

1968: A Global Perspective

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From 1968 to 1825: Impact of Prague Spring on Dissident Poetry

In my paper I make a transition from Prague Spring of 1968 to Moscow Summer of the same year and then to Saint-Petersburg Autumn of 1825. In August of 1968 dissidents organized a demonstration on the Red Square, protesting against Soviet invasion into Czechoslovakia. Even though it was quickly suppressed, this event influenced Soviet intelligentsia and contributed to the identification of dissidents with the Decembrists, the aristocratic rebels and contemporaries of Pushkin. Although removed temporarily, the Decembrists could be viewed as mediators between the Soviet dissidents and protesters from Prague because they synthesize the ideals of intelligentsia with the aspiration towards a non-violent revolution. In the paper I will explore how nostalgia for "Romantic epoch" created subversive political message in the poetry of Okuzhava, Galich, and Naum Korzhavin. Their nostalgic poems may seem escapist, yet they draw parallels with the experience of Soviet intelligentsia in the 60s and involve such topics as conflict of an individual and the system and opposition of private and collective spheres.