

Abstract

The proposed dissertation is devoted to the relations of the Czechoslovak cultural left to Soviet Russia in the interwar period. It focuses on the image of Soviet Russia, pointing out that for many Czechoslovak leftist artists and intellectuals it served as a framework for their own vision of an ideal socio-political arrangements. In their view, the image of Soviet Russia stood out as a utopia in the sense that the sociologist Karl Mannheim attributes to this phenomenon. The dissertation follows the evolution of this utopian image among the Czechoslovak cultural left in the early 1920s, maps the changes in its thematic structure and motives and follows its disintegration against the ideological split of the Czechoslovak cultural left in the late 1930s. This development is perceived through the analysis of travelogues in which left-wing artists and intellectuals presented their immediate impressions and experiences from this country. The semiotic text analysis method is being used for this purpose. By analysing the confrontational and transformative functions of the utopian image of Soviet Russia, the dissertation attempts to clarify the attitude of Czechoslovak artists and intellectuals towards Soviet Russia in the context of the socio-political situation of the interwar period and in the broader context of interwar European development. It draws a conclusion that some leftist intellectuals broke with the utopian image of Soviet Russia when it ceased to fulfil necessary confrontational and transformative functions. Therefore, they began to point out from within this utopian thinking on its ideological features. The escalating attack on modern art in the Soviet Union may be considered as a catalyst of this process, as it posed a major threat to the avant-garde utopian project of transformation of the world through the magical power of the image and the word.