

**Organization, implementation and interactions of a socialist system of temporary migration.** The framing of the Cuban personnel circulation within the CMEA by the organizations of the Communist Party of Cuba, 1972-1990.

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The economic organization of the socialist world system, the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), is still waiting to be studied in the framework of policies for the achievement of convergence between states and regions with great differences in terms of power and wealth. Three gaps can be identified in the literature:

-The first one is the study of the CMEA as an organization for “development” in the sense of achieving convergence among its members. The fundamental principles of the international socialist division of labor set the goal of aligning the levels of development of CMEA countries since 1962.<sup>1</sup> Concepts and practices different from development concepts and practices in the capitalist world were generated within CMEA for the socialist path of development. Relations for development took place in three main ways: an economic line based on the “mutual interest” fundamentally conceived as a system of joint planning and economical exchange, another line of “scientific-technical cooperation” offering preferential conditions for exchanges with the “underdeveloped” partner and, not least, a third line of “solidarity” transfers which could take a unilaterally beneficial character. “Mutual interest” does not have to be understood restricted to the economic level; it was intermingled with the level of political relations, which in quite a few cases seemed to predominate, thus showing the political economy face of the socialist system. Planning was part of the effort to increase economic integration, whose greatest success remained essentially in the bilateral sphere. In addition, “Solidarity” and “mutual interest” were not exclusive.

-The second gap concerns the conditions for the integration and the participation of those non-European and underdeveloped members in the CMEA, in this case Cuba. The authorities from Havana were searching for preferential treatment as a condition of establishing “fair” economic relations with developed socialist countries. In pursuit of this target, the CMEA, as an organization of developed socialist countries, had to apply rules that would allow to eliminate unequal exchange, offer enough advantages for fostering accelerated development and to close the gap that separated these countries from the other members, claimed Cuban representatives.<sup>2</sup> These expectations and revendications about how the socialist countries in Europe should deal with “underdevelopment” went even further: all those underdeveloped countries set on a non-capitalist way of development, such as Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique, should be helped “through

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1 Klaus Fritsche, Sozialistische Entwicklungsländer in der "internationalen sozialistischen Arbeitsteilung" des RGW. Zum Forschungsstand, Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien 27/1991, 14

2 This was the thesis defended by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, the leading man for CMEA affairs in Cuba.

economic, scientific and technical cooperation as well as trade, in advantages terms for them, with a view to their future incorporation into the world socialist economy system".<sup>3</sup> However, governments and parties from the CMEA members showed quite distinct understandings and levels of application of those principles.

-The third gap is the CMEA as the framework for a socialist system of temporary migration generated by the massive personnel circulation among socialist states across the continents. "Socialist system" refers to the self-definition of the CMEA member states as "socialist community of states" or "socialist world system", corresponding to a degree of economic, social and political coherence. Temporary migration is understood in the case of the sending of students abroad as a form of educational migration and in the case of experts or workers abroad as a form of labor migration. The states controlled migratory flows and explicitly conceive them as temporary. These "migrants" were expected to come back to their countries of origin after a given period of time. These temporal limits were stipulated in bilateral treaties within the loose framework of the CMEA.

The trans-continental movement of people within the socialist system has not been studied so far from the angle of the socialist approach to achieve economic, societal and political convergence by enhancing "socialist development", taking into account the interactions among international, institutional and individual actors involved; as well as the different lines of exchange that were linked to these flows of temporary migration generated by the "mutual interest" of senders and recipients. The implications of the Cuban participation in these migratory flows are unknown in all its magnitude.

After the revolution, the most industrialized among the socialist European countries, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), became, behind the Soviet Union, the most important economic partner of the island and thus main partner for the circulation of personnel. The focus of attention of this dissertation will be the movement of people between Cuba and the GDR after the entry of Cuba into the CMEA as a full member in 1972, when these flows increased significantly and assumed a new quality. In focusing on personnel circulations, the dissertation project shall adopt a global history perspective, thus including the socialist world system into this field of historiography. The main research methods are the collection of information, the analysis and synthesis and the historical-logic.

The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) has been the highest organization for political and economic decision making in the country since 1965. Its leadership and guiding role for

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<sup>3</sup> Roa Kourí Raúl, *En el torrente*, La Habana, Casa de las Américas 2004, 295.

the building of socialism and the development of moral and civic values<sup>4</sup> were decisive in the implementation of that transcontinental movement of people within the CMEA, thus contributing to the international influence of this non-European member of the socialist system. Most of the personnel sent to the CMEA sphere were youngsters, so the PCC organizations were significantly complemented by its youth organizations, the Union of Young Communists of Cuba (UJC).

The Party's organizations had to increase their work both inside and outside the island in unison with complex and growing challenges arising from the Cuban personnel circulation. They played 3 main roles. The first one was to set up the structures in order to select, prepare, educate, control, eventually sanction, organize a collective Cuban life-world in the exterior and reincorporate after their return those thousands of people on the move. The second one was an intermediary position between the Cubans who most often had no foreign experience and the authorities and population of the recipient countries. The third one as the liaison institutions, to a minor degree, for the East Germans in Cuba, for instance the "solidarity brigades" and experts and workers in joint projects.

In the framing of personnel mobility within CMEA, the Party organizations were involved with other main institutional actors from the Cuban government and society:

-The State Committee of Economic Collaboration (Comité Estatal de Colaboración Económica, CECE), main institutional governmental actor for the negotiation and execution of international, scientific-technical and economic agreements. Cubatécnica was its implementation agency to administrate the sending of Cuban workers abroad.

-The State Committee of Work and Social Security (Comité Estatal de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, CETSS), main institutional governmental actor for the preparation of selected youngsters to work and receive a qualification in European countries (Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary and Bulgaria), as well as for the work ubication of qualified workers and graduated students coming back to Cuba.

-The Ministry of Education, and (later) Ministry of Higher Education, main institutional governmental actors for the administration of Cuban students in CMEA countries.

-The Ministry of Interior, main institutional governmental actor for security issues related with the sending of Cuban students, specialists and workers abroad.

-The Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC), mass organization with participation in the survey of female students, specialists and workers abroad.

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<sup>4</sup> The role of the PCC is established in article 5 of the two last Cuban constitutions 1976 and 2019.

-The Central of Workers of Cuba (Central de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC), mass organization with participation in the selection and survey of workers abroad.

In the spirit of mutuality and in order to study interactions, the GDR counterpart (and, to a minor degree, in other socialist countries) of the Cuban institutional and personal actors have to be studied. The practice of sending and receiving people sometimes overlapped.

The movement of thousands of individuals, with needs of various kinds, was not always simple or easy to handle. Major problems occurred from the beginning and some could never be solved. How did the Party's organizations deal with such problems? Which interactions happened between the involve Cuban and East German institutional and personal actors?

The following groups of people are to be included in the research:

- The personnel milieu linking Cuba to the CMEA/ the GDR
- Cuban students in European socialist countries, particularly the GDR
- Cuban workers to be qualified in European socialist countries, particularly the GDR
- Cuban experts/ specialists/ consultants in European socialist countries, particularly the GDR
- Cuban "Solidarity" brigades in European socialist countries
- Cubans attending experts and members of the "solidarity brigades" of the GDR in Cuba

Taking into account the circularity of the flows, the impact of their movement in both the country of origin and the recipient country have to be analyzed. How did individual actors get involved in this personnel exchange? How was their selection, preparation and survey organized and which role played the Party organizations in this process? Which were the life conditions they had to face in the countries where they were sent and which experiences resulted from these encounters?

The process of setting up a sort of Cuban self-governing institutions in socialist "fraternal" countries has not been studied so far. The dissertation will study it focusing on the case of Cuba-GDR. Which were the particularities associated with the "development" (convergence) momentum in the bilateral relations between economically unequal partners? How did the movement of temporary migration begin and how was it framed by the Party's organizations? How was the "mutual interest" proclaimed by the CMEA put into practice? Which were the points of divergence and convergence? Which were areas of mutual learning and zones of conflict?

Depending on what the archive material and personal memory can tell us in this respect, direct or indirect transfers resulting from these trans-continental flows of people in different fields of professional, personal, socio-cultural and political life may also be scrutinized.

A note on materials:

For the investigation, archival materials and interviews with direct participants in the socialist system of temporary migration are available.

Glejeses has published abundant material from the PCC archives at the Internet platform of the "Hoover Institution".<sup>5</sup> The archives themselves are not accessible in their majority. The abundant and well organized UJC archives are accessible and will provide the main stock of archive material for this dissertation.

This Cuban archive material is to be complemented by GDR sources from the State and Party institutions implicated in the trans-continental flows of temporary migration, above all the archives of the Party youth organization FDJ (Freie Deutsche Jugend).

The Cuban and German archive material is to be complemented by interviews with actors from both sides.

This dissertation is situated within the framework of the research project "Entanglements between Cuba and the GDR: mobilities, exchanges, circulations within the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance" at the Institute of Economic and Social History of the University of Vienna, under the guidance of Univ.Doiz. Dr. Berthold Unfried. As such, it will potentially profit from Prof. Glejeses', who is a cooperation partner of this project, ongoing research on Cuba's foreign policy. Cooperation has also been established with the Global and European Studies Institute, Leipzig (Prof. Matthias Middell, another cooperation partner of the project). In this institute, a research group directed by Dr. Uwe Müller is focusing on the history of the CMEA. A joint presentation of preliminary results is envisaged for the next ENIUGH-congress in Turku (June 2020).

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<sup>5</sup> <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org> <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org> (Southern Africa)

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