

International Conference:

Historical (Re-)interpretations of 1945 in the Former European Socialist Countries

Zagreb, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, 25 September 2025

In 2025, we mark 80 years since the end of the Second World War. The end of wartime horrors did not bring about the benefits of democracy, the affirmation of human rights principles, or the end of authoritarian policies to many nations in this region. Most countries between the Baltic and the Adriatic found themselves under the influence of the Soviet Union, leading to the establishment of socialist regimes. This change defined the political structure of the area and influenced historical narratives and the culture of remembrance of 1945, resulting in various, often conflicting interpretations of 1945. While liberation from fascism is celebrated on one hand, the beginning of Soviet (communist) domination as a new form of political and ideological repression is highlighted on the other. These conflicts in historical narratives are revived in today's political contexts, especially after the Russian military interventions in Ukraine have given new meanings to the memory of 1945.

At this Conference, we aim to examine how the historiographies of former socialist states of the area between the Baltic and the Adriatic have researched and interpreted the year 1945 over the past 80 years. Have historiographical narratives changed over time, and what caused these changes? We will consider whether the collapse of communism in the late 1980s influenced historiography in post-communist societies when focusing on the year 1945. Does the recent Russian aggression and the war between Russia and Ukraine affect the historical interpretation of 1945 in the former socialist states of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe?

The International Conference is jointly organised by the Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb, the Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb, the Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague, the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), Regensburg, the Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest and the Study Centre for National Reconciliation, Ljubljana. The Conference is also supported by the Liszt Institute – Hungarian Cultural Centre, Zagreb, the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Zagreb, as well as co-funded by two NextGenerationEU projects (POREHR; BAD).

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Additional information:

Josip Mihaljević, Croatian Institute of History, Zagreb,
Email: josip@isp.hr

Ivan Hrstić, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Zagreb,
Email: Ivan.Hrstic@pilar.hr

Milan Sovilj, Institute of History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague,
Email: sovilj@hiu.cas.cz