Crisis, loss of values, end of a paradigm, here are among many others the expressions that are associated since the 1990s with the antifascism. The reasons, which led the antifascism to be blacklisted as a political and historical legitimate object, are varying. They may however be connected, in a wider sense, with the pure and simple assimilation of antifascism with communism, and more precisely with the fact that antifascism was one of the founding values of communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

The purpose of this workshop is to rework this theme by highlighting the ruptures and continuities between the antifascism of the 1920s-1950s, expression and plural political practice involving various actors and the discursive usages made by the communist regimes. The anti-fascism has diversified over time and its definition varies according to the political programs or the repertoire of mobilized collective action.

The confrontation between these two aspects involves the questioning of the antifascist configurations in their practices and the existent political movements by which they are carried. For antifascisms in action, we will analyse the diversity of practices in changing contexts by starting with precisely documented case studies. The forms of exploitation by the communist parties will be studied, both in their dimension of national legitimacy as well as in the context of the international Cold War competition. So what represented the anti-fascism in the eyes of the communist, non-communist or anti-communist activists, the opponents, the survivors of the Résistance and the victims of fascist regimes? To what collective imagination is it related? What is the meaning of this commitment? What will happen after the war in the West when the anti-fascistic struggle will leave room for the daily political battles carried on by the parties and movements of different, not to say incompatible, values and projects and yet all united under the same “anti-fascistic” label? And what will this meaningless notion signify for the opponents and victims of the communist regimes?

To highlight ruptures and continuities between these two aspects of antifascism, it will be particularly interesting to “follow” certain antifascist figures and to analyse accurately the contexts and modalities of the biographical rewritings, which they undergo in the East as well as in the West.

Finally, we will confront the reality and the diversity of antifascist practices with their reinterpretation and their simplification in the ideological discourse of the communist parties in power in the East as in the opposition in the West. A particular attention will therefore be paid to the political usages of this concept throughout the post-war period.

In addition to its high-ranking methodological contribution (socio-historical analyse of practices and discourses), this roundtable should create the conditions for a dialogue between
various scientific communities, whose meeting will have essential heuristic effects for those working on the history of ideas and political practices.

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Dates: January 2012  

Scientific Committee:  
Sonia Combe (University of Paris West)  
Alberto de Bernardi (University of Bologna)  
Thomas Lindenberger (Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for European History and Public Spheres, Vienna)  
Anson Rabinbach (Princeton University)  
Brigitte Studer (University of Bern)  
Mercedes Yusta (University of Paris 8)  

Proposal for Papers:  
Please send proposals of no more than 500 words to Alix Heiniger: aliheiniger@unige.ch.  
Deadline: 15 June 2011