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'Noon Universe' revisited: Conservative engagement with the Soviet science fiction

Popularity of the genre of science fiction among Soviet intelligentsia made this reading for entertainment a real life-changing experience for the generation of reformers of the 1990s as well as for architects of the Putin's regime in our days. This paper examines think-tanks (such as Russian Institute for Strategic Research and Russian Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies) of the Presidential Administration, whose staff largely consists of professional science fiction writers and intellectuals, who extensively reflect on science fiction as a medium for political projecting (e.g. Boris Mezhuev and Aleksandr Neklessa). The paper focalizes on the intellectual legacy of the enormously popular works by brothers Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, showing that today's Russian conservatives decisively repudiate but at the same time profoundly engage with them. Specifically, I demonstrate how the Strugatsky brothers serve as a ground for ideological reflection on Russia's relation with the West, on modernization, and progress in general. The Strugatsky brothers had deep moral and existential doubts whether advanced intruders can 'progress' (i.e. facilitate the progress of) the backward local population, but it took their followers in post-Soviet Russia to radicalize these doubts and transmogrify them into an unequivocal 'no' to what they perceive as violent Westernization.