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Slavic Studies in China

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Abstract: Slavic studies in China have long been conducted under the category of the Soviet Union and Eastern European studies. In the past three decades, the research in China has turned to the attention of various Slavic countries amid the evolving domestic and international situations. With a number of research findings in Slavic language, literature, and area studies, Slavic studies in China have contributed its share to the development of philosophy, social science, and the building of our country as a whole. As an emerging discipline, our research is expected to include studies of every Slavic country, do more comparative research among Slavic nations, optimize the discipline system, and amplify its voice worldwide. We believe that with the joint effort of Chinese researchers our Slavic studies will earn a place in the field of international Slavic research.

Keywords: Slavic studies, linguistics, literature, area studies, discipline system

The Slav is the largest ethnic group in Europe that mainly dwell in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, with a small number of settlements distributed from Northern Asia to the Pacific region. In addition, the Slavic people also live as a minority in regions such as Western Europe, America, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia. At present, they enjoy a population of 300 to 350 million (PIA Новости, 2021), and can be divided into three ethnic groups: East Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians), West Slavs (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, and Sorbs), and Yugoslavs (Bulgarians, Serbians, Croatians, Slovenes, Macedonians, Bosnian-Muslims and Montenegrins). They speak East Slavic, West Slavic, and Yugoslavian languages respectively. Slavic is the largest of the three major Indo-European language families (Slavic, Germanic, and Latin). Since the main ethnic group of the 13 countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro) is Slavs, and these countries are often called Slavic countries. Our Slavic studies started and are going well along with the exchanges between China

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and the Slavic countries, the implementation of China's reform and opening-up policy, and the promotion of the Belt and Road initiative.

1 The History of Slavic Studies in China

Of all the Slavic countries, Russia is the only one that borders our nation, both being each other's largest neighbor. After the signing of the *Treaty of Nerchinsk* (1689), which defined the Sino-Russian border, trade contacts between them became increasingly frequent. In order to train translators for the communication with Russia, Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty issued a decree to establish the Ministry of Minority Affairs in 1708, which was then called Russian School. Since then our Russian education began now with a history of over 300 years. China first turned her attention to Russian ways of development in the early 20th century. The October Revolution in Russia had a significant impact on the development of China. Both Sun Yat-sen, the pioneer of the Chinese revolution, and the early Chinese Marxists realized the importance of learning Russia. After May 4th Movement, a large number of works on Marxism-Leninism were translated from Russian into Chinese by progressive intellectuals, and numerous young people went to the Soviet Union to seek ways for national salvation, and later became the core with the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

At the beginning of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), our country was economically assisted and technically guided by the Soviet Union. Therefore, there was an urgent need for Russian translators. In September 1951, our Central People's Government convened the first national conference on Russian language education to strengthen the training of Russian talents. At that time, there were 36 universities with Russian departments and 7 Russian academies in China (Wang & Meng, 2005). However, the capacity of these institutes was far from enough to meet our urgent needs. In 1952, China followed the Soviet model to adjust the departments of colleges and universities all over the country, and simultaneously Russian is designated as the first foreign language in higher education. As a result, an enormous upsurge in studying Russian started in nationwide colleges and universities. In order to better achieve cooperation and exchanges with the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, Peking University took the lead in setting up Polish and Czech majors in 1954, but in 1956, the two majors were relocated to Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), which also set up the Bulgarian major in 1961. In 1963, Serbian-Croatian majors also began to enroll students in BFSU. These new majors laid a linguistic foundation for Slavic studies in China. In 1959, to make available reading materials for students learning

Russian, BFSU started publishing the magazine *Russian Learning*, which gave a big push in promoting Russian in China.

In the early 1950s, China not only invited Soviet experts to come for guidance, but also sent a large number of outstanding administrators, scientific and technical workers, and college students to the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries for one to two years of internships, or to study for a master's or doctoral degree. In 1952, the Preparatory Department for Studying in the Soviet Union was established by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in order to provide language training for students who were going to the Soviet Union. From 1952 to 1960, a total of 9,000 students were sent to the Soviet Union and 1,000 to the Eastern European countries by the department (Zhu, 2013). These students cherished the precious opportunities provided by the motherland, so they were diligent and eager to learn while overcoming all sorts of difficulties. After returning to China, they became the leading figures in various industries among whom were many of the earliest scholars of Slavic Studies in China. In Slavic language education before the end of the 20th century, the founders of majors such as Russian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, and other Slavic languages in Chinese colleges and universities, as well as the writers of relevant textbooks and dictionaries, were mainly returnees who had studied in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, Russian experts Xin Delin, Zhang Huisen, and Hua Shao who had studied in the Soviet Union translated and edited the Chinese version of *Russian Grammar* published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP), and its Russian version was edited by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1980. Moreover, Prof. Xin Deli's *Slavic Languages: A Survey Course* (published by FLTRP in 1991), Prof. Zhang Huisen's *Practical Grammar of the Russian Language* (I) and Prof. Hua Shao's *Practical Grammar of the Russian Language* (II) (published by the Commercial Press in 1979), Prof. Wang Fuxiang's *Analysis of Russian Discourse Structure* (published by FLTRP in 1981), and *The Russian-Chinese Dictionary* (published by the Commercial Press in 1985) collectively compiled by teachers of Russian major at Heilongjiang University, etc. are still widely used in our colleges and universities. *Czech Grammar* by Prof. Zhu Weihua (one of the first group of returnees from the Czech Republic after the founding of the PRC) and *Bulgarian Grammar* by Prof. Yang Yanjie (a returnee from Bulgaria) were successively published in 1989 and 1994 by FLTRP and have been the indispensable reference books for students majoring in Czech and Bulgarian in colleges and universities.

After the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956), the Sino-Soviet relationship began to deteriorate due to ideological differences. Under such circumstances, our policy for foreign language education was adjusted in a timely manner focusing on the education of English, German,

French, Japanese, and other foreign languages. After that, the dominance of Russian as the public and professional languages was soon replaced by English. During the Cultural Revolution, foreign language education in China was severely hit, while the teaching and research of Russian and other Slavic languages also fell into a trough. The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC (1978) put forward new tasks for China's reform and opening-up as well as the socialist modernization. Subsequently, our foreign language education and research entered a period of vigorous development. Objectively speaking, the history of the professional education of Slavic languages in China is basically the history of learning and teaching Slavic languages. The theoretical study of Slavic linguistics only started after the reform and opening-up. In the mid-to-late 1980s, academic papers and monographs on the linguistic research of Slavic languages came out one after another. Scholars closely followed the academic trends of the Slavic countries and they timely translated and studied the latest research results of linguists or linguistic schools in those countries. In addition, the compilation of textbooks and dictionaries has also yielded substantial results. In the period only FLTRP published Prof. Ding Shuqi's eight textbooks of *College Russian* between 1994 and 1998, Prof. Wang Chunyuan's *Serbian and Croatian Languages I* in 1989, Prof. Jin Piliang's four textbooks of *Bulgarian Language* in 1994, Prof. Li Jintao's three textbooks of *Polish Language* in 1990 and *Polish Grammar* in 1996, and Prof. He Lei's four textbooks of *Czech Language* between 1986 and 1988.

In order to increase the exchanges between the educators of the Russian language in the whole country, the first civil society for academic research of the Russian language—the China Russian Teaching and Research Association—was established. And the society also joined the International Association of Teachers of Russian, striving to build a platform for Chinese scholars of Russian teaching and research to participate in international academic activities. *Teaching Russian in China*, the journal of China Russian Teaching and Research Association, became an important academic field for scholars of Russian language research and teaching in China.

The study of Russian literature in China began with its translation. The earliest translated works in China were produced in the 1870s. At that time, most of them were translated from their English and Japanese versions. The translators were either foreign missionaries or Chinese who had learned Western languages and culture through the church. Mostly. They translated literary works from Russian into classical Chinese. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, with the outburst of the May 4th Movement—the New Culture Movement, and the spread of Marxism in China, Russian literature received unprecedented attention. Many founders of modern Chinese literature, such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and other masters

were pioneers in translating and introducing Russian literature. Lu Xun even called the Chinese translation of Russian literature “smuggling arms to the uprising slaves” and called Russian literature “our friend and mentor.” In 1903, Pushkin’s novel *Captain’s Daughter* was translated into Chinese. It was the first one-volume Russian literature ever translated into Chinese, which marked the beginning of the Chinese reception of Russian literature. Afterwards, many insightful Chinese intellectuals went to Russia to study, and some of them became well-known translators such as Qu Qiubai, Jiang Guangci, etc. In the parallel period, the Chinese translations of Polish literary works also began to spread in China. In the mid-1950s, a large number of excellent Soviet literary works were translated into Chinese. According to the statistics, “From October 1949 to December 1958, a total of 3,526 kinds of Russian and Soviet literary works were translated in China (works published in journals are not taken into account). A print volume of over 82 million copies were recorded, which accounted for two-thirds of the types of all translated foreign literary works and three-quarters of the print volumes during that period of time” (Chen, 2019). Besides, some Chinese scholars with good command of the Russian language tended to read the original literary works in Russian. Soviet literature not only helped the Chinese people learn about the positive image of the constructors of socialism, but also boosted their confidence in building Chinese socialism.

Since the mid-to-late 1950s, with the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, the translation of Soviet literature in China also appeared deserted. With the resumption of foreign literature studies after the reform and opening-up, some excellent Chinese translations of literary works reflecting the contemporary social life of the Soviet Union were published in China. From 1980 to 1990, “approximately 10,000 kinds of Russian literary works were published successively by nearly 100 publishing houses in China” (Liu, 2006). In addition, academic platforms for Soviet literature studies were also established. In the 1980s, *Soviet Literature* (established by Beijing Normal University in 1980, renamed *Russian Literature Arts* in 1991), *Russian and Soviet Literature* by Wuhan University, *Contemporary Soviet Literature* by BFSU, *Russian and Soviet Literary Works* by Shandong University came out one after another. Journals like *World Literature* (1964) and *Foreign Literature Review* (1987) established by the Institute of Foreign Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) were also important platforms for displaying the results of Russian literature translation and research. In order to strengthen the academic ties of Russian literature researchers across the country, a national Russian literature research group, the Chinese Soviet Literature Research Association (now renamed the Chinese Association of Russian Literature Studies, China Association of Foreign Literature) was established in 1978. Various types of seminars on Soviet (Russian) literature were held by the association,

which played an active role in promoting the study of Soviet (Russian) literature in China.

It is particularly worth mentioning that in the late 1980s, Russian literary studies in China went beyond the territory of translation and became a field of academic research. A considerable number of papers and monographs on Russian literature were published every year. In the 1990s, the research on Russian literature in China enjoyed a broader range and higher quality. Some Russian writers and their works which were not well known to the Chinese people were also included in the research of Chinese scholars. Apart from the special research in the study of West and South Slavic literature, some monographs, such as *A Brief History of Czechoslovak Literature* (translated by Liu Xingcan and published by Foreign Literature Press in 1984), *A History of Eastern European Literature* (edited by the Eastern European Literature Department of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS, published by Chongqing Press in 1990), *A History of Contemporary Eastern European Literature* (Lin, 1998), *A History of Bulgarian Literature* by Yang Yanjie and *Polish Literature* by Prof. Yi Lijun (published by FLTRP in 1999), etc. played a leading role in this discipline.

The Slavic country studies in China began after the founding of the PRC. The October Revolution brought Marxism to China. The progressive intellectuals of China sought the truth in Marxist-Leninist thought and founded the Communist Party of China. After twenty-eight years of struggle, the Party led the people to victory in the New Democratic Revolution and the founding of the PRC. Previously, under the influence of the Soviet Union, many socialist countries in Eastern Europe including the West Slavic countries, Poland (1944) and Czechoslovakia (1948), Bulgaria (1946) and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945) were successively established.

In the early days when the PRC was just founded, in addition to being “one-sided leaning” toward the Soviet Union, it also maintained friendly relationships with various socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Both the party and the government established research institutions on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For instance, the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC has set up the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe Office since its establishment in 1951, which is responsible for the CPC’s communication with and research on the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist parties. In 1965, the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC established the Institute of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In 1981, the chief members of the institute continued to work in the Institute of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, CASS (now known as the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian

Studies, CASS). For another instance, in 1958 the Institute of International Relations (known as China Institute of International Studies today), a research institution directly under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was established. The following year the academic journal *International Studies* sponsored by the institute was launched.

In 1953, the Central Committee of the CPC established the Compilation and Translation Bureau (now renamed as the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau), which translated a large number of works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. It's directly under the guidance of the Central Committee of the CPC. The bureau scrupulously abide by the principle of placing equal emphasis on translation and research, as well as research on classic literature and practical issues, and has made great contributions to the promotion of the Sinicization of Marxism. The complete works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin were translated into Chinese by this institution, with regular supplements, revisions, and reprints based on the continuous excavation of historical materials. These classic works are still essential references for Chinese decision-makers, administrators, and scientific researchers.

In 1955, the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was established, which was renamed the Institute of Philosophy, CASS in 1977. In the 1950s, Soviet philosophy reigned supreme in the field of philosophy research in China. Andrei Zhdanov's criticism of Alexanderlov's *History of Western European Philosophy* (1947) was regarded as a standard textbook by Chinese scholars, by which guided both Chinese and western philosophy research. Soviet philosophy has had a profound influence on the philosophy research in China. The textbook system of Marxist philosophy and even "the way of thinking of several generations of Chinese people are shaped by Soviet philosophy" (Ma, 2014).

Even in the period of Sino-Soviet tension, China's research on the history and reality of the Soviet Union never stopped. The Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (now the Institute of Modern History, CASS, established in 1950) mainly studied Chinese history from 1840 to 1949. In 1972, the institute established the Research Department of the History of Sino-Russian Relations, which was the most important academic institution to study the history of Sino-Russian relations at that time. In 1964, the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was established. The institute had a research department on the history of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, specializing in the study of the history of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. And some comprehensive universities also established the institutes of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and almost all colleges and universities had teaching and research sections on Soviet history in the major of world history. Naturally, affected by the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, the relevant research results

in China during this period were inevitably concerned with the debate between China and the Soviet Union.

Since the reform and opening-up, the free academic atmosphere, frequent academic exchanges at home and abroad, and the open archives and databases of the target countries have provided precious opportunities for Chinese researchers who studied the Soviet Union (Russia) and Eastern Europe. With the smooth transition from Sino-Soviet relations to Sino-Russian relations in the early 1990s and the continuous advancement of Sino-Russian relations, the research on the Soviet Union (Russia) and Eastern Europe in China has experienced unprecedented prosperity. In 1985, the first Chinese academic monograph on the history of Poland, *A Compendium of the General History of Poland* (Liu, 1985) came out. The first monograph on the history of Russia, *A Compendium of the General History of Russia* (Sun et al., 1986) and the first monograph on the history of contemporary Soviet philosophy, *Contemporary Philosophy of the Soviet Union (1945–1982)* (Jia & Zhou, 1986) were published in succession by People's Publishing House. In 1987, the Institute of Russian and Eastern European, CASS compiled the book *The Political System and Reform of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Countries* (published by Qishi Publishing House). Chinese scholars compiled two works on the general history of the Soviet Union, *A History of the Soviet Union (1917–1937)* (Chen, 1991) and *A Newly Compiled History of the Soviet Union (1917–1985)* (Zhou et al., 1991) published by Shanghai People's Publishing House successively. According to the statistics, from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s, more than 10 types of monographs on the history of Sino-Soviet relations were published in China (Xue, 2018, p. 51). From 1995 to 1998, the Chinese scholars published the monographs on Eastern European countries: *The Economic Transition in Eastern Europe* (Zhao & Zhu, 1995), *Privatization in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries* (Zhao & Jiang, 1995) and *Towards a Market Economy in Central and Eastern Europe* (Zhang, 1998) and others.

In the 1990s, with the continuous developments of Russian and Eastern European studies in China, the study of cultural history drew the scholars' attention. The first monograph on the history of Russian culture, *An Introduction to Russian Culture* (Yao, 1992) was published by Zhejiang People's Publishing House. *Slavic Culture* (Liu, 1993), China's inaugural work on the culture of Slavic countries, was published. In 1994, the book *Social Leaps and Cultural Lag in Eastern Countries—Russian Culture and Leninism* (An, 1994) had a great academic impact on the circles of Chinese philosophy and culture due to its profound thoughts. Hereafter, research on the Soviet Union (Russia) and Eastern European countries in China really got on the track of academic exploration.

In order to facilitate academic exchanges between researchers of the Soviet Union (Russia) and Eastern Europe, some first-class academic groups of various

disciplines and journals have been established one after another after the reform and opening-up. In 1978, the China-Russian Relations History Research Association, sponsored by the Institute of Modern History of the CASS, was established. In 1983, the journal *Soviet and Eastern European Issues* (renamed as *Eastern Europe and Central Asia Studies* in 1993) sponsored by the Institute of Soviet and Eastern Europe of the CASS was officially published. In 1996, another academic journal of the institute, *Russian, Central Asian and Eastern European Markets* (now renamed as *Eurasian Economy*) was launched. In 1985, the China Research Association of History of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the most important academic society in the field of Soviet and Eastern European history studies, was born. Its secretariat was located at the Institute of World History of the CAS. The Institute issued the journals *World History* in 1978 and *Historiography Bimonthly* in 1992. In 1979, the China Research Association of Modern Foreign Philosophy, a national academic society initiated by Chinese experts in the research and teaching of modern foreign philosophy, was founded. In 1991, the research society was renamed China Modern Foreign Philosophy Society. At present, the society consists of nine academic research institutions including the Committee of Russian Philosophy, and the secretariat is located in the Institute of Philosophy of the CASS. In 1982, the East China Normal University started to issue the magazine *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe Today* (now *Russian Studies*). These academic societies and journals are still playing an active role in China's Slavic area studies, providing an excellent platform for Chinese scholars to conduct domestic and international exchanges and disseminate the latest academic achievements.

2 The Status of Slavic Studies in China

Chinese academics have been using Russian and English sources to conduct Slavic studies since the end of the 20th century. Only precious few of them use Bulgarian, Czech, and Polish to do their research. At the beginning of the upheaval in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Serbia (1991), Croatia (1991), Slovenia (1991), Macedonia (1991), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992), Montenegro (2006) became independent one after another, and the three eastern Slavic countries Russia (1991), Ukraine (1991), and Belarus (1991) also gained independence (1991) respectively, but Chinese academics have not paid much attention to these Slavic countries (except for Russia) due to the language barrier, and their findings, as a result, are far from enough.

Since the 21st century, Slavic studies in China has shown new trends with the changes of the international situation and the shift of the focus of national development strategy. At the beginning of the new century, a multi-polar world

has taken shape, and international and regional integration organizations have been emerged. As a rapidly developing emerging market country, China actively joined the WTO (2001) and co-founded the international and regional integration organizations with relevant countries, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (2001) and the BRICS (2011). In 2013, China proposed the Belt and Road initiative. As of March 23, 2022, China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents with 149 countries (including all Slavic countries) and 32 international organizations for the co-construction of the Belt and Road (Belt and Road Portal, 2022). Further studies of each Slavic country and the entire Slavic region are therefore suggested for better cooperation. To get to know these Slavic countries in depth, what needs to do first is to cultivate talents who are proficient in their official languages.

In 1999, BFSU took the lead in opening Slovak teaching in China to teach, making all the official languages of West Slavic countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia) available at BFSU. In 2001, MOE set up “The National Non-general Language Teaching Base for Undergraduates” at BFSU and the language groups including all Slavic languages, and Serbian and Croatian languages in BFSU have been recruiting students since the 1990s without interruption. Subsequently, Ukrainian (2003), Slovenian (2010) and Belarusian (2018) majors of BFSU began to recruit students, and Serbian and Croatian have been recruiting students since the 1990s without interruption. At present, BFSU offers the largest number of Slavic courses in China. In 2019, the undergraduate programs including Russian, Bulgarian, Polish, and Czech were approved as the national top-notch majors, and Slovak has been approved as the first-class undergraduate program in Beijing.

Beyond the cultivation of talents in Slavic languages, BFSU has set up a series of Slavic research platforms. In 2005, the academic collection, *European Language and Culture Studies* (Vol. 1) came out, which relates to the European literature, history, philosophy and religion (including West and South Slavic countries and regions), sponsored by School of European Languages and Cultures of BFSU and published by Current Affairs Press. By 2021, this journal has been published in 12 volumes. In 2012, the Center for Central and Eastern European Studies of BFSU was approved as the Teaching Base for area studies under MOE, and it was listed as one of the sources of Chinese Think Tank Index (CTTI) in 2017. In the same year, BFSU registered with the MOE to establish five centers for area studies, including the Center for Russian Studies, the Center for Ukrainian Studies, the Center for Polish Studies, the Center for Bulgarian Studies, and the Center for Balkan Studies. The year 2017 also witnessed the first Center for Slavic Area Studies at BFSU thanks to its advantage of boasting the complete Slavic languages. In September 2021, China’s first Slavic English-Russian international academic journal, *Chinese*

Journal of Slavic Studies sponsored by BFSU, was officially launched. It focuses on 13 countries with Slavs, the largest ethnic group in Europe, covering the fields of language, culture, area studies, etc., which aims to bring together the new findings of Slavic studies and promote academic exchanges among Slavic researchers for development.

In Slavic language teaching and linguistic research, many universities in China boast promising academic achievements with the characteristics of the new era, such as the publication of Slavic language teaching materials and dictionaries. Since the beginning of the new century, the study of Russian in our country has been boosted again along with the continuous deepening of good neighborly friendship and cooperation between China and Russia. Textbooks of skill-oriented courses such as Russian intensive reading, extensive reading, listening, Russian-Chinese translation and knowledge-oriented courses such as Russian literature, Russian society and culture, Russian economy, trade, and diplomacy have been released. To meet the requirements of national strategy in the new era, Russian studies have been incorporated into the textbooks on the basis of language skills training. From 2005 to 2010, BFSU published a set of national planning textbooks for the “Tenth Five-Year Plan” of general higher education, such as *Multimedia Course in Understanding Russia* including the four textbooks—*Russian Geography* (Dai, 2005), *Russian History* (Dai, 2006), *Contemporary Russia* (Dai, 2008) and *Russian Culture* (Dai, 2010). They are Russian-Chinese bilingual textbooks, integrating texts, pictures, audios and video, widely used by Russian majors in colleges and universities at present. The most influential textbooks of the courses in Russian language skills are the series of intensive reading textbooks dedicated by BFSU, Shanghai International Studies University and Heilongjiang University. Eight volumes of *College Russian* by Shi Tieqiang (new edition, published by FLTRP during 2008–2014), integrating language learning with area studies, aims to “cultivate Russian-speaking talents with proficient language skills, extensive knowledge of nations concerned and innovative research abilities” (Shi, 2019a, p. 288). The series is therefore selected as the textbook of intensive reading by more than 90% of Russian majors nationwide and it was awarded the second prize of the 1st National Excellent Teaching Materials (Higher Education Category) in 2021.

In addition, a variety of dictionaries edited by institutions of higher learning came out one after another, such as the Russian-Chinese dictionaries, the Chinese-Russian dictionaries, the Russian dictionaries of new words and Russian Chinese professional dictionaries. The Research Center for Russian Language and Literature of Heilongjiang University is a key research base of humanities and social sciences of the MOE. With the joint effort of nationwide experts on Russian linguistics, the center released the multi-volume *A Comprehensive Russian-Chinese Dictionary for the New Era* (published by the Commercial Press in 2014) on the basis

of *A Russian-Chinese Dictionary* (published by Heilongjiang People's Publishing House in 1998), which is very popular among Russian teachers. The center also completed *A New Age Russian-Chinese Dictionary* (2019), a key project of MOE. *The Chinese-Russian Dictionary* by Gu Bolin of Shanghai International Studies University and published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press (SFLEP) in 2009 is a must for Russian learners in China. Moreover, various electronic Russian dictionaries are becoming more and more popular among young Russian learners.

College teachers serve as the main body of Russian linguistics researchers in China. Their research focuses on the academic thoughts and the research methods of the well-known Russian linguists of the 20th century as well as the characteristics of the main linguistic schools. At the beginning of the new century, Russian linguists in China have been broadening their horizons, paying attention to the dynamics of Russian linguistics and Western linguistics, and striving to make breakthroughs in the new fields such as Russian psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, ethno linguistics, comparative linguistics, cognitive linguistics, philosophy of language, computational linguistics and even engineering linguistics. A number of papers and monographs with considerable academic value have been produced.

The early 21st century saw the improvement and growth of teaching materials for other Slavic languages in China. Relevant textbooks were produced one after another as the school began to teach more and more Slavic languages. *Slovak Readers* by Zhu Weihua and Zhou Meiru in 2001, *Basic Croatian* (I) by Hu Weiling in 2004, *Introduction to Ukrainian* by Igor Gorshkov and Lao Huaxia in 2019 and *An Integrated Serbian Course* by Yao Jie in 2021, which are all published by FLTRP, are new additions to the Slavic language textbooks.

Among Chinese researchers of Russian literature in the new era, there are academics who are devoted to the study of classic Russian writers and the style of their works, as well as explorers who focus exclusively on contemporary Russian writers, the postmodernist style writers in particular. Today, the study of Russian literature in China presents a diversified situation, with Russian writers and works from different historical periods, styles and genres included in our research. In May 2013, the "Publication Project of the Chinese-Russian and Russian-Chinese Translation of Classical and Modern Literature" was officially launched with the joint effort of the Chinese National Press and Publication Administration and the Russian Publishing and Mass Media Agency. Our selection consists mainly of the representative works of the writers who are active in the contemporary Russian literature. The Chinese translations of *Conservation Law of Love* by Evgeny Shishkin, *Pushkin's House* by Andrey Bitov, *Before and Now* by Vladimir Sharov and the series of *Russian Juvenile Literature* (ten books in total) are available today.

As of August 2019, 56 Russian works have been translated and published in China (Shi, 2019b). In order to facilitate readers' reading, the publisher is ready to offer reader-friendly services by providing electronic versions and audiobooks of the project.

With more experience and stronger research capabilities, Chinese academics of Russian literature have spared no effort to retranslate the Russian classics in an attempt to provide our readers with quality Chinese translations. Some publishers have released a series of translations of Russian-Soviet literary classics in different forms, including the *Golden Russia*. Multi-volume collections of Russian classical writers such as *The Complete Works of Pushkin* and *The Complete Novels of Lev Tolstoy* have been retranslated. In 2010, *The Complete Works of F. Dostoevsky* (22 volumes in total) by Chen Shen, a researcher of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS, was published by Hebei Education Press. It is now the most complete collection of Dostoevsky's works with the most detailed annotations in China. Its release is of epoch-making significance for the study of Dostoevsky and even for the study of Russian literature in China.

Among the textbooks of Russian literature in colleges and universities, the textbook of the history of Russian literature is quite unique not counting the various textbooks of selected readings. In the past two decades, the representative textbooks of the history of literature in China include *The History of Russian Literature* (compiled by Ren Guangxuan, Zhang Jianhua and Yu Yizhong and published by Peking University Press in 2004) and *The History of Russian-Soviet Literature* by Cao Jinghua, a senior scholar of Russian literature in China and published by Henan Education Press in 1992. The former is written in Russian and covers the history of Russian literature from the Ancient Rus Period to the early 21st century, and the latter is written in Chinese and focuses on the development of Russian literature before the end of the 19th century. In addition, *The History of Russian Literature* by Prof. Zheng Tiwu (published by SFLEP in 2008) is also an influential textbook. *The History of Russian Literature* by D. S. Mirsky was translated into Chinese by Prof. Liu Wenfei (president of Chinese Association of Russian Literature Studies), and published by the Commercial Press in 2020. The book has long been used as a literature textbook in prestigious European and American schools, and its Chinese version serves as an important reference for the study of Russian literature in China. *A History of Russian-Soviet Literature Studies in China* by Prof. Chen Jianhua of East China Normal University (including four volumes in total published by Chongqing Publishing House in 2007) is another significant academic work in Russian literature studies in China.

At present, the vast majority of the domestic research on the literature of West and South Slavic countries come from the first generation of Chinese scholars who studied in Eastern European countries. *The History of Polish Literature in the 20th*

Century by Zhang Zhenhui, a researcher of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS (published by Qingdao Publishing House in 2004) and *The History of Polish Literature* with two volumes (published by SFLEP in 2019) is a must for foreign literature researchers in China, especially for those in Polish literature. *The History of Czech Literature* by Jiang Chengjun, a researcher of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS (published by SFLEP in 2006) is the first work to systematically study the history of Czech literature in China. It is of great academic value for the in-depth study of Czech literature. *The History of the Literature of Central and South-Eastern Europe in the 20th Century* (published by SFLEP in 2008) written by Feng Zhisheng, a researcher of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS is a significant academic book that illustrates how the literature of seven countries (such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) in the 20th century was influenced by Western European and Soviet-Russian literature to varying degrees while maintaining their own literary traditions. *The History of Eastern European Drama* (Lin et al., 2018) with seven volumes in total edited by Lin Hongliang, a researcher of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS, and other academics is the first in China to review the development of drama in Eastern European countries. Most authors have studied in Eastern European countries and they are proficient in the local languages. They have also visited the relevant countries for information collection. Their findings are invaluable for a comprehensive, systematic understanding of the drama culture of these Eastern European countries before the upheaval in Eastern Europe. Prof. Yi Lijun, a senior expert in Polish at BFSU, translated into Chinese the masterpieces by Henryk Sienkiewicz and Olga Tokarczuk, Polish writers and Nobel Prize winners, and introduced them to Chinese readers. She also wrote *A History of Polish Postwar Literature* (published by FLTRP in 2004), a significant work for Polish literature studies. For her outstanding achievements in translating and studying Polish literature, Prof. Yi Lijun was awarded “Lifetime Achievement Award in Translation” in 2018 and had won the honors granted by the Polish president, government as well as universities on several occasions.

What is worth mentioning is that *The Great Garden of Eastern European Literature* by Gao Xing, the editor-in-chief of *World Literature* of the Institute of Foreign Literature, CASS, offers a systematic view of the literature of seven Eastern European countries, including Slavic countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, which is published by Hubei Education Press in 2007. It is presented in an illustrated form that is highly readable and it is therefore popular among the readers. In addition, he edited the series *Blue Eastern Europe* (Vol. 1) (2012) published by Guangzhou Huacheng Publishing House and a large number of contemporary literature has been translated from Slavic countries into Chinese, which has generated a great response.

The upheaval in Eastern Europe and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union caused a fundamental change in the research target of the area studies concerning the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in China, which in turn directly affected the development of Slavic country studies in China. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC renamed the Department of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as the Department of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (1993). Subsequently, the two authoritative institutions for the study of the world history and the current situation of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, namely the Institute of World History Studies and the Institute of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Studies under the CASS, renamed relevant departments as well. To be specific, the Department of Soviet Union and Eastern European History Studies under the former was renamed the Department of Russian Eastern European History Studie, and the latter changed the name to the Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS. Meanwhile, the journal *On the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* sponsored by the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS was also renamed as *Eastern European and Central Asian Studies*. Russia is the largest successor of the Soviet Union and the largest neighboring country of China. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, China and Russia have been working together for new outcomes in bilateral relations. In 2002, the Institute of Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS was renamed as the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS so as to reflect Russia's status as a major country and its importance in China's country studies. In 2003, *Eastern European and Central Asian Studies* was renamed as *Russian, Central Asian and Eastern European Studies* (Chang, 2006). In 2013, the journal was renamed again as *Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies*.

The Department of Russian and Eastern European History affiliated to the Institute of World History Studies of the CASS boasts a large group of academics who have studied in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1950s. Their research focuses on the history of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Poland. In this way, they have completed a number of projects for the CASS and the National Social Science. In 2011, the Department of Russian and Eastern European History was replaced by the Department of Russian and Central Asian History and the Department of the Belt and Road History. Among the eight departments affiliated to the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, CASS, four of them target Russian studies, namely, the Department for the Study of Russian Politics, Society and Culture, the Department for the Study of Russian Economy, the Department for the Study of Russian Diplomacy and the Department for the Study of Russian History and Culture. In respect of the study of other Slavic countries, there is only one Department for Ukrainian studies, while

the area studies of West and South Slavic countries are all included in the Department for the Study of Transformation and Integration Theory. The relevant renaming of the above two institutes of the CASS has been recognized by universities and research institutes across the country who followed suit.

At the end of the “Cold War,” the “Eastern European” countries that had been under the control of the Soviet Union for a long time moved towards the path of independent development. At present, the vast majority of Eastern European countries are members of NATO and the European Union. Under such circumstances, the term “Eastern Europe” has gradually faded out, replaced by a new geopolitical concept “Central and Eastern Europe” that has emerged in recent years. Facing the trend of European integration, especially the integration of Central and Eastern European countries into Europe, the Western European Institute of CASS (founded in 1981) was renamed the European Institute of the CASS. In addition, a research department for Central and Eastern European countries has been established in the institute. The *Journal of European Studies* and the *Blue Book of European Development Report* cover the related research findings of Chinese scholars. In addition to the European Institute of CASS, more than ten Central and Eastern European research centers are set up by Chinese universities or registered with MOE. In 2018, the Center for Central and Eastern European Studies of BFSU launched *The Blue Book on Central and Eastern Europe: Development Report of Central and Eastern European Countries (2016-2017)* (written by Zhao Gang, Lin Wenshuang & Dong Xixiao, published by Social Sciences Academic Press, abbreviated as SSAP), representing the latest research findings in this field. As of April 2022, four other Blue Books in the series have been published.

In the past two decades, five Slavic research centers have been established in Chinese universities, namely the Slavic Research Institute of Tianjin University (2004), the Slavic Research Center of Beijing at Capital Normal University (2015), the Slavic Area Studies Center of BFSU (2017), the Research Center for Slavic States of Harbin Normal University (2017), and the Slavic Research Center of Circum-Mediterranean Institute at Zhejiang Foreign Studies University (2021). The Slavic Research Center of Beijing at Capital Normal University has frequently held international and domestic Slavic academic seminars. The director of the Center advocates that exchanges and cooperation should be strengthened between Chinese and international scholars of Slavic studies, which will enable China’s Slavic Studies to “play an increasingly important role in the world” (Liu, 2021a, p. 15). The Slavic Area Studies Center at BFSU held “The First National Symposium on Area Studies of Slavic Countries,” and launched a collection of papers with the same name (edited by Dai Guiju and Zhao Gang, published by FLTRP in 2019). The Center also launched the *Chinese Journal of Slavic Studies* (the English-Russian bilingual version). Presently, the researchers in the Center are

working on a monograph on studies of Slavic countries, *Research Series on Culture and Education in Countries of the Belt and Road*, which is an initial achievement of a major project funded by the National Social Science Fund.

In the field of Slavic country studies in China, the research on Russia is remarkable, with strong teams and fruitful findings. The institutions engaged in Russian studies include national ministries and commissions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the International Department, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Development Research Center of the State Council. Besides, specialized national research institutions are also involved in Russian studies, such as the Institute of Russian, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia Studies of the CASS, China Institute of international studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, Xinhua News Agency, and the Chinese Academy of Strategic Studies. In addition, many well-known universities and colleges are also conducting Russian studies. At present, MOE has set up bases and record centers for area studies in many colleges and universities. With self-organized Russian research institutes, there are hundreds of research centers, bases, and strategic research institutes of Russian studies at all levels across the country. In contrast, there are only a handful of Ukrainian Research Centers, Belarusian Research Centers, Polish Research Centers, Bulgarian Research Centers, and Czech research centers, while studies of some South Slavic countries are conducted in the Balkan Research Centre.

China boasts a long history of Russian studies and excellent researchers in this field. There are not only the first group of senior experts who studied in the Soviet Union but also excellent middle-aged scholars who grew up after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, quick-witted young scholars are proficient in many foreign languages. Notable achievements have been made in research through concerted efforts across three generations of Russian researchers. In the past two decades, Chinese researchers of Soviet history translated and published nearly 80 volumes of Soviet archives, such as *The Selected Historical Archives of the Soviet Union* (edited by Shen Zhihua and published by SSAP in 2002) including 34 volumes in total. They launched a program of translating famous Russian historical works (into Chinese), such as the *Russian History Translation Series* with 26 books in total (edited by Zhang Guangxiang, and published by SSAP during 2017–2021). In addition, they also published over 100 academic works on Russian history written by Chinese scholars. These translations and research works involve politics, economy, diplomacy, society, culture, ethnicity, and religion in different historical periods of Russia. They are of significance for the Chinese people to have a comprehensive understanding of Russian history and to grasp the laws of its development. From the perspective of research methods, scholars of Russian history in China adhere to the guidance of Marxist historical materialism, and at

the same time, they analyze problems with modern theories and the historical view of civilization (Liu, 2021b).

In the field of contemporary Russian studies, there are numerous achievements in the follow-up study of Russia's independent development path in the past three decades. From the 1980s to the present, scholars in the Institute of Russian, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia of the CASS have written, translated, and compiled hundreds of monographs, translated works, and large-scale reference books, along with tens of thousands of papers and research reports (Official Profile of the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, 2022). Russian research institutions at all levels across China give full play to their strengths, produce more high-quality research findings, and provide intellectual services for China's Belt and Road construction. At the beginning of the 21st century, researchers for Russian studies in China began to discuss Russian studies with Chinese characteristics. Nationwide seminars on "Russian Studies in China" are held at Heilongjiang University, Sichuan International Studies University, BFSU, Peking University, and Yanshan University, etc. As a discipline, China's Russian Studies has won the recognition of scholars in Russian teaching and research after more than ten years of accumulation, and their research areas cover Russian history, language, literature, art, economy, and other material or spiritual civilizations. In 2017, the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia launched the first collection of essays titled *Russian Studies in China* (edited by Li Yongquan, published by SSAP). By 2021, its fourth volume has been published. This series of essays brings together the latest historical and practical findings on Russian issues from teaching and research institutions of Russia in universities and research institutes in China, which has become a good platform for Chinese researchers of Russian studies to communicate with one another. In addition, since 2021, the Institute of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, CASS has also published the *Russian Yellow Book: Russian Development Report (2012)* for the first time (published by SSAP). As of 2021, the Institute has published 10 annual reports on Russia, providing an important window for researchers to understand the politics, economy, diplomacy, and social life of contemporary Russia.

In 1999, the CASS together with domestic authoritative experts in related fields, launched the book series *Guide to the World States*, a major research project of the CASS and a national key publishing project of the "Tenth Five-Year Plan." Since the volume of the series was published by SSAP in 2002, they have been widely praised by various circles of society. By 2012, a total of 150 academic monographs have been published, involving more than 180 countries and international organizations, covering politics, economy, culture, military, geography, and other fields. In the publishing history of China, these are the first large-scale book series that have made a complete and systematic introduction to the latest developments in countries and major international organizations around the

world. Among them, the introduction to ten Slavic countries is included, *Ukraine* by Ma Guiyou in 2003, *The Czech Republic* by Chen Guangsi & Jiang Li in 2004, *Poland* by Gao Deping in 2005, *Belarus* by Li Yunhua & Nong Xuemei by in 2005, *Serbia and Montenegro* by Zhang Yongyong by in 2006, *Bulgaria* by Zhang Ying in 2006, *Slovenia* by Wang Limin in 2006, *Slovakia* by Jiang Li in 2007, *Croatia* by Zuo Ya in 2008 and *Russia* by Pandeli in 2010. Besides that, the monographs on studies of Slavic countries also involve *Research on Culture and Education in Ukraine* by Zhang Hong and Chen Chunxia (published by FLTRP in 2021), *General History of Poland* by Liu Zuxi (published by Commercial Press in 2006), *General History of Yugoslavia* by Ma Xipu (published by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press in 2020), etc. The academic achievements on Slavic topics include the monograph *Slavic Civilization* by Yu Pei, Dai Guiju, & Li Rui (published by China Social Sciences Press in 2001) and *The Style of Slavic Orthodox Church* by Yu Pei & Dai Guiju (published by Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House in 2007), etc. Academic papers on area studies of West and South Slavic countries are published in academic journals, annual reports, and other research collections related to Eastern or Central and Eastern Europe in various institutes and universities across the country. However, none of China's other Slavic studies can compare with its Russian studies on an overall level, either in terms of the research areas or the sum total of achievement.

3 Reflections on Slavic Studies in China

After nearly a century of development, Slavic studies in China have achieved fruitful results in the fields of language, literature, and area studies, and have become an indispensable part of China's philosophy and social sciences. Chinese researchers engaged in Slavic studies have undertaken and completed some major projects, which are of important strategic value and practical guiding significance for China's development path and the construction of the Belt and Road. Nevertheless, Slavic studies in China as an emerging discipline still has many limitations, among which the restrictive factors are mainly as follows.

3.1 Slavic Country Studies in China Needs to Be Balanced

When reviewing the history of Slavic country study, it is not difficult to find that the comprehensive research strength on the Soviet Union (or Russia) is the strongest in China. This situation originates not only from historical reasons but also from practical needs. Since the Soviet Union was the country that had the greatest influence on China's development path in the 20th century, the motivation to learn

from the Soviet Union has inspired generations of Chinese intellectuals to engage in Soviet studies. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia became the largest successor to the Soviet Union. China and Russia achieved a smooth transition from Sino-Soviet relations to Sino-Russian relations. At present, the two countries have established a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era. The international and domestic situation determines that Russian study is still the top priority of China's country studies. Therefore, the large scale, solid foundation and fruitful results of China's Russian studies are beyond the reach of other Slavic studies in China.

Meanwhile, China's research on Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia has also reached a relatively high level, accumulating abundant results in language, literature, and country studies. In the future, we need to achieve full coverage studies of 13 Slavic countries.

3.2 “Slavic Studies” as a Discipline Needs to Be Improved

Slavic country studies in China have been in progress under the framework of Soviet and Eastern European studies for a long time, and have not formed its own disciplinary system. At present, Russian studies are in a dominant position. Comparative studies among East Slavic countries have not been carried out. Studies of the West and South Slavic countries have been included in the category of Central and Eastern European studies, of which almost no achievements as sub-regional topics. China's Slavic country studies and comparative studies of Slavic countries obviously lag behind compared with similar studies abroad. In recent years, departments and research institutes named after “Slav,” seminars on Slavic area studies, and the academic journal *Chinese Journal of Slavic Studies* have appeared in China, which indicates a positive development trend. With the improvement of personnel training in Slavic official languages in China's colleges and universities, young scholars who can use the target country's language to study Slavic countries will join force with current researchers, which will make up for the shortcomings of China's Slavic area studies. As a result, China's Slavic Studies as a discipline will continue to improve.

3.3 The Voice of China's Slavic Studies Needs to Be Heard

The Slavs are the largest ethnic group in Europe. The Slavic area studies abroad have a long history, which has laid a solid foundation and built a good academic platform in this field. As an emerging discipline, Slavic studies in China is gradually breaking away from the Soviet-Eastern Europe model, drawing on the

strengths of others and changing to a diversified model. Chinese scholars of Slavic studies need to go to the target country to do fieldwork, collect first-hand information from original texts, strengthen basic research, especially research on the newly independent Slavic countries, and lay a solid foundation for Slavic area studies. Thus, we can strengthen ties with international centers for Slavic studies at institutes and universities and some international academic association. On the one hand, it is necessary to promote Chinese researchers to go abroad to participate in international seminars; on the other hand, international academic forums should be held in China, inviting top scholars of Slavic studies from various countries to give lectures or to be visiting scholars in China and launching the joint training and cooperative training project of Slavic talents.

Some of the difficulties in Slavic studies in China are only temporary. As a whole, the situation of Slavic research in China shows a good prospect at this historical transition from points to well-grounded and comprehensive development. With our great determination to solve the present bottle-neck problems, our Slavic studies will surely take big strides and make its own voice heard in the global circles in the near future.

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