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Our Soviet Ancients. Appropriation of Antiquity for Children’s and Youth Culture of the USSR

The attitude towards antiquity in the Soviet Union was ambiguous and changed over time. It started with abolishing classical education in Russia just after the Bolshevik revolution. But at the same time some ancient ideas, texts and figures were promoted as a common European (and Soviet) heritage, being used as a tool to legitimise new Soviet authority. The history of the Soviet Union is full of denials of antiquity and returns to it. It is worth mentioning at least the return of teaching Latin at high schools during the WW2 or large publishing projects, such as translations of ancient authors and publishing biographies of remarkable men by the “Youth Guard” Komsomol publisher. As education and publishing were under the state control, the initiatives were part of cultural politics.

Another important phenomenon concerns popular culture. There were many animations (mostly for children and youth) about Greek and Roman mythology and ancient history. There was a state order from Ministry of Education in 1969 (“Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece” series by Alexandra Snezhko-Blotskaya) in Moscow, but then continued in many republics, and, at least some times, it seems to be an initiatives of the authors of the films.

Many of these cultural texts have redesigned classic characters and subjects to make them more suitable as role models for the education of Soviet youth. This remaking will be a subject of my analysis.



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