

# Introduction

**Aurelia Ohlendorf / Max Trecker**

## **1. Nikita Khrushchev's "Opening Up" to the Global South**

In 1970, Nikita Khrushchev's memories were published in the United States. Khrushchev had been the de facto ruler of the Soviet Union from 1953 until his ouster in 1964, the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) who had not died in office but "retired" and lived on as a pensioner. In his eleven years of rule, he presided over attempts to "de-Stalinize" the USSR, lower international tensions, and significantly increase the living standards of its peoples and so-called satellite states.<sup>1</sup> He did not end the Cold War or dictatorial control of the country through the CPSU, but under his rule, the Soviet Union and other state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe did significantly extend and strengthen their ties with the outside world enabled by the ideology of "peaceful coexistence" in which the Soviet leader rejected the idea of violent world revolution and asserted that capitalism and communism could coexist.

Khrushchev's shift not only opened up venues for diplomacy and exchange with Western countries but also and more strikingly, facilitated a new quality and quantity of relations with the countries of the Global South, many of which had become independent states in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thus, the Soviet Union's outward turn coincided with decolonization and subsequently led to growing interactions between the socialist countries and the global South. Khrushchev's memoirs, published under

1 See W. Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era*, New York 2003.

mysterious circumstances, were not well-received by the Western press.<sup>2</sup> They contained no state secrets and consisted mainly of “kitchen gossip”. The disappointment was not well-judged, however, insofar as it had been unrealistic to expect any secrets in a publication whose source material had been screened by the Soviet secret service apparatus before being smuggled abroad. Notably, moreover, Khrushchev’s memoirs included his statement on Soviet relations with Egypt as *pars pro toto* for Soviet relations with the countries of the Global South:

*There had been no strings attached to our defense of Egypt. Our actions were based on purely humanitarian, not mercenary concerns. Mercantile interests had nothing to do with it. In fact, we didn't really need anything that we might have been able to get from Egypt. We have almost everything they produce and many things they don't produce. We have rice and oil of our own. We're a much richer country, and we can rely on our own natural wealth. And if there is something we do need, we always try to acquire it from other countries by fair trade arrangements. Unlike the colonialists, we don't need to resort to war or political machinations to get what we want.*<sup>3</sup>

Given that no political leader in the state-socialist countries in the 1950s and 1960s had symbolized the process of “opening up” to the Global South more than Nikita Khrushchev, these remarks seem a little odd. Independent Egypt under General Gamal Abdel Nasser had been one of the closest partners from the Global South with the Soviet Bloc and welcomed engineers and military advisers, who helped improve the capabilities of the country, while the flow of expertise was accompanied by a flow of goods, again, military as well as civilian<sup>4</sup> – yet Khrushchev characterized these interactions as only “humanitarian” and rejected the notion that the Soviet engagement with Egypt was in any way related to the pursuit of “mercantile interests”. Thus – at least implicitly – he formulated a dichotomy of trade and aid.

Khrushchev saw the Soviet Union as a provider of aid, generously supplying funds to countries in need. He imagined the USSR – and with it, also the other state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe – as (almost) self-sufficient in economic terms. And he characterized his home country as being much richer than those in the Global South, such as Egypt. Trade, on the other hand, was mainly the business of Western “colonialist” countries who resorted to morally questionable behaviour to get what they wanted without regard to the consequences of their actions.

This special issue aims at situating East-South economic interactions in the dichotomy between trade and aid. Which motives were the driving forces behind these relations? Was the ultimate goal to embark together on a socialist path of development or were ends

2 H. E. Salisbury, Khrushchev Remembers, in: New York Times Book Review, 3 January 1971, p. 1.

3 S. Talbott (ed.), Khrushchev Remembers: With an Introduction, Commentary and Notes by E. Crankshaw, Boston 1970, p. 437.

4 T. Scheben, Wachstumsstrategien im Nahen Osten während des Kalten Krieges, in: B. Greiner, C. T. Müller, and C. Weber (eds.), Ökonomie im Kalten Krieg, Hamburg 2010, pp. 148–149.

and means purely mercantile? How did the motives differ between actors and change over the course of time? How did the actors themselves make sense of these interactions? Khrushchev's statements did not deviate widely from the standard Soviet line according to most Western Kremlinologists and other researchers who specialized in the state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe. That was most likely also the reason why his statement on East-South relations was hardly commented on by reviewers of his memoirs even though they analysed his words diligently for omissions and falsifications. For their part, the majority of Western experts were convinced that there was not much to be gained economically in the Global South. The economies of the newly independent countries were seen as problems, as being in need of help. Providing this help was the self-declared task of the Global North, in line, still, with Kipling's late-Victorian call to take up the "White Man's Burden".<sup>5</sup> When the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies interacted with the Global South (Third World), they were regarded in the South as belonging to the Global North (First and Second Worlds).

When Khrushchev's memoirs were published, the world was clearly divided into East and West from the perspective of the bulk of Western and Eastern elites. During the Cold War, this East-West divide dominated the North-South divide until the state-socialist countries, mostly peacefully and voluntarily, dissolved their system in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Conceiving the post-WW II period as one defined by the conflict between East and West left little room or agency for those countries – the vast majority of them in the Global South – that did not identify with either the state-socialist or liberal-capitalist systems. If there was no real economic gain to be made in the Global South, then interaction with the countries there inevitably became expressed as primarily a fight for influence and prestige in an extended playing field of the East-West struggle. In such a context, trade or "normal" economic relations were of negligible relevance. When economic interaction had to follow the goal of increasing prestige and influence by design, then all interaction was to be understood in terms of aid – per Khrushchev's statement in his memoirs.

## 2. How to Make Sense of East-South Relations

The debate on how to frame the economic side of East-South and West-South relations remains ongoing. While we follow the trend in current literature and use the terms East, West and South as categories for the two influential socio-political systems of the Cold War and the "Third World", we are aware of the analytical weaknesses that come with the usage of such general terms. Some of our case studies show, that these spatial categories in practice often blurred. Local transfers, national projects and "men on the spot" shaped the interactions on the ground and were not always in line with any official agenda.

5 See W. Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good*, Oxford 2006.

In general, one group of researchers argues that state-socialist interaction with the South played no significant role in the Cold War period, while another group holds a contrarian view. Advocates of the former often cite the following points to support their conceptualization of interactions with the Global South. The West was the economic centre of gravity throughout the period between the end of the Second World War and the dissolution of state socialism in Eastern Europe; the share of the US and its allies in global GDP far surpassed that of the Soviet Union and its allies. The same was true for global trade; the importance of the West in international commerce could never be matched. What was true for production and trade was true in finance, too; the US dollar was traded globally and fully convertible, its position as the leading currency in the world was unquestioned, while the rouble played an insignificant role in the world and no country outside the Eastern Bloc had any interest in accumulating it for their currency reserves. In fact, the state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe themselves sought to get their hands on US dollars than on roubles, their elites preferring Western technology and consumer items to their own (or ex-Western colonial) equivalents and accrued considerable amounts of debts in US dollars to import these prized goods.

The aforementioned points are often emphasized by researchers who argue that the economic relations of the North with the South during the Cold War period were not primarily of an economic nature but rather served a political purpose in the struggle between East and West. This struggle followed a clear hierarchy, as the West – at least in hindsight – dominated the East.<sup>6</sup> The researchers who do not share the general view of their colleagues do not necessarily challenge these facts or the statistical data on which they are based. However, they do note that conceptualizing economic interaction with the Global South as essentially political in nature and consisting of aid narrows the analytical view and hides more than it reveals. They point to further, different facts about the relationships in question, which they use to form their alternative narratives and research hypotheses.<sup>7</sup>

Once the process of decolonization had gained momentum in the 1950s, the socialist states of Eastern Europe and decolonized states in Asia and Africa became increasingly interested in one another. Their motivations were manifold: leading figures from newly independent countries in the developing world wanted to secure their political independence with economic independence. Although these countries themselves did not always harbour strong pro-socialist sentiments, interacting with representatives from

6 See, e.g., S. Kotkin, *The Kiss of Debt: The East Bloc Goes Borrowing*, in: N. Ferguson et al. (eds.), *The Shock of the Global. The 1970s in Perspective*, Cambridge, MA 2010, pp. 80–93; Y. Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia*, Washington 2007; P. Germuska, *Attraction and Repulsion: Hungary and European Integration*, in: A. Romano and F. Romero (eds.), *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West*, London/New York 2021, pp. 50–77; B. Tomka, *Globalizáció Kelet-Közép-Európában a Második Világháború Után. Narratívák és Ellennarratívák* [Globalization in East-Central Europe after the Second World War: Narratives and Counter-Narratives], Pécs 2023.

7 A. Calori et al. (eds.), *Between East and South: Spaces of Interaction in the Globalizing Economy of the Cold War*, Berlin/Boston 2019; O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge 2014.

socialist Eastern Europe could serve their purpose. Contact with the East could, at a minimum, be used to leverage economic concessions from Western representatives. For the East, the newly independent states provided an opportunity to export goods and parts of their economic model, gain influence internationally, and import vital resources in exchange for machines and technology.<sup>8</sup>

Against the backdrop of the Cold War and the notion of peaceful coexistence under Khrushchev in the 1950s, the significance of international economic relations in the ideological struggle for influence in the world gradually increased. The West remained the most important partner for East and South alike, but East-South relations became an integral part of international affairs. Not only goods and services but ideas, expert delegations, and activists, too, were exchanged. These interactions were often characterized by tensions between aspiration and feasibility and longer-term strategies versus short-term needs, as well as by political ambitions as distinct from economic interests.

### 3. Alternative Globalizations?

There is a growing list of publications that argue in favour of the latter view of East-South interactions in the Cold War period and challenge the scholarly status quo. This challenge is best epitomized by the concept of “alternative globalizations” promoted by James Mark and others.<sup>9</sup> It argues that the facts do not support the thesis that the West was the sole driving force behind the globalization processes that occurred after 1945. Relatedly, we should not be guided by what we know now about the real capabilities of the state-socialist economies but rather by our appreciation of how contemporaries conceived the world around them. In fact, at the height of its expansion in the early 1980s, the socialist world encompassed around a third of the global population.<sup>10</sup>

Following the approach of James Mark et al. and the research at the Collaborative Research Centre 1199 in Leipzig, we understand the growing interdependence and mutual entanglements of the world in the second half of the Twentieth Century as multiple, sometimes competing globalization projects or processes, rather than talking of one single, teleological globalization that strives towards ever more entanglement.<sup>11</sup> We are convinced that actors from the socialist states pursued their own visions of globalization. Whether this was always in sharp competition to Western projects or in the end aiming at integrating into them is controversially debated in the papers collected here.

8 S. Lorenzini, *The Socialist Camp and the Challenge of Economic Modernization in the Third World*, in: N. M. Naimark, S. Pons, and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.) *The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s*, Cambridge, UK 2017.

9 See J. Mark, A. Kalinovsky, and S. Marung, *Introduction*, in: J. Mark, A. Kalinovsky, and S. Marung (eds.), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial Work*, Bloomington 2020, pp. 1–34.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

11 M. Middell, *Neue Dynamiken oder das Ende der Globalisierung?*, in: M. Middell (ed.), *Verräumlichungsprozesse unter Globalisierungsbedingungen I*, Leipzig 2021, pp. 12–13.

A multitude of actors from the socialist world actively shaped globalization processes after 1945 through their involvement in international organizations and by forging connections that hitherto had not existed. Although their efforts may not have reached the level of their Western counterparts, these efforts were nevertheless real and significant, with a measurable impact, and this inevitably informed the hopes and fears of the various actors at the time. The term “alternative globalizations” brings a more complex understanding of agency to the discussion on Cold War dynamics. The researchers associated with the project “Socialism Goes Global”<sup>12</sup> claim that the state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe were actively working on providing a genuine and substantial alternative to the Western globalization models in the 1950s and 1960s before gradually subordinating themselves to the framework provided by the West.<sup>13</sup> They argue that in the perception of the actors in the early Cold War period, socialism was just as capable as capitalism of guiding the way to modernization and prosperity. However, it is not necessary to follow the ideas suggested by the “Socialism Goes Global” group strictly to think that – with hindsight – there had always been credible alternatives to (Western) globalization projects on offer. The term has analytical value even without taking it literally. It helps to afford a better understanding of the perceptions of the time as it describes the strategy of innovation and imitation followed by state-socialist actors to break the perceived monopoly of the West over globalization processes and adopt different pathways to a better future.

This strategy gave actors from the Global South enough leverage to gain concessions and carve out a space for themselves on the international scene. Therefore, the true analytical value of the concept of alternative globalization lies in the fact that the would-be revolutionary globalization projects of the socialist East potentially threatened the established position of the West and thus forced Western actors to react – and this was the case regardless of how objectively real this threat ever became in material terms. However, this should not lead to any assumption that, since the state-socialist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed in 1989–1991, the East must have been outsmarted by West and South alike in the Cold War period. As the articles in this special issue show, the Eastern European actors were, by and large, quite rational and extremely well-informed about what was going on in other parts of the world.

#### **4. From “Socialist World Economic System” towards an Economically Interdependent World?**

In the 1950s, when decolonization was gaining momentum and questions of economic development and modernization were of growing relevance, socialism presented itself to

12 J. Mark et al., *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization*, Oxford 2022. See also the project website, <https://socialismgoesglobal.exeter.ac.uk/team/> (accessed 29 April 2023).

13 See Mark, Kalinovsky, and Marung, Introduction, pp. 6–7.

the newly independent states as an alternative to Western ideas of modernization and continued dependency on the former colonial oppressor. Central planning, nationalization, industrialization and close cooperation with the state-socialist states were promoted as recipes for economic independence and modernization.<sup>14</sup> While *development* was the buzzword of American engagement in the Global South and shaped US foreign policy towards the decolonized world from Truman's Point IV programme and the Decade of Development<sup>15</sup> proclaimed by Kennedy in 1961 onwards, the socialist camp used a different vocabulary. "Aid" was rejected in socialist parlance, the preferred terms being "technical assistance", "scientific-technical cooperation", and "trade agreements".<sup>16</sup> In particular, the mutual benefit of *cooperation* was emphasized as a principle in order to stress the anti-imperialist, solidarity-based character of cooperation and to distinguish it from post-colonial exploitation.

As the second necessary step after achieving political independence, *economic independence* was another concept formulated by socialist economists as a goal for the decolonized states. This was based on the idea that the poor economic situation of many countries in the Global South was a direct consequence of colonial exploitation and that after political independence had been achieved, economic independence had to be fought for. This explains the focus on the state sector, the preference for an import-substituting economy, and the emphasis on infrastructure and heavy industry in the socialist development model. All this was seen by Soviet economists as a prerequisite for an independent economy and the consolidation of political independence.<sup>17</sup>

But, putting aside the vocabulary, how and to what extent did the socialist camp really pursue an alternative globalization project, as postulated by James Mark and colleagues? Or did the individual cooperation projects tend to look rather similar in practice as socialist actors pursued comparable economic (self-)interests, including access to the raw materials on which their domestic economies were dependent? In the academic debate on these questions, it becomes apparent that the concept of socialism as an attractive and convincing alternative to the Western development model had its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s before gradually falling into decline. Economic concepts of an independent "Socialist World Economic System" of all the socialist-oriented countries and their integration through the socialist division of labour were influential, especially in the early Cold War decades, and later lost their persuasive power.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1970s, the world became much more interdependent as economic entanglements increased.<sup>19</sup> Although trade between East and South grew rapidly in this decade, co-

14 Lorenzini, *The Socialist Camp*, p. 341.

15 S. Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History*, Princeton 2019, p. 65.

16 Lorenzini, *The Socialist Camp*, p. 344.

17 P. Robinson and J. Dixon, *Aiding Afghanistan: A History of Soviet Assistance to a Developing Country*, New York 2013, p. 57.

18 Mark et al., *Socialism Goes Global*, p. 78.

19 M. Deuerlein, *Das Zeitalter der Interdependenz: Globales Denken und internationale Politik in den langen 1970er Jahren*, Göttingen 2020.

operation also became more multilateral and the socialist globalization projects were increasingly absorbed into Western-dominated globalization processes. Cooperation projects in the Global South, which until then had often been organized bilaterally, were now often organized as tripartite cooperations between East, West, and South, or else the decolonized countries simply awarded the contracts for industrialization projects to the highest bidder after public tender.<sup>20</sup> Can it thus be assumed that cooperation between state-socialist countries and the Global South in the following two decades was much more driven by economic motives and that the ideological surplus of the early Cold War subsided? It is this fundamental question that the studies compiled in this special issue examine. They do so from different perspectives and on the basis of different case studies and timeframes, and they come to partly divergent conclusions.

## 5. Contributions to the Special Issue

The contributions gathered here investigate the dynamics of East-South relations, explore the manifold interactions between the state-socialist countries and the Global South with regard to trade and aid, and ask about the role of economics, ideology, and politics as driving forces in and of these increasing encounters. The authors focus on case studies as well as comparative analyses from the early 1950s until the late 1980s. They investigate how and by whom the projects were initiated and how the mutual perception of the partners changed as a consequence of their cooperation schemes in the Cold War period.

What made cooperation with the state-socialist countries specifically attractive for actors in the Global South? How did actors modify their thinking about the East-South exchange over time? What kind of impact did these changes have on their home countries? Did practices of business and trade change due to mutual exchange? To what extent did knowledge exchange between East and South cause modifications in the models of socialist development? The contributors to this dialogue here are not acolytes of one particular school of thought. Their opinions on the role of East-South relations in the Cold War period differ to a certain extent. This variety, it is hope, will itself stimulate debate and encourage methodological reflection.

To give an example: two articles of this special issue deal with Algeria's relations with the socialist East. One article by Zsombor Bódy focuses on Hungarian-Algerian relations and the other one by Dora Tot on Yugoslav-Algerian relations. While the former emphasizes the purely economic aspects of cooperation and stays in opposition to James Mark's concept of "Alternative Globalization(s)", the latter states that political aspects cannot be thought independently from economic ones but have to be analyzed as being in a precarious and tense mutual dependency. The differences between the two articles are partly due to different kind of source material employed by the authors, and partly

20 Lorenzini, *The Socialist Camp*, p. 357.

due to different concepts used. Despite – or better to say because of – these differences the articles speak quite well to each other, as they share enough common ground for a fruitful conversation. Both authors share the view that time matters: by the 1970s and 1980s projects were framed differently than in the 1960s. Furthermore, both authors provide us with ways to reconcile different layers of decision-making and interaction like party heads and company managers with each other.

Offering insights into current research trends on East-South relations in the Cold War period, this special issue is an outcome of a conference organized in Leipzig by the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 1199) and Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in late June 2022. The authors come from different European countries and institutional backgrounds, which proves rewarding in that it affords the inclusion of multiple research perspectives. The papers focus on issues like debates among economists in state-socialist countries and Soviet engineers exporting a particular development model, with case studies on building dams in Syria, the activities of East European architects in sub-Saharan Africa, and the role of North Korea in East-South interaction during the Cold War period. This combination of case studies and comparative analyses enables abstraction as well as empirically saturated argumentation at the micro-level.

Opening the volume, Max Trecker focuses on the 1950s and 1960s and deals with how East German economists dealt with decolonization theoretically. He argues against the narrative that state-socialist actors were merely passive observers of globalization processes and reacted to changes in the West by looking at the debates of East German economists. The interplay of decolonization and its handling by socialist actors led to global interactions that were actively shaped by both sides in their own interests. Confronted with the new trade opportunities created by decolonization, East German economists gradually moved away from the Stalinist principle of importing raw materials and processing them domestically into finished goods. Instead, they developed a concept of “entanglement balances” that involved looking at the entire production process of goods, identifying bottlenecks, and importing semi-finished products to enhance factor productivity. Although there was a mutual interest among socialist countries and individual decolonized states in these more complex trade relations, their implementation often failed due to a lack of personnel and the incompatibility of short- and long-term goals. Nevertheless, the examples provided show that East German actors were no economic free riders of North American or West German cooperation projects with the Global South but developed tools and mechanisms to cope with the new possibilities on their own.

Karina Khasnulina investigates a similarly early period by looking at the construction of a tractor factory in China based on a Soviet model. During the decade or so between the communist revolution in China and the Sino-Soviet split, which led to the withdrawal of Soviet advisors from China, the two countries maintained very close relations. Soviet advisors assisted in the transformation of China according to the Soviet model, and Chinese experts learned how to run industrial enterprises in the Soviet Union. Khasnulina

uses the example of the No. 1 Tractor Plant in Luoyang to show that in this specific case of technology transfer, the Soviet model of a tractor factory built in the 1930s in Kharkiv was adopted in China in the form of a “wholesale” transfer. Khasnulina asks in her contribution, how scholars can deal with the socialist development model, as it originated in the Soviet Union under Stalin and was subsequently exported to other countries, as well. She employs the term “socialist development model” not only as a category of analysis but simultaneously as research object.

Besides turnkey industrial plants, infrastructures in the energy sector were central components of the Soviet technology transfer to the Global South. Especially in the Middle East, the Soviet Union used large hydropower plants as door openers for deeper economic and political partnerships. Using the example of the Euphrates Dam in Syria, Aurelia Ohlendorf shows how the Soviet Union succeeded in winning Syria as a reliable partner in the region alongside Nasser’s Egypt. A comparison with events a few years earlier surrounding the realization of the Aswan High Dam reveals that it was a similar competition that flared up between the superpowers over the implementation of the dam on the Euphrates. In the West, which lost out in the earlier competition, there was great concern about losing another important development project to the Soviet Union. This competition over dams, as large, centrally planned development projects, shows that the USSR was certainly pursuing political and geo-strategic goals with their engagement in the South in the context of the Cold War and aiming to export a specific model of socialist development.

While the relations with the Global South of the Soviet Union and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) have received significant attention, there is comparably little research on the endeavours of the smaller state-socialist countries. Seung Hwan Ryu addresses this gap in examining the socialist solidarity between North Korea and Tanzania in the 1960s. Although the two countries had no tradition of cooperation to build on, they looked back on comparable historical experiences. This “imagined affinity” with Tanzania was highlighted in North Korea by its emphasis on the similarities between colonial oppression and the socialist path of development. When the conflict between the Soviet Union and China led to growing competition in the Global South,<sup>21</sup> the North Korean leadership used the situation to develop an independent foreign policy strategy. Ryu’s contribution shows very well the potential upside of thinking in multiple competing, but at times also overlapping globalization projects. Although North Korea had few financial resources to support African countries, it became involved in the web of different socialist globalization projects in the Cold War period by cultivating good relations with Tanzania. The Cold War framework was a prerequisite for this particular interaction to come to pass, but agency clearly lay with Tanzanian and North Korean actors. Furthermore, Ryu (similar to Khasnulina on China and Tot and Bódy on Algeria)

shows how local and national constellations of actors could significantly alter the outcome of the implementation of the socialist development model.

Algeria, which identified itself as socialist after independence, developed economic and trade relations with socialist Eastern Europe from the 1960s onwards. Two contributions in this special issue are dedicated to Eastern European cooperation with Algeria, one from the perspective of Hungary (Zsombor Bódy) and the other related to Yugoslavia (Dora Tot). Both authors point to the tension that arose between the political claims of anti-imperialist solidarity and long-term partnerships based on mutual benefit, on the one hand, and the often profit-oriented short-term goals of the actors on the ground, on the other.

Zsombor Bódy questions whether there were any efforts by Hungarian actors to establish alternative globalizations in the Global South and shows that their economic activities in Algeria were guided by clear business interests. Through its relations with Algeria, Hungary tried to acquire hard currency, which the country urgently needed in its unequal economic relations with the West. The share of “socialist trade” with the South clearly lagged behind that of the West, and socialist cooperation never had the potential to challenge the capitalist development model. Yugoslavia is an interesting special case because its international trading companies had more room for manoeuvre due to the relatively liberal market socialism compared to other socialist countries where the state monopolized foreign trade. Focusing on trade and solidarity within the non-aligned movement in the area of technical cooperation, Dora Tot uses the example of Yugoslav companies in Algeria to detail how the political goals for long-term trade partnerships with the Global South clashed with the profit-oriented approach of self-managed Yugoslav export companies.

In his contribution, Jakob Marcks highlights the advantages of cooperation with East Germany in the field of architecture and construction for the South African liberation movement. During the 1980s, the African National Congress (ANC), which ran a development and education centre for South African refugees in a rural region in Tanzania, sought help both from the West and in the East. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) supplied a flexible panel construction system specially designed for simple housing construction in rural areas. Marcks describes how, despite the system’s clear deficiencies in quality, its joint implementation by South African and East German actors provided an opportunity for cooperation on an equal footing and enabled mutual learning processes characterized by a spirit of socialist solidarity that went beyond the mere export of technology and client-contractor relationships.

Overall, this collection of contributions shows that there is (not yet) a definitive answer to questions regarding the alternative character of East-South economic interaction vis-à-vis the West; the motives of the state-socialist actors varied between the goals of solidarity-driven support and business-oriented trade relations. In some cases, the lofty aims of political leaders clashed with the immediately perceived reality of the actors on the ground. Additionally, motives might significantly change over the course of time. What does become clear is that cooperating with the state-socialist countries was seen as

a valuable opportunity by the recipient countries, who sought to diversify their interactions and expand their scope for action. Rather than offering definitive answers to the questions discussed at the above-mentioned conference and in this special issue, we hope to have collected a diverse range of contributions to an ongoing research debate that provide food for further thought and fruitful discussions.