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Спасение для нигилиста: представления Н. Н. Стрехова о А. И. Герцене

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Аннотация: Герцена всегда представляют в первую очередь как аристократа-революционера и поклонника Западной Европы. Однако Герцен достаточно быстро разочаровался в перспективах развития европейской цивилизации, и это поняли и почувствовали некоторые его проницательные современники. Литературный критик Н. Н. Стрехов написал объемную статью «Герцен», в которой доказал, что Герцен прошел путь от отчаявшегося нигилиста до приверженца русских культурных традиций. Автор рассматривает статью Стрехова, анализирует ход его размышлений, останавливается на философских и мировоззренческих особенностях в произведениях Герцена, которые выделяет критик. В статье показано, что Стрехов определяет Герцена как первого литератора, начавшего борьбу с Западом. По мнению автора статьи, это утверждение является не только типичным случаем антизападничества почвенника Стрехова, но и отправной точкой саморефлексии в русской культуре второй половины XIX в. В статье также подробно обсуждается влияние статьи Стрехова на критику и академическую науку.

Ключевые слова: Н. Н. Стрехов, А. И. Герцен, литературная критика, культурная идентичность, западничество, нигилизм.

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Research Article

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The Salvation for a Nihilist: N. N. Strakhov's Ideas About A. I. Herzen

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Abstract: Herzen is always presented primarily as a revolutionary aristocrat and admirer of Western Europe. However, Herzen quickly became disillusioned with the prospects for the development of European civilization, and this was understood and felt by some of his astute contemporaries. Literary critic N. N. Strakhov wrote a voluminous article “Herzen”, in which he proved that Herzen went from a desperate nihilist to an adherent of Russian cultural traditions. The author examines Strakhov's article, analyzes the course of his reflections, dwells on the philosophical and worldview features in the works of Herzen, which the critic highlights. The article shows that Strakhov defines Herzen as the first literary man who began the struggle against the West. According to the author of the article, this statement is not only a typical case of anti-Westernism by the nationalist Strakhov, but also the starting point of self-reflection in Russian culture in the second half of the 19th century. The article also discusses in detail the impact of Strakhov's article on criticism and academic science.

Keywords: N. N. Strakhov, A. I. Herzen, literary criticism, cultural identity, Westernism, nihilism.

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Herzen is always remembered as an aristocratic revolutionary and Western Europe-worshiper. From the perspective of cultural conflict, however, literary critic N. N. Strakhov wrote a long article “Herzen”, prove that Herzen went from a nihilist in despair to a believer of Russian cultural traditions. Based on the “Herzen”, author analyzed the entire process of Strakhov’s recognition. Strakhov’s exploration of religious factors in Herzen’s works is further explored. At last, Strakhov define Herzen as the first to fight with the West in Russian literature. In our opinion, this statement is not only a typical case of a critic’s anti-westernism, but also the departure point of self-reflection in Russian culture in the second half of the 19th century. Other than that, the impact of this “Herzen” on academia at the time and later is discussed in detail.

In the discussion on the construction of the national image in the Orthodox Church and Russian literature, Nikolai Strakhov’s research on Herzen has received little attention but is worthy of attention. Because this not only provides a valuable reference for academic circles to evaluate Herzen as a writer, but also reveals how Russian intellectuals represented by Herzen adhere to the national spirit and beliefs and how they go through a spiritual journey from imagining the West to returning to Russia.

In Strakhov’s entire literary criticism heritage, the commentary on Herzen occupies an extremely prominent position. The first volume of the three major volumes of this critic in his later years *The Struggle against the West in Our Literature* analyzed Herzen in nearly one-third of the length. In 2010, a collection of essays of the same name was published and the editor put Strakhov’s long essay on Herzen in a very prominent position, which is much longer than other writers [Strakhov 2010]. However, because of some reasons including documents and ideology (For example his works have not been reprinted in the period of USSR for a long time. And Strakhov himself was regarded as an opponent of Marxism-Leninism) academic circles at home and

abroad have paid little attention to this issue¹. As the American scholar Linda Gerstein, the author of Strakhov's biography, pointed out: "As a writer, his theme is that Russia must be rescued from the rule of Western culture in order to discover its own Individuality" [Linda Gerstein: 102]. In other words, Strakhov's theme is that Russia must get rid of the influence of Western culture and establish its own cultural identity whose characteristic is obviously based on the Orthodox spirit. If we say that Strakhov's several comments on Tolstoy established the writer's status as the embodiment of the national character of Russian literature [Zhu Jiangang]; then his evaluation of Herzen outlines a senior Western European imagining the collapse of the West. This break-up not only forms an important theme in Strakhov's literary criticism: "Struggle against the West in Russian literature", but also reflects Strakhov's final recognition of the uniqueness of Russian culture under the influence of Orthodox civilization.

Strakhov's Discussion on Herzen

On January 21, 1870, Herzen died in Paris. The news spread to Russia, but there was not much response. Even if it was mentioned, it mostly focused on the political activist Herzen. After all, as a veteran exile, Herzen's golden age has long passed. After the Polish incident in 1863, Herzen and his *The Bell* fell sharply in popularity among the Russian people because of his support for Polish independence. Herzen recalled in *My Past and Thoughts*: "By the end of 1863, the circulation of *The Bell* had dropped from 2500 and 2000 copies to 500 copies, and never exceeded 1000 copies ever since" [Gertsen 11: 374]. However, Herzen is after all a person who left a significant influence on the history of Russian thought and literature. There are still people who are paying attention to and carefully studying his thoughts after the revolution of 1848 in Russia when his thoughts changed. Strakhov is one of them. In the 3, 4, and 12 issues of 1870, the *Dawn* magazine quickly published his long article *Herzen*² and the full text is divided into three chapters. Ac-

¹ The famous scholar Dolinin paid attention to this issue earlier, but only a few words [Dolinin: 226, 334–335]. Later Saratov University professor Antonova also mentioned it in her monographs, but only in Stella Hoff's evaluation of Herzen's early novels [Antonova: 160–169].

² There are two versions of Strakhov's long essay: one is "Herzen" published

ording to the separate edition in 1887, it is 168 pages long and entitled as *Herzen's Literary Works, Loss of Faith in the West and Struggle with Western Thoughts and the Belief toward Russia*. It is easy to see from the title: In Strakhov's interpretation, Herzen has gone from exile to return: that is, attacking Russia —attacking the West — returning to Russia. This process embodies Herzen's gradual understanding of Russian and Western thoughts and his reaffirmation of Russian civilization represented by the Eastern Orthodox civilization. Strakhov interprets it as: "The struggle with European ideas is Herzen's main task and achievement" [Strakhov 2010: 147].

At the beginning of the article, he pointed out many misunderstandings about Herzen: people all regarded him as a political activist, while ignoring his side as a writer. Strakhov positioned Herzen as a "literary and propagandist", and "Herzen is not a simple propagandist; first of all, he is a writer, the holder of famous ideas and opinions and for him, speaking out these thoughts and opinions is the main basic mission. The role of the propagandist is only partly consistent with his views, and most of them are in fierce conflict" [Strakhov 2010]. What needs to be pointed out is: Strakhov first defined Herzen as a writer, but his focus was not on the artistic expression of literature, but on what he called "famous ideas and opinions". Under this premise, the first chapter of *Herzen* is Strakhov's review of Herzen's main literary works one by one, summarizing Herzen's thought process, and finally it was concluded- Herzen is a pessimist.

Critics start with *A Young Man's Memoirs* (1840). The focus is on the different views of Goethe between the protagonist and the Polish Terenzynsky, where the author's first sigh of skepticism sounded. Terenzynsky has seen Goethe twice, which is obviously extraordinary for the "me" who admires Goethe. But the fact is just the opposite: Goethe left behind an image of being superior regardless of common people's sufferings. As Strakhov pointed out: "The meaning of the story is consistent with Herzen's many inner desires and is quite diverse. First, there is a denial of authority... Second, there is sympathy on the interest in reality and for *living person* who is opposite poets and philosophers (the original text is in italics-quotes, the same below)" [Strak-

in the magazine *the Dawn* in 1870, which has the nature of a eulogy; the other is published in St. Petersburg in 1887. The first volume of the three-volume "Struggle with the West in Our Literature" is titled "Herzen's Literary Activities". This article refers to the latter version. For the convenience of discussion, it is always referred to as "Herzen".

hov 2010: 13]. In Strakhov's view, Herzen has already aware of the conflict between life and theory: If you emphasize the supremacy of theory, you need to avoid life like Goethe, so that you can achieve the purity of theory; otherwise, it will inevitably lead to suffering, because of the richness of life is not covered by any theory. As Goethe said in *Faust*: "Theories are all gray, beloved friends, and the golden tree of life is evergreen" [Goethe: 106]. In fact, Herzen's creation just reflects the humanism of the Orthodox Church, which makes thought and theory closer to people's life, showing the humanistic caring of Eastern Orthodox civilization. Although on the surface, Herzen, who emphasizes Western civilization and rationality, seems to be incompatible with Eastern Orthodox thought.

In the analysis of *Whose Sin?*, Strakhov further pointed out the theme of Herzen's creation: the contingency of life and the absurdity of human nature. For the above theme, Herzen proposed three solutions in *About a Drama*: First, Stoic formalism; second, religion; third, public interest. What Strakhov admires most is religion: "This plan is obviously the most complete, clearest and most satisfying" [Strakhov 2010: 31]. As Herzen said: "Religion moves to another world and earthly enthusiasm can be hidden in it... Religion is the only and precious way of freedom for humans to control their enthusiasm" [Strakhov 2010: 31]. Religion breaks the isolation of individuals' soul and let their soul combine with the eternal world. However, there is a real society between the eternal world of religion and the spiritual world of individuals. How individuals connect with the eternal world through society is a new problem. This refers to the third point, that is, public interest. Associating individuals with social well-being is a more representative ideological concept since the Enlightenment era. However, in Herzen's era, "everything around is met with skepticism from critics. This is a symptom of the transitional era" [Strakhov 2010: 35]. Everything is changing, including the public interest itself. Therefore, the so-called personal involvement in the public interest was destined to be a purely theoretical solution at that time¹. Probably because of this, Strakhov said:

¹ This is like Voltaire's "The Honest Man" finally said that "it's important to grow your own garden"; Faust, which Goethe shaped, finally found the meaning of life in the great cause of transforming nature and reclaiming land from the sea. They all just revealed the theoretical possibility of Enlightenment. Because in the European environment at that time, where could the garden be cultivated freely? Where can the beach be reclaimed from the sea?

“Herzen’s formula has a too broad meaning to generalize his personal thoughts” [Strakhov 2010: 35].

Strakhov also analyzed works such as *Doctor Krupov*, but his main point is still consistent with the above, that is, he summarized in the last section of the first chapter of the paper *Herzen’s Main Discovery*: “What we have analyzed so far is mainly Herzen’s literary works, so what is reflected in it is his overall view of life and overall tendency. We think we have clearly proved that the main feature of his tendency is pessimism” [Strakhov 2010: 52].

The second chapter *Lost Faith in the West* first talks about “what is the West” or the origin of Russian intellectuals imagining the West. Here, Strakhov commented on the issues of Slavophiles and Hegelism successively, and in fact introduced the background of the growth of Herzen’s thoughts. It is worth mentioning that Strakhov pointed out here: “Among all those who endlessly talk about the West and worship the West, Herzen is a truly mature person who has made an independent evaluation of the West. For Granovsky and Belinsky, the West is a distant world of the other that blends with their own imagination; for Herzen, the West is his homeland, and he talks about it confidently and without cowardice. And he lives in it” [Strakhov 2010: 62]. This made Herzen’s Western imagination more authentic and representative in the Russian intellectual circles at that time. However, it was precisely this kind of motherland that dealt Herzen a heavy blow after 1848, which made him feel at a loss. This is particularly evident in his *Book of the Other Side* while he wrote: “We have studied the decline of Europe for a long time. The mechanism of death is found in all its classes and places and only occasional prophecies are heard from a distance. We also hoped, believed, and worked hard to believe at first. The dying struggle has changed the characteristics one after another so quickly that we can’t deceive ourselves. Life is like the last light from the window before dawn, which is gradually extinguishing. We are defeated and terrified. We stand by and watch the terrible results of death. What do we see in the February Revolution? It can be said that we were young two years ago, but now we are old” [Gertsen 16: 116–117]. This should be Herzen’s summary of his thoughts over the years and it’s not hard to see his pessimistic and even desperate mentality. And this is exactly what Strakhov will reveal below: “As a result, Herzen went to complete despair. This is our first Westernist *desperate for the West*” [Strakhov 2010: 97]. However, human beings have to survive after all and despair can only promote hope. It is precisely under the persecution of despair that Herzen’s

thoughts have undergone a qualitative change, that is, the title of Chapter Three, *The Struggle with Western Thoughts. Belief in Russia*.

This chapter is actually the focus of Strakhov's discussion, because he wants to use Herzen's choice to raise the issue of the development path of Russian culture. Therefore, the title of the first section is *The Most Essential Question in Our Problem* — "Our spiritual uniqueness. Who are we Russians? Are we forming a unique nation in terms of ideology and morality that we can find special elements in our own history to create a special culture? Or should we keep the same proposition and keep everything subject to Europe, just like the relationship between Belgium and France?" [Strakhov 2010: 106]. So, Strakhov talked about Herzen, and he really focused on the uniqueness of Russian culture. Herzen's choice gave the best answer to this question. In his words: "Faith in Russia — saved me on the verge of moral collapse" [Strakhov 2010: 111].

Then, what is the "Russian Faith"? Strakhov explained it with the help of Herzen's *From the Other Shore* (1851). First of all, he pointed out: "There is no event in Herzen's life more important than this struggle and no book comparable to *From the Other Shore* among all his works" [Strakhov 2010: 277]. Furthermore, "In the book, Herzen expounds his views on Russian Slavophiles. He notes that Eastern Orthodoxy is superior to Roman Catholicism and that although Russia has been rid of feudalism, its legacy — village communes — still remains" [Strakhov 2010: 27]. In other words, the "Russian Faith" is embodied among others in the superiority of the Orthodoxy and the uniqueness of village communes. When speaking of the Orthodoxy, however, Herzen made a rather vague statement: "I think something existing in Russian life is above society and more powerful than the country itself. Such a thing can't be related by language and is hard to explain. By this, I mean some internal and unnoticed power which has freed Russian people from their sufferings under the rule of the Golden Horde and Germans. It is this internal power that enabled Russian farmers to keep a cheerful personality and an active mind even when they have gone through humiliating oppressions in serfdom. This power also enabled Russian society to respond to Tsar's decrees with the great Pushkin phenomenon even after one hundred years. Last but not least, this power and faith is continually active in our mind" [Strakhov 2010: 278–279].

Herzen didn't mention the Orthodoxy in the book, but it seemed that nothing other than the Orthodoxy could have such a huge impact in the context of

the evolving history of Russian culture. Or a comparison can be drawn between Herzen's statement and the words of the Orthodox philosopher Sergey Bulgakov (1871–1944) on the Orthodox spirituality: “The holiness this spirituality pursues (Russian people expressed their pursuit in the name ‘Holy Russ’) is the utmost tolerance and self-sacrifice. <...> There is an innermost and heroic element in this holiness: the full power of religious will and practice lies in trying to get rid of the natural image of self and wearing the image of Christ” [Wright: 188]. The two thinkers were actually speaking of the same subject with descriptions of the sufferings and the creation of heroic deeds in their writings. Although the Orthodoxy pays less attention to the rites and ceremonies than the Catholicism, its strong spiritual power is the source of strength for Russian people. This ineffable mystery of the Orthodoxy constitutes its characteristics on the one hand, and its superiority over Catholicism on the other: “Among many types of religions, Orthodoxy is characterized by insufficient reality and external manifestations, but because of this, the heavenly truth revealed by Christ gets least distorted” [Wright: 4].

Now that the particularity (or superiority) of the Russian faith is noticed, the answers to the questions: Where is the path forward for Russia? What is the particularity of Russian culture? — are obvious. In his article *The Old World and Russia* written in February, 1854, Herzen put forward: “The question arises naturally — Should Russia follow all the stages of European development? Or should Russia take a different revolutionary path? I am firmly opposed to its taking the old paths of Europeans. <...> Our people don't need to restart such painful efforts at all. Why should they bleed for insolvable problems that we meet and that only give rise to other problems and aspirations?” [Gertsen 16: 186]. Therefore, Herzen concluded that Russia should consider its own reality and take a unique Russian path for its political and cultural construction. Just like the Orthodox cultural thinker Berdyaev (1874–1948) said many years later, Herzen “went out of the Western camp and defended the unique Russian path” [Berdiaev: 66]. This is exactly the purpose of Strakhov in writing the article.

The Way Out for Herzen and Nihilists

Upon Herzen's death, Petersburg Censorship Committee hastily issued a notice in order to prevent the radical publications from taking the opportu-

nity to promote Herzen and causing social ideological confusion. The notice read: “If the committee during the censorship finds any articles that express sympathy for the activities of Herzen, a recognized sinner of the state, the committee shall consider them completely unsuitable for publication. The committee will only allow articles stating Herzen’s death just as a fact and Herzen’s works published in Russia to be published” [Pekar’: 110]. Therefore, review articles of Herzen at that time often ended up with criticism on his political activities. However, Strakhov’s article is different in that it breaks free from the political fights, not only breaking the rule and referring Herzen’s works published abroad, but also interpreting Herzen’s thought with great patience. For one thing, the article wants to show the development path Russia should take through Herzen’s life experience; for another, it implies the profound thoughts of Strakhov on nihilism. From disillusionment of the West to the return to Russia, these are the two aspects of the same problem. The disillusionment of nihilism would definitely create conditions for returning to Russia. Herzen is a typical representative of nihilism. Therefore, an interpretation of his ideological process would represent the whole process of nihilism from its birth to disillusionment and reveal his spiritual process of returning to Russian civilization based on the Orthodox spirit. In fact, Strakhov has long been paying his attention to nihilism.

In the series of articles *Poverty of Our Literature*, Strakhov (1868) discussed nihilism — “its existing reasons and power” in a separate section. First, he pointed out the conflict between nihilism and life: “Nihilists deny both Russian life and European life”. In the following analysis, Strakhov gradually traced the origin of nihilism: “Nihilism is a kind of Westernism in the first place”. “Besides, nihilism is nothing but extreme Westernism that has fully developed and reached its culmination”. Furthermore, “nihilism denies all the established lifestyles” [Strakhov 1868: 45–54]. Accordingly, in Strakhov’s view, Herzen’s nihilism resulted from his extreme worship of Westernism is “pure nihilism”. “The negative and pure nihilism constitutes Herzen’s ideological tendency to his last breath of life” [Strakhov 2010: 142]. It is fair to say that those critics’ grasp of nihilism and of Herzen’s illusion of the West is extremely accurate, but just like a doctor’s treating a patient, it is not enough to just obtain an accurate diagnosis of the disease but a treatment plan needs to be proposed. This involves the issue of critics and religion.

Scholars have always had split opinions about Strakhov and religion [N. N. Strakhov v dialogakh]. Considering his natural science and hegelian

background, some scholars believe Strakhov is not a devout worshipper of the Orthodoxy and at most a “religious skeptic”. Russian cultural activist Duke Ukhtomsky (1861–1921) recollected: “He has never heard a word relating to religion from Strakhov. He thinks Strakhov is more ‘a Voltairean’ and ‘a thinker of the 18th century’ than a religious man” [Luk’ianov: 398]. However, actually, as Strakhov grew up in a church school, a religious complex was deeply ingrained in him. For example, in August, 1886, he wrote in a letter to Tolstoy: “I would rest in peace if I could write another book on how to seek, extol and learn God in every possible way” [L. N. Tolstoy i N. N. Strakhov: 712]. Another more direct proof is that in 1890, Strakhov’s student and religious thinker Rozanov (1856–1919) asked Strakhov directly: “Am I right to define your exploration focus of thought, scholarship and literature as religious in my article?” Strakhov answered: “I have no idea how you would write about my religiousness, but of course, you are right, for all serious explorations will eventually lead to religion” [Rozanov 2001: 60]. As Rozanov later concluded, Strakhov’s works were centered on Eastern Orthodoxy. “It is just that he is a philosopher-observer, who is afraid of making not only absolute but also direct and detailed conclusions on the issue of faith” [Rozanov 2001: 117]. Apparently, Rozanov’s statement is not a conclusive conclusion, but if we look into Strakhov’s works, it is not difficult to find that the critic has a very close relationship with religion, and this relationship is naturally reflected in his articles.

Take the above article about Herzen as an example. Strakhov praised Herzen’s mention of using religion to deal with contingency and absurdity of life so that he even inserted on purpose in the article a discourse on the image of the soldier Platon Karatayev, a character in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, saying: “He represents a vivid solution of the task for which Herzen suffered” [Strakhov 2010: 34]. Strakhov later specifically pointed out: “A few chapters involving Karatayev play an extremely important role in establishing the internal connection of the whole story, almost overshadowing all our literary works depicting the inner and daily life of ordinary people” [Strakhov 1901: 270]. The reason is that Karatayev represents the embodiment of Russian spirit full of characteristics of the Orthodoxy. When depicting Karatayev, Tolstoy wrote he always used the word “peasant” as “Christian”. In addition to the little clue and more importantly, Karatayev embodies the factor of “aggregation”: In his opinion, his life as an individual phenomenon has no meaning. He is meaningful only when he is a part of the whole that he always feels. His words and

actions flow out of him, just like the fragrance coming from the secretion of the flower is so uniform, inevitable, and direct. Aggregation emphasizes the achievement of unity through maintenance of individuality. An individual's life is meaningless unless it is integrated into the collective one. In the view of the famous thinker Khomyakov (1804–1860), “This integration is based on the love of God and His truth and the mutual love between those who love God. In Catholicism, there is only unity but no freedom; and in Protestantism, there is only freedom but no unity. What is realized in these religious beliefs is only external unity and freedom” [Lotsky: 31]. In the novel, Karatayev is such a spiritual embodiment of aggregation who loves God and truth as well as his companions.

It is true that Karatayev is just the most ordinary soldier in the eyes of others while he is extraordinary to Pierre because the latter has Herzenesque despair. This kind of despair only appears meaningful in contrast with Karatayev's spirit of letting things take their own course and feeling at peace with the world. Therefore, it is under Karatayev's influence that Pierre felt that the world that has been destroyed is now active in his soul with new beauty and on a new unshakable foundation. Isn't this return, in Strakhov's eyes, the best way out for nihilists after the disillusionment of their Western dream?

The Debate about *Herzen*

According to archive records, *Herzen* once put the book censor in St. Petersburg into a dilemma. As far as the content of the article is concerned, there are many banned contents in the article. Instead of criticizing Herzen, this article quoted a large number of Herzen's texts published overseas. But on the other hand, the ultimate goal of *Herzen* is not to promote Herzen. The article was finally approved by Yelenev (Еленев Ф. П. 1827–1902) and Fox (Фукс В. Я. 1829–1891), members of the National Publishing Affairs Commission. It should be said that the two have seen the significance of Strakhov's article. For example, Yelenev pointed out that the purpose of the article is to prove that Herzen expressed disappointment in democratic and revolutionary Europe at the end of his literary and political career, and he firmly believed in the national factor in Russian life... Although this view is clearly inconsistent with Herzen's entire activities and is therefore not accurate, the political inclination of this article is not harmful... The Herzen's

work cited just proves the author's presupposition... [Pekar': 119]. Thanks to the censor's understanding, the article was not subject to official suppression after its publication. However, it should be pointed out that for a long time after the publication of *Herzen*, the focus of the critics did not fall on the core view of "struggling with the West". Critic, including Dostoevsky and others, have focused more on Herzen as a thinker.

The first to respond to the article was Dostoevsky, who lived abroad. On March 24, 1870, Dostoevsky's letter to Strakhov mentioned the latter's article on Herzen, "I have read the third issue of *Dawn* with great satisfaction and can't wait for reading its sequels in order to fully understand what is said in it. I have a foreboding that you mainly want to present Herzen as a Western European faction and talk about the West in comparison with Russia, right? You have successfully demonstrated Herzen's main point, pessimism" [The Complete Works of Dostoyevsky 22: 720–721]. Dostoyevsky captured the key point of this article, the relationship between a Western European faction and Russia. However, Dostoevsky did not fully support Strakhov's view. In the same letter, he raised the following question, "By the way (although this is not included in the title of your article), in judging and determining whether the main essence of all Herzen's activities still exists another point of view, which believes he is mainly a poet at all times" [The Complete Works of Dostoevsky 22: 721]. However, Strakhov mentioned in the article that the purpose of his writing was to "recover the meaning of Herzen's literary activities" [Strakhov 2010: 54]. In other words, he wanted to point out the meaning behind the literary activities, that is, the meaning of Herzen's struggle with the West. This is probably something that Dostoevsky did not expect. Because he focuses more on the disconnection between Herzen and the "soil" of his country. "History seems to be destined to show this crack between the majority of our educated class and the people through Herzen, the most distinctive character type" [The Complete Works of Dostoyevsky 19: 8]. Despite the above differences, Dostoyevsky still expressed "extremely satisfaction" and even portrayed a Herzen in *The Boy* to respond¹.

Perhaps because of the praise of Dostoyevsky and many friends, Strakhov himself was quite content with this article, so that he took the initiative to recommend it to Tolstoy, "The article about Herzen is the depth of under-

¹ For the relationship between Versilov and Herzen, see: [Dolinin: 104–112]; [Kantor].

standing surprised those who knew Herzen and loved him...” [L. N. Tolstoy i N. N. Strakhov: 134]. Compared to Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy emphasized the issue of Herzen’s struggle with the West, which is closer to Strakhov’s original intention. In 1888, Tolstoy mentioned Herzen in a letter to Chertkov. His views were obviously influenced by Strakhov. “I was reading Herzen and I was very happy but also sad to see his works being forbidden to be published. First, as a writer, even if he is not above, but he is equivalent to our first-class writer; second, if his works have become inseparable in the thinking of the younger generation since the 1850s, then we won’t have any revolutionary nihilists. To prove that the revolutionary theory is baseless, just read Herzen, just like all violence can only be denied with the purpose of violence” [Tolstoy 86: 121–122]. Herzen is the antidote to the theory of Western revolution for Russian society. This understanding is exactly the same as the viewpoint put forward by Strakhov in the article. Victor Shklovsky saw this in his biography of Tolstoy, “According to Tolstoy, Herzen is important because he is a person who struggles with the ‘Western European Revolutionary Theory’. This is an explanation of Tolstoy. He wanted to turn Herzen into his fellow traveler” [Shklovsky: 583].

Throughout the Soviet period, Herzen researchers rarely mentioned this long article by Strakhov. In 1922, Dolinin (Долинин А. С. 1880–1968) wrote *Dostoevsky and Herzen*, which involved Strakhov’s evaluation of Herzen, but it was also very few. Even if other Herzen researchers mentioned it occasionally, they all believed that Strakhov had exaggerated Herzen’s pessimism¹ too much. Because according to Lenin’s tone, despite Herzen’s many shortcomings, he is after all “a figure of the generation of aristocratic landlords and revolutionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century” [Lenin: 125]. It is obviously not conducive to shape Herzen as a revolutionary if completely attribute it to “pessimism”. In addition, Marxism is also a theory from Western Europe. If Strakhov’s attempt to fight against it with the help of traditional Orthodox ideology, isn’t him a complete reactionary for those Soviet academic authorities? However, Linda Gerstein, who is far across the ocean, pointed out the uniqueness of Strakhov’s article. In the biography mentioned at the beginning of this article, Gerstein not only pointed out that “For Rus-

¹ “Herzen’s pessimistic remarks are too much in Strakhov’s discourse and turned into the main characteristic of his thought” [Gille’son, Dryzhakova, Perkal’: 86].

sians, Herzen is a perfect example of ‘struggle with the West’”, he also believed that “Strakhov is the first someone who sees the Slavist side of Herzen” [Linda Gerstein: 128]. On this basis, one of the older generations of scholars Tunimanov commented on *Herzen justly*. “This work of Strakhov is the most talented and most distinctive work of critics. Strakhov has every right to be proud of his articles about Herzen and his contemporaries’ response...” [Tunimanov: 104]. But that was happened in 1987.

After entering the 21st century, Russian social conservatism has re-emerged, and Strakhov has entered the reader’s field of vision with his clear anti-Western stance. In 2010, the collection of essays published by the Russian Academy of Civilization was named “Struggle with the West” and the main article was *Herzen*, which fully reflects Russian ideological circle’s recognition for Strakhov’s article.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this article, Strakhov used Herzen as a model, trying to discuss a senior Western faction imagining the collapse of the West. Because it is “collapse”, the article *Herzen* does not actually put forward too many constructive conclusions. For Strakhov, Herzen’s thought shift is just an introduction. The article focuses on the formation process, reasons and eventual disillusionment of Herzen’s imagination of the West. As for what happens after the turn, Strakhov only briefly involved here, without further elaboration. The 20th-century religious philosopher Vasiliy Zinkovsky (Зеньковский В. В. 1881–1962) said Strakhov has just walked halfway towards this goal after all, which is not unreasonable. He first appeared in the “foundation” of mysticism, and he has become more and more attuned to the remnants of rationalism” [Zinkovsky: 458]. What is “foundation”? It is a question that could be discussed separately. But it is certain that the foundation must contain the Orthodox element. In Zinkovsky’s view, although Strakhov did not become a devout believer (walking “half the way”), as mentioned above, his thoughts undoubtedly included many elements of the Orthodox Church. From the perspective of his writing style, the incompleteness or openness of this ideological discussion also constitutes Strakhov’s consistent style of literary criticism, just as Rozanov pointed out: “A brief discussion, a summary, or as he used to name his article twice, the ‘at-

tempt to ask the question correctly' — this is the most common and most convenient way to express his thoughts" [Rozanov 2000: 12–13].

From today's point of view, Strakhov's turn towards Herzen is inevitably "over-interpreted". For example, the understanding of Orthodox Church and the identification of Slavic ideas may not be consistent with Herzen's expression in *The Past and Thoughts*. But the reason is obviously not only Strakhov's theme coming first. You must know that Herzen himself is a rather contradictory person. The contradictory expressions of certain issues in different periods can be seen as the manifestation of the complex personality of the thinker, or as the constant self-denial and self-development of his own thoughts. Influenced by the failure of the revolution in 1848, Herzen lost confidence in Western Europe and turned his hopes on Russian villages.

From this perspective, Strakhov mainly emphasized the Russianness (more precisely, the Orthodox factor) in Herzen's thought transition in his later years. In fact, he grasped the core part of his life's thoughts, which can be described as one-sided profound. It contrasts with the revolutionary mentor's understanding of Herzen's "anti-liberalism" from a revolutionary perspective. With regard to Strakhov's cognition, the 20th-century thoughts of Sher Bulgakov, Zenkovsky, etc., everyone recognized it, "...Herzen is a religious thinker, because for religious orientation (and only for it), theory and value factors are intrinsically inseparable in the understanding of existence. Therefore, when studying Herzen, we should start from analyzing his religious consciousness and religious ideals, deriving and reconstructing its ideological system" [Zen'kovskiy: 274]. Finally, although in Strakhov's ideological exploration career, *Herzen* is only one of his periodic achievements in reflecting on the Russian nation's cultural characteristics and shaping the national image of Russia. However, from today's perspective, breaking the blind worship for Western culture and building a culture with national characteristics on the soil of the whole country is also a practical reference of great significance for the rising China.

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