

Das Institut für Slavische Philologie lädt ein zum Gastvortrag von

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The "epic turn" in the 1930s: a product of coercion or an aesthetic trend?

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16-18 Uhr

Raum E 318

LMU Hauptgebäude

Der Vortrag findet im Rahmen des Forschungskolloquiums von Prof. Riccardo Nicolosi statt. Alle Interessenten sind herzlich eingeladen

Synopsis:

Given the scope of violence and terror in the Stalinist epoch, it seems natural to see in the doctrine and practice of Socialist realism a pure product of coercion that had little to do with problems of aesthetic and cultural history as such. Yet if considered in a contemporary world-wide context, Soviet literature and art of the 1930s reveals some fundamental features that were common cultural trends of the time at large. These new trends emerging on the turn of the 1930s could be most generally characterized as "fatigue of avant-garde." Some dominant features of high avant-garde aesthetics of the 1910s-20s, such as fragmentariness and nonlinearity of discourse, a drive for the constant renewal of poetic language, and an open hostility toward the "conservative" mass public, have been turning by the end of the 1920s into dogmatic imperatives. Consequently, one can see on the part of many writers, musicians, and artists of the time, regardless of their cultural and political situation, a turn toward large epic narratives, grounded in the national cultural tradition and appealing to broader segments of the public. Within the framework of the new "epic trend," the novel of Socialist realism finds parallels in such Western writers as John Steinbeck, Scott Fitzgerald, Louis Aragon, Alfred Döblin (his works in the 1930s), Hans Fallada and many others. The decisive return of Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitry Shostakovich to the "grand symphony" of the Chaikovsky-Mahler provenance and to a national musical drama finds parallels in the evolution of Aaron Copland, Arthur Honegger, and Béla Bartók in the 1930s. An important question to be considered is how political and economic pressures interacted with the spontaneous development of aesthetic tastes and values of the time.