

FIRST CONGRESS OF SFERES

French association for Russian and Eastern European studies in social sciences
(ICCEES member)

1989 IN THE EAST: BETWEEN ORDER AND SUBVERSION

organized with the support of CERCEC (Centre d'études des mondes russe, caucasien et centre-européen - EHESS, CNRS), ISP (Institut des sciences sociales du politique - Université Paris Nanterre, ENS Paris Saclay, CNRS), CEFR (Centre d'études franco-russe - MAEE, CNRS), CERI (Centre de recherches internationales - Sciences Po, CNRS), *Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest* (RECEO) and *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies* (PIPSS)

CALL FOR PAPERS

The political events that unfolded in Eastern Europe around the year 1989 have constituted one of the largest upheavals that the European continent has seen since the end of the Second World War and the dawn of the Cold War. The congress intends to re-examine the processes that led to the disintegration of communist regimes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as in the Balkans and the USSR. This disintegration appears to be the product of complex mobilizations based on new forms of action and it crossed the most established political borders within Sovietized regimes: between “dissidence” and involvement in the official sphere, between “conventional” political action and street-level mobilization, between national spaces. During this period, the repertoires of action, the institutional ties, the ideological preferences, and the actors’ identities, including the most official, have been profoundly changed. The modes of contestation have gone from a self-limited subversion of established institutions, one that could accompany forms of collaboration with the regime, to much clearer and radical head-on opposition. These same oppositions were led by actors often integrated within the system, according to the rhythms and modalities specific to each country (and, in the USSR, to each republic), perhaps to each social sphere, and correlated to the phenomenon of circulation between these spaces. Everything occurred as if the events linked to 1989 had resided in the blurring of routine landmarks of the *order* and of the *subversion* of the “system.”

In spite of the considerable number of research projects dedicated to the “fall of communism,” there are few that systematically examine these transformations *in the making*, taking into account the entire social field and its blossoming since the second half of the 1980s. The congress seeks to explore these transformations by highlighting their heterogeneity in the different countries and in transcending binary categories of analysis inherited from transitology: power/opposition, conservative/reformer; authoritarianism/democracy; planning system/capitalism, etc. Underscoring the complexity of these processes and the strategic anticipations that they raised at the moment of their unfolding impels the most attentive possible reading of the events to the practices of actors of the different social spheres and to the manner by which the transformations of relationships and the interdependences between these sectors affected the practices. Empirical materials, whether newly available or already known, can thus be questioned or revisited in the light of these methodological requirements. How did the existing order’s actors and institutions adapt or how were they discarded? How did the reconfiguration of the system, using elements of the past, reshape actors’ practices? Which new forms and configurations of competition have emerged? How does one understand the role played by the “grassroots” actors or those situated at the periphery of the elites?

We invite scholars wishing to participate in the congress to propose papers around the following themes:

1. THE NEW FORMS OF POLITICAL ACTION

How, by the re-appropriation of old forms of mobilization or the invention of new ones by the opposition, did a new directory of collective actions emerge (street demonstrations, electoral campaigns, round tables, clubs, parties, “national” or “popular” fronts, chain of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in the Baltic countries, Imre Nagy’s funerals in Hungary, etc.)? How were these new directories sometimes re-appropriated by the actors of the “apparatuses,” thus contributing to their legitimation or, to the contrary, to their disqualification? By which modalities and actors did these new forms of action circulate between countries in this zone? How have the mobilizations produced new uses for political categories (left/right, for example) and new hybridizations (“liberal-socialism,” “red-brown,” “theocratic-democratic” movements...)? One could, for example, dwell upon the models drawn from western democracies. How have non-elite or “popular” groups intervened in the political interplay, and how have the elites reacted? Can one narrow the perspective, like in classic transitology, to street demonstrations, or should one focus on the logic of political representation seeking to produce a “democratic” support to the transformations, or, inversely, to disarm the mobilizations of which the blossoming potentially deprived the “reformers” of their legitimacy as “democratizers”?

2. THE RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE STATE, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, AND RULING PARTIES

Which processes have fragmented these institutions? Which resources have allowed actors to distinguish themselves and to seize parts of old institutions to develop internal competition within different sectors (ruling party; central or regional authorities or, in the case of the USSR, those of the Soviet republics and the regions within them; social services; education; cultural institutions; etc.)?

3. THE INFORMATION FLOW WITHIN THE APPARATUSES OF POWER

How have information channels internal to the state and within the ruling party transformed themselves? How have their “upper spheres” (political bureau, ministries...) followed the current processes in society? In federal states, how has the center been informed of what happened in the republics, some of which had begun to assert their autonomy? How have surveillance practices implemented by security services evolved? What was the role of public opinion polls, since their emergence in the late 1970s, in the authorities’ representations of “society”?

4. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MEDIA SPHERE

How have public media redefined themselves in order to fall within what increasingly appeared as a redesign of the Soviet system and in the political and economic transformations of their sector, for example, with the appearance of alternative media (sphere called “beyond censure” in the 1980s, then came the media’s liberalization at the end of the decade)? How have the latter managed to impose themselves in the landscape? What have been journalists’ trajectories in such an uncertain environment? What has been the influence of foreign media in these reconfigurations?

5. THE NEW POLICING AND SECURITY MEASURES

How have the authorities framed the new forms of political mobilization (demonstrations, opposition movements ...) through negotiation, by changing the techniques of surveillance, repression, and policing? What were the new uses made by the actors of the judicial system, the police, and the army? Have specific models of repression and policing been circulated between different countries within the region? How have law enforcement agencies transformed their relationships with other social sectors?

6. THE RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE ECONOMIC WORLD

How have state enterprises been split up (by the creation of “cooperatives” within them)? How have the former and emerging elites grabbed public property and, to revisit these issues, what were the signs of organized transfers of public policy from one country to another? For example, what was the role of the Hungarian “laboratory” of liberalization? What created private property before the privatizations? How have the supply channels of goods been affected? What practices have been developed to face shortages? What happened to the “second” market (trafficking of goods, services, and currencies)? How have foreign actors seen their access to different economic spaces change?

7. INTERNATIONAL CIRCULATIONS, DIPLOMACY, AND FOREIGN POLICY

What have been the pacts, alliances, bilateral relations, exchanges of information and practices between states, between ministries, between ruling parties, and between the protest movements of the region? How has the arrival of international foundations, organizations, and investors affected the internal interactions between and within the different social spheres? What roles did the different diasporas play? What were the effects of a concomitant event in the communist world—the demonstrations and repression at Tiananmen Square—which also marked the transformations in Eastern Europe?

8. SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS, AND CULTURE BETWEEN ORDER AND SUBVERSION

What has been the role of the arts and social sciences in the processes of subversion? How have artists profited from the political transformations to get political institutions to finance their work and to give voice to their protests? How have national and international events, such as film, music, and theater festivals, exhibitions, publications of works, or large sporting events, been both subversive and policing events? What have been the effects of newly available sources (archives, oral sources, testimonies, literary works on prior periods...) and greater access to western scholarship had on the social sciences and their interpretations of the past?

CALENDAR

Deadline for abstract submission (maximum 1,000 words), in French or English, to sferes@cnrs.fr: **December 1, 2018**.

Notification of acceptance: **January 15, 2019**.

Deadline for sending texts: **September 1, 2019**.

Date and venue of the congress: Paris in **October 2019**.

Speakers are required to become members of SFERES.

Fees for academic staff in full time posts and post-doctoral researchers: 15€.

Fees for students: 5€.

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