

Entanglements Cuba-GDR: mobilities, exchanges, circulations within the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA/COMECON)

This project explores an axis of the international history of the **Socialist World System**: the **systematic economic and human interaction** between the **GDR** and **Cuba** as members of the **Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA/COMECON)**. These interactions are to be examined on the levels of economic exchange and of professional and educational mobility. The focus is on the people on the move between the GDR, Cuba and various hubs of the CMEA sphere. This research applies a Global History approach to the Socialist World System emphasizing reciprocity and mobility. The time frame is the period of Cuban integration into the CMEA (1972-1990). The project breaks new ground by looking at the CMEA not only as a European but as a global developmental organization serving as framework for a temporary migration system.

Abstract:

Aims of this project:

- 1-To analyse the CMEA as a **developmental organization** for its non-European members.
- 2-To describe this sort of **“socialist temporary migration system”**.
- 3-To explore how these interactions constituted **entanglements** that held together the CMEA or became part of its disintegration.

- Who were its main **actors** and what were the sending and the recipient **structures**?
- What did people put "on the move" and how did this mobility **influence** them?
- Where was the claimed **"mutual interest"**, the reciprocity in these relations?
- Which were the **intentions and interests** of the institutional actors, which were the institutional provisions for this form of temporary labour migration and how did the agency of the individuals deal with this framework?

Main questions:



a. Examples of people on the move: advisors, experts, workers, consultants, trainees and students



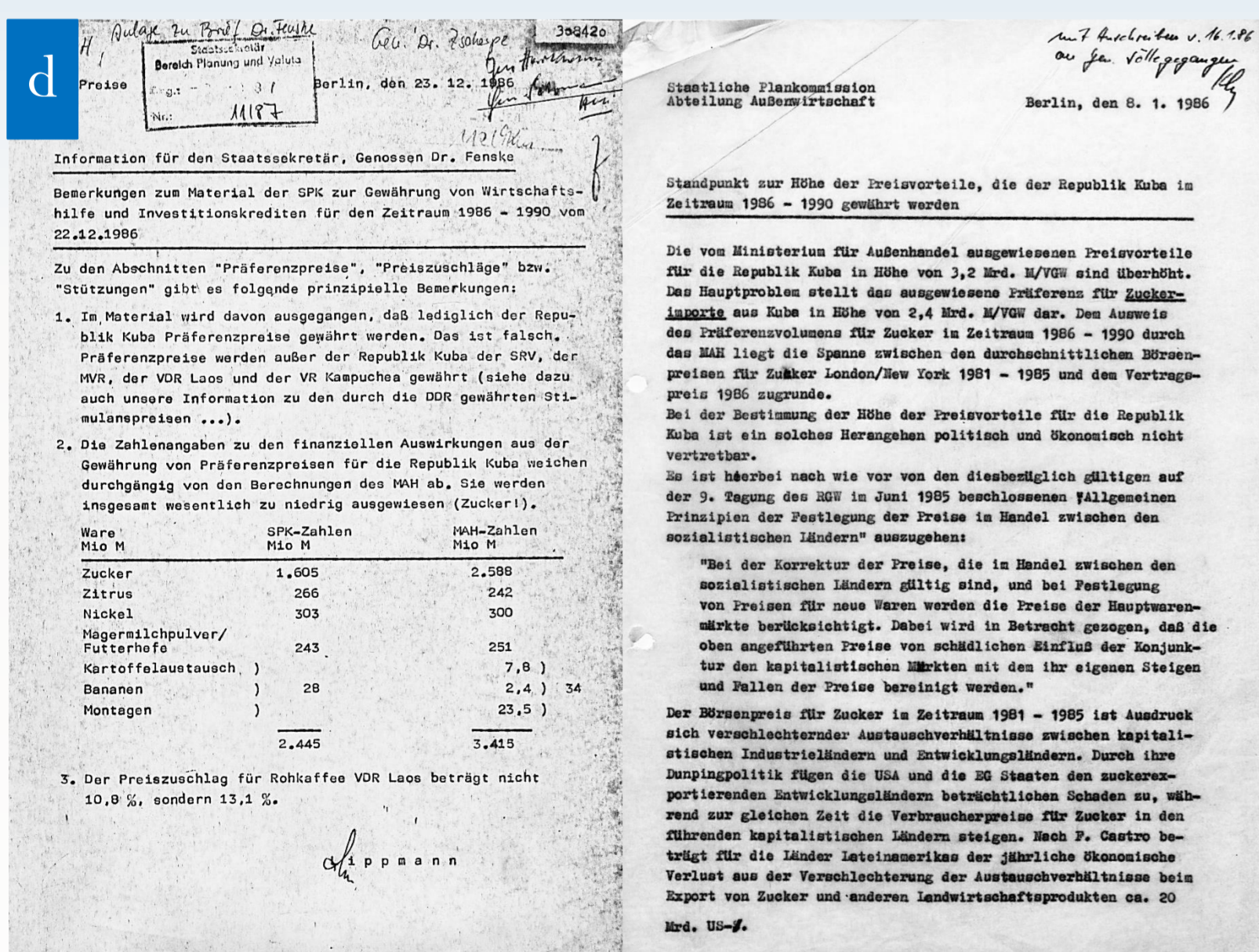
b: Members of the CMEA

c: Foreign Trade vice ministers of Cuba and the GDR, Berlin 1976

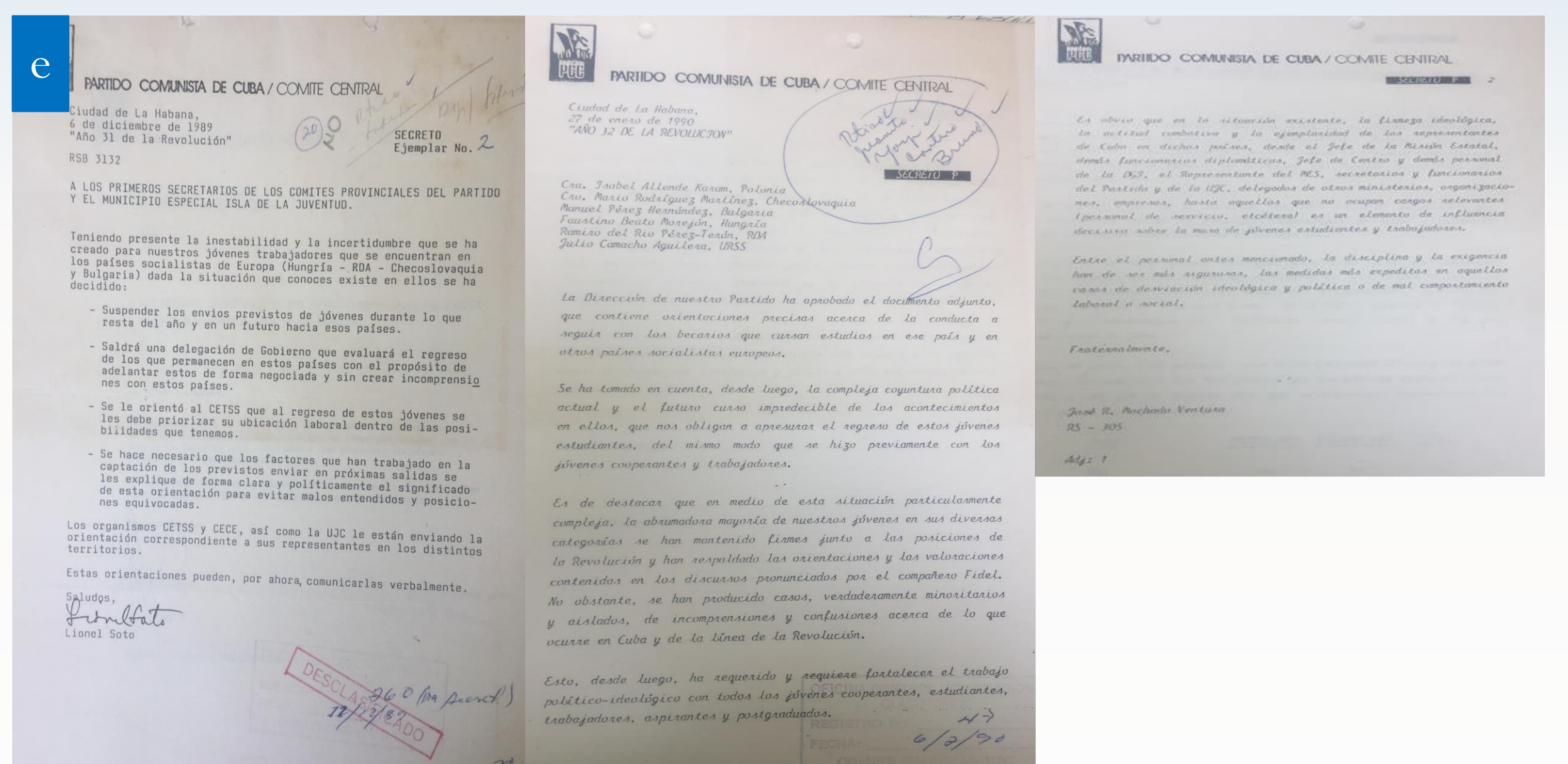


Hypothesis

The CMEA provided instruments to achieve economic and social convergence to its members from Asia and Latin America. In this perspective, it established inter alia a socialist system of temporary migration. This developmental strand put thousands of people on the inter-continental move. The entanglements resulting from these human interactions held the “Socialist World System” probably more together than those resulting from economic interactions.



d. Documents from the complex and sometimes confusing negotiations about the preferential price of Cuban sugar to be paid by the GDR (1986). Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin



e. Documents from the Communist Party of Cuba with instructions to suspend the labour and educational temporary migration of Cuban youth to the GDR after the fall of the Berlin wall. Source: Archivo Central de la UJC, Havana