

Lumina Quaeruntur ““Images of science” in Czechoslovakia 1918-1945-1968” colloquium

Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, v. v. i. (MUA CAS), Gabčíkova 2362/10, Praha 8, 182 00

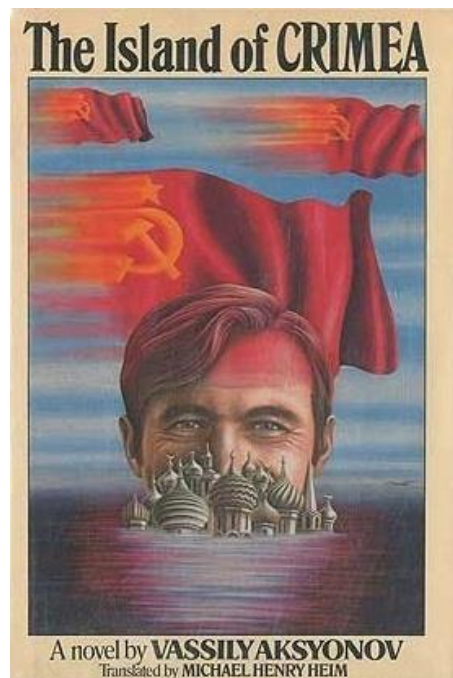
January 26, 2023, 10:00 Prague, Berlin / 11:00 Kyiv

Room MUA CAS B -110 & zoom (for the link contact [surman@mua.cas.cz](mailto:surman@mua.cas.cz))

## Riccardo Nicolosi

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### Counterfactual Thinking in the Soviet Union Between Historical Sciences and Literature



In my talk I focus on counterfactual historiography and counterfactual literature, that is on thought experiments that address the question what would have happened if history had taken a different course. First I discuss the epistemological value of this kind of thought experiments in both discourses and highlight the tradition, which developed in the 20th Century in the West. Second, I analyze the fate of counterfactual story-telling in the Soviet Union, which is situated between determinism of HistMat and alternativity of and in history. Here I try to explain the difficulties that the Soviet culture had in asking the question of "What If?". Finally I'll give a look at the first counterfactual novel in the Soviet Union, Vasily Aksyonov's *The Island of Crimea* (1981), which I read as a "historiosophic provocation", that is, as a counterfactual reflection on the Soviet philosophy of history.

**Riccardo Nicolosi** (PhD) is Chair of Slavic Philology(Literatures) at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich. His latest publications explore the rhetorical and narrative interfaces between literature and science.