



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

INSTITUTUL NAȚIONAL PENTRU
STUDIUL TOTALITARISMULUI

30INST

Call for Papers

„The Light Comes from the West!”

The Politics of East-European Migration during the Cold War

International conference

The lives of the citizens of the Soviet bloc countries were largely determined by imposed isolation from the rapidly modernising democratic Western world and radical restrictions on the free circulation of cultural goods and other commodities, as well as foreign travel. This was motivated, above all, by the ideological, economic and cultural divide symbolised by the Iron Curtain and the fear on the part of the communist authorities that the escalation of differences between their countries could compromise the unity of the entire Soviet empire.

No wonder that in contrast to the title of a lecture given by the Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu in 1945 – *The Light Comes from the East* – which predicted Soviet political dominance in Eastern Europe, in the decades of the Cold War many citizens felt that the light came rather from the West. One way of fulfilling this desire was migration, motivated first of all by the repressive nature of communist dictatorships, political or religious discrimination and economic hardship. In addition to the very many individual cases of migration, the Cold War was also marked by several major migration waves, such as the ones following the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising and the Prague Spring of 1968 or the Polish migration in the 1980s in the aftermath of martial law.

The actors and institutions of Western diasporas and émigré milieus played a major role in reducing the isolation of the Soviet bloc, to some extent ensuring the cross-border flow of information, knowledge and some cultural products between East and West, while also representing citizens who suffered discrimination in their home countries, amplifying the voices of dissidents behind the Iron Curtain and keeping Eastern regimes under political pressure. At the same time, the communist authorities sought to extend their control and influence beyond the Iron Curtain, with the intention of weakening the role of émigré actors and institutions.

The aim of the planned conference is to revisit the broadly defined politics of migration in the light of new archival materials and considering recent research approaches, with a particular focus on the following issues:



- foreign travel and passport policies of the communist regimes (social conditioning of outward mobility [mobility of elite groups and intellectuals vs. immobility of the masses]; legal migration and the criminalisation of migration; migration as a political weapon, etc.);
- influencing and diversifying diaspora and émigré actors and institutions by socialist countries (undercover agents, state security operations, diplomacy, etc.);
- politicisation and political power of Western diasporas and émigré circles (émigré political actors and institutions and their role; the impact of new migrants on Western diasporas; tensions and cooperation between East-European diasporas in the West; networks between dissidents and Western émigré milieus; human rights discourses, actions and their impact on various political levels);
- the problem of migration in Eastern-Western relations (tensions, ideological wars, common interests; interstate relations and treaties; policy on migration of specific nationalities; political aspects of economic migration and unofficial commercial exchange in the Soviet bloc, etc.);
- comparative and transnational approaches (comparative analysis of the diasporas, émigré groups or policies of socialist countries; transnational case studies on cross-border political cooperation and exchanges).

Organisers:

- European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS, Warsaw)
- National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (NIST, Bucharest)
- National University of Political Studies and Public Administration/College of Communication and Public Relations (NUPSPA, Bucharest)

Date: 10–12 October 2023

Venue: Romanian Academy Library, Bucharest, Romania

Deadline for sending proposals: 31 May 2023

The title and abstract of your paper of maximum 300 words accompanied by a short bio (also of maximum 300 words, including your current affiliation), should be sent to secretariat@totalitarism.ro by 31 May 2023.

The organisers will provide accommodation for selected speakers.

The organisers are planning to publish the papers delivered at the conference