

IN SEARCH OF A MAN ZENIT AND ZENITISM

ZENIT – the main forum of avant-garde Zenitism movement and its program ideas was an international magazine of leftist orientation that had a great number of collaborators from Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana, almost every part of Europe, North and South America and even Japan. The magazine had an apparent commitment to the new art which they believed will help make a new man of the twentieth century. Zenitistic activism reflects the antiwar atmosphere after the horrors of World War I, and participates in the aspiration to create an informal international brotherhood of artists gathered around the idea of radical “remeriting of all merits”. In different phases of magazine and movement’s existence there was an active exchange and reception of ideas and experiences with European artistic movements, from Expressionism, Post-Cubism, Futurism and Dadaism all the way to Russian avant-garde and social tendencies. In its leftist orientation Zenit also undoubtedly supported the October Revolution and Marxist ideas. From the first issue Zenit has expressed its sharp critical orientation towards conservative (petty) bourgeoisie state of mind and capitalist society, authority of political government and the church, social injustice and ossified institutions through argumentative and program articles, manifests, prose and poetry. Compelling visual effects, such as the design of the magazine and other Zenitistic issues, reproductions, typographic and graphic solution have reflected that fiery activism.

Parallel with the sharp critique of European capitalism and its political and cultural practices that was concisely contained in Micic’s program slogan *Antieurope*, Zenitism offered its own project called Balkanizing of Europe that was supposed to be conducted by the *barbaric genius* (deciviliser) “the bearer of unsentimental and raw vitality – pure faith – non-artificial soul – and open and kind heart”.

With the slogan “East – West” and affirmation of new creative forms and actions like “words in space”, illogicality, paradoxality, usage of colloquial terms, ads, news from printed media and the radio, Zenit was open towards new media and models of expression in prose and poetry, philosophy and critique, theater and film, fine arts and visual culture, architecture and applied arts. It has supported and propagated new scientific and technical achievements such as radio, telegraph, airplane, electrical energy, Tesla’s discoveries or Einstein’s Theory of relativity.

Although they were marginalized and ignored in their time and areas of origin, Zenit and Zenitism hold an important place on the map of European historical avant-gardes of the twenties.

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Writer and critic Ljubomir Micic (Sosice, Jastrebarsko 1895 – Kacarevo near Pancevo 1971) founded and issued the first number of Zenit magazine in February of 1921 in Zagreb. From May 1923 the editorial staff was in Belgrade and it remained there until the magazine was forbidden in December of 1926 because of a text “Zenitism through the lens of Marxism” by an unknown author Dr. M. Rasinov (most likely Micic himself). There were 43 issues in total.

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