

[Shaping the 'Socialist Self'? The Role of Psy-Sciences in Communist States of the Eastern Bloc \(1948-1989\)](#)

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Call for Papers

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Eastern Europe History / Studies, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology

CALL FOR PAPERS INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

Shaping the 'Socialist Self'? The Role of Psy-Sciences in Communist States of the Eastern Bloc (1948-1989)

Date: 6 November 2020

Venue: Prague, Czech Republic

Deadline for applications: 30 June 2020

Organizing institutions:

- [CEFRES](#) (French Research Center in Humanities and Social Sciences in Prague)
- [Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences](#)
- [Collegium Carolinum](#)

The history of psy-sciences under communist rule in the former Eastern Bloc has been widely perceived as a mirror image of state socialist mental health policies. In the last years, however, the situation has changed: the history of psy-sciences in communist Europe has become an evolving field of research dealing with a variety of topics ranging from the transnational history of psychiatry to the history of social control and criminality. Following post-Foucauldian ideas, many historians and other scholars started to turn their attention to the relation between psy-sciences and distinctive communist art of governing. The role of psy-sciences in communist dictatorships began to be perceived within a broader framework of biopolitics and

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technologies of the 'self'. Furthermore, drawing inspiration from science and technology studies, many of these works aimed to analyse knowledge and practices of psy-sciences in relation to complex networks of agents and objects.

Following these developments, this workshop aims to bring together researchers dealing with the history of psy-sciences in communist Europe. The main aim is to (1) discuss contemporary approaches, topics and themes in current research about the role of psy-sciences in the communist states of the Eastern Bloc and to (2) outline possible questions and issues relevant for future research in this field.

We are interested in all papers from various methodological backgrounds dealing with the history of psy-sciences in communist Europe. We especially welcome papers focusing on aspects and questions such as:

- **Psy-sciences between East and West: circulation of ideas and practices**

How did the production of knowledge and practices of psy-experts look like in Eastern Europe? Were psy-experts involved in discussions with their colleagues from other parts of Europe or were they working in isolation? Were psy-experts in Eastern Europe influenced by their national scientific traditions or by globalising trends in the field? Was there any forum for exchanging ideas and theories? What kind of role had international conferences in shaping the knowledge of psy-experts?

- **Creating the 'socialist self': psy-sciences, identity and politics**

How did the knowledge and practices of psy-sciences form the 'self' of people under the communist rule? How was the concept of 'socialist personality' constructed and where was it operating (e.g. in mental health institutions, at schools or in the military)? Was the discourse of psy-sciences subjugating or empowering? What kind of technologies of the 'self' did psy-sciences produce and to what extent did people internalize them? How did psy-sciences shape the communist art of governing?

- **Regulating the socialist society: psy-sciences, security and social control**

What was perceived as 'abnormal' or 'anti-social' behaviour and how was it treated by psy-experts and the state? How did the knowledge and practices of psy-science influence socialist criminology and penology? How was the medicalisation of crime integrated into the socialist criminal justice system? To what extent did psy-sciences get involved into public health campaigns propagated by the socialist state?

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We welcome all contributions in different phases of research (e.g. an outline of research, a presentation of a chapter/article or finished research). Please send us a short biography (ca. 150 words) and an abstract of your paper (up to 400 words for a 20-minute presentation) until 30 June 2020 to Jakub Střelec (jakub.strelec@fsv.cuni.cz). The workshop will be held in English.

Participants who are not able to secure funding for travel and accommodation will have the possibility to apply for financial assistance.

Organisation:

- Jakub Střelec (Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University / PhD CEFRES Fellow)

Scientific Committee:

- Jérôme Heurtaux (CEFRES Director)
- Adéla Gjuričová (Senior Researcher, Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences)
- Martin Schulze Wessel (Institute Director of Collegium Carolinum)

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