

**May 21-22, 2021**

**Constructing the “Soviet”?**

**15th Annual Conference**

**The Tenacity and Fragility of “Late Socialism”**

For this fifteenth Constructing the “Soviet”? conference we have decided to update the format, preserving its traditions while opening up new horizons. Henceforth, each conference will announce a specific topic or question, and in May 2021 our point of departure will be *late socialism*. We hope that this approach will allow us to analyze in detail the multidimensional processes characteristic of the postwar USSR and sketch out new historiographical perspectives.

In chronological terms, we define late socialism as situated between the postwar relaunch of the Soviet project (Fürst, Jones, Morrissey, 2008) to reflect new social and geopolitical realities, and attempts to reform the system and its subsequent collapse (Yurchak, 2006; Zubok, 2009). The usual periodization of late socialism still defines scholars’ epistemological perspectives and is in need of revision. Whereas historiographical discussions of the ruptures and continuities between late Stalinism and the Thaw may be seen as already ongoing and productive (Kozlov, Gilburd, 2013), the boundaries of *zastoi* and *perestroika* are yet to be discussed. Ambiguities and the arguably teleological perspective that this periodization entails forces us to seek other ways in which the Soviet project can be understood.

There are several possible perspectives we offer to adopt for the discussion:

1. New historiographical perspectives: adopting and rethinking the methodological approaches of scholars dealing with the Soviet 1920s and 1930s and applying the notion of modernity to *late socialism*; revisiting and deconstructing the binary oppositions in the Cold War discourse and writing histories beyond the ideological confrontation of capitalism and socialism: global, transnational and postcolonial approaches; histories beyond the teleological perspective that avoid the narrative of inevitable stagnation and decline and instead focus on the ideological and cultural dynamics of the system; ego-documents and the practices of subjectivization.

2. The legacy of *late socialism*: from the Soviet towards a post-Soviet; economic, ecological and technological factors in Soviet history and beyond; the atomic project; memories of the Great Patriotic War etc.

3. Practices characteristic of late Soviet society: consumption and the underground economy; the ritualistic aspects of political practices; transformations in social mobility (from education to the military).

4. Representations of social and cultural phenomena in the visual arts and literature.

We expect submissions that are related to but not limited by these perspectives.

The conference has been awarded a grant by the Mikhail Prokhorov Fund and is supported by the *Prozhito* Centre for Studies of Ego-documents at the European University at St. Petersburg and The International Centre for the History and Sociology of World War II and its Consequences (Higher School of Economics, Moscow).

### **Submission Requirements and Deadlines:**

The conference is open to young scholars from any disciplinary background within the humanities and social sciences. A **proposal of 500-700 words in Russian or English and a short CV** should be sent to [constructing2021@gmail.com](mailto:constructing2021@gmail.com) no later than February 15, 2021. Successful candidates will be informed by March 15, 2021.

**Proposals should:** 1) present a clearly formulated research question and a thesis; 2) set the historiographical context; 3) provide a brief description of sources and the approach to their use.

Candidates should be prepared to submit the detailed text of their presentations (2000 words or more) two weeks prior to the conference. The format of the conference (online/offline) cannot yet be specified but more details will be provided early in 2021.

**Funding:** the conference has a limited budget for high-quality proposals from students unable to cover their travel expenses (including those coming from abroad).

For further information, please contact: [constructing2021@gmail.com](mailto:constructing2021@gmail.com) or <https://www.facebook.com/constructing/>