

Review of dissertation

Changing the interpretation of monuments for the purpose of influencing the Czechoslovak collective identity through Rudé Právo and presidential speeches (1948-1957)

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Elisabeth Hobl's dissertation aims at understanding and explanation of how in 1948-1957 communist daily Rudé právo and presidential speeches were interpreting the nature and political and social role of the three monuments (Bethlehem Chapel, National Liberation Monument at Vítkov Hill, and the „known“ Soviet tank # 23 at Smíchov) and if/how these interpretations influenced the Czechoslovak collective identity.

Dissertation is introduced with an extensive theoretical part where the author selected an appropriate approach and methodology based on discourse analysis of a remarkable amount of texts.

As to this point the dissertation is fine, unfortunately, the fact that it was finished in a hurry left visible traces. First, the text is full of misspelling proving a lack of a solid proof-reading. Secondly, the text is very long which has resulted in the fact that some parts are treated in a rather descriptive way and the discourse analysis sometimes affects just a surface of the problem instead of going deeply into the essence of the matter – there is a certain discrepancy between ambition of the theoretical tools and their employment.

There also some questions to be explained - title of dissertation speaks about “Czechoslovak collective identity”, however, was there any reflection of the Czech and Slovak part of the problem (Bethlehem Chapel and Hussites were hardly acceptable for Slovaks already in the prewar period). Communists did not invent some of the analyzed stereotypes, but they rather modified some of the earlier ideas – how can we deal with (dis)continuity of these stereotypes? Another interesting point – when treating history as a construct produced by various creators – who and how is falsifying history, which is the criteria?

The overall impression of this dissertation is slightly disconcerted. On one hand the author presented very good work vis a vis general concepts, on the other hand implementation of these concepts is rather poor, although, as I believe, this fact has been rooted more in a fatal time-management than in Elisabeth Hobl's inability to produce an excellent piece of an academic text.

Proposed assessment: velmi dobře-dobře (depends on the viva).

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