

## **Call for Papers**

### **International Conference**

#### **The 1970s in the USSR. A cultural renaissance?**

#### **Conference languages: French, English and Russian**

The conference jointly organized by INALCO (CREE – Centre de Recherche Europe - Eurasie) and Université Jean Moulin-Lyon 3 (IRPhiL) explores the intellectual and artistic flourishing of the late Soviet era (from 1968 to the Perestroika), commonly known as “Stagnation”, yet nevertheless unexpectedly rich in cultural production. The aim of the conference is to investigate this little-known cultural phenomenon from the standpoint of an interdisciplinary cultural history focused on forms of sociability and sensibility.

Brezhnev-era USSR went through both deep social (urbanization, advent of a mass-consumption society) and cultural (the spread of nonconformism) changes. The poet Olga Sedakova, a key witness of this time, speaks of an authentic “renaissance” within the human sciences and beyond, the emergence of a new model of an intellectual combining erudition, universal and humanistic spirit beyond the purview of officialdom. The aim of the conference is to investigate systematically the pertinence of this characterization of the decade as a belated “renaissance” conceived as a project of a transformation of the self and of culture, within a chronological framework comprised between 1968 and the Perestroika.

A renewed interest and admiration for the Renaissance period (not the first one in Russian cultural and intellectual history) from a historical, philosophical, and artistic points of view is symptomatic of the new concerns emerging during these years. Stimulated by the popularity of Mikhail Bakhtin’s portrayal of the Renaissance in his book on Rabelais (even though he conceived his project in the 1930s) as an era of creativity and individual freedom which challenged official dogmatism, the 1970s witnessed an exponential growth of publication dedicated to the Renaissance, the most famous but also the most controversial being the *Aesthetics of the Renaissance* by Alexei Losev (1978), which sparked lively discussions and debates around issues such as humanism, human creativity and its limits, a debate which reflects a widespread malaise about the fate of an individual cut off from his roots. A recurring theme of these debates is possibility of alternatives ways of self’s transformation following the decline of the Soviet-era project of the “new man”.

The conference will address the following aspects:

1. *Leading figures and personalities* within the cultural field which reflect the state of mind of this generation of the 70s across various disciplines: philosophy, history, literature,

music, etc. (O. Sedakova, M. Mamardashvili, V. Erofeev, V. Bibikhin, S. Averintsev, A. Piatigorsky, V. Toporov, etc.). What was the exact role of these intellectuals and artists, and how did they contribute to the emergence of a new humanistic sensitivity? Can we speak of a cultural elite? What role they played as cultural mediators within their society? The conference will examine intellectual and spiritual itineraries, the institutional role they played, as well as their cultural production and its impact within a scientific discipline or within the humanities in general.

2. *Leading ideas, mobilizing themes*: “renaissance”, renewal, the role of the intellectual within contemporary society; the theme of the Other, such as the interest towards the legacy of past or non-Western civilizations which contributed to prepare the opening and unraveling of the Soviet civilization; the epistemology of the human sciences against the background of a technocracy triumphant; a new feeling of time and a critical appraisal of models of historical change; issues such as the interpretation of the humanist tradition’s legacy within the context of the reevaluation of the Soviet historical experience and a renewed concern about the relationship of religion and culture.
3. *Practices and “technologies of the self”*: a particular attention will be given to the process of creation of identities, modes, networks, and places of sociability, the emergence of new schools of thought, the issue of the transmission of cultural heritage, the memory of pre-revolutionary intellectual culture. The pioneering work of the anthropologist Alex Yurchak demonstrated the importance of practices and new forms of sociability emerging during those years that allowed the representatives of the “last Soviet generation” to practice a form of “outsidedness” (exotopy). The sociological and anthropological approach can be completed by a section dedicated to various “technologies of the self” (M. Foucault) such as the practice of reading, contemplation, conversation or even the pursuit of academic “acribia” (scrupulousness, rigorous accuracy) akin to spiritual exercises, deliberate individual practices aimed at the transformation of the way of seeing the world and of transforming the self (P. Hadot).

**Submission guidelines:** abstract submissions are due on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. They should include the following elements: title, abstract (250 words), authors name affiliation and short bibliographical note. Abstract submission shall be sent to Dr. Ilya Platov ([ilya.platov@gmail.com](mailto:ilya.platov@gmail.com)). The conference will take place in Paris, 17-19 of May 2022 at INALCO. Upon request funding will be made available, if necessary, to cover the travel costs of participants who is proposals have been selected.