

Final Report

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The title of my project was **Biopolitical Challenges in Post-Helsinki Socialist Eastern Europe**. Its main research goals were:

- How the Helsinki Process causes a shift from the political to the biopolitical in socialist governance
- How symbolic bio-governance is applied differently in socialist Hungary and Romania.

During my two-month stay at the OSA, I studied material from the Radio Free Europe collection, mostly from the Romanian section. The topics I managed to cover were:

- The Helsinki Process, including the preparations and the aftermath of the 1977 Belgrade conference.
- The emergence of the body in the discourse of Romanian Party officials and the Romanian press.

My work in OSA provided me with insightful primary material and also very useful background reports. I investigated media materials from the 1975-1985 period that addressed issues of health, sexuality, mass gymnastics, leisure, vacation resorts, youth culture, delinquency, work camps, illegal border crossing, the cult of work, trans-border media flows, tourism and Western influences during socialism. My interest was to find out how the post-1975 international political environment (post-Helsinki) informs them.

At OSA, I read hundreds of newspaper articles, background reports and other informative documents, which helped me better understand:

- How the Helsinki Final Act was interpreted on both sides of the Iron Curtain.
- How the Helsinki Process contributed to the crisis of European leftist thinking in the 1970s.
- How the Helsinki Process made the body more visible in socialist political discourse.
- How the discourse on human rights became a discourse on body rights and thus object of biopolitical analysis.
- How bodily needs are politically constructed (both in socialism and in capitalism).
- How to read the socialist propaganda as a form of biogovernance.
- How the body is constructed or dissolved in socialist discourse (referred to or eluded).
- How socialist regimes used cultural exchanges in order to control corporeal exchanges.
- How power worked in a socialist state—especially through its public positions reflected in press clippings.

The work in the Archive transformed my research and determined me:

- To focus mainly on Romanian sources and postpone the initially planned comparative research.
- To limit my research method to discourse analysis (the analysis of symbolic biogovernance).
- To change my expectations in terms of biopolitics from a repressive regime.
- To realize that the critique in the name of human rights and the concept of freedom formulated by the East against the West was not meaningless, as it reflects some of the contemporary positions critical of human rights.
- To do more theoretical research on the debates around what is human, humanism, humanitarianism, human rights in order to come up with more sophisticated methodology, which will enable me to analyze the emergence of the body in socialist political discourse.

The OSA is a stimulating work environment with a great infrastructure, which makes it very appealing for researchers to use the materials in its storage. Its user-friendliness influenced my research and made me more interested in the Radio Free Europe collection. My previous research used feature films as primary material. Since I work in the OSA, my analysis predominantly includes other sources such as press clippings, internal reports, and other archival items. Work in the OSA has raised my interest in the Helsinki process and the way in which it influenced the emergence of biopolitics both as a research tool and as form of governance.

I worked mainly with fond **OSA 300-60-1**. The box I spend most of the time on was Box 100, which reads like a page-turner and presents the reparations for the 1977 Belgrade conference—a follow-up to the Helsinki one. It contains insightful documents that throw light on how both east and west interpreted the issue of human rights and issues of free circulation of bodies, information and culture.

Another fascinating box from the same fond is 545 on standards of living. Its materials show how socialist regimes operated biopolitically. Boxes 655 and 656 revealed to me how the Romanian socialist regime envisioned caring for the life of children. Boxes 367-371 introduced me to the immunization mechanisms and the discursive disciplining practiced by the socialist regime in order to shield its population and especially its youth from Western influences (also insightful in this sense was Box 205). Box 169 revealed to me how the regime used work as a biopolitical tool and box 421 how mass gymnastics and sports were used to strengthen the body of the nation.

During my stay at the OSA I had the chance to meeting interesting researchers who gave me valuable feedback on my research. I use this opportunity to thank Ioana Macrea-Toma, Oksana Sarkisova, Csaba Szilagy, Robert Parnica, and Istvan Rev for their feedback.

Appendix – Boxes I worked with

HU OSA 300-60-1

Youth policies: Boxes 68, 100, 170, 171, 411, Box 412, 594-610, 765,

Cultural mobilization: Boxes 58, 101, 109, 123-126, 439-440, 448-450

Sports, mass gymnastics: Boxes, 169, 421, 539,

Health: Boxes 371-374, 757

Standards of living 543-553

Population policies, Boxes 655-656,

Western influence: Boxes 205

HU OSA 300-60-5

Work: Boxes 1-41

HU OSA 300-20-01:

General issues regarding **Eastern Europe** Boxes 14, 23, 42, 61.

Materials from the **Film Library**:

A New Life / Et Nytt Liv [FL 1934]

Children of a Radiant Future / Les Enfants De L'Avenir Radieux [FL 2689]

Cold Waves / Razboi pe calea undelor [FL 1523]

Diamonds in the Dark: Women in Romania