



# History of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe, 1945–

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## Purpose of the Course:

Based on the unique resources of the former Archives of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, now located in Budapest, this course will be on the history and consequences of Communism. The ambition of the program is to publish a regional textbook on the history of the Communist period in Central and Eastern Europe, a new history from the perspective of the demise of the Communist system. Our aim is to write the pre-history of post-Communism. We will concentrate on those elements of Communist history that help us to understand how the sustenance of the system contributed to and paved the way for the collapse at the same time. We do not want to employ external criteria or to criticize the regimes from an outside perspective, but to understand the logic of the working of the system. We will study both the classical period and the post-classic variants of Central and East European Communism.

## Course Description:

In this four-week course, participants will take part in a collective work which will make use of different approaches, methods, and perspectives. The scholars will discuss some important works collectively in seminars, conduct research in the Archives, and have lunch together while discussing their work. Following the four-week program, Summer University participants will continue working at their home institutions and in archives in their home countries. Professors Alfred Rieber, head of the CEU History department, and István Rév, academic director of the Open Society Archives, will co-teach a course at the CEU during the first term of the 1996–97 academic year, continuing the work of the summer program. CEU students attending this course are expected to follow up on the archival research done by the Summer University scholars, and while writing their own papers on related topics, would send the most interesting sources they find to the Summer University participants. It is expected that during the spring of 1997 the scholars working on the textbook and the students from the CEU courses will meet at a workshop in Budapest with a few invited distinguished experts in the field, and the scholars will present the first draft of their manuscript. Following the scholarly discussions, the authors will be given the opportunity to revise the text of their chapters, and each will write the final version of his/her respective section of the textbook. The plan is to organize the work along thematic lines, and different topics would be studied using the example of one country or – in a comparative analysis – more countries.

We will include the following in our study:

- ▲ The unprecedented individualization that characterized the supposedly collectivist regime,
- ▲ The way in which problems were consciously created in order to legitimize the constant intervention by the center,
- ▲ How reforms were built in, used, exploited, and incorporated in the structure of the economy and the sphere of politics,
- ▲ How counter-reforms were integral parts of the reforms (in fact, reforms cannot be understood without counter-reforms),

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### Course Description (continued):

- ▲ How and by what means memory and counter-memory of the pre-Communist past, and of earlier periods of the history of Communism, were created and "kept alive,"
- ▲ How one can identify the thin borderline between resistance and collaboration,
- ▲ What role the Western perception of Communism played in the actions of the regimes, and in the perceptions of the people living under Communism,
- ▲ How much Western propaganda influenced the actions of the people of Central and Eastern Europe,
- ▲ How effective was (especially in the light of the afterlife of Communism) political, ideological and cultural indoctrination.

It is not our ambition to begin the work with a pre-determined set of rigid assumptions, pre-conceptions and table of contents for the planned volume. In designing the structure of the collective work, we would like to leave enough latitude for the discussions and the scholarly preferences of the participants and to rely on important, interesting, and verifiable suggestions.

The first two weeks of the course will be a seminar, with discussions based on common readings, discussion and short reports. The second part will be a two-week research period for the participants in the Central European Archive and Library (formerly RFE/Liberty Archive) and other library resources in the area. A field trip to the Socialist parts of Budapest, the Statue Park and videotapes will be used to analyze visual representations.

**Course Dates:**  
June 17-July 15, 1996

**Application Deadline:**  
April 1, 1996