

**Final Report by Alice Trinkle – Visegrad Scholar at Open Society Archives Budapest, Central European University, from 2021, October 11<sup>th</sup> to 2021, December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Title**

“Liberal Economic Thinking in China in Exchange with (Post) Socialist Eastern Europe, 1978 – 2001”

**Abstract of the project**

China’s reform and opening up policy, kicked off in late 1978, was one of the core transformational forces of the late 20th century, leading to China’s reintegration into a global market and its establishment as a key economic international player in a globalised world. The research project is going back to the early years and one aspect of the intellectual roots of this key development in the transformation of Chinese society and its economic system: It analyses interconnections between Chinese and Eastern European reform oriented academic networks and discuss the influence of Eastern European reform thought on Chinese reform intellectuals. Within a global history framework, it assesses a specific local variety of market liberal thought in China, which emerged from a transnational exchange of ideas and practices.

**Project work at OSA**

With the support of the Visegrad Scholarship I was able to undertake almost two months of archival research in Budapest. Becoming a Visegrad Scholar allowed me not only to undertake in-depth research at OSA, but also it enabled me to get to know Budapest’s archival landscape and its academic community more generally. The stay at OSA therefore proved to be a key undertaking for my PhD research project. After having obtained a huge variety of materials during my stay at OSA, I can finally take my project a step further, starting to analyse materials and put them together into a meaningful dissertation text.

At OSA I obtained material from the following sections more specifically: The Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, and in this section the country units. Mostly, country units contain China specific folders, which often contained very useful documents. Furthermore, the bibliographical files proved to be of use. I found a lot of useful material in the Hungarian unit, next to the Yugoslavian unit. Also, I looked through China-related materials in the Romanian, the Czechoslovakian, and the Polish Units and found some interesting hints for my project; this will allow me to discuss the topic of Eastern European-Chinese exchange on economic reforms in a more global manner. Material on Chinese-East German Relations was available through the collections of Barbara Donovan. The Western Press material on China provided me with an excellent overview on the

observations of Western Press on Chinese Reform and Opening up policies and China's economic reforms' evolution from an outsider's perspective. Furthermore, I collected Human Rights Watch material regarding China from the 1990s, discussing and monitoring the faith of some Chinese key reform intellectuals after 1989. They proved to be a valuable source on how the societal atmosphere in China had changed post 1989, next to delivering some key insights into connections between reformers, 1980s politician's advisors, and the China Fund in the late 1980s. Background reports should not stay unmentioned. They were among the most useful sources and are luckily available online.

### **Doing China-related research at OSA**

OSA's collections proved to be an excellent entry point for my research. Materials provided an overview on relevant exchanges and what to further research, for example in Hungary's national archives. Furthermore, the collection enabled me to gain an overview on countries' exchanges with China like Yugoslavia without speaking Serbo-Croatian. Overall, I checked around 200 archival boxes, which kept me quite busy. Doing China research via archives outside of China was rather successful for me, and I will recommend to do so for other China researchers facing similar restrictions as I did (e.g. not being able to travel to China in the current situation of a global pandemic).

### **Execution of the project and texts**

As mentioned earlier, my time at OSA as a Visegrad fellow is a key undertaking for my dissertation. After being confined to sources available online or in libraries in Berlin for more than a year due to the Covid-pandemic, I was finally able to experience on sight archival research myself. It proved to me that no online archive can replace on site research, as some findings really took me by surprise (and at times were part of folders I had not expected them in). The experience at OSA and most importantly the material I obtained during my time in Budapest will enable me to finally start to write my PhD dissertation, which will be the main textual outcome of undertaking research at OSA. A research article in an edited volume on 'China and Global History' might be another piece of work which I will be able to compose with the help of OSA material. Without this research trip, my research would look pale: Staying at OSA and undertaking archival research in Budapest brought the colour into my project it was missing so far. Furthermore, thanks to an open and relaxed atmosphere at OSA, my stay helped me as a young researcher to find a low barrier entry point into doing archival research. Thank you!