

# CLASSICS AND COMMUNISM: GREEK AND LATIN BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN

Research on the history of Classics during the Communist period shines by its absence, to use a term borrowed from Tacitus, and exceptions to this rule are few and far between.

## GNOTHI SEAUTON

The book probes a subject that remains a scholarly *terra incognita* — investigating the context for the classical tradition and its transmission in what Winston Churchill once called “the ancient states” behind the Iron Curtain that stretched “from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic.” It was born of an international research project on “Classics and Communism” which aimed to discover and explore the history of classical philology after World War II in this region. Classical studies were explored in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany, and the Soviet Union, particularly in Russia, Lithuania, and Ukraine; the situation in Yugoslavia was examined on the example of Serbia and Slovenia. The team started gathering data in the autumn of 2009; research work began with a session organised by the Polish team led by Jerzy Axer. In Hungary, two of the conveners — Gábor Klaniczay and György Karsai — coordinated both local research and the work of participants from the other countries.

## VOICES FROM THE REGION

The first part, “Soviet Russia,” presents the complex personalities of Jakov M. Borovskij, Olga M. Freidenberg, Aristid I. Dovatur, Sergei Averintsev, and Alexander Zaicev, analysed by Alexander Gavrilov, Olga Budaragina, and Dmitri Panchenko. The second part, “Central Europe,” highlights the Hungarian scholars Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, Károly Kerényi, and János Sarkady, presented by Péter Hajdu, Cornelia Isler-Kerényi, and György Karsai; a profile of the Czech Jan Patočka is sketched by Josef Moural; scholars from the Slovak classical milieu are discussed by Ľudmila Buzássyová; David Movrin considers classicists at the University of Ljubljana; Nijole Juchnevičienė speaks of those at the University of Vilnius and Kaunas; Polish scholars, Kazimierz Kumaniecki, Bronisław Biliński, and Rafał



Taubenschlag are discussed by Jerzy Axer, Elżbieta Olechowska, and Witold Wołodkiewicz; and the work of Johannes Irmscher is described by Isolde Stark. The third section relates the realia in the Balkans: David Movrin analyses Yugoslavia in 1949, the Serbian classicist Veselin Čajkanović is presented by Milena Jovanović, the Bulgarian Byzantinist Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova is portrayed by Nikolaï Gochev, and the Romanian Dionisie Pippidi by Alexandru Barnea. Finally, André Hurst provides a unique insight into the activities of the Fondation Hardt.

The editors decided to structure the book according to geographic and cultural divisions, passing from Soviet Russia to Central Europe and to the Balkans, eventually concluding with a peephole into Western Europe. The resulting volume presents a constellation of stars shining on the firmament of classical studies during the period from 1945 to 1989, as well as the scope of their evolution against the changing political background.



EDITORS · György Karsai, Gábor Klaniczay,  
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## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*Classics & Communism* is not merely a study of an age past that has been conducted for the love of scholarship: each of its chapters provides a different perspective on what now seems a futile attempt to exercise crude and naked power in order to intimidate minds and control ideas. One cannot be entirely sure whether the comrades in the Politburo read Henry Miller or not; they certainly agreed with his assessment in the *Tropic of Cancer* that “every man with a bellyful of the Classics is an enemy to the human race.” To those who did not witness Communism personally, this volume explains some of the logic behind the abandoning of classical languages in education, the persecution of insubordinate scholars, marginalisation of Classics, and the priority given to Party connections over scholarly merit.

*Please visit [www.classics.si](http://www.classics.si) for further details about the book and the related projects. It is possible to “Look Inside” the volume on Issuu and on Amazon. To request a review copy, please fax your request, on your journal or station letterhead, to +386-1-425-93-37, or write to [znanstvena.zalozba@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:znanstvena.zalozba@ff.uni-lj.si).*