

## Agents in Their Own Service?

### Central and Eastern European Actors in the Structures of Cold War Internationalism

*Call for Articles*

The history of international relations during the Cold War has traditionally focused on the dominant role of the Soviet Union, reflecting the bipolar perception of the conflict. However, in the context of globalization studies inspired by postcolonial, social and cultural historical approaches, the focus on Cold War dichotomies proves highly reductive. The transnational perspective also relativizes the dominant position of foreign policy institutions as key actors and emphasizes the role of professional groups, personal initiatives, expert knowledge, and international networks and communities.

Through this lens, the Cold War can be seen primarily as a specific phase in the development of internationalism. We subscribe to the theses of Sandrine Kott or Jessica Reinisch that internationalism was not the antithesis of Cold War rivalry, but rather the result of this internally contradictory process, as it followed and shaped ideological and geopolitical barriers on the one hand, while at the same time crossing and disrupting the boundaries between the two blocs towards a universalist global agenda. In this way, we do not see the socialist world as a passive object, victim or loser, but as an active co-creator of the contemporary global world. At the same time, in the light of recent literature, internationalism can be seen not only (or primarily) as a liberal ideology, but also as a category of practices of border crossing, the formation of international and transnational institutions and networks that enable the circulation of knowledge, information and people. We can thus work with a plurality of internationalisms that have their own (albeit interconnected) networks that overlap, move away from or converge with each other over time. From this perspective, international organizations are not merely instruments of power for great powers, but also platforms and networks that enable state and individual actors to achieve goals that are difficult to accomplish at the national level.

In the context of Cold War internationalisms, the focus of foreign literature is primarily on the secretariats of international organizations, with socialist internationalism often understood as a Soviet globalization project that gradually weakened from the 1970s onwards until its eventual dissolution as a result of Cold War developments. This call aims to challenge this interpretation and to invite authors to explore the actors or so-called agents of internationalism (Jessica Reinisch) in socialist Central Eastern Europe. In the post-Stalin period, these countries actively participated in the activities of universalist international organizations with the ambition to influence their course, often through positions in their secretariats. Often these were experts and diplomats who were also active at the national level. These were not only liberal or universalist international organizations, but also socialist-oriented ones, of which Prague was an important centre.

For example, we ask ourselves **the following questions**:

- What has been the role of these agents/actors in shaping structures and policies at national and international levels?
- In what ways did they balance their embeddedness in different social networks of internationalisms?
- How did they reconcile their personal affinities and loyalties? What did they serve and what strategies did they use to achieve their goals? Can fundamental continuities in their activities be traced?
- How did they gain and consolidate their position vis-à-vis the international community and domestic political authorities?
- Can the convergence of socialist and liberal oriented organizations be traced in the cases of the internationalists?
- What was the role of emigration in international organizations, whether emigration from socialist countries to the West (after 1948, 1956, 1968), communist emigration to the East after 1948, or anti-colonial exile from the South to the North?



We welcome articles and essays in English (in Czech only by prior arrangement) **in the range of 5,000 to 12,000 words**. Manuscripts should be submitted via our webpage. science disciplines. **The deadline for submission of manuscripts in English is 31 January 2026.** *Soudobé dějiny* / *Czech Journal of Contemporary History* is indexed in Scopus, ERIH PLUS, CEEOL and CrossRef. It is published by the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences. Contact: [sd@usd.cas.cz](mailto:sd@usd.cas.cz) or 00420 257 286 344.

Authors of the CfA: Mikuláš Pešta, Jiří Janáč and the editors of *Soudobé dějiny*