

Past and Thoughts

An Annotated Critical Edition

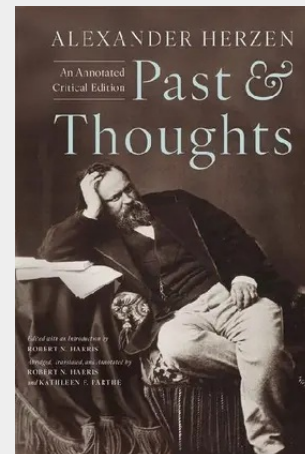
Isaiah Berlin called Alexander Herzen's magnum opus, *Past and Thoughts*, "a literary masterpiece worthy to be placed by the side of the novels of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoevsky." It was the most influential memoir published in nineteenth-century Russia, and its impact extended far beyond the tsarist era and the empire's borders, inspiring generations of thinkers, leaders, and dissidents struggling against authoritarian regimes. The first English-language translation in a century, thoroughly annotated with a new introduction, this volume shows why *Past and Thoughts* is considered a great classic. Against a dramatic backdrop of war, revolution, and exile, Herzen tells a stirring story of political agitation, marital scandal, betrayal, and despair. *Past and Thoughts* begins with Napoleon's invasion of Moscow during Herzen's infancy, then follows the author's central role in Russia's emerging intelligentsia, his imprisonment and exile in the frozen north, his adventures across a mid-century Europe undergoing the turbulence of revolution and unification, and his founding of the first uncensored Russian-language press. We see the Paris revolts of 1848 and the flamboyant swashbucklers of Italy's Risorgimento through Herzen's sharp eyes, alongside his bold journalism, which reached both the tsar's prisoners and the Winter Palace. This edition restores a key section on the tragic denouement of Herzen's marriage—omitted from previous abridged versions—and includes notes offering critical insight into Herzen's historical sketches, travelogues, satire, poetry, philosophical excursions, and polemics. Tolstoy remarked that "Herzen awaits his readers in the future." A piercing investigation of the human spirit and its enemies, *Past and Thoughts* is indeed a work for our time.

An annotated translation of Alexander Herzen's monumental memoir *Past and Thoughts*—the first new English-language edition in a century—captures the tumultuous life and penetrating cultural and political insights of the writer widely regarded as the founder of Russian socialism.

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37,50 €

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Nicht mehr lieferbar

Artikelnummer: 9780674495104

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-674-49510-4

Verlag: Harvard University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 24.04.2026

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2026

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 828 g

Seiten: 416

Format (B x H): 163 x 238 mm

