focus of the fields selected for study. Personally written academic books and individual special styles were lacking.

### **The Real Establishment of the First Generation of Scholars and the Discipline of Russian History in the 1980s**

Reform, opening up, and the Science Spring created a new potential for academic growth for the first generation of Russian history talents in New China. They shouldered the academic mission and undertook the historical mission and responsibility of establishing the discipline of Russian history (Soviet history), translating literature, writing professional textbooks, training professionals, creating professional publications, and popularizing knowledge on Russian history.

Russian history as an independent discipline, in the sense of a country's history, began in China in the early 1980s. The initiation of many important projects, the initial construction of the research teams, translations, and the organization of it were officially planned and coordinated during this period.

Curriculum construction was one of the symbols of the establishment of the discipline. During this period, some universities in Beijing, in the north-east and the north-west, and in Shanghai began to offer courses such as Russian history, the history of the Soviet Union, and the history of Sino-Russian relations. The History Department of Beijing University and the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences began to recruit postgraduate students for the study of the History of Russia and the Soviet Union.

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<sup>15</sup> GEORGE LENSEN, (trans. YANG SHIHAO), *Russia's Expansion to the East* (Beijing: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1978); S. V. BAKHRUSIN, (trans. HAO JIANHENG, GAO WENFENG), *Cossacks on Heilongjiang* (Beijing: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1975). V. A. ARSENYEV, (trans. Heilongjiang University), *In the Forest of Ussuri* (Beijing: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1978). V. A. ROMANOV, (trans. TAO WENZHAO), *Russia in Manchuria* (Beijing: Shangwuyinshuguan, 1980).

In September 1985, China's Soviet Union and Eastern European History Research Association was established in Shanxi Normal University, registered as a first-level nationwide society in the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and the first chairman was Chen Zhizhen (1985–2000).<sup>16</sup> In September of the same year, SDX Joint Publishing Company published the *Paper Collection of Modern Soviet History* edited by the Editorial Department of World History, the first academic paper collection of Russian history written by Chinese scholars. These two events made 1985 a symbolic year, marking the establishment of the discipline of Russian history and professional research groups in this field in China.

Under the efforts of the first-generation scholars, there were a large number of landmark achievements in the 1980s and 1990s, and the second climax of Russian history research since 1949 was reached. It is worth emphasizing that, for the first time, the number of works of research works exceeded that of works of translation. These works of research included the two-volume *Compendium of Russian General History* by Sun Chengmu, Liu Zuxi, and Li Jian (People's Publishing House, 1986), and *An Outline of the History of the Soviet Union (1917–1936), (1953–1964), (1917–1936), (1953–1964)* (People's Publishing House, 1991, 1996) edited by Chen Zhiye, publications that still have extensive influence today. During this period, a number of monographs on specialized subjects, such as histories of the Russian political system, Russian culture and the Russian military, as well as regional histories (e.g., Siberia), biographies of important figures, and historical dictionaries were published.<sup>17</sup> In addition to these, a number of

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16 Subsequent directors were Wu Enyuan (2000–2005), Yu Pei (2005–2010), Yao Hai (2010–2018), Zhang Shengfa (2018–).

17 According to incomplete statistics, the works of this period included: *The Soviet Union Under Brezhnev (1964–1982)* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1998); MA SHANLONG, *A History of the Evolution of the Soviet Union's Cultural System* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1996); SUN CHENGMU, *Russian Culture over a Thousand Years* (Beijing: East Publishing House, 1995); WU CHUNQIU, *A Brief History of the Russian Military* (Beijing: Knowledge Press, 1983); XU JINGXUE, *A History of Siberia* (Harbin: Heilongjiang Education Press, 1991); CHENG ZHIYE, *A Biography of Kropotkin* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1986); LI XIANRONG, *A Biography of Bakunin* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1983); LIU KEMING, JIN HUI (eds.), *The 70-Year Soviet Political and Economic System* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1991); LIU ZHI, *Research on the Soviet Socialist Road* (Xi'an: Shanxi Normal University Press, 1989); ZHANG HONGRU, *Meditations on Soviet Union History* (Beijing: Beijing Economic College Press, 1988); WEN YI, YE SHUZONG, *A Biography of Bukharin* (Changchun: Jilin Education Press, 1988); TAO HUIFEN, *Europeanization: The Reforms of Peter the Great in Russia* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1996); *A Dictionary of Soviet Union History* (Changchun: Jilin Literature and History Press, 1991), and so on.

general-purpose books on famous Russian historical figures and events were published, such as *Annals of Russian History* in the Foreign History series published by Commercial Press. According to incomplete statistics, from 1978 to 1999 domestic scholars published more than 380 papers on Russian history. Until the beginning of the 21st century, although the first generation of historians of Russia were over eighty years old, they still worked hard and produced important works.<sup>18</sup>

### The Debut of the Second-Generation Scholars

Since 2000, research on Russian history in China has entered an important phase of development, and a third climax of domestic Russian history research has been reached. The reasons are as follows.

Firstly, a second generation of researchers in the study of Russian history has been formed and has gradually matured, thereby taking on the baton from the first generation of historians. Most of them were trained by the first-generation scholars and received systematic academic training during their years of study for M.A. and Ph. D. degrees. Some of them joined the second generation after they returned from their training in the Soviet Union or Russia.

Secondly, with the continuous deepening of reforms, further optimization of the academic environment enhanced the research enthusiasm of the relevant institutions and scholars. For example, in 2000 the Center for the Study of Russia at East China Normal University was approved by the Ministry of Education as a key base for research into the humanities and social sciences for Chinese universities. The Center for the Study of Russia in Beijing Normal University and the center at Shanghai International Studies University were approved by the Ministry of Education as further key bases for the study of the field in 2011. In 2015, Renmin University of

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<sup>18</sup> According to incomplete statistics, the works during this period included: CHEN ZHIHUA, *Research on Historical Materialism and Russian History* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2014); WANG XIN, *Russia and Europe: A Perspective of the History of International Relations* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2014); MA SHANLONG, LIU JIANGUO, *Russian Populism and Its Impact Across the World* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2013); LU NANQUAN, HUANG ZONGLIANG, ZHENG YIFAN, MA SHANLONG, ZUO FENGRONG, *The Truth of the Soviet Union: Thoughts on 101 Important Issues* (Beijing: Xinhua Press, 2010); LIU ZUXI, *Reform and Revolution: A Study of Russian Modernization* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2001); XU TIANXIN, *Equality, the Ideal of a Powerful Country and the Practice of the Soviet Union* (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2005); and YE SHUZONG, *Soviet Socialist Practice* (Hefei: Anhui University Press, 2005), and so on.

China and the St. Petersburg University of Russia jointly established the Renmin University of China–St. Petersburg State University of Russia Center of the Study for Russia. Some universities and social science institutes also adjusted or established new institutions for the study of Russian history and the promotion of Russian studies.

Thirdly, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a large number of original archives were opened and digitalized, providing richer and more valuable original archival literature for the study of Russian history. The 34-volume *Selected Volumes of the Soviet Union Historical Archives*, edited by Shen Zhihua were published at that time (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that second-generation historians' knowledge of foreign languages was generally improved, leading to the convenience of being able to use original primary sources. Some scholars went frequently to Russia for exchanges and to consult the literature, and participated at international academic conferences on Russian history, and other related academic conferences. They also communicated directly with colleagues in Russian or English, which rapidly expanded the influence of Chinese study of Russian history in the international academic community.

The second generation of researchers published a large number of general and topical Russian history books.<sup>19</sup> They developed a specialization in their

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19 According to incomplete statistics, general works include: YU PEI, DAI GUIJU AND LI RUI, *Slavic Civilization* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2001); YAO HAI, *A History of Russian Culture* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang People's Publishing House, 1992); YAN GUODONG, *A History of Russian Sinology* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2007); CAO WEI'AN, *A New Theory of Russian History* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2002); LIU XIANZONG, *The Modern Russian State Duma: Establishment and Practice* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2007); ZHAO SHIGUO, *The Choice of History and the History of Choice: A Study of Late Modern Russian Revolution and Reform* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2006); FENG SHAOLEI, *Russia in the 20th Century* (Beijing: Sanlian Book Store, 2007); WU ENYUAN, *A History of the Soviet Union* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2007); XING GUANGCHENG, *Seventy Years of Soviet Union High-level Decisions* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1998); LI YONGQUAN, *A Russian History of Political Parties: The Formation and Collapse of the Power Pyramid* (Beijing: Social Sciences academic press, 2017); XU XIANGMEI, *From Chaos to Peace: The Russian Political Process (1990-2005)* (Beijing: Central Document Press, 2006); ZUO FENGRONG, *Russia: the Road to New Modernization* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2014), and so on. Thematic works included: ZHANG SHENGFA, *Stalin and the Cold War* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004); GUO CHUNSHENG, *Brezhnev's Eighteen Years* (Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009), HUANG LIFU, *Soviet Social Strata and Soviet Dramatic Changes* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2006); ZHANG JIANHUA, *Research on the Transformation of Soviet Intellectuals (1917-1936)* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2012); JIN YAN, *Reversing the Red Wheel: A Retrospective of the Russian Intellectuals* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2011); ZHENG YU, *From Confrontation to Dialogue: Khrushchev's Soviet-American Relations*

fields and diversified research interests. They made great achievements in the field of Russian (Soviet) ideological, cultural and economic history. In addition to their individual works, the second-generation researchers collaborated with the first generation and the growing number of third-generation historians to undertake major national research projects, achieving things that their predecessors were unable to. For example, a nine-volume history of the Soviet Union was published,<sup>20</sup> and a six-volume *General History of Russia* is being written.<sup>21</sup> *Society in the New Economic Policy Period of Soviet Society* (Social Science Literature Publishing House, 2012) edited by Huang Lifu, won the Academic Innovation Award of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Zhang Guangxiang and his Russian history research team at Jilin University organized the translation of *Russian Social History* (Shandong University Press, 2006), the great masterpiece written by Russian contemporary historian Mironov. In recent years, Zhang also arranged for the translation and publication of famous contemporary Russian historiographies in cooperation with Moscow University and the Social Sciences Literature Publishing House. He said, “One reason for arranging the translation of this

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(Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 1998); WANG XIAOJU, *Research on the Development of Immigrants in Eastern Russia* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2003); LEI LIPING, FU SHUZHENG, *The Russian Orthodox Church and the State (1917–1945)* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2001); DAI GUIJU, *Russian Orthodox Church Reform (1861–1917)* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002); ZHANG GUANGXIANG, *Research on Russian Urbanization in the 18th and 19th Century* (Changchun: People’s Publishing House, 2006); BAI XIAOHONG, *Russian Slavism* (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006); LUO AILIN, *Research on Russian Feudal Late Serfdom* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2007); CHEN KAIKE, *Baladi’s Sinology* (Beijing: Xueyuan Press, 2007); LI XING, *Asia-Europe Center: Russia-US-European Games and Chinese Strategy* (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 2013); SHEN ZHIHUA, *Soviet Experts in China (1948–1960) (3rd edition)* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2015); LI SUI’AN, *The Image of Russia in China* (Harbin: Heilongjiang Education Press, 2012); and GE XINSHENG, *A Biography of Khrushchev* (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1997).

20 YAO HAI, *Russian Revolution* (vol. 1) (People’s Publishing House, 2013); ZHENG YIFAN, *Russia during the New Economic Policy* (vol. 3) (People’s Publishing House, 2013); XU TIANXIN, *Formation of Stalin Model* (vol. 4) (People’s Publishing House, 2013); YE SHUZONG, *Brezhnev’s Eighteen Years* (vol. 8) (People’s Publishing House, 2013) and ZUO FENGRONG, *Gorbachev’s Reform Period* (vol. 9) (People’s Publishing House, 2013).

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21 The plan is that Cao Wei’an will write vol.1 (from 10th century to the end of the 17th century), Luo Ailin vol.2 (from early 18th century to 1762), Zhang Jianhua vol.3 (1762-1855), Yao Hai vol. 4 (1855- 1917), Yu Weimin vol. 5 (1917-1991) and Feng Shaolei and Yang Cheng vol.6 (1992-2010).

set of Russian History was my sense that domestic research on Russian history was seriously lagging behind. Although we had been engaging in the study of Russian history for a long time, our work was still far from meeting the needs of domestic academic circles. The other reason was that few related writings are translated by domestic scholars, and this situation was not conducive to our understanding, absorbing and drawing on the achievements of Russian scholars.”<sup>22</sup> This set of translations has become a high-level representative translation project within academic-based Chinese-Russian academia in the 21st century.

According to incomplete statistics, domestic scholars published more than 560 papers on Russian history between 2000 and 2017. It is particularly worth emphasizing that domestic scholars have begun to publish papers in Russian or English in Russian authoritative journals such as the *Journal of Moscow University*, the *Journal of St. Petersburg University*, and *Research on Far East Issues and Russian History*, as well as in internationally renowned English-language academic journals such as *European-Slav Research* in Japan, and *Asian Politics and History* in Hong Kong.

## INSPECTION AND THINKING: A NEW WAY IN CHINESE RUSSIAN HISTORY STUDY

Since 1985, the domestic study of Russian history has made great progress, and a series of hot research topics have emerged in the field of the history of Russia and the Soviet Union.

### **The Field of the History of Russia**

#### ***The Origin of Ancient Rus***

This issue involves the origins of Russia as a “nation” and a “country”, and inevitably presents a problem over which Russian (Soviet) scholars have been great odds with European and American scholars. Research on this issue requires considerable academic knowledge of language,

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22 N. D. KONDRATIEV, (trans. ZHANG GUANGXIANG, ZHONG JIANPING), *Wars and Russian Grain Market in Revolution* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017) pp. 386. Contained in translation postscript.

culture, ethnicity, and religion, but Chinese scholars actively engage in this international academic debate. In the early 1960s, Zhang Chunnian and Chen Qineng finished the “*Norman Theory on the Origin of Ancient Russian Countries*” (History Teaching, no.6, 1962). After 1985, the representative works included *The Chronicle of the Bygone Years* (1995) translated by Wang Yue, and “*Origin of the Name of Rus and the Formation of the Ancient Ross State*” by Cao Wei’an and Qi Jia (Historical Research, no. 3, 2012), etc.

### **Modernization**

When the issue of the concept of modernization comes up in relation to Russian history, it is not only a problem of research methodology, but also of a description of historical changes in modern Russia. Therefore, it has the dual dimension of methodology and ontology in Russian historiography. Domestic academia has studied the starting point of Russian modernization, the process of Russian industrialization, reform and revolution in the context of Russian modernization and changes in Russian modernization and society, comparison of modernization in Russia and Germany, Japan, China, as well as Turkey. Representative works include *Reform and Revolution: Research on Russian Modernization* by Liu Zuxi (2001), *Rural Communities, Reform and Revolution: Village Community Tradition and the Road to Russian Modernization* by Jin Yan, Bian Wu (1996, 2013), *Research on the Russian Road to Modernization* by Zhang Jianhua (2002), *Comparative Industrialization of Russia and China: Prerequisites and Startup Models* by Zhang Guangxiang, and Wang Zihui (Journal of Jilin University, No. 6, 2011), etc.

### **Russian Intellectuals**

Intellectuals are the core driving force for modern political changes and social changes in Russia. Academia at home and abroad has placed the study of intellectuals in the context of political and revolutionary history, but in the past 30 years, domestic academia has extended its scope into the study of Russian intellectual history and cultural history. Topics such as the source of the concept of intellectuals (Интеллигенция/Intellegentisa), the groups and stratification of Russian intellectuals, Russian liberalism, radicalism and conservatism, the “Russian idea” (Русская идея), the concept of Соборность/*Sobornost*’, Slavophilism, Russian rural teachers and rural doctors etc., all have been studied by domestic scholars. The representative works are: *The Origin of the Constitutional Movement in Modern Russia*

by Yao Hai (1996); *An Introduction to the History of Russian Intellectual Thoughts* (2008) by Zhang Jianhua; *Research on Russian Intellectuals* (2009) by Li Xiaotao; and *The Messianic Consciousness of Russia* (2009) by Guo Xiaoli, and so on.

### ***Russian Social History***

Russian social history during the Russian Empire is a popular topic within the study of Russian history, resulting from the rich breadth of publications of Russian literature on social history, and the introduction of a research method by new historiography. After its introduction to Chinese academia, the famous Russian historian's Mironov's work, *Russian Social History* (translated by Zhang Guangxiang, Shandong University Press, 2006), played a particularly significant role in promoting the study of the history of Russian society. Chinese scholars address issues such as institutional changes in the Russian village community (Мир/Mir), aristocratic class, aristocratic economy and aristocratic manors, the Russian urbanization process, land use and peasant issues, the bourgeoisification of the aristocrats and the aristocratization of the bourgeois, judicial reform and changes in Russian social classes, and the functions and reforms of the Russian Local Self-Government Bureau. The representative works are: *The Destiny of Improvement: The History of Reform of Local Autonomy in Russia* (2000) by Shao Liying; *Reformation and Nobility in the 18th Century* (2013) by Zhang Zonghua; *The Transformation of Russian Marriage and the Population Reproduction Model* (Collected Papers of History Studies, No. 2, 2002) by Zhang Guangxiang; and *The Creation and Influence of the Modern Russian Legal System* by Guo Xianghong (World History, No.1, 2014).

### **The Field of the Soviet Union**

#### ***The Thoughts of Lenin***

As the leader of the October Revolution and the founder of the new regime, the figure of Lenin presents an extremely valuable research subject concerning the Soviet socialist road and the construction of the Soviet Communist Party after 1921. Study of works, speeches and transcripts from Lenin's later years, suggested that Lenin's conception of Soviet socialist development was gradually systematized after 1921. Firstly, Lenin emphasized that the Soviet Union must make full use of the role of the

market and develop the commodity economy. Secondly, he emphasized the importance of legalization and the long-term nature of the new economic policy. In addition, Lenin emphasized that the national development strategy represented a shift from a single political struggle to a new strategy enshrining the trinity of economics, culture and politics. The representative works are: *Lenin's Important Works and Theoretical Innovations in the Late Period* (2012) by Yu Min and Li Xiaoshan; *Stalin and Lenin's Reform Ideas in their Later Years* by Ma Longshan (*Eastern Europe and Central Asia Studies*, No. 4, 2001); and *Lenin's Cultural Self-Conscious Thoughts* by Chen Zhaofen (2018), and so on.

### ***Stalin Model***

The Stalin model is the core issue of the Soviet Union's history and a major theoretical issue of the international communist movement. Not only does this issue attract Russian historians, but also scholars in political science and scientific socialism. Chinese academia has studied the similarities and differences between the Stalin model, the Stalinist system, and Stalinism, the relationship between the Stalin model and the Soviet model, the Stalin model and the socialist roads of various countries, the Stalin model and the road to construction of the nation-state after the Second World War, and the Stalin model as a point of reference for European and American countries. The representative works include: *Stalin Model Research* edited by Li Zongyu and other scholars (1999); *The Stalin Mode of Modern Thinking* by Shen Chongwu (2004); *The History of the Soviet Union's Economic System Reform* by Lu Nanquan (2007); and "Formation of the Stalin Model" by Xu Tianxin (*History of the Soviet Union*, vol. 4, 2013).

### ***Soviet Social Classes and their Changes***

The society of the Soviet Union was composed of the working class, the peasant class and the intellectual class according to the Soviet Union's Constitution. In the new perspective of combining social history and political history, Chinese scholars have done in-depth research on the social classes of the Soviet Union. Dividing Soviet society into two groups, such as the management group with power resources and the labor group with specific labor, they analyzed political power and the distribution of social resources and associated conflicts, paying specific attention to six political classes (the top leadership, privileged classes, intellectuals, dissidents, national elites,

workers and peasants), analyzing these classes' economic status, living conditions and the different emotions, wishes and wills that resulted from these. Furthermore, by examining the relationship between the social and political classes of the Soviet Union and the Soviet system, they analyzed the socio-political factors leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The representative works are: *Soviet Social Classes and the Soviet Union's Drastic Changes* by Huang Lifu (2006); *Thoughts as a Mirror: Intellectuals and Soviet Political Changes* by Zhang Jianhua (2016); *Social and Political Stratum and the Soviet Union's Revolution* by Guo Chunsheng (2007); *A Study on Dissidents in Soviet Union* by Guo Yongsheng (2005); and so on.

### ***The Lessons of the Disintegration of the Soviet Union***

The disintegration of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 put forward new requirements for Chinese scholars studying the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the lessons that could be drawn from it. The collapse of the CPSU became an important topic on a national strategic level. The representative works include: *Historical Reflections on the Evolution of the Soviet Union* by Jiang Liu and Chen Zhiye (1993); *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* by Zhou Shangwen, Ye Shuzong, and Wang Side (1993); *A Study of Soviet Union Dramatic Changes* by Jiang Liu and Shan Tianlun (1995); *Historical Essays on the Soviet Union's Rise and Fall* by Lu Nanquan, Jiang Changbin, Xu Kui, Li Jingjie (2004); *A Historical Outline of the Soviet Union* by Chen Zhixuan, Wu Enyuan, Ma Longxun (2014); *Cultural Perspectives on Dramatic Changes in the Soviet Union* by Ma Longshan (2005); and so on.

Since the formation of the discipline of Russian history in China in 1985, great achievements have been made in academic research, personnel training and international exchanges, laying a solid foundation for the future development of the discipline. As a second-generation historian, the author believes that we should fully affirm these hard-won achievements. At the same time, we must also clearly understand the shortcomings of the discipline, so as to spur ourselves on and remind the researchers of them. Firstly, scholars in the study of Russian history still need to improve their international academic exchanges and actively participate in international historical activities. This way, we can let Chinese voices be heard and learn about current international academic developments.

As far as the current situation is concerned, the second- and third-generation historians' level of knowledge of foreign languages is considerably better than that of the first-generation historians. There are

still deficiencies, though. Some scholars only speak Russian but cannot speak English; some scholars can read Russian literature, but cannot speak and write Russian; some scholars are engaged in academic research, but only few scholars participate at international conferences and academic exchanges. Like other international academic conferences on several important nodes of Russian history, the annual Asian Conference on Slavic-Eurasian Studies, founded in 2009, and the International Council for Central and Eastern European Studies' conference (founded in 1974), are still rarely attended by Chinese scholars. The solution to this situation is to raise awareness of and strengthen various international academic exchanges, as well as to attract more students to the field of Russian studies.

Secondly, we should change the traditional paradigm of the study of Russian history and establish Chinese schools of Russian history.

The philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn believed that paradigms refer to the consensus of theoretical systems and research methods adhered to by a community of scholars who work in similar disciplines and pursue the same academic goal. The author was invited to participate in the Seventh Russian Language and Culture Seminar of China held in Sichuan Foreign Languages College in 2004. At the meeting, I proposed the establishment of Russian studies, receiving attention from scholars of Russian language, literature and philosophy. Russian studies in China means in fact the localization of Russian studies within China. Chinese scholars must possess a locality sense of local culture and depend on the excellent local resources of the Chinese academic tradition in order to internalize them into a self-confident mentality and effectively manipulatable skills. For example, consciously digesting and distinguishing all kinds of information that emanate from Russian study in Russia and in Western countries, and choosing the best, instead of blindly, or simply ignorantly, insisting on their own academic ideas and independent opinions. This is how Russian studies can be formed in the context of China. In this regard, there have been successful cases in domestic academia. Based on multi-national and multi-lingual archives, documents and the triangular Sino-US-Soviet relationship, the Cold War International History Research Team of East China Normal University launched Sinicization in the study of new Cold War history, gaining recognition and respect from academia at home and abroad.

Thirdly, we should establish professional journals in the field of Russian history providing thereby more and better research platforms for scholars engaged in Russian history in order to promote international academic exchange.

Professional academic journals are the foundation of academic research. The Research Office of Soviet Union History of the History Department of Shaanxi Normal University set up the first academic journal in 1982, named *Historical Problems of the Soviet Union*, and went on to publish more than 50 issues in extremely difficult conditions until the final issue in 1994. The Research Office of Soviet Union History of the History Department of Lanzhou University started a journal named *Soviet History* in 1983, and also continued to publish it under extremely difficult conditions for several years.

In recent years, the establishment of professional journals on Russian issues has achieved significant results. Academic journal *Study of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia* hosted by the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies CASS, which was founded in 1981, maintains a comprehensive, strategic, academic, theoretical and realistic style. Besides this, *Russian Study*, hosted by the Russian Research Center of East China Normal University, founded in 2000, and *Russian Journal* organized by the Russian Academy of Heilongjiang University, founded in 2011, have become important bases for publishing research achievements in Russian history. However, the lack of a true academic journal for the study of Russian history is a regret and has been a hope of domestic researchers for many years. At the same time, there is a lack of a professional Russian history journal in Russian or English. Such journals will facilitate exchanges with Russia and other countries, but at the present this is a task waiting for members of Chinese academia engaged in the research of Russian history to accomplish.

Fourthly, the present mentoring of talented students for the study of Russian history is not good enough. It is urgent, therefore, to strengthen the training and mentoring system.

Since the formation of the discipline of Russian history in 1985, domestic universities and social science institutions have established a bachelor-master-doctor level training system in the major of Russian History. These are as follows: the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; the Marxist Institute; Beijing Normal University; the Central Party School of the C.P.C; Renmin University of China; Peking University; Nankai University; Shaanxi Normal University; Jilin University; East China Normal University; Huazhong Normal University; and so on.

In the past three decades, nearly 100 people have achieved a doctorate in Russian history. The Chinese Research Association of the Soviet Union and Eastern European History is an academic center and a professional team

where older, middle-aged and young Russianists are cooperating. As the first generation of Russian researchers gradually withdrew because of old age, second-generation Russian researchers with an average age of between 50 and 65 years, and third-generation Russian researchers with an average age of between 30–50 years comprise the prosperous backbone of academic research and talent cultivation, so they have a great responsibility. However, according to the author's incomplete statistics, up to 2015, among more than 150 registered members of the Chinese Research Association of the History of Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the number of those who regularly participate at academic activities, actively engage in academic research and publish academic achievements, is just a little over 30. Therefore, if the quantity of the professional research team in Russian history means quality, there is a considerable gap compared with other research teams in China doing American history, British history, French history, Japanese history, German history, and history of international relations.

The phenomena discussed above are due to the status of the major of Russian History in China for decades and various other factors, but it is, indeed, a problem that we must face and urgently solve. From the perspectives of a national strategy relevant to departments, researchers of Russian history should recognize the seriousness and urgency of the above-mentioned phenomena, and strengthen the training and mentoring of professionals in Russian history so that the discipline is able to develop in a proper way.

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