



Call for Papers

International friendship within and beyond the Iron Curtain

18–19 April 2024, Ljubljana

Proposal submission deadline: 20 January 2024

This workshop aims to explore relations among countries both within and beyond the Iron Curtain through the lens of international friendship. In diplomatic and political history, as well as in public discourse, the term ‘friendship’ is often employed casually to describe various types of interstate relations, ranging from partnerships lacking close bonds to special relationships with dense institutionalized ties. In recent years, however, international relations scholars have acknowledged the analytical and explanatory value of international friendship, recognizing it as a relationship extending beyond conflict-free interstate dynamics. In this regard, international friendship is interpreted as a bilateral relationship that emerges from intersecting collective identities and revolves around shared projects. A friendship bond is marked by a high degree of trust and affect, embedded in close cooperation at different levels of state and society, and expressed in a range of friendship practices (Koschut&Oelsner, 2014; Berenskoetter&Van Hoef, 2017).

The intention of the workshop is to expand the research on international friendship from international relations into the realm of history, particularly by broadening the predominantly Western-focused studies within socialist and Cold War contexts. Scholars are invited to employ conceptual content on international friendship to investigate the processes of formation, maintenance, reproduction, and dissolution of friendship bonds, and to assess their impact on interactions, behaviors, and decision-making at different political and social levels.

The main objectives of the workshop are to explore the identity- and trust-building processes between states and their peoples, to examine the (de)integrating and (de)mobilizing power of international friendship, and to analyze the interaction between normative factors and strategic or material interests in interstate and transnational relations.

The preferred topics may include, but are not limited to:

- **Actors**, such as politicians, government and party officials, cultural workers, scholars, students, entrepreneurs, activists, civil society;
- **Institutions**, such as government offices, cultural and professional institutions, friendship societies, student associations, business enterprises, mass organizations, and non-governmental institutions;
- **Shared narratives** rooted in common history, historical memory, cultural patterns, ideologies, norms, and values, and their impact on the formation of collective interstate identities;
- **Shared projects** aimed at a certain type of world making, such as larger political projects (post-war reconstruction, separate roads to socialism, non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, demilitarization, political and economic decolonization) and smaller (regional) projects (joint economic enterprises, cross-border infrastructure projects, cultural ventures);
- **Friendship practices**, such as friendship discourses (both in private and public interactions), symbolic public displays of friendship (celebrations, commemorations), acts of solidarity, giving counsel and privileged access to information, high tolerance of 'bad news';
- **Channels**, such as diplomacy, cultural and economic cooperation, student and youth exchanges, labor exchanges, town twinning, and transnational activism.

We welcome scholars, especially from history, but also from other disciplines such as political science, political anthropology, international relations, and the like. We are looking forward to abstracts from scholars at all stages of their academic careers.

Proposals, limited to 300 words, along with a brief bio, should be submitted by **20 January 2024** to the following address: maja.lukanc@inz.si

Applicants will receive notification of the acceptance of their proposals by **15 February 2024**.

The workshop will take place in Ljubljana at the Institute of Contemporary History. Accommodation in Ljubljana will be provided by the organizers. A specific fund will be allocated for the travel expenses of researchers without institutional or project financial coverage – please indicate if needed.

The workshop is held as part of the project *Prospects and Boundaries of International Friendship: Polish-Yugoslav Relations between 1956 and 1968* supported by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

