

Title of presentation: ***The Illusion of Change: The Romanian Youth and the Communist Organizations after Stalin's Death***

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**Abstract**

The mid of the 50's let the impression of a relaxing atmosphere in the communist camp. Stalin's death in 1953, "the spirit of Geneva" (an apparent improvement of the relations between East and West in 1955) and Khrushchev's discourse in 1956 seemed to be signs of a political thaw. In Romania, the early suppression of the collectivization after the 1952's political crisis, the World Festival of Youth, held in Bucharest (1955), meant to present the "happiness" of the communist youth, the appearance of the Students' Associations in 1956 that seemed to be a democratic alternative to the Communist Youth Union, the contagious effect of the 1956 Hungarian revolution – all these were interpreted as signs of change. The minimal concessions the communism regime made had the perverse effect of rising expectations. After the outbreak of Hungarian Revolution, student protests erupted in Romania. The youth asked the replacement of the Romanian Communist Party's leaders, denounced the Soviet Union and criticized the Party, the political police and the propaganda apparatus. But, as Jean Francois Revel put it, „the thaw was not a dream, it was a trap”. The same Khrushchev who criticized the Stalinist regime suppressed the Hungarian Revolution. In Romania, members of the Communist Youth Union who attacked the central leadership of the Party or criticized the Soviet Union were excluded from the organizations and tens of them were arrested.