



Communist Biographies – New perspectives, sources and discussions Call for papers – special edition of the journal *Securitas Imperii* 2022/2

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More than thirty years ago, the possibility of research on the history of the communist movement and regime opened up in Czechoslovakia as well in other former state-socialist countries. The few attempts to produce scholarly biographies of politicians and other personalities associated with communist ideology and practice stood somewhat apart from the multitude of topics, research areas, and methodological approaches. Rather, the period demand for “filling in the blanks” prompted the rapid publication of the “secrets” hidden in the archives on partial issues and cases. Biography, as a method attempting a comprehensive and at the same time essentially individualized treatment of a person’s life set in a broad political and social context, required long-term research, that was often at odds with the priorities of research institution and grant agencies. In the Czech milieu, moreover, priority was given to learning about the lives and fates of democratic and non-communist personalities who belonged among those famous “blanks”. However, the few biographies, which began to be published ten or more years after the political change of 1989, showed the exceptional potential of the biographical method in the study of communism as a fundamental phenomenon in the history of the 20th century. By taking the lives of individuals, whether political leaders or cultural and artistic figures, as examples, it was possible to address the deep internal contradictions and ambivalences that communism contained.

The aim of the thematic issue is to provide a space for the discussion of the results achieved so far in the field of biography within the study of communism, both in the Czech and international context. It also aims to contribute to the debate on methodological problems and the future direction of this genre. In order to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of communism as an internationalist movement making a universalist claim, it is necessary to link different research contexts. We would be pleased if the forthcoming issue contributes to this goal.

Editors welcome contributions from different fields of research: history, political science, cultural studies, philosophy, sociology, gender studies or any other related areas of interest.

Topics may address (but are not limited to) the following aspects:

Biography as a method and genre of the history of communism

We welcome studies focusing on different aspects of the methodology of historical biographies, taking into account the context for the study of the communist movement in the national and international context. These aspects are in particular:

- implications of biographies for the study of the history of the communist movement and governance, including transnational perspective
 - the limits and challenges of working with archival fonds and other types of sources such as personal papers, published diaries and memoirs or interviews
 - trends, innovations and new impulses in the writing of historical biographies
- comparison of experiences and achievements in the field of biography in different national settings
- the development of professional and social demand for specialised biographies of communist figures in various countries of the former Western and Eastern worlds

Biographical studies focusing on various aspects of communism

We welcome biographical studies focusing on various aspects of belonging to the communist movement and identification with the communist ideology and its goals. These aspects are in particular:

- background, family and social origin
- biographies of the main personalities of the communist movement over time - their influence on the co-creation of personal history and the connection with the development of the movement
- shared identities and the relationship between them: nation, class, education, gender
- national, regional and local specifics in a universally defined movement; international experience of activity in the structures of the international communist movement
- motivation and context of involvement in the movement - the relationship between idealism and pragmatism, attitude to power and its use, the question of loyalty, conformity and party discipline and its limits
- devotion and willingness to self-sacrifice – experience of illegality, imprisonment and other forms of repression by anti-communist power
- experience of exile – political activity and living conditions of emigrants
- cases of apostasy, condemnation and party dissent – the experience of the victims of purges and repressions under Stalinism and further

We welcome both the elaboration of episodes and the evaluation of the overall life course for biographies of party leaders and top officials and communist intellectuals, artists and scientists, and ordinary rank-and-file.

Studies using collective biography and comparative biography methods are also welcome.

Contributors are kindly asked to write abstracts in English that do not exceed 500 words. For more detailed information about the journal, submission requirements and deadlines, please visit journal's website: <https://securitas-imperii-journal.com/?lang=en>