

International conference
“Literature of Socialist Trauma: Results and Prospects”

University of Palermo, 27-28 January 2026

Palazzo Bonocore, Piazza Pretoria, 2 – Palermo

More than 35 years after the collapse of Socialist and Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe, the literary works related to state repression in the countries of the former Soviet bloc have never been studied in a unified perspective. Yet, the analysis of the vast corpus of memoirs, autobiographies, fiction, poetry and other literary texts written in a variety of countries and languages in relation to state repression suggests that several literary works bear structural and stylistic similarities even if created in different contexts. Oral poems composed by Hungarian, Polish, Ukrainian and Russophone authors detained in the Soviet camps, by Yugoslavian convicts of Goli Otok or prisoners of Ceausescu's prisons and camps; memoirs in Slovenian, Serbian, Russian; hints to repression in “printed” literature in Albania, GDR and the USSR; short tales in Estonian, Polish and Russian – the list of literary works that share common features across languages is impressive and suggests the possible existence of a transnational, multilingual genre in European literature.

The project “Literature of Socialist Trauma (LOST): Mapping and Researching the Lost Page of European Literature”, funded by the Italian Ministry of Research and University under the PRIN 2022 PNRR scheme, has studied for two years the possible connections between these literary texts. The results of these studies have been published or are being published in international academic journals and collected volumes. Coming to an end, the research team will meet renowned specialists in the field (Alessandro Achilli, Ruxandra Cesereanu, Dunja Dušanić, Alexander Etkind, Luba Jurgenson, Eneken Laanes and Arkadiusz Morawiec) to share with them knowledge, findings and expertise in a constant dialogue between scholars and literary texts, with the aim to understand if such a line of research can bring about further perspectives and results. This way, the final conference of the project aims to be a bridge between past and future research. In search of the hidden genre of XX and XXI century European literature.