

CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATIONS BEHIND THE „IRON CURTAIN”

Part three: 1968–1978

International academic conference



Organizer: **Committee of National Remembrance in Hungary**

Co-organizer: **Institute of National Remembrance (Poland),
Nation's Memory Institute (Slovakia)**

Venue: **Budapest**

Date: **23–24 September 2025**

Deadline for submission of abstracts: **31 May 2025**

In the third of our series of international academic conferences, we pick up in 1968, after the crushing of the Prague Spring. The economic and political events of the following more than a decade profoundly changed the dynamics of the Cold War. By the end of the 1960s, the Vietnam War had fostered a peace movement having evolved organically in the West and having directed and backed by the political leadership in the Eastern bloc, which intensified the rapprochement between the churches of the Western and Eastern blocs. The churches, operating under and controlled with varying degrees of success by a socialist dictatorship thus became instruments for the advancement of the interests of the socialist bloc in the West. This was all the more important as the churches and church organisations played an important role in the Soviet and American competition for influence over the Third World states that were becoming independent as a result of decolonisation. Pope Paul VI, who sat on the papal throne for much of the period, was also at the forefront of the rapprochement between the two world orders, initiating dialogue with the leadership of the communist countries at various levels to improve the situation of Christians living behind the Iron Curtain. Then, the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978 (following the short pontificate of John Paul I) brought a new era in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Bloc, contributing to the slow erosion of dictatorships in the 1980s.

The topics of the papers may relate to the following issues:

- international context of churches and religious associations situation
- activities of the Holy See in the countries of the Eastern Bloc and its attitude to the Soviet Union.
- religious policy of the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries
- persecution against the church hierarchy and believers
- the internal situation of individual Churches and religious associations
- situation and attitudes of the church hierarchy
- position and attitudes of the clergy and the faithful
- position and attitude of individual Churches and religious associations to the activities of the churches and the anti-communist resistance
- important events in the internal life of the Churches
- relations between individual Churches and religious associations
- relations of emigration to Churches activities
- changes in the ways of theological thinking
- issues of the education of priests, pastors
- local consequences of the Second Vatican Council
- Ecumenism and interdenominational dialogue
- Non-catholic world organizations (e. g. World Council of Churches) and their roles in the churches of the eastern bloc

The outcome of the conference will be a reviewed collective monograph.

The deadline for abstract submissions is May 31, 2025.

Please send a short abstract, the title of the paper, and a brief CV,
to gergely.iso@neb.hu,
or katrebova@upn.gov.sk,
or rafal.latka@ipn.gov.pl.

The organisers reserve the right to select participants and will cover participants' accommodation and travel expenses.