

Opponent's opinion on the master thesis 'Getting Back to Europe: An Analysis of a Possible Self-perceived Inadequacy of Czechs Towards the West' by Sinan Ertin.

The topic chosen by the author is undoubtedly interesting and significant, mainly because all the Eastern Bloc countries have faced social, political, and economic challenges during the post-socialist transition. One of the consequences of complicated processes that these countries experienced is the rise of such serious socio-psychological effect that could be described as inadequacy (or inferiority) towards more prosperous and successful neighbors. Therefore, I consider it very important to study phenomena that can affect the attitudes and behavior of the citizens and the further development of those countries.

Among the positive characteristics of the work, I would emphasize that the author shows an awareness of different theoretical concepts and terminology of historical sociology, namely progress, civilizing processes, hegemony, geographical other, orientalism, etc. At the same time, his research perspective is so broad and immense that it is worthy not just a master's thesis but a solid monograph.

Nevertheless, the thesis genre is a kind of essay, more publicistic than academic. On the one hand, it allows the author to feel freer in his argument and conclusions. However, I believe this is also a substantial flaw that leads to the lack of scientific rigor when some essential notions are left unclear. In particular, we see the term 'inadequacy' in the work's title, while the author nowhere explains the specifics of the phenomenon. What are the attributes of inadequacy? What measures (psychological, social, political) are inherent in it? And what manifestations of this effect could be observed in the case of Czech? Also, the critical review of existing approaches to the problem is not presented, whereas one cannot investigate any phenomenon without defining its basic and significant theoretical parameters initially. In addition, the word 'possible' in the title seems slightly surprising as it gives the impression that the author is not sure whether the effect he will consider exists. Probably, all the circumstances mentioned above caused the author, despite

his attempt to view the issue from a broad perspective, to pass by the whole range of important questions concerning the subject.

For example, it is not entirely clear who the 'European' and, in particular, 'Western European' is. What are his values and essential traits to which Czechs feel their inadequacy? According to the thesis, a European is an individual who believes in progress (which kind of – technical? social? economic?) whilst being the conqueror with little knowledge of other cultures, however, perceiving himself as a hegemon. He has arrogant attitudes toward others, particularly the East (whether geographically East or European East), and imposes his way of life on the entire world.

Considering communist times, the author explicitly contraposes European and Soviet civilizations. Wherein, he argues, the impact of Western-European civilization on Czechs maintained during the times of the Iron Curtain (he implies the term 'surrogate hegemony'). But were Soviet and Western European civilizations so different? Or did they have common roots and origins? If so, is it relevant when speaking about 'surrogate hegemony'? If not, the author's opinion was not comprehensively justified. Unless we take seriously (that is hard to do) the obviously provocative and hyperbolic definition of a Soviet man as a caricatural 'homo sovieticus' made by Lev Gudkov (not Gennady as it was written in the thesis, while Gennady Gudkov is a Russian politician) also in the times of perestroika (although the origin of the notion finds its roots in satirical works of the famous Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov).

Also, I cannot pass by some inaccuracies in the document's formatting, namely, in notes and references. I noticed several cases when sources in notes were not included in the reference list.

One can definitely agree with some author's arguments and conclusions; nevertheless, I believe these arguments should find their evidence in practical research to eliminate the adjective 'possible'. And probably, it would be more relevant if the author formalized his idea as a hypothesis.

Despite all concerns and flaws, I assume this work deserves a deliberate discussion. Therefore, I would recommend a grade of 'C' whilst being glad to leave the student a chance to prove himself during the defense.

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