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ZOFKA [eds.]**

**Between East and South. Spaces of Interaction in the
Globalizing Economy of the Cold War**

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As part of a renewed historiography of the Cold War, which focuses only on the socialist world and its relations with the “South,” concerning the contribution of socialist States to the post-Second World War globalization, this volume centers around three main issues.¹ The first one relates to the nature of space interactions between the East and the South and how cultural, social, political, and economic links are established between them, as well as inside the international organization Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). The second aspect concerns the reasons and other motivations having led socialist actors to engage in this type of relations. The third and last issue regards the point beyond which East-South relations blur or reproduce the bipolarity of the Cold War and the spatial format of the so-called “Bloc” (2). In order to answer those interrogations, the present volume includes nine chapters. Some of them take into consideration not only bilateral relations between socialist States and those of the South, but also the rapports that socialist States have between them inside their community.

While the first and the last chapters focus on an “alternative globalization” during and after the Cold War, the seven others analyze bilateral or multilateral relations between several types of actors from the East and the South. In the East, there are at least three types of actors: traditional states (Bulgaria, Soviet Union, East Germany, Romania, Czechoslovakia), supranational (CMEA), and civil servants (an East German adviser, and Romanian specialists in health and oil industries). Regarding the South, alongside states (Syria, Iraq, Zanzibar, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Cuba, and Ethiopia), national political organizations – Namibian South-West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), or the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) are taken into consideration.

¹ Philip E. Muehlenbeck and Natalia Telepneva (eds.), *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018); Max Trecker, *Red Money for the Global South: East-South Economic Relations in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

Choosing those actors constitutes a “starting point to tell the story of the Cold War, the socialist bloc, and post-war globalization anew” (2). In doing that, the present collective volume rejects the flow of a certain historiography of the Cold War that makes Western world the only actor until the end of the Cold War, thus excluding both the East and the South (7). In the introduction, the editors criticize the limits of one of the Cold War narratives, as Jürgen Osterhummel and Niels Petersson wrote, presenting it under the notion of “*halbierte Globalisierung*” (8) – namely a globalization contained only to the West.² Moreover, they draw attention to the priority that this narrative gave only to Moscow. The volume is part of a new historiography which considers Cold War as fully global, whereas globalization and decolonization are seen “as two interconnected processes,” in which the “Eastern bloc international activity was not confined to Moscow-directed Cold War geopolitics” (9). Furthermore, contributions allow to understand that socialist countries “shaped an alternative globalization project as well” (11), coordinated, more or less successfully, by CMEA.

Another perspective specific to the Socialist states deals with the international division of labor, planned to make “newly independent former colonies not only served as suppliers of raw materials and labor but also as producers of processed goods” (14).

Throughout the book, we learn that inside the so-called Eastern Bloc, with Moscow often viewed as the center, the movement of East toward South is not that unitary as it could have appeared at a first glance. On the contrary, the authors highlight the existence of a real competition between the national interests of each of socialist states (29). In the second chapter, Max Trecker focuses on the cooperation between East Germany and Bulgaria towards Syria, in the field of cement industry (34). Far away from a certain “narrative of the socialist countries borrowing from the West in the 1970s” (56), those two Eastern European countries are depicted by the author as not being partners but experienced by “quarrels” (56). In chapter VII, Pavel Szobi also mentions that “[i]n the second half of the 1970s, especially East Germany and Czechoslovakia were competing for projects in Angola” (195). In parallel, China is another competitor, that East Germany had to consider in Zanzibar (112).

Studying the involvement of the socialist states in the South reveals a certain prevalence of the national interest above the ideological principle of solidarity between peoples. East-Germany followed its own directives, and from “the oil price shock, [...] decided to act alone in the Iraqi oil market” (84) independently of the negotiations launched by Moscow with CMEA countries and Iraq. More generally, chancelleries of “East Central Europe(an) [...], unlike

² J. Osterhummel and N. P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

Cuba or Soviet Union, were rather interested in profitability than ideological solidarity” (195). In sum, as argued in chapter VIII by Anne Dietrich,

“[m]ore and more Eastern European CMEA member states wished to go their own way... As a result, they competed with each other [...]” (197).

In chapter IX, James Mark highlights the “shift of emphasis in the socialist government’s foreign economic policies towards financial profitability” (219), in illustrating his words through mentions of neo-liberal Latin America (222-223) and East-Asia. Thus, in practice, the ideological aspect that made solidarity a leitmotiv of the socialist states had been replaced by pragmatism.

Alongside the international dimension, the volume includes the supranational perspective, focusing on the CMEA study case.

Max Trecker’s second chapter analyses the triangular relations between the Soviet Union, CMEA countries, and Iraq over oil (59). CMEA is depicted as an organization marked by a set of internal tensions (56-57), in which the “Soviet Union failed in its effort to coordinate the CMEA countries’ actions on global oil market” (59). It is presented as somehow weak, or at least non-significant “space of interaction” between member states but also with non-members – such as Iraq, far away from the vision of an organization managed by the only Soviet Union interest (61). Max Trecker adds that discussions about importing oil from Iraq were managed only by Baghdad (61). The presence of Iraq in that space of interaction gave it the possibility to influence decision within the organization during the 1970s (61). At first glance, through the subject of the multilateral cooperation between Socialist countries and Europe, it becomes obvious “how limited the Soviet power was in coordinating activities of member countries” (83). Nevertheless, the lack of coordination by Moscow between member states of CMEA did not make it a weak actor inside the Eastern Bloc. East-Germany states that Soviet Union

“did not have to adhere either to the CMEA cooperation or to bilateral agreement concerning Iraq oil as long as the Soviet Union behaved as a far more reliable and convenient supplier of oil. The Soviet economic bureaucracy undermined their own goals” (84).

Through the fourth chapter, bilateral relations between East Germany and Zanzibar of Abeid Karume are studied, with a focus on “the interactions of East German advisers with Zanzibari politicians” (85). Eric Burton underscores here a shift regarding the

“visions of modernity [which] were first concealed but came to the fore as a result of power shifts in Zanzibar’s political landscape and East German failures to provide efficacious aid” (85).

Divergences are also ideological, since “East Germany sought a political alliance based on a shared commitment to socialism and the Soviet camp” unlike “Karume [who] was pursuing a vision of autarky that dovetailed Chinese concepts of self-sufficiency” (85), China being the “[German Democratic Republic]’s greatest rival in Zanzibar...” (112). What is revealed by the author is the fact that the ideology and policies of the partner Zanzibari socialist chancellery are perceived not only through the conception of socialist chancelleries, but in particular by the experienced men on the field, namely the advisers (114). Finally, as argued by author, the power of Karume seemed to be legitimized by relations its country had with the Eastern Bloc (114).

The fifth chapter studies the relations between a state (East Germany) and a political party – Namibian SWAPO. The author, Chris Saunders, underlines the “aspects of the nature of that relationship [between East Germany and SWAPO]” and how they changed over time” (117). East-Germany supported SWAPO in the fields of military, finance, and humanitarian aid (118). Support gave by Easter Germany was constant, even during the period when the state faced economic difficulties, in a total non-dependent way to Moscow (131). However, this regular implication cannot be seen as a success for East-Germany. Indeed, the author reveals that

“the technical expertise the Namibians gained from the GDR was relatively little used in independent Namibia, while the ideological instruction that GDR had provided did not shape the future thinking of those who received it” (132).

That kind of failure is also shown regarding MPLA, when Pavel Szobi adds, in the seventh chapter, that “[i]n many cases, the technocratic pro-Western elites preferred the cooperation with private companies over the socialist competition...” (195).

Following the approach from the third chapter, with a micro study of the relations between East and South, Bogdan C. Iacob, and Iolanda Vasile analyze in chapter six the links between Ceaușescu’s Romania and Mozambique, with a focus “on the personal experiences of two groups of Romanian specialists/medical [...] and oilmen” (134). Precisely, it “investigate[s] the transformation of macro-official discourses of solidarity into micro-histories of experiencing Mozambique” (134). A kind of psychological dimension may also be perceived in this chapter, in which the authors reveal that “Romanian experts were conscious of their participation in projects that aimed to counter the encroaching capitalist globalization from the West” (163). Yet, they underline

“an ambivalence: anti-imperialist solidarity was subordinated to a particular understanding of commercial interest, and by hierarchies founded on Romanian exceptionalism and claims of civilizational superiority” (163).

Once again, the notion of solidarity between people is challenged.

Choosing a state-to-state approach, Pavel Szobi examines “Czechoslovakia’s involvement in the economic and political development of Angola after the country gained independence in 1975” (164). Beyond this approach, he also seeks “to verify or refute the general argument that Czechoslovakia did not have an active and independent foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s long which was used only as an auxiliary for Soviet foreign interest” (164). He proves that Prague was not just a satellite having followed Moscow’s African policy. On the contrary, well before the beginning of an assumed African policy launched under Khrushchev, “Czechoslovakia was already an established partner of several African countries and did business with several European colonial territories” (194-195).

In chapter VIII Anne Dietrich follows two axes: the first one “deals with the Cuban East-German intra-CMEA commodity exchange,” while the second one focuses on the “bilateral trade agreement that was concluded between the GDR and Ethiopia in 1977” (198). A three-scale analysis is used: micro-level (the study of a joint multinational enterprise), bilateral-level, and multilateral-level (198). For the author,

“trade relations in the form of a barter business between countries of the socialist camp and in the Global South seemed to be only beneficial for those partners who did not lose foreign currency due to the related transactions” (216).

In deconstructing the vision of a Cold War world leaded only by the Western part, each of the chapters skillfully highlights the antagonism between sovereign interests and those of internationalist socialist ideology, while simultaneously questioning how this ideology could be applied to reality.

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