

## **THE 1948 COMMUNIST TAKEOVER. STALINISM. SOCIALIST REALISM. CULTURE IN A COMMUNIST STATE**

Post 1945 - „Košice government programme" - „, guided democracy, controlled economy, foreign policy based on East-West cooperation". Free elections in 1946. Unsubstantiated charges of wartime collaboration used to remove candidates. Only National Front parties allowed. Salami tactics. Communists Communist Party won 40 per cent of the vote in the Czech lands. Next elections due to be held in April 1948. Growing Soviet-American breach in 1947. The Soviets banned the Czechoslovaks from participating in the Marshall Plan. Communist campaign for millionaires' tax, then against ministers protesting against it.

February 1948 - pretext: disagreement about payrises to civil servants. Crisis about police misuse by the Communists. The Communists forced government crisis and non-communist ministers resigned on 25 February 1948. Quick creation of a totalitarian system.

Post war literary developments of many strands abruptly cut off. Zhdanov, socialist realism. Writers arrested, catholics, surrealists.

Ladislav Štoll - January 1950 - condemned pre-war Czech modern poetry.

Sincere attempts to create socialist realist literature. *Rezáč, Nástup (Line-up)*, 1951, *Bitva (Battle)* 1954.

What is socialist realism:

Marxist theory of human development. Progression from primitive society, via feudalism, capitalism to COMMUNISM. The development is driven by economic forces, by economic development. Contradictions between the exploited and the exploiters. Transformation of quantity into quality. Different economic formations, which have nothing in common. Everything within a particular economic formation is influenced by it.

"Objective" laws, functioning outwith human will. Gives you enormous confidence if you believe in this.

Class view: "all values are relative, depending on which class they serve. Still today, people in power in the Czech Republic ask "why is he saying this?", not "what is he saying?"

Importance of terminology - labels quickly explain everything.

Communism is a classless society, dictatorship of the proletariat. Depiction of "objective reality" is wrong. Socialist literature must depict reality in its "revolutionary development", i.e. fictionalize marxist theory.

Maxim Gorky, Anatoly Lunacharsky

Socialist realism was highly formalised. Totalitarian art (see current exhibition in London). Similar, idealised features of Nazi and communist art

The East European ideological state.

Ideology: an excuse. You do not need to believe in it, but you must be seen to believe in it. Václav Havel: why did the greengrocer put communist slogans in his shopwindow?

Military organization of society. Everything controlled by the state. Ideological totalitarianism in the past also in the West (church)

Culture - product of economic relations. Progressive or reactionary.

Communists see themselves as rightful heirs of everything that is progressive in world culture (what is "progressive"?) because their system represents the peak of human achievement.

Art, culture "must express the views of the people". Elusive concept. 19th century, traditional concept.

Cultural policy - sum of measures and attitudes taken by authority in power towards various activities and fields of human endeavour which together represent culture.

Democratic culture tolerated, reactionary culture suppressed. But who decides what is reactionary?

Ideological Department of the Communist Party: "runs" cultural life of the nation.

Nationalisation of culture. No amateur productions or privately organised rock concerts.

Administrative system preserves historical monuments, classical works of literature. But imposes uniform view on the present, stifles all creativity.

Censorship. Propaganda. Elimination of true political life. Return of citizens into a child-like state. Concern only about themselves and their families. Subtle propaganda through consumerist art.

Literary magazines. Exaggerated role of literature. Everything has ideological implications.

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