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Universität Leipzig, Centre for Area Studies  
Nicolaistr. 6 – 10  
Strohsackpassage  
D–04109 Leipzig

Tel.: +49 / (0)341 / 97 37 888

E-Mail: [comparativ@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:comparativ@uni-leipzig.de)

Internet: [www.uni-leipzig.de/comparativ/](http://www.uni-leipzig.de/comparativ/)

Redaktionssekretärin: Katja Naumann  
([knaumann@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:knaumann@uni-leipzig.de))

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**Comecon revisited.  
Integration in the Eastern Bloc and  
Entanglements with the  
Global Economy**

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**Edited by Uwe Müller and Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast**



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# **Introduction: Failed and Forgotten? New Perspectives on the History of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance<sup>1</sup>**

**Uwe Müller**

This volume has two main objectives. *First of all*, it will present some new approaches to understanding the history of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).<sup>2</sup> We believe it a worthwhile venture because the CMEA, and exploration of the issues surrounding its existence, has been treated for a long time as a complete. During the Cold War, naturally, a great interest in the functioning of the organization prevailed, which concerned the management of the economic cooperation within the Eastern bloc countries. On both sides of the Iron Curtain, particularly in the 1980s, a few general overviews on the CMEA were published.<sup>3</sup> Yet, even those suffered from limited access to statistical data and information on internal decision-making processes. In addition, social science research was, to various degrees, (self-)censored in the communist countries. However, not only communist social sciences but also Western research was often influenced by the ideological preconceptions that arose as a product of the Cold War. At

1 I would like to thank Pauline Siebert and Carl Roberts for proofreading the text.

2 In this volume, the two common terms for the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance “CMEA” (sometimes also “Council for Mutual Economic Aid”) and “Comecon” are used synonymously.

3 See J.M. van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe. A Handbook*, New York 1989; R. Damus, *RGW. Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit in Osteuropa*, Opladen 1979; G. Neumann, *Die Entwicklungsbedingungen des RGW. Versuch einer wirtschaftshistorischen Analyse*, Berlin 1980; *Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Strukturen und Probleme*, Bonn 1987; A. Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Der dornige Weg von einer politischen zu einer wirtschaftlichen Integration 1949–1987*, Wien/New York 1988.

that time, “observing the enemies” had many more resources at hand than today’s historical research. This, however, cannot negate the value of Eastern publications as historical sources. Indeed, publications produced in the East did not consist exclusively of propaganda phrases, but sometimes even upheld a very critical attitude towards the CMEA.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, reading into the implications of such statements may offer a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play. The neglected mass of publications, along with an arsenal of new approaches, calls for a renewed exploration.

After the dissolution of the CMEA in 1991, only a few historical studies on its development have been published.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to this, the political, and partly also the cultural and social, conditions within the communist states; the political relations between the Soviet Union and the other Eastern bloc states; and the focal points of the Cold War were thoroughly investigated topics in contemporary history due to the easier accessibility of sources.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the development of the CMEA was regarded as an ultimately completed story, which hardly anyone was interested in already at the end of the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> In 2010, Martin Dangerfield stated: “Ten years ago the 50th anniversary of the founding of the CMEA passed without anyone taking notice of it, and with its 60th anniversary it was no different.”<sup>8</sup>

In the last few years, a new generation of historians has rediscovered the CMEA as an object of research. They were personally much less influenced by the ideological clashes of the Cold War. Probably, therefore, it was easier for them to take up the current tendencies of contemporary historical research in the beginning of the twenty-first century and to apply them to an object of investigation, in which – contrary to previous assessments – there are still secrets to be discovered. Some results of looking at the history of the CMEA from new perspectives are presented in this volume.

While the research on the CMEA until 2000 was concentrated on its internal functioning, today it is understood much more in the context of a global contemporary and economic history. It is, therefore, a complementary concern of this volume to present some insights into the positioning of the Eastern bloc in the globalizing world economy.

4 In some cases this should, however, deflect the deficiencies of the local economic system or of mistakes by politicians or economic planners who were active at the national level.

5 R. Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe? Die DDR im RGW – Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien 1963–1976*, Köln et al. 2000; L.K. Metcalf, *The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. The Failure of Reform*, Boulder 1997; G. Neumann, *Probleme der osteuropäischen Wirtschaftsintegration*, in: J. Wysocki (ed.), *Wirtschaftliche Integration und Wandel von Raumstrukturen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1994, pp. 159–187; R. W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade*, Princeton 1996; See also A. Steiner, *The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. An Example of Failed Economic Integration?*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 39 (2013), pp. 240–258.

6 See, for example, M. Kramer and V. Smetana, *Imposing, Maintaining, and Tearing Open the Iron Curtain: The Cold War and East-Central Europe, 1945–1989*, Lanham et al. 2013, which almost entirely neglects the economy as such.

7 F. Golczewski, *Der RGW – eine europäische Einigungsorganisation? Die Beziehungen zwischen dem RGW und den EG*, in: G. Clemens (ed.), *Die Integration der mittel- und osteuropäischen Staaten in die Europäische Union*, Münster et al. 1999, p. 36.

8 M. Dangerfield, *Sozialistische Ökonomische Integration: Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW)*, in: B. Greiner, C.T. Müller and C. Weber (eds.), *Ökonomie im Kalten Krieg*, Hamburg 2010, p. 369.

At first glance, this question does not appear to be particularly attractive. Although the collapse of socialism in European states in the years 1989–1991 was a great surprise for almost all contemporaries, only shortly afterwards was it interpreted as the inevitable consequence of a comprehensive crisis of the state socialism. The economic side of this crisis was obviously the increasing technological gap between the West and the East, the inability of the socialist economies to master the challenges of the structural change during the “third industrial revolution”, and of intensifying globalization since the 1970s. This culminated in economic stagnation, or even decline as in the case of Poland, as well as the unsatisfied consumption needs of the population, together with the debt trap.<sup>9</sup> Nearly all economists and many social scientists would be satisfied with such a simple analysis of these economic mechanisms that explains the economic crisis and the collapse of socialism. Social scientists with a good knowledge of history, however, know that inefficient institutional arrangements in history tend to be the rule rather than the exception.<sup>10</sup> They are therefore interested in the scope of action and motives of actors, which were crucial in certain decision-making situations.<sup>11</sup> The articles of this issue deal precisely with this. *Erik Radisch* vividly describes various Soviet attempts to make the CMEA an effective instrument of socialist economic policy. While supranational planning was never introduced and trade integration was only marginally successful, CMEA member states succeeded in building up transnational infrastructures, as *Falk Flade* shows for the case of the electricity grid “Mir”. The preparation of these projects was an essential part of the work of the CMEA bureaucracy. *Simon Godard* shows that many members of the CMEA staff were changing from representatives of national interests to organizers of international cooperation.

The history of the CMEA can only be understood as a part of global history. *Suvi Kansikas* shows that the CMEA, with the increasing importance of the European Community (EC), became an actor of foreign policy, which had not originally been envisaged. *Christian Gerlach* recalls that the reintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) into the world market in the early 1970s was less due to its demand for high technology, and more because of the Soviet Union’s inability to meet the needs of its own people for food. *Martin Dangerfield’s* investigation of trade relations between the Visegrád states after 1991 shows once again that many potentials for exchange could not be exploited under the conditions of a planned economy and the state monopoly over

9 D. H. Aldcroft and S. Morewood, *Economic Change in Eastern Europe since 1918*, Aldershot 1995, pp. 156-157; S. Kotkin, *The East bloc goes borrowing*, in: N. Ferguson, C.S. Maier, E. Manela and D.J. Sargent (eds.), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 80-93; J. von Puttkamer, *Ostmitteleuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, München 2010, pp. 130-135, 140; A. Steiner, *The Globalisation Process and the Eastern Bloc Countries in the 1970s and 1980s*, in: *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, 21(2014) 2, pp. 165-181.

10 D.C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, New York/Cambridge 1990; D. Acemoglu and J.A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*, New York 2012. See about the phenomenon of the “persistence of inefficient institutions” with reference to the CMEA: Stone, *Satellites*, pp. 22-25.

11 R. Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, pp. 12-13.

foreign trade. *Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast* synthesizes these perspectives by presenting the actors of “hidden integration” between the East and the West.

This introductory contribution aims to assemble some important findings from the literature on the CMEA and its position in the global economy. This should help clarify the significance of the individual essays for a historization of the CMEA, which is still in its initial steps.

### **1. The Master Narrative of a Complete Failure or What “Integration” Means in the case of Centrally Planned Economies**

An important reason for the lack of interest in the history of the CMEA is certainly the unambiguous judgment that Western literature of the 1980s as well as the small number of studies in the 1990s disseminated about this international organization. All of them tell us a story of countless deficits and a complete failure.<sup>12</sup> A research subject with such a negative image is usually not attractive to a historian. However, today we should be aware that this master narrative of complete failure was the result of a specific historical context and of a specific perspective and methodology: the collapse of the socialist world system around 1990 and the comparison with the European (Economic) Community (EEC) as the Western counterpart of the CMEA.

If we want to question this master narrative in order to achieve a more differentiated picture of the CMEA or – putting it in other words – if we try to historize the CMEA, we should, first of all, raise the following questions: In what respect and by what standards did the CMEA fail? Was the failure of the CMEA only one part of the general crisis of the communist states and economies? Was the CMEA even within the socialist order with its own specific logic unable to fulfil its mission? The answer to the first question in the relevant literature almost always reaffirms that the CMEA was never an organization with supranational power, and it did not succeed in creating an actually integrated economic area.<sup>13</sup>

Dealing later with the argument of political scientists, this exploration begins with an economic perspective on integration processes. The term “integration” is used in different contexts.<sup>14</sup> However, an assessment of an integration process or of the organization which is to promote it as “failed” presupposes a precise set of criteria for success and/or failure. In (neo-)classical economic theory, there is the idea that increasing trade generally has prosperous effects. Economic integration theory assumes that the convergence and the expansion of commodity and production factor markets result in a more efficient allocation and use of resources, which enhance the use of scale effects and promote inno-

12 C. Gati, *The Bloc that Failed: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition*, Georgetown 1990; Steiner, *The Council*.

13 See, for example, Zwass, *Der Rat*; van Brabant, *Economic Integration*.

14 W. Plumpe and A. Steiner, *Dimensionen wirtschaftlicher Integrationsprozesse in West- und Osteuropa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 2008, vol. 2, pp. 23-28.

vation as an effect of more intense competition.<sup>15</sup> Even in studies on socialist countries, it is often assumed that “a successful regional economic integration is expressed in an increase in trade volume”.<sup>16</sup> This, at least implicitly, concludes that the main task of the CMEA was to increase trade between its member states.

However, the prerequisite for the above-mentioned growth and productivity effects of integration processes is – in addition to free trade, which should prevail in an integrated economic space – a competitive economic order, which generates production at the lowest opportunity costs. In principle, such an order existed in Western Europe, although in the EEC restrictive market regulations dominated agricultural as well as numerous other industries and service branches for sometimes very long periods. In the CMEA, by contrast, there was never any real competition between different suppliers.<sup>17</sup> Thus, “international economic intercourse among CMEA countries has never been based on considerations of comparative advantage. Even the theory of comparative advantage has been emphatically refuted as aimed at conserving structural dependencies established under imperialism”.<sup>18</sup>

For this reason, it is not surprising that an increase in foreign trade per se was never one of the most important economic policy objectives of the socialist countries: “The CMEA was never intended to maximize integration through trade, but rather to provide a protected environment within which to maximize the power, stability and economic growth of the socialist states.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, the share of CMEA countries in global industrial production was approximately three times higher than their share of world trade.<sup>20</sup> In the economic order, “planned economy” foreign trade mainly aimed at completing the supply of the national economy. The focus was on imports of raw materials that were not available in the respective country as well as goods that could not be produced for technological reasons. The importance of exports was primarily determined by the achievement of foreign exchange income to ensure these imports.

The second argument for the failure of integration within the CMEA came from political science. Many authors stress that the CMEA was never able to take over substantial competences and rights from the member states. In contrast to the EEC, the CMEA never created supranational institutions with decision-making power:

15 Sometimes, however, it is forgotten that even in (neo-)classical economic theory, trade is of “no value in itself”. Only if there are corresponding changes in the price and thus in the real income levels, integration will generate increasing welfare. G. Ambrosius, *Wirtschaftsraum Europa. Vom Ende der Nationalökonomien*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996, pp. 30–41 (cit. p. 40).

16 Dangerfield, *Sozialistische Ökonomische Integration*, p. 356; See also S. Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community. Soviet-Bloc Controversies over East-West Trade*, Frankfurt a. M. 2014, p. 24.

17 In competition with each other, “companies” from the CMEA countries came at best on third markets, which was however quantitatively hardly relevant.

18 L. Csaba, *Joint Investments and Mutual Advantages in the CMEA. Retrospection and Prognosis*, in: *Soviet Studies*, 37 (1985) 2, p. 228.

19 R. Bideleux and I. Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change*, London 1998, p. 538.

20 A. Inotai, *Industrialisierung und Industriepolitik*, in: *Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Strukturen und Probleme*, Bonn 1987, p. 42.

*According to its statutes, the organization's resolutions were not binding for its member states, but they did have to be approved by the national legislatures. [...] Additionally, all CMEA decisions had to be unanimous.*<sup>21</sup>

This lack of political integration is often perceived as an indicator for the secondary role of the CMEA in the development of economic relations in the Eastern bloc.

Indeed, if we take the key events of CMEA history, we get the impression of a rather weak institution. In the first years after its founding in 1949, the CMEA was no more than an umbrella that included a set of bilateral trade agreements that the Soviet Union and the other bloc countries signed with each other.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, “[i]t was not endowed with any authority, any significant functions, or any substantial staff [...] for the first decade of its existence it lived only on paper.”<sup>23</sup> Its weakness is usually attributed to Stalin, who deliberately chose to keep the CMEA debilitated in order to keep its allies divided and powerless against him.<sup>24</sup>

In the early 1960s, the interests, and more importantly the perception, of CMEA actors had changed fundamentally. Nikita Khrushchev suggested the establishment of a joint CMEA Central Planning Office to introduce a supranational planning system.<sup>25</sup> This idea was rejected by Romania – acting probably in the interests of other small members – for fear of Soviet domination and of degradation to the producer of agricultural goods for the Eastern Bloc. Planning of the economy was regarded as an essential part of national sovereignty and Romania wanted to uphold its national industrialization policy.<sup>26</sup>

In the late 1960s, a second Soviet attempt failed to introduce a supranational planning authority within the framework of the CMEA. At the time, the Soviet Union received support from Poland, which was, however, primarily politically motivated. Polish fears of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and mistrust of East Germany's privileged status vis-à-vis the FRG brought a temporary alliance of convenience with Moscow. In March 1969, for example, a British diplomat reported that Poles described their push for closer CMEA integration as an effort to keep the Soviet bloc intact by preventing East Germany from moving closer to the West.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, leading economists from Czechoslovakia and Hungary had quite different concepts in mind for the future

21 Kansikas, *Socialist Countries*, p. 30.

22 I. T. Berend, *An Economic History of Twentieth-Century Europe: Economic Regimes from Laissez-Faire to Globalization*, Cambridge 2006, p. 166; See also Bideleux, Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, pp. 534-543.

23 Stone, *Satellites*, p. 29.

24 Bideleux, Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, pp. 539-540.

25 Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, p. 12. The seriousness of Khrushchev's proposal is assessed differently in the literature. See M. Simai, *A Case Study of Economic Cooperation in Eastern Europe*, in: D. Nicol, L. Echevarria and A. Peccei (eds.), *Regionalism and the New International Economic Order*, New York et al. 1981, p. 126; Stone, *Satellites*, p. 34.

26 E. Dragomir, *New Explanations for Romania's Detachment from Moscow at the Beginning of the 1960s*, in: *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, 13 (2010), pp. 51-82. For Poland see W. Jarzabek, *Polish Economic Policy at the Time of Détente, 1966-78*, in: *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 21/2, pp. 293-309.

27 D.R. Stone, *CMEA's International Investment Bank and the Crisis of Developed Socialism*, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 10 (2008) 3, p. 55.

development of the CMEA. They generally believed that integration should be fostered by more rational pricing, a convertible CMEA currency, and a free socialist market. Therefore, they rejected a stronger centralization of planning in Moscow.<sup>28</sup> “These two competing visions of the CMEA’s future, Soviet supranational planning versus Czechoslovak and Hungarian free trade and convertible currency, clashed at the CMEA’s 23rd Session, in Moscow on 23–26 April 1969.”<sup>29</sup> In a way, however, the Comprehensive Programme of 1971 can be interpreted as a compromise between these two concepts. The programme aimed to coordinate medium-term economic plans. This, however, was limited in practice to the exchange of goods and to specialization in the manufacture of certain goods. Joint planning by the CMEA was not foreseen. Consequently, the structure and investment policy was not coordinated but remained the full responsibility of the member states. Closer cooperation was only possible with the implementation of individual projects, in which interested countries could participate.<sup>30</sup>

In the last two decades of its existence, the CMEA was never capable of developing its own institutions with real decision-making powers. Regarding the formation of supranational institutions, the (West) European Community was a more integrated association, because the West European member states granted discretionary competences to Brussels.<sup>31</sup> However, the much-loved comparison between the EEC and the CMEA is in some respects methodologically questionable. The member states of the EEC transferred only part of their decision-making power under certain political conditions to supranational institutions, which was a lengthy and conflicting process. In the CMEA, the establishment of a supranational planning authority would have meant the loss of the most important economic policy instrument for its member states.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, it was no accident that the term “integration” was not used to describe the aims of the CMEA during the development of its most important institutions between 1957 and 1963. The 1962 programme, which focused on developing the basic principles of the CMEA, was largely dedicated to the “International Socialist Division of Labour”<sup>33</sup> The contemporary socialist political economy interpreted “integration” as a process that could only take place within capitalism.<sup>34</sup> This corresponded in a certain way to reality since, of course, entanglements between national planning economies could not constitute an integration process in the form of a “free play of market forces”. Accordingly, the installation of a supranational planning procedure did not succeed. Moreover, it can be

28 J. Kučera, Zwischen „kapitalistischem“ und „sozialistischem“ Weltmarkt: Die tschechoslowakische Wirtschaftsreform der 1960er Jahre und der RGW, in: C. Boyer (ed.), *Zur Physiognomie sozialistischer Wirtschaftsreformen: Die Sowjetunion, Polen, die Tschechoslowakei, Ungarn, die DDR und Jugoslawien im Vergleich*, Frankfurt a. M. 2007, pp. 179-200; See also Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, pp. 213-225.

29 Stone, *CMEA’s International Investment Bank*, pp. 52-58 (cit. p. 58).

30 H. Machowski, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Ziele, Formen und Probleme der Zusammenarbeit*, in: *Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. Strukturen und Probleme*, Bonn 1987, p. 20.

31 Kansikas, *Socialist Countries*, p. 24.

32 *Ibid.*, 32.

33 A. Uschakow, *Integration im RGW (COMECON): Dokumente*, 2nd edition, Baden-Baden 1983, pp. 1018-1036.

34 Kansikas, *Socialist Countries*, p. 20; See also Machowski, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, p. 19.

assumed that even if there had been the political will to install a supranational planning, this would have failed due to technical problems. Even at the national level, the planning authorities lacked reliable information on capacities and, above all, on real demand.

The socialist division of labour was equally striving to achieve the optimal coordination of national economies as the central controlling instrument. To this end, the institutions of the CMEA prepared specialization agreements that were supposed to allow single countries to produce certain products for the entire CMEA market. This kind of division of labour was especially developed in engineering. The Hungarian Ikarus company, for example, held a monopoly in bus production in the CMEA and evolved into the world's sixth largest bus producer, with a six per cent share of the world's bus output.<sup>35</sup>

This resulted in the interim conclusion that the CMEA did not strive for economic and political integration as defined in the West. It was mainly concerned with the division of labour, which had to be planned in socialist economies and was primarily aimed at the use of scale effects.<sup>36</sup> A discussion of whether the CMEA failed and, if so, why, must be guided by the tasks assigned to the CMEA by the leadership of its member states. However, there are several indications that the CMEA was only moderately successful in the organization of the planned division of labour between its member states. At this point, it is sufficient to mention only two of these. Firstly, in all socialist countries, there were strong efforts to produce as many products as possible in their own country despite existing specialization agreements within the CMEA. Secondly, particularly in the early 1970s, being the honeymoon period of détente, the share of Western imports within the total imports of the CMEA increased from 26 (1970) to 36 (1975) per cent.<sup>37</sup> Both trends suggest that the specialization agreements could not achieve the desired effects and that confidence in the functioning of the CMEA had generally declined as well.<sup>38</sup>

## **2. The Disadvantages of the Economic Order “Planned Economy” and its Effects on the Functionality of the CMEA**

If we want to historicize the CMEA, we should try to understand whether it was the economic order of “central planned economy” that was generally and fundamentally inefficient, or whether it was certain decisions made within this order that led to the “failure” of the CMEA. With these questions in mind, historians Simon Godard and Erik Radisch are interested in the scopes of action of important persons. In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to note both the knowledge of the systematic and of the

35 I.T. Berend, *An Economic History*, p. 167; See also Z. Bódy, *Der Ikarus-Bus als ungarische und sozialistische Ikone: Die symbolische Aufladung alltäglicher Objekte mit politischen Bedeutungen*, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften*, 21 (2010) 2, pp. 152-172.

36 van Brabant, *Economic Integration*, pp. XXI-XXII.

37 Aldcroft and Morewood, *Economic Change*, pp. 156-157.

38 Puttkamer, *Ostmitteleuropa*, p. 131.

historical sciences.<sup>39</sup> Within the field of systematic sciences, the theory of “economic orders” (Wirtschaftsordnungen) has dealt specifically with economic systems organized by central plans. Again, this is a normative theory that mainly makes comparisons with the ideal type “market economy” to identify the “deficits” of the “planned economy”. Nevertheless, analyzing the economic order provides valuable evidence concerning the CMEA failure because on this level many of the general “deficits” of the planned economy were particularly dramatic. These “deficits” seem almost irreconcilable in hindsight, making failure inevitable. However, the contemporary actors saw this – at least in the 1950s and 1960s – quite differently. In the East, many people considered the CMEA as an instrument to resolve the problems of the post-war era, and in the West, not just a few people considered the socialist world a serious opponent.<sup>40</sup>

There is an abundance of studies that show how the essential features of the planned economy negatively affect its productivity.<sup>41</sup> Often the same factors made it difficult for the CMEA to fulfil its tasks. The planning of processes within a national economy is already a very ambitious project. The problems begin with the acquisition of information about the current state. Subsequently, numerous supply relationships must be created in such a way as to achieve the desired result with minimal effort. Regarding international trade, planned economies had an additional problem. The national planners could not know what foreign partners would buy from it. International trade relations had to operate on a market basis, but the socialist countries were lacking freely convertible currencies. For this reason, it was necessary to artificially establish market relations. Prices were therefore fixed in lengthy negotiations because the signal effects of supply and demand were missing.

*Under these conditions, it was logical to want to minimize even unexpected foreign economic influences, which were supposedly guaranteed by the state's monopoly in foreign trade and currency. [...] And so at first a strategy of substituting imports with domestic products, which was one of the factors promoting extensive economic development, was pursued.*<sup>42</sup>

This explains, on the one hand, how difficult it was to initiate and to increase foreign trade even within the CMEA. In addition, with the foundation of the CMEA the fun-

39 About the differences of systematic and historical sciences: H. Seiffert, Einführung in die Wissenschaftstheorie. Geisteswissenschaftliche Methoden, Vol. 2. Phänomenologie, Hermeneutik und historische Methode, Dialektik, München 2006, pp. 234-246.

40 R. N. Cooper, Economic Aspects of the Cold War, 1962–1975, in: M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), The Cold War, Vol. II. Crises and Détente, Cambridge 2010, p. 45.

41 See the classical study J. Kornai, The Socialist System. The Political Economy of Communism, Princeton 1992. The observation of a negative effect of planned economies on productivity is principally true, although in certain historical situations, such as the reconstruction period after the Second World War, planned economies could achieve considerable economic growth. See f. e. W. Loth, The Cold War and the Social and Economic History of the Twentieth Century, in: M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), The Cold War, Vol. II. Crises and Détente, Cambridge 2010, p. 503 and 514. Moreover, this observation is true independent of the fact that capitalism, especially in its unregulated variant, is often simultaneously economically efficient and socially destructive.

42 Steiner, The Globalisation Process, p. 168.

damental idea of self-sufficiency was transferred from the national level to the whole bloc. After the Second World War, Eastern Europe experienced a reorientation of foreign trade, which was unique in economic history. Trade of the Soviet allies with the USSR increased between ten- to twentyfold.<sup>43</sup> However, this was only to a very small extent a result of the CMEA, and rather a consequence of the exclusion from trade with Western Europe. One estimate of the value suggested that the trade of socialist nations with the capitalist world declined precipitously from 74 per cent of its total trade in 1938 to just 14 percent by 1953.<sup>44</sup>

In the processing of trade relations within the Eastern bloc, hard currency was basically excluded, whereby the countries paid each other with deliveries of goods. Money terms (in our case the transferable rouble) were only used for accounting and control.<sup>45</sup> The prices were fixed for several years. However, already in the 1950s, nearly all socialist countries complained about losses because of the price freeze. For example, coal exporters, like Poland, were unable to profit from the world market boom. This led to the adoption of the simulated world market pricing principle that was introduced by the 9th council session of the CMEA in Bucharest in 1958 and maintained its validity (in a modified form) until the self-dissolution of the CMEA in 1991.<sup>46</sup>

Although negotiations about price changes and the trade deficits still remained conflictive, the barter trade was largely of use for all sides.

*Bilateral trade agreements guaranteed the energy and raw material supply for the small Central and Eastern European countries from the Soviet Union, while they mostly paid by industrial products, which helped Moscow ease the shortage of investment and consumer goods.*<sup>47</sup>

However, a multilateral organization such as the CMEA was naturally set back by the preference for bilateral barter relations.

The economic advantages and disadvantages of this foreign trade system are very obvious. On the one hand, the economies of scale could not be optimally used, and, on the other, the monopoly position weakened the incentive to innovate. From the perspective of economic history, this system – combined with the protectionism of the CMEA – essentially eased the import substitution industrialization of the agrarian countries (especially Romania and Bulgaria and partly also Hungary and Poland), which were able to sell their often low-quality industrial products in other CMEA countries and especially in the huge and, in many respects, functional Soviet “market”. However, Polish and Hungarian economists, in particular, recognized the ambivalent character of the situation:

43 Aldcroft and Morewood, *Economic Change*, p. 134.

44 F.D. Holzman, *The Economics of Soviet Bloc. Trade and Finance*, Boulder, Col. 1987, p. 180.

45 Plumpe and Steiner, *Dimensionen wirtschaftlicher Integrationsprozesse*, p. 35; Stone, *CMEA's International Investment Bank*, p. 57 f.

46 Machowski, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, pp. 22-24. See also the article of Erik Radisch in this volume.

47 Berend, *An Economic History*, p. 167.

*All these advantages [...] were realised in a rather contradictory way. An isolated and safe market which was not competitive blocked not only the destructive effects of competition from the advanced industrialised countries but its challenging and stimulating effects as well.*<sup>48</sup>

Since the 1970s even the most developed industrial states of the CMEA, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia, benefited from the fact that they were able to supply industrial products that were no longer competitive in Western markets to the Soviet Union and, in return, received raw materials and fuel on relatively favourable terms.<sup>49</sup>

This kind of organizing of intra-CMEA trade had a negative impact on both the integration and the structural development of the socialist economies. The Soviet Union mainly exported subsidized goods and mostly imported overpriced goods in return.<sup>50</sup> It did so mainly for political reasons, which will be discussed in more detail later. However, it must already be noted at this point that the Soviet Union had an urgent interest in changing the modalities and the terms of intra-CMEA trade, especially when its own economic problems arose.

The structural effect of the form of processing and goods-flows in intra-CMEA-trade was the continuation of the development of those sectors which in the Soviet concept of planned economy and in the concepts of the smaller states of import substitution had already been the focus of the growth strategies. The socialist as well as the national industrialisation concepts concentrated on the development of mining and 'heavy' branches of manufacturing (metallurgy, shipbuilding, heavy armaments such as tanks, and basic chemicals such as fertilizers) at the expense of consumer goods industries, services and technologically advanced high-skill branches.<sup>51</sup> This production structure mentioned above corresponds to the findings demonstrating that the socialist division of labour consisted mainly of the exchange of raw materials and finished products. More complex delivery relationships, which used the specific advantages of individual production sites, were difficult to plan. They also posed a great risk to companies; as experience had shown, the supplies often did not arrive on time or were inferior in quality. There was no effective system in place to compensate for such damages.

Adam Zwass – a Polish Jew, who was an executive of the Central Bank in Warsaw and from 1964 to 1969 the head of the financial department in the CMEA, and who later escaped to Austria – characterized the difficult position of the CMEA in the economic system of the Eastern bloc countries as follows: The CMEA was a unique attempt to

48 I.T. Berend and G. Ránki, *The Hungarian Economy in the twentieth Century*, London/Sydney 1985, p. 280.

49 Inotai, *Industrialisierung*, p. 44.

50 Stone, *Satellites*, p. 5.

51 A part of the literature still overlooks the continuity of the national economic policy of the 1930s and argues that the concentration on the heavy industry in the 1950s was based solely on the transfer of the Soviet industrialization model. See e.g. Puttkamer, *Ostmitteleuropa*, p. 122.

unite economies, which are principally more introverted because of their internal money and price system and their foreign trade monopoly.<sup>52</sup>

Another expert from the region, András Inotai, who was the general director of the Institute for World Economics in Budapest from 1981 to 1989, identified 10 factors that hampered a deeper integration of the CMEA:<sup>53</sup>

1. The national strategies of industrialization were oriented to the needs of the respective national market and aimed at substituting imports.
2. The large absorption capacity of the Soviet market allowed several countries to orient to the same market without considerable competition.
3. The stability of the foreign market decreased the efforts to change structures and offers.
4. Economies of scale lost their growth potentials.
5. The principles of bilateralism and the equalization of trade balances caused the weakest economy to determine the pace.
6. The lack of convertibility of currencies distorted price relations.
7. In the case of violations of contracts, for example in the case of non-delivery, there were rarely sanctions.
8. Specialization and cooperation agreements contributed little to international competitiveness.
9. Opposing interests between companies and the national economy caused a mutual blockade. Firms were not involved in decision-making about specialization, and often failed to realize their advantages.
10. Exports were urgently needed for the payment of interest and for the repayment of debts, but with the industrial structure based on the strategy of import substitution and on the requirements of the Soviet Union, there was only little chance on the world market.

There are also arguments explaining the weakness of integration in the Eastern bloc, which are not directly linked to the question of the economic order. In this line of thought, some authors stress that the effectiveness of the CMEA had also been hampered by the great differences in the levels of development between the member states and/or by the asymmetry between the large Soviet economy and the much smaller ones of the East Central and Southeast European states.<sup>54</sup> This certainly played a role. However, we should keep in mind that from the perspective of an economic historian, the position of the Soviet Union as the hegemon of the firmly hierarchical Eastern bloc and military superpower could not be described by simple and usual models, such as the dichotomy of centre and periphery. After all, the internal economic developmental level of the Soviet

52 Zwass, *Der Rat*, pp. 13 and 149.

53 Inotai, *Industrialisierung*, pp. 50-53.

54 Plumpe and Steiner, *Dimensionen wirtschaftlicher Integrationsprozesse*, p. 22 and 28; Golczewski, *Der RGW – eine europäische Einigungsorganisation*, p. 34.

Union was extremely heterogeneous, and as the leading country of the Eastern bloc, it had to import a lot of modern technologies from its satellite states.

### 3. Primacy of Policy and Hegemony of the Soviet Union in the CMEA?

The relations between the Soviet Union on the one hand and the other socialist states on the other also play an important role within the often held argument that the CMEA could not become economically successful because all its key decisions were mainly based on political motives and aims and not on economic rationale.<sup>55</sup> This frequently corresponds with the view of many contemporary historians, who regard the CMEA primarily as a part of the Soviet power politics to control its sphere of influence, or as an instrument of foreign policy.<sup>56</sup> This opinion is especially represented by many historians from East-Central and Southeast European countries. This is also due to the fact that the interpreting of the socialist period as a time of limited state sovereignty and exploitation by the Soviet Union is still very popular in all former Eastern Bloc states.<sup>57</sup> The already mentioned economic advantages for the smaller member states due to the terms of trade in the intra-CMEA trade are completely ignored.

However, it is indisputably true that in the socialist system of one-party rule, nearly all fundamental decisions concerning economic and social policies depended on whether they promised an extension or at least stabilization of communist power. Perhaps the best proof of this thesis is the appreciation of consumption policy after the uprisings and disturbances of 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1976. Again and again, measures were taken that exclusively served to maintain the political power of the communist parties, without paying attention to economic effects.<sup>58</sup> However, was the CMEA primarily a “weapon of Soviet domination”?<sup>59</sup> And did the main decisions of the CMEA completely follow a political logic neglecting economic interest?

On closer inspection, it soon becomes clear that in the case of the CMEA, the relationship between politics and economy cannot be grasped by categories such as primary or secondary importance.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, and possibly in contrast to the Warsaw Pact, the

55 Zwass, *Der Rat*; van Brabant, *Economic Integration*, Metcalf, *The Council*; G. Herzog, *Schwäche als Stärke: Bargaining Power im RGW* (= Arbeitspapiere des Osteuropa-Instituts der Freien Universität Berlin, 17, 1998).

56 Golczewski, *Der RGW – eine europäische Einigungsorganisation*; G. Thum, „Europa im Ostblock“. *Weißer Flecken in der Geschichte der europäischen Integration*, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*. Online-Ausgabe 2004.

57 Golczewski, *Der RGW – eine europäische Einigungsorganisation*, p. 31; S. Troebst and U. Brunnbauer (eds.), *Zwischen Amnesie und Nostalgie: Die Erinnerung an den Kommunismus in Südosteuropa*, Köln 2007.

58 C. Békés, *East Central Europe, 1953–1956*, in: M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cold War*, Vol. I. *Origins*, Cambridge 2010, p. 351; C. Boyer and P. Skyba (eds.), *Repression und Wohlfahrtsversprechen*, Dresden 1999; Cooper, *Economic Aspects of the Cold War*, p. 50; A. Kemp-Welch, *Eastern Europe: Stalinism to solidarity*, in: M.P. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cold War*, Vol. II. *Crises and Détente*, Cambridge 2010, p. 229.

59 I. T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe, 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery*, New York/Cambridge 1996, p. 82.

60 See Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, pp. 13–15.

relationship between the political leader of the Eastern bloc and the smaller states in the field of economy cannot simply be understood as a relationship between a ruler and subordinate subjects. One of a few general observations is that the Soviet Union “was unquestionably the moving force within in the CMEA”.<sup>61</sup>

This was undoubtedly the case since the founding of the CMEA. However, just the formation process reveals how many different interests and influencing factors determined the history of the CMEA. In addition, this event continues to be a source of controversy, or at least for a different weighing of several factors. Contemporaries “believed that the creation of Comecon [the CMEA] was part of a slowly unfolding plan for Soviet domination of post-fascist Europe. However, Western ‘revisionist’ historians of the Cold War [in the 1970s and 1980s] have long maintained that such a plan never existed, and we [these historians] share the view that Stalin was merely reacting defensively to unforeseen Western challenges and provocations, improvising as he went along”.<sup>62</sup> In the 1990s, the majority of the authors stressed the ideological driving forces of the Cold War:

*Stalin proclaimed the existence of two independent, capitalist, and socialist world markets. As a pragmatic consequence, the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (CMEA) was established in 1949.*<sup>63</sup>

Alternatively, the move has been seen as a wrecking manoeuvre to nip in the bud emerging efforts towards regional economic integration among the East European states. Indeed, there were several Balkan federation schemes as well as a Czechoslovak-Polish trade agreement, which were designed to promote closer economic links among the member states. The Bulgarian-Yugoslav plan had especially alarmed the Kremlin, which was anxious to isolate Yugoslavia economically and stamp out its alternative socialist economic vision.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the foundation of the CMEA can also be seen as an important step in the transformation of the Soviet Union’s policy in its sphere of influence. In the first post-war decade, the Soviets plundered around USD 14 billion from six East European countries.<sup>65</sup> However, since 1947, the Soviet Union gradually came to concede that if it was to continue occupying the void in trade links with Eastern Europe left by the defeated Germans, it would have to make loans in the form of grain and other foodstuffs in order to relieve food shortages and provide some raw materials and consumer goods. In return, it would accept anything the East Europeans could offer. In 1947, the Soviets renegotiated credit agreements with Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia and wrote off half the Hungarian and Romanian reparations.<sup>66</sup> In a way, the founding of the

61 Aldcroft and Morewood, *Economic Change*, p. 137.

62 Bideleux and Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe*, p. 535. For the development of Cold War historiography in the 20<sup>th</sup> century see O.A. Westad, Introduction: Reviewing the Cold War, in: O.A. Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, London et al. 2000, pp. 1-23.

63 Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe*, p. 82.

64 Aldcroft and Morewood, *Economic Change*, p. 133.

65 Ibid., p. 132.

66 van Brabant, *Economic Integration*, pp. 12-16.

CMEA was a further step in the context of the change in Soviet policy from exploitation to stabilization.

In view of these circumstances, it is astonishing that the CMEA remained so inactive after its establishment. However, the initial absence of steps towards the integration of the East European economies in the years after the founding of the CMEA was not just due to Stalin's distrust and power calculations, but also due to structural reasons. In the late 1940s, the USSR was largely self-sufficient, whereas the level of development of productive forces in the East Central Europe had not yet reached the degree of international cooperation that could be called "integration" in the full sense implied by the concept.<sup>67</sup> A second example of the interaction between political and economic factors and the complexity of the relations between the Soviet Union and the other European CMEA countries are the already mentioned terms of trade in the CMEA. At least since the early 1960s, commodities such as oil were generally underpriced on the CMEA "market". The Soviet Union provided "hard goods" with a relatively high value on the world market and in return received machinery, equipment, and consumer goods from its allies, much of which could not have been sold on the world market.<sup>68</sup> Already in the 1980s, there were several attempts to quantify the implicit Soviet trade subsidies to other European CMEA members. In the probably most famous study on this matter, the authors conclude that these subsidies constituted around USD 87 billion for the period from 1960 to 1980.<sup>69</sup> Most economists considered that these estimates were too high.<sup>70</sup> What is not in doubt is that Soviet subsidization was widespread and considerable.

The main beneficiaries of this generosity were the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, and in the 1970s also Bulgaria. The differences in behaviour of the Soviet Union towards its allies are partly due to their respective economic structures. However, the foreign policy and geostrategic interests of the Soviet Union were more important. In general, the Soviet Union rewarded its supporters and punished detractors. For example,

*East Germany [...] permitted 20 Soviet divisions [with about 500,000 army personnel] to be stationed on its territory, and, through its economic links with West Germany, acted as a conduit for Western expertise and technology and was the Soviet Union's principal supplier of technologically advanced goods. Equally, the Soviets were always conscious of the GDR's vulnerable strategic position and it was no accident that it became the Soviet Union's most important trading partner.*<sup>71</sup>

67 Simai, A Case Study of Economic Cooperation, p. 127; Csaba, Joint Investments, p. 230.

68 Stone, Satellites, pp. 5-9.

69 M. Marrese and J. Vanous, Soviet Subsidization of Trade with Eastern Europe. A Soviet Perspective, Berkeley 1983.

70 J.M. van Brabant, The USSR and Socialist Economic Integration: a Comment, in: Soviet Studies, Vol. XXXVI, (January, 1984) 1, pp. 135-153; M. Lavigne, The Soviet Union Inside 'Comecon', in: Soviet Studies, Vol. XXXV (April, 1983) 2, pp. 127-138.

71 Aldcroft and Morewood, Economic Change, pp.137-139, at p.138.

Czechoslovakia was also located directly at the Iron Curtain and remained – only intermittently interrupted by the Prague Spring – a similarly loyal ally, housing five Soviet divisions. These two cases prove that Moscow provided large hidden economic subsidies to its allies in exchange for their political and military loyalty. Bulgaria was less strategically important, but had always been a reliable and obedient client, in sharp contrast to Romania. The indirect subsidies, as well as loans to Poland – which was politically unreliable and economically unstable but was also strategically important – could also be described as expenditures of the Soviet Union for the preservation of its empire in addition to the immediate military expenditures. Accordingly, the countries brought into the Soviet fold were “effectively subsidized by a country that was, in fact, less developed than many of them.”<sup>72</sup> These circumstances could confirm the primacy of politics.

However, the situation changed when the USSR faced increasing difficulties in maintaining its economic growth, particularly the growth of oil production. The inability to innovate, or even to absorb foreign innovations, the loss of discipline among Soviet workers, and the failure to maintain installed equipment explains the gradual but steady decline in economic growth.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, the poor performance of its own agricultural sector, which necessitated the Soviet Union taking ever greater food imports from the West, caused problems in the Soviet balance of payment. Christian Gerlach shows in his contribution to this volume the great and increasing value of food imports within Soviet foreign trade after 1972. The imports were not enough to stop the deterioration of living standards, which were worse in the allegedly leading country of the Eastern bloc than in most of the satellite states. This highlighted the need for fundamental reforms, which later were tried under Gorbachev.

The economic crisis in the Soviet Union also had an impact on the relations of other CMEA members. In 1973, the Soviet Union initially proved willing to shield its Eastern satellites from the ravages of the oil price inflation. But increasingly, as it too faced the problem of countering slower economic growth, this benign attitude proved ever more difficult to sustain. When in 1981, Gerhard Schürer, the head of the GDR’s State Plan Commission, complained that the Soviet Union supplied less oil to the GDR and was also unwilling to give credit to its most important front-line state on the Iron Curtain, Nikolai Baibakov, the head of Gosplan, responded:

[I have to think about] *the People’s Republic of Poland! When I cut back on oil there (I am going there next week) that would be unbearable for socialism ... And Vietnam is starving. We have to help. Should we just give away South East Asia? Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Yemen. We carry them all. And our own standard of living is extraordinarily low. We really must improve it.*<sup>74</sup>

72 O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold war from Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge 2014, p. 70.

73 Cooper, *Economic Aspects of the Cold War*, p. 48.

74 Cited in: J. Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989*, Chapel Hill 2009, pp. 93–94.

#### 4. Conclusion. Paths to Historize the CMEA

The relative accessibility of the archives in Moscow and those in other former socialist countries, and perhaps also the decline of the immediate political relevance of this topic, are good conditions for the historization of the CMEA. The newly accessible sources enable the reconstruction of the decision-making processes, thereby sketching a much more detailed picture of different interests and conflicts within this organization. Thus, it will also be possible to understand the CMEA through its own logic. As a result, we are not left with the discovery that “integration” has not succeeded in the CMEA. We will know in more detail what goals had been set, how they should have been achieved, and the concrete obstacles to the implementation of the objectives.

The studies of recent years, as well as the contributions in this volume, show three main approaches to deepen our knowledge about the CMEA. This is, *firstly*, an actor-centred approach, which not only considers the party leaders but also focuses on economic experts, technicians, and above all CMEA staff.<sup>75</sup> For example, experts from East Central Europe were also involved in the founding of the CMEA, drawing on experiences gained during the interwar period. The intra-CMEA trade was organized by a clearing system that was already demonstrated in the 1930s between East Central European states and within the so-called German Großraumwirtschaft, and that was easily applicable in planned economies.<sup>76</sup>

Although the CMEA was not a supranational organization, it built up its own public service with several hundred, and by the 1980s more than one thousand, employees.<sup>77</sup> Many of them originally had been national stakeholders, but they developed a more or less “internationalist” identity over the years. Besides the staff of the headquarters in Moscow, about 25 standing committees for special branches or tasks located in other capitals of the smaller CMEA member states employed technical experts with several connections also to the West.<sup>78</sup>

*Secondly*, it is worth looking at the more successful projects of the CMEA. The results of these activities have continued to some extent until today. The joint investment projects, intensified due to the Comprehensive Programme of 1971, also relativize the picture of the subsidization of the smaller states by the Soviet Union. It was precisely because of unfavourable price structures in foreign trade that from the early 1960s raw material exporters like the Soviet Union increasingly tended to incrementally restrict supplies on the condition of investment contributions, a CMEA term for such joint investments.

75 See the articles by Simon Godard and Erik Radisch in this volume.

76 Z. Drabek, Foreign Trade Performance and Policy, in: M.C. Kaser and E.A. Radice, The Economic History of Eastern Europe 1919–1975, Vol. I. Economic Structure and Performance between the two Wars, Oxford 1985, pp. 435 f. and 450–454; W.S. Grenzebach, Germany's Informal Empire in East-Central Europe: German Economic Policy toward Yugoslavia and Rumania 1933–1939, Stuttgart 1988.

77 This is one of the parallels to the EC and Brussels.

78 D. Jajeśniak-Quast, „Hidden Integration“ – RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte, (2014) 1, pp. 179–195.

This form of cooperation, which was the first of its kind, is most closely related to the underdeveloped state of the monetary sphere of integration under the conditions of socialism.<sup>79</sup> Joint investments of CMEA countries were concentrated on industrial branch programmes, such as the complex computer programme and its future developments; programmes of a “pendulum type”, for example the ethylene pipe line between the Tisza Chemical Combine and Kalus; and transnational programmes, for example the Friendship oil pipeline and the Orenburg gas pipeline.<sup>80</sup> The results of these joint investments and their benefits for the various stakeholders have not yet been sufficiently investigated.

Thirdly, it is fruitful to regard the CMEA not as a closed entity but rather to consider its development within the (economic) history of the socialist countries and, above all, the effects of the Cold War and the development of the world economy under the conditions of globalization. Only a few years ago, Suvi Kansikas stated:

*There are so far relatively few studies that analyse the CMEA as part of the international history of the Cold War. There are even fewer studies that have used materials from the CMEA archive, and they to a large extent have analysed the CMEA within the socialist bloc framework, overlooking or ignoring altogether the influences coming from outside the bloc, such as the EC.*<sup>81</sup>

Once again, we can point to the establishment of the CMEA, which in several respects was linked to the Marshall Plan. As Kansikas further stated:

*The establishment of the CMEA in January 1949 needs to be seen in the context of the ensuing Cold War bloc division. The single most important external factor pushing the Soviet bloc together was the US-sponsored aid plan for European recovery, the Marshall plan.*<sup>82</sup>

The autarchic orientation of the CMEA in the 1950s was less an implementation of the communist industrialization ideology and instead a consequence of Western embargo politics.<sup>83</sup> And last but not least, the relative decline in intra-CMEA trade in the early 1970s, along with the turn towards the countries of the Global South and the partial revival of the intra-CMEA trade since the end of the 1970s, can only be understood by taking into account the growing East-West trade and the debt crisis.<sup>84</sup>

We should reintegrate the history of the CMEA into contemporary world history and especially into the history of the recent period of globalization. In other words, only a

79 Csaba, *Joint Investments*, p. 227.

80 K. Botos and G. Hajdu, *Coordination of Investment Policies in the CMEA*, in: *Soviet and Eastern European Foreign Trade*, Vol. 15 (Summer, 1979), 2, p. 5. See also Csaba, *Joint Investments*, pp. 227-247, and the article by Falk Flade in this volume.

81 Kansikas, *Socialist Countries*, p. 25.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

83 Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization*, pp. 70-80.

84 Steiner, *The Globalization Process*, and the other articles in *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 21 (2014) 2.

transnational approach to the CMEA will keep us from writing the CMEA history only from the perspective of its dissolution. As historians, we should not step into the “the trap of teleology”.

# The Struggle of the Soviet Conception of Comecon, 1953–1975

Erik Radisch

*God himself, as they say, ordered us communists and leading persons to give an example of economic cooperation with commonly united aims.*<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACTS

Der Artikel untersucht für die Zeit von 1953 bis 1975 die sowjetischen Versuche, Reformkonzepte für den RGW zu erarbeiten. Während der Stalin-Ära begann die Sowjetunion, eine starke direkte Kontrolle in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa auszuüben, was auch das Wesen der Zusammenarbeit wesentlich prägte. Kooperation hatte in dieser Zeit keine Priorität. Erst nach Stalins Tod begann die Sowjetunion, eigene Konzepte für die wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit im RGW-Raum zu erarbeiten. Chruščev wollte die Kooperation auf wissenschaftliche Grundlagen stellen. Unter Berufung auf „objektive Gesetzmäßigkeiten“ der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung sollte jedes Land dazu bewegt werden, sich auf bestimmte Branchen zu spezialisieren. Diese Überlegungen schlossen die Erarbeitung und Umsetzung eines für den gesamten RGW geltenden, gemeinsamen Plans ein. Ähnlich wie bei seinen Sovnarchoz-Reformen ging Chruščev hierbei von einem Ideal des kommunistischen Menschen aus, der jedoch in der Realität nicht existierte. Auf internationaler wie auf Unionsebene scheiterten seine Reformen aus zwei Gründen: Zum einen schaffte es die Sowjetunion nicht, einen wissenschaftlich begründeten RGW-weiten Planungsprozess zu etablieren, zum anderen konnte die UdSSR die neuerliche Ausbildung von nationalstaatlicher Interessenpolitik nicht verhindern. Nach dem Scheitern der Reformansätze schlug die UdSSR unter Brežnev einen konservativeren Kurs im RGW ein, der vor allem darauf

1 N.S. Khrushchev, Rede des Genossen N.S. Chruschtschow auf der Beratung der ersten Sekretäre der Zentralkomitees der kommunistischen- und Arbeiterparteien sowie der Regierungsoberhäupter der Teilnehmerländer des Rats für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe 1962, in: German Federal Archive Berlin (BArch), DY 30/ 3481, p. 16 (Translation by the author).

ausgerichtet war, die Effektivität des eigenen RGW-Handels zu erhöhen. Auch diese Ansätze wurden durch heimische Wirtschaftsreformen – im Zusammenhang mit der Liberman-Debatte – beeinflusst.

The article examines Soviet efforts between 1953 and 1975 to develop reform concepts for the Comecon. During the Stalinist era, the Soviet Union began exercising strong control in East Central and Southeast Europe. This control also significantly impacted the nature of cooperation. But cooperation at this time was not a priority; it only became a priority after Stalin's death, at which time the Soviet Union began developing its own concept of economic cooperation for the Eastern Bloc. Khrushchev wanted cooperation to have a scientific foundation. Based on "objective laws" of economic development, each country should be encouraged to specialize in different economic sectors, as part of an overarching plan for the economic development of the CMEA area. Like his Sovnarkhoz reforms, Khrushchev based this plan on the ideal Communist man, who in reality did not exist. The plan proved unsuccessful at the international and regional level for two reasons. First, the Soviet Union failed to establish a centralized rational planning process for the entire Eastern Bloc. Second, the Soviet Union could not prevent the resurgence of policies based on national interests. Following Khrushchev's failed effort at reforming Comecon, Brezhnev adopted a more conservative approach, aimed primarily at increasing the effectiveness of Soviet trade relations in the CMEA. These approaches were also influenced by reform efforts at the national level against the backdrop of the Liberman Debate.

## 1. Introduction

During its existence, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) introduced several structural reforms, but none of them succeeded as their inventors had hoped. Randall Stone argues in *Satellites and Commissars* that the main reason for Comecon's resistance to reforms was the inability of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to force unwanted policies on lower administrative levels of Comecon member states against their will.<sup>2</sup> This article is an attempt to complement the existing body of literature on the topic by offering new perspectives to this line of enquiry. In doing so, it will highlight the struggle that the Soviet Union faced while developing its own conception of inner-Comecon cooperation. I argue that the Soviet Union under Stalin fully shaped the economic relations within Comecon without developing its own distinctive form of socialist cooperation. Cooperation was based exclusively on Soviet whims, and enforced by brutality. The absence of an elaborate concept led to an existential crisis after Stalin's death, as terror was no longer used as a political device. The absence of terror in the post-Stalinist period induced the Soviet Union to develop its own concept of Comecon trade, which was regarded as needing to be scientifically based. To be successful, a common price base was needed inside Comecon, which at that time was nearly impossible to

2 R.W. Stone, *Satellites and commissars. Strategy and conflict in the politics of Soviet-bloc trade*. Princeton, NJ 1996.

achieve. Khrushchev promoted his idea of a common plan for Comecon without a scientific basis – and failed. After Khrushchev's endeavours to reform Comecon, the Soviet Union undertook only half-hearted approaches to restructure Comecon cooperation, which made cancelling or ignoring any attempts of reform remarkably simple. Without a new fundamental reform of trade organization, the Soviet Union remained trapped in old Stalinist patterns of action with very little room for manoeuvre. The ineptness of the Soviet Union to reform Comecon is therefore a consequence of its inability to develop a fully functioning socialist trade system.

## 2. Developing a Socialist World System: Setting up Soviet Foreign Trade with the New Socialist Republics

Legitimized through its own success, the Soviet Union began to influence – at first, indirectly and cautiously – the countries in its sphere of interest. This process was not without contradictions, primarily because the majority of the occupied states were former aggressors during the Second World War, which had to pay reparations. Yet, the Soviet Union also prevented the complete economic collapse of the region through its trade input and activities in the region.<sup>3</sup> To guarantee the maintenance of production in these states, the Soviet Union largely supplied them with raw materials. For the Soviet Union, the post-war appearance of its sphere of influence, which was not yet socialist, but of becoming such, was a stroke of luck. Here, one can see the roots of Soviet-East European economic relations. Having been accustomed to having access to Western products, the devastation of these regions left the Soviet Union desperate for nearly every kind of import and technology transfers, which the new people's republics could offer. For its part, the Soviet Union had enough raw materials to sell. The trade relations between the East European states and the USSR thus began to grow rapidly after the war. The most important factories and industry sectors even came under direct Soviet control through the foundation of joint companies.<sup>4</sup>

3 Even countries that had not been former enemy countries like Poland had to deliver extremely cheap coal to the Soviet Union as compensation for gained German territories. See: Pamyatnaya zapiska o postavkakh uglja iz Pol'shi v SSSR v 1946-1953 gg. i ob ekonomicheskoi pomoshchi SSSR Pol'she v etot period, in: A. A. Fursenko (ed.), Prezidium CK KPSS 1954–1964. Chernovye protokolye zapisi zasedanii, stenogrammy, postanovleniya; v 3-ch tomakh, tom 2. Moskva 1956, pp. 426-427.

4 For the Soviet occupation zone, see: W. Mühlfriedel, SAG-Betriebe – Schulen des Sozialismus. Eine Skizze der historischen Entwicklung des staatlichen sowjetischen Eigentums an industriellen Produktionsmitteln in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone und in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, in: Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte No. 3 (1980), pp. 159–186, p. 165; For Czechoslovakia see: A. Bischof, Das tschechische „Nationalunternehmen Jáchymov“ – ein sowjetisches Großprojekt? Die Uranerzindustrie in der Wahrnehmung und in den Zukunftsvorstellungen tschechoslowakischer Politiker im Wandel der Zeit (1945–1964), in: M. Schulze Wessel (ed.), Zukunftsvorstellungen und staatliche Planung im Sozialismus. Die Tschechoslowakei im ostmitteleuropäischen Kontext 1945–1989. München 2010, pp. 115–136, at 19-20. Karlsch points out, that one can find such cases also in Bulgaria: R. Karlsch, Ungleiche Partner – Vertragliche und finanzielle Probleme der Uranlieferungen der DDR, in: R. Karlsch (ed.), Strahlende Vergangenheit. Studien zur Geschichte des Uranbergbaus der Wismut, St. Katharinen 1996, pp. 263–300, at 272.

### 3. Driven, Not Leading: Founding of Comecon as an Act of Opposition

During this time, the United States proposed the Marshall Plan, pursuing a completely new foreign policy direction. The new aim was not only to rebuild Western Europe with large-scale loans, but also to integrate the European economy according to Western values and to establish a strong economic bloc against the socialist economy in the East. Additionally, some Central and East European countries within the Soviet sphere of influence, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, were interested in Marshall Plan loans. Their interest directly threatened the Soviet attempts at economic consolidation of its own sphere of interest. The United States connected the terms of these loans to their new idea of an economically integrated and democratic Europe, which was unacceptable to the Soviet Union. Despite its disapproval, the Soviet Union could not offer credits of such large amounts.<sup>5</sup>

The immediate response was the forceful strengthening of Soviet power within its sphere of influence. A peaceful path to socialism was quickly forgotten and, within a short time, all of the Eastern bloc countries were taken over by communist regimes, which soon established Soviet-inspired planned economies. To force and control the “building of socialism” in these countries, the Soviet Union started to send Soviet advisors. These advisors quickly became the key elements of the Stalinist system in the people’s republics. Soviet officials maintained that their advisors acted only as consultants although the Soviet Union controlled the intelligence apparatus directly, and thus a Soviet advisor could accuse anyone who opposed the new system of being a traitor.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet Union exported its own trade pattern, which tended to be autarkic and overcontrolling.<sup>7</sup> Every country was forced to sever connections with capitalist countries whether they were vital for their existence or not. Instead, the Soviet-influenced countries were forced to look for substitutes inside the bloc or to build their own new factories. After this political decision, economic logic was rather secondary. Self-reliance of the bloc was the main reason for economic decisions in the Soviet sphere after the Second World War. The foundation of the Council of Mutual Economic Aid in January 1949 should be understood as a part of this rationale. Consequently, in the founding protocols of Comecon, the relationships between the socialist states were mainly defined in opposition to the capitalist model. The protocols explicitly mentioned the Marshall Plan and its threat to the interests of the socialist world.<sup>8</sup>

5 K. Kaplan: *The short march. The Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1948*. London 1987, p. 67.

6 T.V. Volokitina, *Moskva i Vostochnaya Evropa. Stanovlenie politicheskikh rezhimov sovetskogo tipa; (1949–1953). ocherki istorii*. Moskva 2008, p. 594.

7 As Sanchez-Sibony recently showed, it is not right to call Soviet trade patterns autarkic. The Soviet Union had a vital interest in trade in nearly every phase of its history. See: O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red globalization. The political economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev*. New York 2014. However, the fear of a military confrontation with the West led the trade between the two blocs to drop to a bare minimum.

8 The protocols can be found in: *Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI)*, f. 82, op 2, d. 1073. See also M. A. Lipkin, *Sovetskii Sojuz i evropejskaya integraciya. Seredina 1940-kh – seredina 1960-kh godov*. Moskva 2011, p. 90.

Thus, unlike the Marshall Plan, the foundation of Comecon was a defensive response to the post-war economic reality. The Soviet Union forced its own interest, creating unity at the expense of losing much needed Western trade relations. Although Comecon member states also declared that they engaged in economic relations “of a new type”, the definition of such relations remained rather unclear:

*These relations are based on broad common interests and mutual solidarity, which has already achieved great successes in bilateral economic relations between the people's republics and the Soviet Union. These successes are expressed by an immense growth of the exchange of goods and a wide range of new forms of economic cooperation.<sup>9</sup>*

In the Stalinist period, to call economic relations within Comecon “relations of a new type based on mutual solidarity” was problematic at best. On the one hand, Comecon made decisions that were truly based on “mutual solidarity” – and thus did not necessarily follow economic logic. The most important example of this is the decision during the second Comecon session to exchange technical knowledge practically freely within Comecon. On the other hand, the Soviets controlled the entire region more or less directly through their advisors and forced the people's republics to accept their irrational deals.<sup>10</sup> Important factories were dismantled or directly controlled by the Soviet administration. Moreover, the Soviet Union did not regularly provide payment for goods produced in those factories.<sup>11</sup>

Most current scholars understand the first years of Comecon as a time when the organization existed only on paper,<sup>12</sup> which is not entirely true. Comecon had a completely different role under Stalin than it had under Khrushchev and his successors. During the Stalinist era, its most important duty was to cut off trade relations with capitalist states and to strengthen the base of raw material in the region. The organization of a socialist division of labour was not a priority. Likewise, economic logic remained at the margins. The socialist fear of a big confrontation with the capitalist bloc resulted in an investment scope devoted almost completely to the development of the heavy industrial and defence sectors, independent of the available resources. Specialization attempts were therefore limited to a few key industries. Consumer goods were neglected in the Soviet Union as well as in the European people's republics. It is hence not very surprising that the few efforts in cooperation of this early period were limited to trade relations and expanding the

9 RGASPI, f. 82. Op. 2, d. 1073.

10 At least two ministers of foreign trade were executed because they bargained too hard with the Soviet Union. Those Stalinist deals are often described as unfavourable for the people's republics. However, it is not entirely true to call those deals one sided or unfavourable. For example, Poland had to sell coal to the Soviet Union well below world market prices, but the Soviet Union also supplied Poland with goods under world market prices: O. Sanchez-Sibony, *Red globalization*, pp. 68-69. Inner-Comecon trade relations under Stalin are best described as irrational.

11 The most important example might be the uranium mining in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. Even in Czechoslovakia, the uranium mining was under complete Soviet control. See: A. Bischof, *Das tschechische "Nationalunternehmen Jáchymov"*.

12 R. Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe? Die DDR im RGW - Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien 1963-1976*. Köln 2000, p. 97; R.W. Stone, *Satellites and commissars*, p. 29.

extraction of raw material.<sup>13</sup> Until the death of the Generalissimus, the Soviet Union did not make serious attempts to create its own authentic idea of a socialist method of economic cooperation. Nevertheless, the USSR changed the economic and political structure of Comecon countries in order to guarantee the unity of the bloc through the system of advisors. Comecon provided advice for further development and rebuked “non-compliance”. The economic advisors in situ made sure that the advice and complaints from Comecon were heard. If a suggestion was not followed, the responsible Soviet advisor would report the native bureaucrats as counter-revolutionary to the Soviet-controlled security institutions. Until Stalin’s death, the socialist bloc could compensate, to some extent, for the resulting social and economic tensions with repression by the means of its advisor system. The renunciation of exaggerated political violence by the post-Stalinist elite, however, led to a crisis of legitimization, which consequently translated into massive protests in some people’s republics. It quickly became clear that the previous policy of continuing demands for reparations and direct control needed to be fundamentally changed in order to prevent a collapse of the Soviet sphere of interest.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. Inventing Socialist Cooperation after Stalin

One of the first measures after Stalin’s death was the return of the majority of the Soviet stock companies.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the artificially low coal price was renegotiated with Poland, which the Soviet Union interpreted as compensation for the handover of German industrial equipment to Poland after the war.<sup>16</sup> The reparation debts of former enemy states were also alleviated. Likewise, after Stalin’s death, the Soviet Union cleared its trade debts to Czechoslovakia, which it had accumulated due to delayed payments for uranium.<sup>17</sup> The influence of the Soviet advisors over policy matters in the people’s republics gradually declined, giving way for local communist parties to gain control. By 1956, the Soviet Union withdrew most of the advisors.<sup>18</sup>

13 To some extent, one can also find ideas of specialization in the protocols of the first Comecon sessions of the Stalinist era. Yet they were restricted to a few sectors with relevance solely for the independence from Western raw materials and for the strategic defence industry. See, for example, specialization in the car industry: Kantselyariya Sekretariata SEV: Proekt Postanovleniya o soglasovaniiya planov proizvodstva avtomobiliej i mototsiklov na 1950 god (1949) Russian State Archive of the Economy (RGAE), f. 561 op. 1s. d. 24, S. 1–4. Fava, for example, demonstrates with the Czech example that under Stalin the car industry almost exclusively focused on military needs: V. Fava, *The socialist people’s car. Automobiles, shortages, and consent on the Czechoslovak road to mass production (1918–64)*, Amsterdam 2013, p. 88.

14 K. Miklóssy, *Khrushchovism after Khrushchev*, in: J. Smith; M. Ilić (eds.), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin. Policy and government in the Soviet Union, 1953–1964*. Abingdon 2011, pp. 150–170, at p. 154.

15 With exception of the Wismut AG, which stayed under direct Soviet control. In fact, the whole uranium industry in the Comecon region was still kept under direct Soviet influence.

16 A. Nove, *An economic history of the USSR. 1917–1991*. London 1992, p. 341–342.

17 K. Kaplan, *Die Entwicklung des Rates für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. RGW in der Zeit von 1949 bis 1957*, Ebenhausen b. München 1977, p. 44.

18 T.V. Volokitina, *Moskva i Vostochnaya Evropa*, p. 652; A. Steiner, *Sowjetische Berater in den zentralen wirtschafts-*

Domestic economic policy also went through a comprehensive redevelopment. This was most pronounced during the short tenure of Malenkov, who wanted to prioritize consumer goods over industrial goods. This venture was abandoned as soon as he lost power, but it had become apparent that solely focusing on the heavy metal industry was no longer practical, and that the livelihood of the population had to improve.<sup>19</sup> One cannot stress enough the aftermath of such a rethinking of the economic policy. A one-sided investment focus was simple to pursue in socialist economies, but the new policies vitiated such investment strategies. New investment policies had to focus on several different sectors, which had a terrible influence on the efficiency of socialist economies. The focus on several great projects guaranteed their realization in a relatively short time. The diversification resulted in many unfinished projects, which drained the Soviet budget without any hope for amortization in the near future. The post-Stalinist Soviet Union suffered from this fundamental structural problem to its last day.

For the socialist bloc, it was becoming progressively harder to maintain a high rate of economic growth. As the Marshall Plan began to show results, the rates of economic growth generated by Western Europe – primarily West Germany – were impressive and thus even more alarming. In East Germany, the preparation papers for the 1958 meeting of the leaders of the Comecon workers and communist parties reveal that the German Democratic Republic (GDR) admitted that it was unable to keep up with the rapid development of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and therefore asked for massive economic aid.<sup>20</sup> While officially rejecting the idea of economic integration as “imperialistic”, the socialist bloc registered and respected the economic success of the European Economic Community (EEC). At the same time, the Soviet system had to admit that there were great mistakes in Stalinist planning.<sup>21</sup> The socialist bloc had to reform its own planning system at the time when Western economic development began to accelerate. To counteract these developments, the Soviet Union needed to find an answer to the developing structural problems regarding complex investments and efficiency of production. In his speech at the Comecon council session in 1954, the deputy prime minister of the USSR, Anastas Mikoyan, stated that “the plans are worked out without adequate mutual reconciliation and without any reconciliation of those plans with the USSR”. According to Mikoyan, these plans also led to the construction “of numerous companies,

leitenden Instanzen der DDR in der zweiten Hälfte der fünfziger Jahre, in: *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (1993), S. 100-117, at pp. 115-116.

19 A. Nove, *Economic History*, pp. 318-319.

20 “Bemerkungen zur Entwicklung der Volkswirtschaft der DDR 1958–1960 und 1961–1965” in: *German Federal Archive Berlin* (hereafter BArch) DY 30/ 3474, p. 33-51.

21 M. Lipkin, *Sovetskii Soyuz i evropeiskaya integraciya*, p. 292. One of the best examples of the Soviet confession to its planning mistakes is Khrushchev's speech at the 6th PUWP CC plenum 1956 in Warsaw, see: N.S. Khrushchev, *Speech by comrade Khrushchev at the 6th PUWP CC Plenum 20 March 1956, Warsaw 1956*, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111920> (accessed 12 May 2017). For further information on the relations between Comecon and the EC, see the Article of Suvi Kansikas in this issue.

without any consideration for the existing possibilities in other People's Democracies and the USSR".<sup>22</sup>

This parallelism neglected industrial branches such as agriculture and the production of consumer goods. In the future, "coordination of the main tasks of national plans" should offer a guarantee "to build where it is advantageous".<sup>23</sup> Plan coordination and specialization would become the major strategy for developing a Comecon-wide economy.

### **5. Organizing Cooperation Scientifically: Debates about Plan Coordination and the Convertibility of National Currencies**

Mikoyan's statements about Comecon represented the first concrete move towards a Soviet conception of Comecon. In other words, his statements are the first assessments of Comecon as something more than a simple economic fortress against the West and led to an understanding of Comecon as a catalyst of socialist economic relations. In order to fulfil these new tasks and to adjust it to the post-Stalinist political reality, Comecon's bureaucratic apparatus had to be widely expanded. The council founded several standing commissions mainly to operate in its branches and manage major issues, such as the Standing Commission for the Economy, which dealt mainly with questions of plan coordination.<sup>24</sup> At the end of the 1950s, Ispolkom, the executive committee of Comecon, became the highest organ of the council between sessions and had the authority to give recommendations for advancing specialization. Furthermore, this period saw the first large-scale projects, such as the unification of the electrical power network, the foundation of the International Bank for Economic Cooperation, and the construction of the Druzhba oil pipeline. Together, these bureaucratic reforms were a response to the same demand for greater participation in decision-making by the people's republics, which could be observed all over Europe after Stalin's death. Yet, this also weakened the position of Comecon.

The motives for the economic redirection were closely interwoven with the challenges of the new economic policy. With the aid of an effective division of investments, the socialist bloc hoped to enhance their efficiency and thus offer a sustainable approach to stimulate economic growth. The Soviet Union wanted to base "the relationships between states of the socialist camp not on someone's subjective wishes but on objective economic laws".<sup>25</sup> Scientific socialism was supposed to become the foundation of all mutual international economic efforts among socialist states. Therefore, through scientific logic, the

22 O reorganizacii i dal'neishei deyatel'nosti soveta ekonomicheskoi vzaimopomoshchi, BArch DE 1 / 21735, pp. 44–48. Also: G. Herzog, Schwäche als Stärke, Bargaining power im RGW, Berlin 1998, pp. 19–20.

23 Ibid.

24 In contrast to older Comecon structures, where the Soviet Union was dominant, like the Comecon bureau, one of the most important features of the standing commissions was that every country had the same rights.

25 D.T. Shepilov, Doklad D.T. Shepilova, „Voprosy mezhdunarodnogo polozheniya i vneshnei politiki Sovetskogo Soyuza“ na VI sessii Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR, in: A.A. Fursenko, Prezidium CK KPSS 1954–1964, Tom 2, pp. 542–574, at 551.

socialist countries were bound to the formulation of a coordinated development of their economies. For the Soviet elite, there was no doubt that there was only one economic truth, which only needed to be determined. In the intellectual world of socialism, this principle carried a logical trajectory. There was still a strong belief in the Soviet Union that there should be only one socialist ideology and, consequently, only one way to build socialism effectively through Comecon. “Only” this most effective way was to be explored. In this way, the Soviet Union hoped to align the principle of sovereignty with the principle of plan coordination.

This was why the Soviet Union was willing to restructure Comecon in a more “coequal” way through the expansion of standing commissions, as well. As it seems, they simply assumed that among communists one does not need such a harsh control, which Stalin established. “The indisputable unity of our countries results from our class position. On decisions of all fundamental questions, we have one and the same interests. Thus there cannot be any disagreement between us.”<sup>26</sup>

Notwithstanding, within its exploration, the Soviet conception of Comecon faced its first large-scale problem. To evaluate the most effective method of capital investment, Comecon had to prepare an international balance sheet for all Comecon members. And in order to balance several different states, one had to develop a mechanism to compare their currencies. Soviet experts were aware of the problem and repeatedly stressed that the ability of the system to manage either feast or famine depended mainly on the solution to the money problem, because it was impossible to make scientifically based conclusions about specialization plans without guaranteeing the comparability of national economies.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, in 1958, at the meeting of the workers and communist parties of the Comecon member states, party leaders began to discuss this problem. The Comecon member states wanted to base their own socialist price system on the real value of a product or, in other words, on their real domestic production costs. On the one hand, it appeared to be a very reasonable and achievable project to determine a bloc-wide price basis. On the other hand, the socialist price system itself ensured that this was very risky and perhaps impossible. Every single socialist state used prices extensively as an economic and political tool, so that internal prices were sometimes very far from world market prices. The task of finding a common price basis would have been already extremely complex in the Stalinist era, but the Soviet Union let this question take a back seat. Trade was demanded, with the conditions being treated as a secondary question. As socialist states began

26 S. Khrushchev, *Eröffnungsrede des Genossen N.S. Chruschtschow 1956*, BArch DY 30/ 3473, p. 83–93, p. 84. Surely, such phrases can also be found under Stalinism; however, in the post-Stalinist times, those phrases were often followed by the Soviet elite. The withdraw of the advisors and the reform of Comecon are examples of this new behaviour.

27 Malyshev, *Zamechaniya o proekte predlozhenii ob osnovnykh printsipakh mezhdunarodnogo sotsialisticheskogo razdeleniya truda*. Pis'mo. Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie pri sovete Ministrov SSSR (1960), RGAE f. 99, op. 1, d. 649, p. 32.

to gain enough political independence to explore their own paths to communism, this question became very important again.

Thus, it was not surprising that the problem could not be solved at the high-level meeting in 1958. The leaders only decided to investigate the possible ways to change to a common price base in the future and to find a task group to explore this, supervised by the standing commission on economics. Meanwhile, the member states agreed to use world market prices free of cyclical fluctuations, which meant that during each planning period, Comecon member states traded with one another using the average prices of the previous five-year period (sometimes referred to as the “Bucharest Principle”).<sup>28</sup> The burden of finding a solution was thus placed on this standing commission. However, the barriers to exploring any possibilities were very high because, on the one hand, prices had to be comparable; on the other hand, the member states had to preserve their sovereignty over the price formation policies in order to maintain their influence over the economy. Basically, the investigative task group looking at possible ways of changing over to a common price base had to bear all the contradictions that arose from the several different socialist planning systems. A conference dedicated to these questions provided a very good example of this complexity, as every single state presented its own thoughts about the direction the common price base should take. While countries like the Soviet Union and Bulgaria still tried to find a socialist common price base, reform states like Hungary and Czechoslovakia openly called for a market mechanism in the socialist trade system and directly accused the Soviet Union of holding a monopoly-like trade position.<sup>29</sup> At the end of the conference, it was impossible to find common ground on this issue.<sup>30</sup>

The responsible experts within the task group emphasized this contradiction in their first Ispolkom reports. They reported that there was only a remote possibility for the development of a common price base without a harmonization of the processes of price formation,<sup>31</sup> which would have meant limiting the sovereignty of the member-states.

Very soon, the task group was overstrained. Its members went from one problem to the next without solving a single one in a way that was agreeable to all parties. While as several subcommittees were founded to discuss those problems, Comecon member states were aware of the seemingly insurmountable challenge. Already as early as 1958, the GDR very conservatively stated that there were “differences between domestic and foreign prices, which do not have their reasons in currency exchange rates alone”. Fur-

28 Reshenie soveshchaniya predstavitelei kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partii stran-uchastnits sovetu ekonomicheskoi vzaimopomoshchi s uchastiem predstavitelei bratskikh partii stran narodnoi demokratii vostoka po voprosam ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva (1958), in: BArch DY 30/ 3475, p. 23; M. Lavigne, *The Soviet Union inside Comecon*, in: *Soviet Studies* XXXV (1983), pp. 135–153, at p. 136.

29 This was the position of one member of the Czechoslovak delegation: *Otchet o rabote Sovetskoi delegatsii na mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii po voprosam sobstvennoi bazy cen v torgovle mezhdru stranami-chlenami SEV* (1967), State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) f. R-5446, op. 101, d. 1271, pp. 2–8.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

31 *Teksty po pn. II “v” povestki dnya (b): O khode izucheniya i razrabotki vozmoznykh putei perekhoda sobstvennoi baze cen v torgovle mezhdru socialisticheskimi stranami i o merakh uskorenii u etoi raboty* (1962). RGAE f. 561 op. 41s. d. 15, pp. 85–86.

ther, they postulated that, for now, “it is not possible to subordinate the domestic pricing policy [...] under the foreign price policy. This would have meant that the member states would lose an economic instrument for their domestic policy”.<sup>32</sup> This indicates that the Comecon project for a scientific base of the international socialist division of labour was doomed to fail from the beginning. Without a scientific “fundamental truth” (and without a market-type pricing system), there was occasional uncertainty about whether a specialization plan, which would have been effective for the whole bloc, could also be effective for the specialization of the individual states. The consequences of this ambiguity were immense. The uncertainty of inner-Comecon specialization trade led to petty jealousy among member states. Not only was Romania, the black sheep among the Comecon members, unsatisfied with its share of specialization trade, but so was Bulgaria, which was always eager to present itself as one of the Soviet Union’s closest allies. In 1966, Bulgaria complained that its part of specialization in engineering was not big enough.<sup>33</sup> Even if providing a Comecon-wide analysis for economic specialization decisions had worked, the disadvantages of lesser developed countries in such decision-making processes would have been incredibly high. The Romanian suspicion that an intensification of cooperation would have been at the cost of their economic development, for example, was not without reason.<sup>34</sup>

## 6. Khrushchev’s Ideas on Comecon Cooperation: The Common Plan

Ironically, the Soviet Union did not stop to pursue its ideas of a scientifically based division of labour. For the Soviet Union, one of the main requirements for establishing a common price base in the future was a “consequent rational division of labour between the socialist states based on the development of specialization and large scale production”.<sup>35</sup> Higher specialization would lead to higher productivity and therefore to pricing

32 Erwägungen der deutschen Seite zu den Prinzipien der Bildung der Preise zwischen den sozialistischen Ländern 1958, BArch, DY 30/ 3474, p. 236.

33 Gossudarstvennyi planovyi Komitet Soveta Ministrov SSSR (Gosplan SSSR) – Otdel’ koordinatsii narodnohozyaistvennykh planov SSSR i sotsialisticheskikh stran, Porucheniya Soveta Ministrov SSSR, VSNH SSSR i rukovodstva Gosplana SSSR po voprosam koordinatsii narodnohozyaistvennykh planov SSSR i sotsialisticheskikh stran, okazaniya im ekonomicheskoi pomoshchi i dr. voprosam ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva, zaklyucheniya i predlozheniya Gosplana SSSR po nim v CK KPSS i Sovet Ministrov SSSR 1963 (1963), RGAE f. 4372, op. 81, d. 380, p. 219.

34 An internal document of the GDR makes the best point about the problem. It stresses that if the Soviet industry would grow on average 11 per cent until 1975, the GDR could only grow 7.2 per cent (Czechoslovakia 5.2 per cent) in order to align industrial development. Consequently, Romania and Bulgaria would have to grow considerably more than 11 per cent. This was not in the interest of the GDR or Czechoslovakia. See: Information über ein Schreiben des Genossen Steinwand, Stellvertreter des Vertreters beim Rat für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW) an den Genossen Apel (1960), BArch DY 30/ 3464, pp. 187–196, p. 191; C. Buchheim, Wirtschaftliche Folgen der Integration der DDR in den RGW, in: C. Buchheim (ed.), Wirtschaftliche Folgelasten des Krieges in der SBZ/DDR. Baden-Baden 1995, pp. 341–361, at p. 353.

35 Erwägungen der sowjetischen Seite zur Frage über die Prinzipien der Preisfestlegung im Handel zwischen den sozialistischen Ländern (1958), BArch DY 30/ 3474, pp. 135-145, at p. 141.

based on production. This strategy, the Soviet Union hoped, would ensure a “more just” relationship between different classes of goods. In other words, the Soviet Union was aware that for an effective division of labour, it would need a Comecon-wide common price base. However, for the Soviet Union, the only way to achieve that was through a greater division of labour. Essentially, Moscow wanted to solve the problem with its solution and vice versa. Despite the seeming paradox, it had its own logic: the leadership thought that many of the problems within the Comecon economic system were due to the forced and hasty industrialization process, which would be resolved once the economy reached a higher state of development and the industrial and commercial sectors moved toward equilibrium. This conviction encouraged the Soviet Union to pursue the idea of Comecon’s socialist economic integration even without a common price base and the scientific “fundamental truth”.

By the end of the 1950s, the Soviet Union pressed Comecon to prepare a draft of “Basic Principles of the International Socialist Division of Labour”. Yet, without a common price base, it is not surprising that the editors of this document struggled to develop concrete ideas about how to divide labour based on socialist principles.

Even Soviet analyses of the draft were very critical. Soviet specialists understood the shortcomings of the draft very well and criticized both the complete absence of a common price basis and the missing strategy of how to organize the international socialist division of labour.<sup>36</sup> Notwithstanding the reviewers’ direct criticism of the draft, they did not propose solutions to these problems. This was a major issue in the Soviet conception of Comecon. The aim was clear: a scientifically based system for an international division of labour, which should equally bind all member countries to scientific facts of a single commonly agreed upon plan coordination. Yet, no one knew how to translate this theoretical system into a practical plan, not for the least because there were vastly different understandings of the socialist order.

Historical sources demonstrate that the Soviet Union had not developed its conception of the international socialist division of labour at the time of the drafting of the basic principles. As late as 1962, some reports of the Gosplan Economic Research Institute still showed that there was no scientific basis for an international socialist division of labour.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the draft fell far short of Khrushchev’s expectations of an international socialist division of labour. Khrushchev’s own ideas were inspired by the impressive success of West European integration. In comparison to the Western world, Khrushchev admitted a certain backwardness towards integration of Comecon. In his own words:

36 For example: S. Ryumin, *Zamechaniya po predvaritel'nomu proektu predlozhenii ob osnovnykh printsipakh mezhdunarodnogo socialisticheskogo razdeleniya truda* (1960), RGAE, f. 99. op. 1, d. 649, p. 30. Or: K.V. Ostrovityanov, *Zamechaniya k predvaritel'nomu proektu predlozhenii ob osnovnykh printsipakh mezhdunarodnogo socialisticheskogo razdeleniya truda*, 1960, RGAE, f. 99. op. 1, d. 649, p. 22.

37 *Predlozheniya sektora ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva po realizacii prikaza Gosekomsobeta SSSR No. 437 ot 9. Oktyabrya 1962 g.*, “O rabote nauchno-issledovatel'skogo ekonomicheskogo instituta” RGAE, f. 99, op. 1, d. 651, p. 22.

*This kind of cooperation is much lower among us than in the EEC. Although we communists know much better how to use the advantages and the objective laws of the concentration of capital. One can read it already in Marx and the capitalists follow it. I only mention the example of coal and steel. At first, capitalism developed only inside of national borders, but then it went beyond borders and developed international production. In the EEC, those processes found its organizational form. As it is for coal and steel, so is it for mechanical engineering and other fields. We are witnessing a transitional period from national to international capitalism. And what do we do?*<sup>38</sup>

In meetings with Comecon members, he admitted quite directly that capitalist integration processes are so successful that they are even able to economically destabilize several “not so consolidated” young people’s republics. For Khrushchev, this was all the more alarming, as he understood that this destabilization was not only economic. The economic integration in Western Europe was always understood in terms of an explicit connection to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>39</sup> In other words, the economic strengthening of Western Europe was also perceived as a threat to the security and the very existence of East European socialist states. This, therefore, presented a very serious security threat to the entire bloc.

On another occasion, Khrushchev observed how socialist economic cooperation was virtually offending the socialist idea.<sup>40</sup> Through all his ideological enthusiasm, Khrushchev understood quite well that the economic cooperation within Comecon was still in its fledgling stages and that the autarkic tendencies were still strong among socialist countries.<sup>41</sup> Still, it did not prevent him from being very optimistic about the potential of a properly functioning socialist world system. In his eyes, the socialist system was superior to the capitalist one, and the current conditions were just a temporary paradox resulting from historical and economic circumstances. Overcoming these circumstances was inevitable, or as Khrushchev put it:

*Even if the capitalists achieve certain results with their coordination of their economic activity to certain results, then God himself, as they say, ordered us communists and leading persons with commonly united aims to be an exemplar of economic cooperation.*<sup>42</sup>

Regardless of the divine mandates, Khrushchev knew that strong economic integration, such as that seen in Western Europe, could not be realized in the short term and that the socialist world had still a long way to go.<sup>43</sup> Khrushchev’s speeches about international

38 N.S. Khrushchev, Notizen über die Beratung beim Genossen Chruschtschow am 20.02.1963, BArch DY 30/ 3420, p. 19.

39 N.S. Khrushchev, Rede des Genossen N.S. Chruschtschow auf der Beratung der ersten Sekretäre der Zentralkomitees der kommunistischen- und Arbeiterparteien sowie der Regierungsoberhäupter der Teilnehmerländer des Rats für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe 1962, BArch DY 30/ 3481, p. 12.

40 N.S. Khrushchev, Notizen, BArch DY 30/ 3420, p. 20.

41 N.S. Khrushchev, Rede, BArch DY 30/ 3481, p. 8-9.

42 Ibid., p. 16.

43 Ibid., p. 6-7.

socialist cooperation reveal that he was very unsatisfied with the situation, as were a lot of other leading communists. Khrushchev saw the current economic cooperation based only on trade, but not on production. From his point of view, the countries did not sufficiently specialize. As Khrushchev put it, they only specialized with the help of specialization lists, where the country that had to specialize was marked with a cross, without any economic consideration, whether this made sense or not. As a cross is a very common way for illiterate people to sign, Khrushchev postulated that Comecon specializes like persons unable to read or write.<sup>44</sup> These specialization recommendations were without concrete commitments, which made realization risky for every member state. This was why Khrushchev, despite of all problems, wanted to reinvent specialization.<sup>45</sup> He formulated very clearly during the November plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that Comecon countries should “move boldly forward with the foundation of a common unified planning institution for all countries”.<sup>46</sup>

## 7. Sovnarkhoz Reform as a Blueprint for Comecon?

One might be tempted to ask, “What exactly did Khrushchev mean with a common unified planning institution for all countries?” It is – again – hardly a coincidence that Khrushchev spoke about his ideas about a common plan during the November plenum, the same plenum in which Khrushchev announced a broad reform of the above-mentioned Sovnarkhoz system.<sup>47</sup> Khrushchev also mentioned the connection between his domestic reforms and his economic ideas for Comecon during a Comecon meeting in 1963, where he tried to promote his idea of a common plan:

*We also deal with this question repeatedly in the Soviet Union. We think that we found an appropriate answer with the reconstruction of the Sovnarkhoz. The Sovnarkhozes have been enlarged.*<sup>48</sup>

A closer look at Soviet domestic reforms indeed shows some interesting parallels. In 1957, Khrushchev introduced a broad economic reform inside the Soviet Union, which transferred most of the economic competence from central organs as Gosplan (the Soviet agency responsible for central economic planning) to 105 newly founded regional economic subjects. The idea behind this new concept of economic organization was that regional administrations have a better overview of the regional economy and could thereby organize it better than a central organ.<sup>49</sup> The main idea of Khrushchev’s great

44 N.S. Khrushchev, Notizen, BArch DY 30/ 3420, p. 23.

45 Ibid., p. 23-24.

46 Lukin, *Soobshchenie Sekretarya Soveta po dokladu Sekretariata o deyatelnosti Soveta Ekonomicheskoi Vzaimopomoshchi* (1962), RGAE, F. 561 Op. 415. D. 4, p. 8–21, at p. 10.

47 N. Kibita, *Moscow-Kiev relations and the Sovnarkhoz reform*, in: J. Smith and M. Ilić (eds.), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin*, pp. 94–111, at p. 104-105.

48 N.S. Khrushchev, Notizen, BArch DY 30/ 3420, p. 25.

49 N. Kibita, *Soviet economic management under Khrushchev. The Sovnarkhoz reform*, New York 2013, pp. 35-37.

economic reform programme was – along with the preservation of centralized planning – to abolish the industrial ministries and devolve their managerial authority to the Sovnarkhozes and the republican governments. The regional councils would thus cure the economic administration of the shortcomings of the excessive centralization created by the ministries. They would ensure cooperation and specialization between the enterprises located near each other but previously belonging to different ministries. Cooperation and specialization would prevent wasteful expenditures on transportation and provide the rational usage of production capacities and the development of new products.

The only weak point that Khrushchev anticipated was a possible tendency of certain industrial regions to prioritize the development of their own regional economies, the so-called localisms (*mestnichestvo*).<sup>50</sup> In Khrushchev's ideal world, all that was needed to solve such contradictions was a higher communist consciousness among the people. Regional or national egoisms would be replaced by the awareness of a higher communist good. At the Union level, this system could only work if one assumes that there is only one "right" way to organize the economy and every Sovnarkhoz will follow as soon as this way is revealed to them. Therefore, the responsibility was transferred to the Council of Ministers (SovMin) of the USSR and the republican SovMins to control the situation. Gosplan, in turn, would study the economy of the regions and avoid planning unprofitable economic investments by developing a prospective plan. The aim was to bring the economy through decentralization back to the Leninist principle of regional production management and away from Stalin's approach, which focused on a strong state with centralized power.<sup>51</sup> It is logical that these reforms also influenced Khrushchev's ideas for Comecon. In his idea, bloc-wide economic planning would have only controlled specialization and cooperation. The rest of the planning apparatus would remain in the hands of the people's republics.

As on the union-level, the Sovnarkhoz-reform, Khrushchev's Comecon reform was based on strong communist party discipline and the idea that an intelligent, enlightened communist would always sacrifice his own advantages for the benefit of an abstract communal goal. In Khrushchev's opinion, union-wide Comecon planning had to be strictly scientific in order to guarantee that, in case of contradiction with regional or republic needs, the plan served at least the divine communist good. One might be tempted to say that Khrushchev, with his economic reform, naively believed in a higher-level, altruistic communist human being, who would always identify the needs of random other communist persons as his very own.

Therefore, the domestic economic reforms mirror Khrushchev's considerations for Comecon. Khrushchev wanted the same Leninist ideal of a regional production management orchestrated by an overall scientific based plan for Comecon. Moreover, he had the same naive ideas that communist leaders would sacrifice some of their needs for higher common communist goals. And, thus, the domestic reforms impressively mirror the

50 N. Kibita, *Moscow-Kiev relations* p. 95.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

problems on the supranational socialist level. How could one persuade sovereign socialist states to disregard their own needs for the benefit of an abstract socialist ideal? How would deliveries of goods between entities be guaranteed? How would specialization decisions be assured? And how would “universalism” (a popular word at the time, which meant the opposite of specialization) be prevented? Without the scientific basis, which socialism failed to provide, all those questions were left unanswered. Even though the Sovnarkhoz reform was designed to answer these questions, the more it was utilized, the more it showed that the reform was not the right solution to these issues.<sup>52</sup>

On both the national and international levels, Khrushchev believed in a firm party discipline led by higher communist ideas and in the possibility of scientifically justifying socialist ideas. Both levels demonstrate how Khrushchev – a true communist – struggled with the political reality. Unfortunately for Khrushchev, the communist system did not provide the scientific basis that could have promoted such an awareness of a higher communist ideal. Additionally, there were several opponents to Khrushchev’s idea. In his own words, at least the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Poland were open to discussing his proposition, while Hungary and Romania had concerns.<sup>53</sup> As Khrushchev himself mentioned, the USSR still had the possibility of realizing the goal with a “coalition of the willing”, but the USSR obviously decided not to offend the Romanians by pouring oil on troubled waters.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the project fizzled out in 1963 without any concrete results. With the end of the project for a common plan, the efforts to find a common price base for Comecon began to take a back seat. Although the Standing Commission of the Economy continued to investigate the possibilities of changing to a common price base, the Soviet Union no longer included it in its own strategy papers. These strategy papers started to reflect how the USSR hoped to reform the existing price system.<sup>55</sup>

With his ideas, Khrushchev brought to the surface the contradictions of reforms. On the one hand, Khrushchev wanted an efficient socialist division of labour; on the other, no one was willing to bear the consequences of such a policy. The latter case entailed solving the ideological and economic contradictions within the socialist system or overcoming them with a supranational institution, which would have had some power to enforce Comecon-wide planning if needed, even against the will of some member states. This contradiction already prevented the Soviet Union from formulating the basic principles of the international socialist division of labour more precisely. Thus, one can say, that ideological and economic contradictions prevented the Soviet Union from pushing

52 Ibid., p. 102.

53 Shirokov mentions that also Hungary opposed a common plan, just as Romania did: O.N. Shirokov, *SEV v mirovoi ekonomike: sovremennaya otsenka problem funktsionirovaniya i znacheniya. Voprosy istorii, metodologii i istoriografii*. Moskva 2005, p. 52-54.

54 TsK KPSS, Protokol No. 100. Zasedanie 7 iyunya 1963 g., in: A.A. Fursenko, *Prezidium CK KPSS 1954–1964*, tom 1, pp. 719–720.

55 The change in the price system in 1975 is one piece of evidence of the growing acceptance of world market prices.

Comecon into a new level of cooperation. The countries opposing these efforts, led by Romania, had it very easy when it came to boycotting Soviet plans.

In the mid-1960s, the Soviet administration lost patience with the economic commission and criticized it sharply for its inconclusiveness, assuming that the Soviet members of the commission were simply not aggressive enough to enforce their point of view.<sup>56</sup> The struggles to find a common scientific “fundamental truth” were not the only problems in the Soviet conception of Comecon. It was, however, a prime example of ideological struggle within Soviet economic decision-making. These battles prevented the Soviet establishment from developing Comecon according to the Soviet’s conception. Consequently, following the old adage that “nothing is more definitive than the temporary”, the provisional rule to use average world market prices was kept in place, leaving Comecon subject to the development of capitalist markets. Furthermore, the temporary Comecon pricing system contained its own risks: it guaranteed stable prices within the five-year planning periods, yet made the transition to a new pricing period much more difficult and riskier.

## 8. Discovering Its Own Interests

Comecon became a source of deep frustration for its members, especially the Soviet Union. In 1963, the Soviet conception of Comecon had reached a dead end. The altruistic idea of a higher socialist good, which should serve in the form of scientific laws as the basis of socialist cooperation, vanished. Instead, Gosplan ordered its Sector for Cooperation with other Socialist States within its Economic Research Institute to investigate problems of economic efficiency regarding the Soviet Union’s foreign trade.<sup>57</sup> The fact that the Soviet Union thought about economic efficiency was not new, but it was usually reserved for its relations with capitalist states. By placing the idea of base investment on “objective economic laws” on the back burner,<sup>58</sup> socialist trade began to lose its exceptional position in Soviet policies. This does not mean that the Soviet Union did not differentiate between capitalist and socialist trade anymore. But, its focus and its priorities began to change.

Except with the GDR, which still had a more favourable position, the Soviet Union wanted to organize future trade on “mutually profitable bases”.<sup>59</sup> To put it another way, the Soviet Union wanted to pay more attention to its own profit in trade inside Comecon.

56 V. Shapovalov, A. Shul’man: Otchet o rabote Postoyannoi Komissii SEV po ekonomicheskim voprosam za 1967 g. i 1. polugodie 1968 g. i soobrazheniya o napravleniyakh i plane dal’neishei raboty Komissii v 1969–1971 (1968) gg., GARF, f. R-5446, op. 102, d. 1259, p. 59–70, p. 68.

57 N. Oznobin, Pis’mo k chленu kollegii gosplana SSSR Nachal’niku otdela vneshnei trgovli tov. Gusevu M.M. (1963), RGAE f. 99, op. 1. d. 111, p. 41.

58 D.T. Shepilov, Voprosy mezhdunarodnogo polozheniya i vneshnei politiki Sovetskogo Soyuz (1957), in: A.A. Fursenko (Ed.), Prezidium CK KPSS, tom 2, pp. 542–574, p. 551.

59 TsK KPSS, Protokol No. 96. Zasedaniye 8 maya 1963 g vo vremya obeda (1963), in: A.A. Fursenko (Ed.), Prezidium CK KPSS, tom 1, p. 717.

Surely, the Soviet trade policy did not change immediately; nevertheless, in its strategy papers the Soviet Union tried to find a new direction in the organization of Comecon trade. Perceiving itself as the centre of socialist politics, it wished to organize the Comecon trade with the aid of bilateral long-term contracts. Long-term contracts would serve as a kind of instrument that would allow the Soviet Union to interfere directly in the plans of the people's republics.<sup>60</sup> Thus, unsurprisingly, the inner-Comecon trade system grew even more centralized after 1963.

The idea of a common scientific basis receded and was replaced by a stronger sense of self-interest. Occasionally one can find hints of a revision inside the Soviet Union before the reorganization of Soviet policy in the mid-1960s. In 1961, for example, one of the experts in the Economic Research Institute of Gosplan wrote that some of his colleagues are too single-minded, thinking about efficiency in foreign socialist trade from an internationalist viewpoint only, as if the sole question of national efficiency could be reduced to commercialism.<sup>61</sup> As with every economic sector in socialist partnerships, there were simply two different schools of thought:<sup>62</sup> one more market oriented and the other closer to the communist ideology.

The new policy direction in Comecon was an early indication of the policy changes that led to the Kosygin reform of 1965. Efficiency was the centrepiece of foreign economic policies at the time and was a precursor to the adoption of the Kosygin reform of material incentives. Yet, it did not lead to any major attempts to fundamentally reform Comecon. The Soviet Union was from now on satisfied with small adjustments to its advantage in the existing system. The USSR began to think about import effectiveness (that is, what brought in more roubles than what they cost) and what was not.<sup>63</sup> They, therefore, became highly interested in increasing the quality of specialized goods in the people's republics. The pressure to enhance their quality and technological level in relation to the other Comecon members progressively rose in this area. While Khrushchev was still willing to guarantee the maintenance of existing cooperatives once they would begin to purchase goods,<sup>64</sup> the drafts during the early Brezhnev years present another tone. Internally, the Soviet Union even began to consider the cancelling of contracts if the specialized products did not match world standards,<sup>65</sup> or to let the contract breaker be responsible for the monetary consequences for failing to deliver.<sup>66</sup> The reflections of

60 O. Rybakov, *Koordinatsiya narodnokhozyaystvennykh planov stran-chlenov SEV na sovremennom etape (1971–1975)* (1970), RGAE f. 99, op. 1, d. 932, p. 42.

61 O.T. Bogomolov, *Nauchnyi Otchet po teme „Metody opredeleniya ekonomicheskoi effektivnosti proizvodstva na osnove mehdunarodnogo soctsalisticheskogo razdeleniya truda (1961)*, RGAE, f. 99, op. 2, d. 579.

62 M. Lipkin, *Sovetskii Soyuz i evropeiskaya integraciya*, pp. 292–293.

63 P. Sel'dyakov, *Pis'mo k zamestitelyu Ministra tovarishchu Kuzminu M.R.*, 1965, RGAE f. 413 op. 31 d. 869, p. 93–99, at 96–97.

64 N.S. Khrushchev, *Zapiska Pervogo sekretarya TSK KPSS, predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR N.Ts. Khrushcheva „O nekotorykh voprosov ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva s Chekhoslovakiei“*, in: A.A. Fursenko (ed.), *Prezidium CK KPSS*, tom 3, 729–735, p. 733.

65 P. Sel'dyakov, *Pis'mo*, pp. 100–101.

66 P. Sel'dyakov, *Pis'mo k zamestitelyu Ministra tovarishchu Zorinu L.M.* (1965), RGAE F. 413 Op. 31 D. 1471, pp. 150–151.

the Soviet Union went so far as to incorporate quality criteria into the system of price formation.<sup>67</sup> Price thus would have become the central interest to producer countries specializing in high-quality goods and products in short supply. This change happened against the backdrop of the discovery of new resources in Siberia and the resulting explosion in investments, which made trade even more unprofitable for the USSR. The Soviet Union was no longer willing to pay for raw materials alone and was determined to divide the costs among the other Comecon member states. It wanted to lower its investment costs in order to lower the burden for its own economy.

This demonstrates that the treatment of the people's republics as component suppliers through the Soviet Union in the 1960s should also be understood as an opportunity to lower its own investments. For example, the Soviet Union included deliveries of components in its planning for the Volzhskii car plant. The problem is that such observations on efficiency were very locally limited to the factory or branch ministry.<sup>68</sup> From a broader view, as from that of Gosplan, it was much more important that such cooperative efforts would not cause higher exports of resources in the people's republics.<sup>69</sup> Another risk of this type of specialization was that if the provider states could not deliver on time, the whole production line of the company had to stop. This was already a serious challenge to specialization in only one country,<sup>70</sup> but it was even more risky if there was no state power to intervene or to punish for delivery failures. This again showed what role the disturbing absence of a controlling entity played in socialist international relations.

## 9. New Ideas in Old Patterns: Socialist Integration

In short, one might say that the Soviet conception of Comecon changed from a strong multilateralism to a centralist economic policy with a focus on bilaterally controlled economic policy. This policy was strongly influenced by principles of profitability. This redirection in principles laid the foundation for a new period in Comecon history: the period of socialist integration. The phrase appears at the end of the 1960s; socialist integration became the bureaucratic framework for Comecon within the second, broader Comecon reform paper called "The Comprehensive Program for Socialist Economic Integration".

67 Problemy dal'neishego uglubleniya mezhdunarodnogo sotsialisticheskogo razdeleniya truda i usovershenstvovaniya koordinatsii narodnokhozyaystvennykh planov sotsialisticheskikh stran (1966), RGAE, f. 99. op. 1. d. 663, pp. 3–32, at p. 22a.

68 O koordinatsii Postavkakh iz stran-chlenov SEV uzlov i detalei dlya proizvodstva v SSSR legkovykh avtomobiley Volzhskogo zavoda (Poruchenije zamestitelya predstavatelya Soveta Ministrov SSSR tov. Novikova V.N. ot 7. yanvarya 1967 g.) (1967), GARF, f. 4372, op. 66, d. 1693, pp. 43–44.

69 Ibid.

70 The Soviet Union itself had problems with supply of semi-finished goods: Ya. Yakovlev.: Spravka o sostoyanii i merakh po uluchsheniyu vypolneniya plana kooperirovaniya postavok / po itogam raboty za 1 kvartal 1966 g., RGAE F 398, Op. 1, D. 468, p. 84.

The main change was to introduce a so-called joint planning of collective projects as a “new” form of cooperation. These were the aforementioned new projects of raw material exploitation, which were partly financed through credits paid by the other Comecon member states (a type of cooperation that had been common practice inside Comecon for a long time; as early as in 1958, for example, Comecon decided to jointly built the Druzhba oil pipeline). Through the Comprehensive Program, the Soviet Union mainly achieved the easing of its investment burden in raw materials, rather than inventing new socialist trade patterns. The Comecon elite still spoke about reaching a new level of multilateral cooperation, but its implementation took the shape of formerly accepted common Comecon trade patterns.<sup>71</sup>

The Comprehensive Program is the best evidence that the Soviet Union stopped trying to find new ways to organize the socialist trade and, instead, tried to introduce patterns to its own advantage. For example, the reform of the above-mentioned “Bucharest Principle” concerning pricing was such an effort. After the oil price crisis in 1973, the Soviet Union enforced a modification of the “Bucharest Principle”. From 1975 onwards, prices were set up every year, but fixed as before on the basis of an five-year average of the world foreign trade prices (the “Moscow Principle”), which increased the prices up to 32 per cent, with a clear benefit for the Soviet Union.<sup>72</sup> Its implementation represents the acceptance by the Soviet Union of its conception of Comecon, signalling the Soviet abandonment of finding a unique socialist organization of international economic relationships.

However, it should be mentioned, that one can find practical approaches to deepening cooperation at this time outside of the official Comecon organs. One example would be industry organizations such as “Intermetall”.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, with all these obstacles to Comecon cooperation, the high standard of cooperation the people’s republics reached despite the problems of socialist trade was impressive. Despite the negative picture presented here, one should not forget that notwithstanding the critical problems in developing their own economic systems, the standing commissions of Comecon began work on specialization. By the 1960s, they made countless recommendations regarding specialization. Specialization proposals, in which all sides were interested, had realistic chances to be implemented, as is evidenced by many specialized industries all over Eastern Europe. This demonstrates a high political motive to cooperate, which arose from the success of the West European integration. Unfortunately, it did not provide any guarantee for reducing costs or increasing technical and quality standards as was always implied in the principles of international socialist division of labour.

71 O.N. Shirokov, *SEV v mirovoi ekonomike*, p. 62; R.W. Stone, *Satellites and commissars*, pp. 138-139.

72 M. Lavigne, *The Soviet Union inside Comecon*, in: *Soviet Studies XXXV* (1983), pp. 135–153, pp. 136-137.

73 A. Zwass, *Der Rat für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe 1949 bis 1987*, Wien 1988, p 36.

## 10. Conclusion

One can say that the Soviet Union failed to organize a socialist economic system due to the contradictions inside its own ideology. The strong influence on the future Comecon countries in the last years of the Stalin era prevented the Soviet Union from elaborating an organizational concept or structure for socialist cooperation inside Comecon. Instead, the Soviet Union began to develop a Stalinist trading pattern with the new people's republics – a pattern born out of the needs of the time. Only after Stalin's death was there an understanding within the USSR that cooperation within Comecon had to be structured and coordinated in order to accelerate the development of the whole region by synergistic effects. The Soviet Union intended to ground such coordination on scientifically based decisions, which should have reflected Comecon-wide considerations instead of national concerns. The Soviet conception of Comecon during Khrushchev's time therefore comprised, to some extent, a supranational idea of a socialist system. However, the Soviet conception had two weak points. First, planning in socialist economies was not scientifically based but instead strongly influenced by ideological or political decisions. Five-year plans never met their scientific standards on a national or international level.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, economic planning simply failed to provide the basis for such an altruistic ideal. These structures made it impossible to analyse the socialist division of labour and to decide, what was efficient and what not.

Second, firm party discipline vanished quickly after Stalin's death, which Khrushchev had to realize on many occasions. Even if a scientific basis for communism would have been possible, the member states were never ready to abandon their self-interest in the way the Soviet conception suggested. Its supranational ideas led the Soviet Union to a dead end, which also led to a rethinking of Comecon relationships. By distancing itself from supranational concepts, the Soviet Union began to focus on the effectiveness of trade relations inside Comecon. Ideas for Comecon trade began to be characterized by efficiency. However, the Soviet Union also experienced complications in determining effectiveness, as it was interpreted differently on different levels. A strict implementation of such a policy was impossible as the other Comecon member states were too unstable to bear pressure from the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Soviet Union became trapped in this trade pattern that evolved in the first few years after the Second World War.

The Soviet failure to deliver a proper international socialist trade system, which could have been an alternative to the Western trade system, weakened the USSR's position in Comecon trade negotiations and made it possible for the other member states to exploit the situation. The ideological superstructure produced many economically interdependent problems, which kept the Soviet Union in a very conservative position despite it being unfavourable. At the core of this issue was the responsibility of the Soviet Union, as the leader of the camp, to guarantee the success of Comecon. The Soviet Union had

74 V. Vasiliev, *Failings of the Sovnarkhoz reform. The Ukrainian experience*, in: J. Smith and M. Ilić (eds.), *Khrushchev in the Kremlin*, pp. 112–132., at p. 117.

to develop the trade with the other Comecon members in order to show the success of the socialist system, even if it was not backed up by any economic rationale. For the same reason, it also had to sell raw materials to them and to guarantee the stability of the regimes.

Soviet ideas of Comecon policy mainly followed ideas and reforms in its domestic economy. Ideas surrounding both Khrushchev's attempted Sovnarkhoz-reform and the Kosygin reform can be found in the Soviet conceptions of Comecon as well. Consequently, they suffered similar shortcomings and failed to overcome the major economic problems of a socialist planned economy. As for Soviet domestic policy, the Brezhnev era lacked great ideas on how to rebuild the economy. In fact, after the rethinking that led to the Comprehensive Program, there was no noticeable change in the conception of Comecon until Gorbachev came to power in 1985. This did not stop the Soviet Union from attempting several new reforms in Comecon; however, until Perestroika there was no new real attempt to reorganize socialist economic cooperation.

# **The Role of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in the Construction of the Transnational Electricity Grid Mir**

**Falk Flade**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Der Beitrag betrachtet die Rolle des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW, 1949–1991) bei der Entstehung und Entwicklung des transnationalen Stromverbundes „Mir“ (russisch: Frieden). Dieses Stromnetz wurde 1959 offiziell gegründet und verband die nationalen Elektrizitätsnetze der sozialistischen Staaten Osteuropas auf der Basis grenzüberschreitender Hochspannungsleitungen. Diese transnationale Infrastruktur wurde über fast vier Jahrzehnte ausgebaut und umfasste auch Atom-, Wasser- und Wärmekraftwerke. Planung und Bau grenzüberschreitender Energieinfrastrukturen gehörten zu den Hauptaufgaben des 1949 gegründeten RGW. Entsprechende Institutionen wie die Ständige Kommission für Elektroenergie, die Zentrale Dispatcherverwaltung oder „Interatomenergo“ sollten die Kooperation der beteiligten RGW-Länder effektivieren. Seit der politischen Annäherung zwischen Ost- und Westeuropa in den siebziger Jahren rückten außerdem den „Eisernen Vorhang“ überwindende Stromlieferungen in den Fokus. Im Vergleich zu anderen transnationalen Energieübertragungssystemen für Rohöl und Erdgas zeichnete sich das „Mir“-Netz durch einen relativ hohen Institutionalierungsgrad aus. Diese Koordination war für den reibungslosen Betrieb des Gesamtsystems wichtig. Das Ende des RGW im Jahr 1991 erschwerte die notwendige Koordination und führte zu einer im Vergleich zu anderen transnationalen Infrastrukturen raschen Auflösung des Stromverbundes „Mir“. Der Beitrag analysiert, wie dieser transnationale Stromverbund funktionierte und welche Akteure beteiligt waren. Damit schließt er eine Forschungslücke bezüglich der Entwicklung grenzüberschreitender Elektrizitätsnetze im sozialistischen Ostblock.

The article addresses the role of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, 1949–1991) in the creation and development of the transnational electric power grid “Mir” (Russian: Peace). This power grid was officially established in 1959 and connected the national electric

networks of the socialist states of Eastern Europe by means of cross-border power lines. This transnational infrastructure was developed over the next decades and included nuclear, hydro, and thermal power plants. The planning and construction of cross-border energy infrastructures was one of the primary tasks of the CMEA. CMEA institutions, such as the Permanent Commission for Electric Energy, the Central Dispatch Organization, and the “Interatomenergo” were supposed to facilitate cooperation between participating CMEA countries. Following the political rapprochement between East and West Europe in the 1970s, the idea of surmounting the iron curtain to create a European-wide system of electrical supply became the focus. Compared with other transnational systems of energy transmission for crude oil and natural gas, the Mir network had a relatively high degree of institutionalization. This coordination was essential for the smooth operation of the overall system. The disintegration of the Comecon in 1991 impeded this cooperation and led to the rapid dissolution of the Mir power grid (compared to other transnational networks). This article analyses how this network worked and the actors involved. In doing so, it addresses a gap in research on the development of transnational electrical networks in the socialist Eastern Bloc.

## 1. Introduction

In October 1995, four electricity network operators in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) joined the Union for the Coordination of Production and Transmission of Electricity (UCPTE). At that time, the UCPTE comprised only countries from western and southern Europe. The new members were electricity system operators from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic, which had formed the CENTREL<sup>1</sup> network in October 1992. After the fundamental political and economic changes in Eastern Europe, there was a need to stabilize national power grids by establishing close ties with the UCPTE. However, cross-border links in CEE had already existed since the 1950s, when national power grids became part of a transnational electricity network with the name United Energy Systems “Mir”. The Mir electricity grid was officially established in 1959. After almost four decades of continuous extension, the electricity grid, which had included nuclear, hydroelectric, as well as thermal power plants, was finally dissolved in 1991.

How did the Mir grid work? In which way was it extended? What were the underlying key drivers of this endeavour? Why was the grid disconnected so swiftly after four decades of construction? The key to these answers can be found in the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (CMEA).<sup>2</sup> This transnational economic organization was founded in 1949 and comprised all socialist countries of the Eastern Bloc. One of the CMEA’s main goals was to secure energy supplies for member states, which were urgently needed

1 CENTREL was the name of a union of electricity system operators from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. It was officially established in October 1992 and synchronized with the synchronous grid of Continental Europe UCTE in 1995.

2 Sometimes also Council of Mutual Economic Assistance. Especially in Western literature also Comecon.

in industrializing socialist economies. Therefore, the planning and construction of cross-border energy infrastructures, such as electricity transmission lines as well as oil and gas pipelines, was a primary task of the CMEA and its bodies, such as its executive committee, the secretariat, or the standing commissions. The Standing Commission for Electric Energy had been established in May 1956 and was one of the first CMEA commissions. This fact indicates that the construction and extension of the United Energy Systems Mir was of great economic and political relevance. It linked the national power grids of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary, Poland, Romania, and western parts of the Soviet Union enabling a stable and efficient electricity supply to member states. In order to plan and construct cross-border electricity transmission lines, institutions like the aforementioned Standing Commission for Electric Energy, the Central Dispatching Office (CDO), or international economic organizations such as “Interatomenergo” were set up. Due to the political rapprochement between East and West in the 1970s, an aspect of concern was if electricity transfers to Western Europe would be possible.

The CMEA and its substructures were of decisive relevance for the smooth running of the United Energy Systems. In comparison to other transnational infrastructures such as oil and gas pipelines, a high degree of coordination of load management was necessary to operate the Mir grid. The dissolution of the CMEA in 1991 seriously complicated load management and consequently led to the swift disintegration of the United Energy Systems.

This article addresses a research gap concerning the development of cross-border electricity networks in the socialist Eastern Bloc. Similar research has been conducted with regard to Western Europe,<sup>3</sup> the United States,<sup>4</sup> Scandinavia,<sup>5</sup> and the Baltic region.<sup>6</sup> Eastern Europe, however, remains largely unexplored.

## 2. Laying the Foundations

One of the main economic aims of the young socialist countries at the end of the 1940s was the accelerated extension of heavy industry. The socialist industrialization, however, was realized without taking into account the allocation of natural resources. The challenge was to provide rapidly increasing amounts of energy supplies for new steelworks, industrial plants, and mines. The resulting discrepancy between energy demand and supply had the potential to cause a slowdown in economic growth. This fact limited autarky

3 See V. Lagendijk, *Electrifying Europe. The Power of Europe in the Construction of Electricity Networks*, Amsterdam 2008.

4 See D. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology. 1880–1940*, Cambridge 1990.

5 See A. Kaijser and M. Hedin (eds.), *Nordic Energy Systems. Historical Perspectives and Current Issues*, Canton 1995.

6 See P. Högselius, *Connecting East and West? Electricity Systems in the Baltic Region*, in: E. van der Vleuten and A. Kaijser (eds.), *Networking Europe. Transnational Infrastructures and the Shaping of Europe. 1850–2000*, Sagamore Beach 2006, pp. 245–275.

efforts, which was a major policy goal in the early 1950s. The Hungarian aluminium industry represents an instructive example. Due to significant bauxite deposits, energy intensive aluminium industries were built up in Hungary, a country with very limited energy resources. On the other side, neighbouring states like Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Poland had considerable brown and hard coal reserves at their disposal. Since the transport of brown coal is uneconomical, the conversion into electricity at the place of mining and the delivery via cross-border transmission lines appeared to be a practicable solution to bridge the Hungarian energy gap. In the first half of 1956, a series of conferences was held in Prague and Budapest to bring electricity to Hungary from the thermal power station of Hirschfelde in the GDR via Poland. The decisive question was how to establish prices for the planned electricity deliveries. The Czechoslovak, East German, and Polish delegations proposed to calculate electricity prices on the basis of coal prices, since electricity in all three countries was produced especially in coal-fired thermal power plants.<sup>7</sup> The Hungarian side, however, did not agree with the proposed price of 7.6 kopecks for one kilowatt hour (kWh) and a final solution could not be found. Consequently, representatives from the Czechoslovak, East German, and Polish government as well as the Hungarian utility company *Erőmű Tröszt* only reached a temporary agreement in May 1956, which enabled the transmission of 60 megawatts (MW) annually from the GDR to Hungary.<sup>8</sup> The discussion about how to establish prices for cross-border electricity deliveries was closely related to the broader question of foreign trade prices between socialist countries. Although CMEA countries agreed on the so-called Bucharest principles<sup>9</sup> at the ninth CMEA session in June 1958, this solution only had a temporary character and the pricing question stayed at the top of the agenda during the forthcoming decades.

Another reason for the young socialist countries to construct cross-border transmission lines was to supply energy-poor border regions. Due to frontiers shifting after the Second World War, existing electricity networks did not always match with new borderlines. Already in April 1947 Poland had reached an agreement with the Soviet administration in the Soviet occupation zone, which foresaw electricity deliveries of German power plants to regions in western Poland.<sup>10</sup> In addition to a price of USD 1.8 for 100 kWh, the Hirschfelde thermal power plant, which delivered the largest amounts of electricity, received 12,000 tons of brown coal from the nearby Turów coal mine. Before the war, the power plant and the coal mine had formed one complex. This cooperation was beneficial for Poland since it allowed the country to postpone the costly construction of a transmis-

7 Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), 351/84/3, p. 9 (Protokół z posiedzenia w sprawie energii elektrycznej; Prague, 6-14 April 1956).

8 AAN, 351/17/2 (Schlussprotokoll der vierseitigen Konferenz der Aussenhandelsorgane; Prague, 5-8 May 1956).

9 According to the Bucharest Principle, intra-bloc prices were established on the basis of world market prices for a set of basic goods, which were cleared from short-term price fluctuations and averaged over a period of five years. See Bucharest Agreement, in: J. Wilczynski, *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Marxism, Socialism and Communism*, London 1981, p. 52.

10 Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych, 4/17a/51/56, p. 5 (Protokół o dodatkowych dostawach prądu elektrycznego; Berlin, 18 June 1947).

sion line from Upper Silesia and only came to a halt when Poland commissioned its own lignite power plant in Turów in 1963.<sup>11</sup> The existing link between the GDR and Poland also enabled the aforementioned electricity deliveries of 60 MW to Hungary.

In June 1955, the GDR and Czechoslovakia agreed to link their national power grids, too. Bilateral agreements between other socialist countries followed.<sup>12</sup> The trend to link national electricity networks was supported by the CMEA, which was becoming increasingly active due to Nikita Khrushchev's endeavour to transform it into a central planning authority for the entire Eastern Bloc.<sup>13</sup> At its Moscow meeting in September 1957, the CMEA's Standing Commission for Electric Energy<sup>14</sup> approved the construction of additional cross-border transmission lines to enable electricity transfers between Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Poland, as well as to strengthen the electricity exchange with Hungary. In the beginning of 1960, the following transnational links were in place:<sup>15</sup>

Figure 1: Cross-border transmission lines between CMEA Countries (1960)<sup>16</sup>



11 AAN, 274/1526, p. 58 (Protokół końcowy z obrad Komisji Współpracy Gospodarczej Energetyk NRD i PRL; Warsaw, 8-23 November 1954).

12 R.C. Ribj, *Das Comecon. Eine Untersuchung über die Problematik der wirtschaftlichen Integration sozialistischer Länder*, Zurich 1970, p. 407.

13 A. Uschakow, *Probleme der Wirtschaftsintegration im RGW*, in: *Aussenpolitik* 23 (1972) 3, pp. 150-151.

14 In the first two years of its existence (1956–1958), this body had been called Standing Commission for the Exchange of Electricity and the Use of the Danubian Energy Resources.

15 Y.N. Savenko, *Ob'edinennyye Élektroenergeticheskie Sistemy Stran-Chlenov SÉV*, Moscow 1983, p. 11.

16 Source: Own drawing based on an open-access map of the Leibniz Institute of European History, [www.ieg.maps.de](http://www.ieg.maps.de) (accessed 19 December 2016).

- 1: Zwönitz (GDR) – Vyškov (ČSSR); 2 x 220 kV
- 2: Hirschfelde (GDR) – Bolesławiec (Poland); 1 x 110 kV
- 3: Berzdorf (GDR) – Mikołowa (Poland); 2 x 220 kV
- 4: Poříčí (ČSSR) – Wałbrzych (Poland); 2 x 110 kV
- 5: Lískovec (ČSSR) – Skawina (Poland); 1 x 220 kV
- 6: Bystričany (ČSSR) – Vác (Hungary); 1 x 220 kV
- 7: Nové Zámky (ČSSR) – Kisigmánd (Hungary); 2 x 110 kV

### 3. The Establishment of “Mir”

Cross-border transmission lines between Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Poland, and Hungary served as a starting point for a bloc-wide electricity grid in Eastern Europe. The eleventh CMEA session in May 1959 officially approved the establishment of the United Energy Systems and called the project “Mir”, which means peace in Russian. CMEA Vice Chairman Henryk Róžański stated in his memoirs that the head of the energy department, G. Novikov, had made the initial proposal for the construction of a bloc-wide network.<sup>17</sup> An important argument in favour of a transnational electricity grid was that peak loads in individual countries differed considerably. Therefore, a transnational power grid could help reduce national standby capacities by using additional power plants.<sup>18</sup> In July 1962, an exceptional CMEA session in Moscow stressed the importance of these efforts and approved the Basic Principles of the International Socialist Division of Labour, which was one of the most important CMEA documents. Concerning the energy sector, the Basic Principles declared the establishment of the Mir network as “one of the most progressive directions of labour division [...] in the socialist camp”.<sup>19</sup> Three weeks later, following the recommendation of the Standing Commission for Electric Energy representatives of all European CMEA countries<sup>20</sup> established the CDO in Prague. Primarily, the CDO was responsible for the smooth running of the Mir network as well as coordinating with member state utilities. Expenses were covered in equal shares and the Czechoslovak government provided the headquarters on Prague’s Jungmannova Street. Although the CDO was not a direct CMEA body, it had to take into account recommendations of the Standing Commission for Electric Energy as well as to regularly inform the CMEA about its work. Implicitly, the CMEA had the authority to issue instructions to the CDO.<sup>21</sup> In the following years, the CDO established contacts with other international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for

17 H. Róžański, *Spojrzenie na RWPG. Wspomnienia, Dokumenty, Refleksje*, Warsaw 1990, pp. 82–83.

18 Differing peak loads were related to the intersystem effect based on divergent production and consumption patterns in individual countries due to industrial, cultural, and climatic differences. See for example R. Cizek, *Die Zusammenarbeit der RGW-Länder auf dem Elektroenergiesektor, Aussenhandel* (1974) 4, p. 21.

19 Reprint of the Fundamental Principles in: German in A. Uschakow, *Integration im RGW (COMECON). Dokumente*, Baden-Baden 1983, pp. 1018–1035 (Quotation p. 1026).

20 In June 1962, Mongolia had joined the CMEA.

21 L. Kieres, *Die rechtliche Regelung der Energiewirtschaft im RGW*, in: *Osteuropa* 37 (1991) 1, p. 51.

Europe (UNECE), the International Union of Producers and Distributors of Electrical Energy (UNIPED), or the International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRÉ). As a next step towards an integrated bloc-wide electricity grid, CMEA organs initiated the linking of the Rumanian, Bulgarian, and Soviet southern energy system<sup>22</sup> with the already connected grids of Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, and Poland. A transmission line between eastern Poland and the Dobrotvor thermal power plant<sup>23</sup> in the west of Ukraine became operational in 1963.<sup>24</sup> One year later, a link between Czechoslovak Velké Kapušany and Romanian Luduș via Mukachevo located in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was established.<sup>25</sup> Starting from Mukachevo, another line to Sajószöged, Hungary was introduced. A look at the map shows that the emerging infrastructure of Mukachevo and the West Ukrainian energy system provided by Lvovenergo represented a key intersection in the Mir network. The case of Mukachevo is interesting from another point of view as well. In June 1963, representatives from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the Soviet Union signed an agreement to construct the Mukachevo transformer station.

This was one of the first construction projects in the East European energy sector, where CMEA countries made a direct investment in another socialist state. The conditions of the investment were threefold. Soviet state-owned enterprises carried out construction work, whereas the other participating countries delivered construction material. After commissioning, the Soviet Union would become the sole owner of the facility. Operational expenses were to be equally distributed amongst the five countries.<sup>26</sup> This form of investment was a kind of blueprint for later large-scale projects like the Soyuz gas pipeline in the 1970s.

With the construction of a transmission line between Craiova, Romania and Bořchinovtsi, Bulgaria, the linking of East European socialist countries was completed in 1967.

22 The United Energy System of the South was part of the bigger Unified Energy Systems of the USSR and consisted of the energy grid of the Ukrainian SSR (energy systems of Donbass, Dnjepr, Kharkov, Kiev, Lvov, Vinnitsa, Odessa, Crimea) as well as the Moldavian SSR.

23 In accordance to source material, toponyms in the Ukrainian and Belarussian SSR are transliterated from their Russian spelling.

24 A transmission line between Ross' in Belarussian SSR and Białystok in the east of Poland was in operation since 1962. However, this line was not connected to the Mir grid. See Z. Mozer, *Czy Polskie Sieci łączą Wschód z Zachodem?*, in: *Gazeta Prawna*, 26 January 2005, p. 1.

25 O.A. Chukanov (ed.), *Sodruzhestvo Stran-Chlenov SÉV. Politiko-Ékonomicheskii Slovar'-Spravochnik*, Moscow 1986, p. 183.

26 D. Mentz and J. Pfeffer, *Die rechtliche Regelung der internationalen Energiebeziehungen der RGW-Länder*, Munich 1982, pp. 89–91.

Figure 2. Cross-border transmission lines between CMEA Countries (1967)<sup>27</sup>



- 1: Dobrotvor (Soviet Union) – Zamość (Poland); 1 x 220 kV
- 2: Velké Kapušany (ČSSR) – Mukachevo (Soviet Union) – Luduș (Romania); 1 x 400 kV
- 3: Mukachevo (Soviet Union) – Sajószöged (Hungary); 1 x 220 kV
- 4: Craiova (Romania) – Bořčinovtsi (Bulgaria); 1 x 220 kV

27 Source: Own drawing based on an open-access map of the Leibniz Institute of European History, [www.ieg.maps.de](http://www.ieg.maps.de) (accessed 19 December 2016).

#### 4. Impacts of the Socialist Economic Integration

In July 1971, representatives of CMEA countries agreed to enact the Comprehensive Programme.<sup>28</sup> Next to the Basic Principles, it was one of the most important CMEA policy papers. Some of its explicit aims were to cover growing energy demands by the expansion of nuclear energy, the joint construction of energy-related facilities, and the further extension of the Mir grid. This would be achieved by the establishment of a network of high voltage transmission lines of 750 kilovolts (kV) in combination with the joint construction of nuclear power plants.<sup>29</sup> In February 1974, representatives of Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union approved the construction of the first high voltage line from Vinnitsa, Ukrainian SSR to Albertirs, Hungary with a total length of 842 kilometres (km). The Soviet organization *Énergosetproekt* elaborated technical plans with the assistance of the Hungarian enterprise *Eröterv*.<sup>30</sup> Similar to other infrastructure projects, the Soviet Union and Hungary conducted construction work on their own territories. Other countries provided machines, building materials, and consumer goods. From 1980 on, the participants imported electricity and benefited from higher grid stability. The transmission line between Vinnitsa and Albertirs was the first of three electricity aortas running from the Soviet Union to Eastern Europe in order to supply electricity and to strengthen the interconnection between the Soviet Unified Energy Systems and the Mir network.

Simultaneously, the construction of minor cross-border transmission lines continued. Between 1975 and 1978, three links between Poland and the GDR, the GDR and Czechoslovakia, as well as Czechoslovakia and Hungary went online enabling additional electricity exchanges.<sup>31</sup>

Table 1: Mir in the mid-1970s:

	1962	1977
Total power generation capacity (MW)	28,400	83,600
Electricity production (GWh)	137,500	401,000
Electricity exchange within Mir (GWh)	3,400	21,600
Electricity exchange in comparison to overall electricity production (in %)	2.5	5.4

Source: M. Engert and H. Stephan, *Lexikon RGW*, Leipzig 1981, p. 244.

28 The full name was Comprehensive Programme for the Further Extension and Improvement of Cooperation and the Further Development of Socialist Economic Integration by Comecon Member Countries. Reprint in German in L. Rüster, *Grunddokumente des RGW*, Berlin 1978, pp. 47–141.

29 A. Uschakow, *Internationale Rohstoffabkommen im RGW*, in: G. Gutmann, K.C. Thalheim and W. Wöhlke (eds.), *Das Energieproblem in Ostmitteleuropa. Part II: Energiepolitik und Energieverbund in den mitteleuropäischen RGW-Staaten*, Marburg 1984, p. 102.

30 M. Melkonyan, *Stroika Druzhyby*, in: *Ékonomicheskoe Sotrudnichestvo Stran-Chlenov SÉV* (1981) 2, pp. 85–86.

31 J. Bethkenhagen, *Die Zusammenarbeit der RGW-Länder auf dem Energiesektor*, in: *Osteuropa Wirtschaft* 22 (1977) 2, p. 74.

Due to increasing energy prices on world markets, the energy question received greater attention since the global oil crisis in 1973. As a counter-measure, socialist countries focused on the acceleration of national nuclear power programmes and the further extension of the joint electricity grid.<sup>32</sup> In November 1977, CMEA countries signed the General Agreement for the Cooperation and Prospective Development of the United Energy Systems of CMEA Member States (hereinafter General Agreement) until 1990. Furthermore, an Agreement for Multilateral International Specialisation and Cooperation in the Construction and Mutual Supply of Equipment for Nuclear Power Plants between 1981 and 1990 was accepted in June 1979. This agreement involved industrial giants all over Eastern Europe like Atomenergoproekt in Volgograd, Škoda in Plzeň, or RAFAKO in Racibórz. Already in the beginning of 1973, the international economic association Interatomenergoproekt had been established in order to coordinate the process of intensified division of labour in the socialist nuclear power sector.<sup>33</sup>

Another major step towards the further extension of the Mir network was the joint construction of the Khmel'nitskiĭ Nuclear Power Plant in the west of the Ukrainian SSR in March 1979. Additionally, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union agreed on the joint construction of a 750 kV transmission line between the Khmel'nitskiĭ Nuclear Power Plant and a substation near Rzeszów located in the east of Poland. A similar agreement was signed in 1981 between the Soviet Union, Romania, and Bulgaria in order to construct the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant in Yuzh-noukrainsk, Ukrainian SSR and a 750 kV transmission line to Vetrino, Bulgaria via Romania. The financial conditions were modelled after the agreement concerning the Vinnitsa-Albertirsa transmission line. However, further discussions were held due to the considerable financial scope and unclear economic benefits. The question at issue was how long the investors would receive free electricity deliveries from the Khmel'nitskiĭ Nuclear Power Plant. Again, discussions touched on the intra-bloc pricing system, which was the weak point of the intra-bloc trade. Due to specific price setting, which followed the world market price for a commodity with a delay of five years, it was clear by the end of the 1970s that the energy prices would significantly increase in the next years.<sup>34</sup> If prices for future electricity deliveries were accounted for at the time of actual supply, this price setting could have led to unfavourable investments. For importing countries it would have been more beneficial to fix electricity prices to a 1979 level in order to secure deliveries regardless of future price increases.<sup>35</sup> According to the General Agreement regarding the Khmel'nitskiĭ Nuclear Power Plant, however, electricity prices were

32 V.I. Voloshin, *Electric power in the Comecon European Countries*, in: *Energy Policy* 18 (1990) 8, p. 742.

33 A.F. Panasenkov, *Co-Operation among CMEA Member Countries in the Development of Nuclear Energy. Its Role in the Implementation of the NPT*, in: *IEAE Bulletin* 22 (1980) 34, p. 72.

34 Since 1975, prices were adjusted annually to an average of world market prices of the last five years (Moscow Principle). Before that, the adjustment was made only every five years (Bucharest Principle). See J.M. Kramer, *Soviet-CEMA Energy Ties*, in: *Problems of Communism* 34 (1985) 4, pp. 32-47.

35 AAN, 1878/8/260, p. 6 (Instytut Energetyki: Stanowisko IE w sprawie udziału PRL w wspólnej budowie Zachodnioukraińskiej elektrowni jądrowej; Warsaw, July 1977).

not fixed for the entire contract period, but were established in accordance to the CMEA pricing methodology.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, both nuclear power plants as well as the corresponding transmission lines were activated in the second half of the 1980s. However, pricing problems were likely the reason that no other 750 kV transmission lines were put into operation.

Figure 3: Cross-border 750-kV transmission lines between Soviet NPPs and neighboring CMEA countries, second half of 1980s)<sup>37</sup>



- 1: Vinnitsa (Ukrainian SSR) – Zapadnoukrainskaya Substation – Albertirsa (Hungary); 1 x 750 kV  
 2: Khmel'nitskiĭ (Ukrainian SSR) – Rzeszów (Poland); 1 x 750 kV  
 3: Yuzhnoukrainsk (Ukrainian SSR) – Isaccea (Romania) – Vetrino (Bulgaria); 1 x 750 kV

36 AAN, 290/2.9/8, p. 111 (Urząd Rady Ministrów; Porozumienie między rządem PRL a rządem ZSRR o współpracy w budowie na terytorium ZSRR Chmielnickiej Elektrowni Atomowej i związanych z tym dostawach energii elektrycznej do PRL; Warsaw, 29 March 1979).

37 Source: own drawing based on an open-access map of the Leibniz Institute of European History, [www.ieg.maps.de](http://www.ieg.maps.de) (accessed 19 December 2016).

## 5. Failed Exams

In the beginning of the 1980s, the Soviet Union was no longer willing to supply socialist partners with increasing amounts of energy. In late 1981, the Soviet Union announced a 10 per cent reduction of oil deliveries to Eastern Europe from 1982–1985. This measure especially affected industrialized Czechoslovakia and the GDR. In doing so, the Soviet leadership revised an announcement made by the chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers, Alexei Kosygin, in June 1980. Back then, Kosygin had stated that Soviet energy exports would remain at the 1980 level for the entire five-year planning period.<sup>38</sup> One of the reasons for the cutback was the increasing expenses of grain imports from the United States and the need to scale up Soviet oil and gas exports to West European countries in order to earn hard currencies.<sup>39</sup> However, already at the thirtieth CMEA Session in July 1976 the Soviet Union indicated limiting future oil exports.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the reduction of Soviet oil supplies put CMEA countries under additional pressure to extend nuclear energy and to exploit domestic energy resources.<sup>41</sup> The construction of nuclear power plants however, could not keep pace with the growing demand. The Soviet company Atommash, which was the main producer for components of water-water energetic reactors (VVER),<sup>42</sup> managed to deliver only seven reactors instead of the 43 scheduled to be complete by 1985.<sup>43</sup> These delays were due to several reasons such as the lack of skilled labour and adequate housing in the rapidly growing city of Volgodonsk. The main reason, however, was that Atommash's huge factory hall with a total length of 750 metres had been constructed too close to the Tsimlyansk Reservoir and was slowly sinking into the ground until it eventually collapsed.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, East European countries were forced to rapidly increase electricity imports from the Soviet Union. Whereas Eastern Europe imported 14,700 gigawatt hours (GWh) in 1980, imports grew to 37,000 GWh in 1987.<sup>45</sup> Poland, which was an energy net exporter for decades, became a net importer in 1986. Apart from significant construction delays of its Żarnowiec Nuclear Power

38 S. Closson, A Comparative Analysis on Energy Subsidies in Soviet and Russian Policy, in: *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 44 (2011) 4, p. 345.

39 See the article of Christian Gerlach in this volume.

40 R. Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe? Die DDR im RGW. Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien. 1963–1976*, Cologne 2000, p. 300.

41 Therefore, the GDR became the leading brown coal producer with significant repercussions to people's health and environment.

42 The Water-Water Energetic Reactor (VVER, Vodo-Vodyanoi Énergeticheskiï Reaktor) belongs to the group of pressurized water reactors with light water as coolant and moderator and slightly enriched uranium as fuel. The coolant is pumped into the reactor core, where it is heated by the fuel. Due to the high pressure, the coolant remains liquid despite the high temperature in the core. The heated coolant in the hermetically closed first loop flows to a heat exchanger, where it transfers its thermal energy to water in a second loop. This water turns into steam and moves a steam turbine.

43 H. Brezinski, *Wirtschaftliche Fragen des Energieverbundes im Ostblock*, in: G. Gutmann, K.C. Thalheim and W. Wöhlke (eds.), *Das Energieproblem in Ostmitteleuropa. Part II: Energiepolitik und Energieverbund in den mittel-europäischen RGW-Staaten*, Marburg 1984, p. 72.

44 P. R. Josephson, *Red Atom. Russia's Nuclear Power Program from Stalin to Today*, New York 2000, p. 104.

45 K. Schappelwein, *Atlas Ost- und Südosteuropa. Energiewirtschaft Ost- und Südosteuropas*, Vienna 1990, p. 4.

Plant, reasons for this switch were the stagnating domestic coal production after the political and economic crisis as well as unsuccessful energy-saving measures as a reaction to the second oil crisis.<sup>46</sup>

Growing Soviet electricity deliveries could not prevent recurrent energy shortages and severe blackouts. Especially harsh winter weather put grids under pressure. In 1978/79, heavy snowfalls triggered blackouts in the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. Another bottleneck was that emergency electricity supplies from neighbouring states remained insufficient. One of the main benefits of the Mir network was supposed to be that in cases of emergency, neighbouring countries would supply the troubled country. However, in reality this was not feasible. In January 1987, there was an explosion at Boxberg, one of the biggest thermal power plants in the GDR, causing severe damages. Approximately five per cent of the countrywide electricity production capacity broke down. Other members of the Mir grid could not compensate these losses due to their own strained electricity supplies. Consequently, the GDR was forced to import electricity from Austria, while Austria itself imported electricity by contract from Poland and Czechoslovakia, although in smaller amounts. Moreover, Austria paid an average of 0.33 automatic transfer switch per kWh, as opposed to the GDR, which had to pay 0.77 automatic transfer switch per kWh.<sup>47</sup>

At the end of the 1980s, no change for the better was conceivable. Due to the Chernobyl disaster, national plans for nuclear energy were further delayed. In the case of the Polish nuclear construction site in Żarnowiec, public opposition led to the overall halt of the project at a time when 36 per cent was already finished.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the Soviet Union could not guarantee its obligations of electricity deliveries anymore. During the meeting of the Standing Commission for Electric Energy in Sofia in 1989, the delegations from Poland, Hungary, and the GDR complained about the Soviet announcement that it would not fulfil contractual obligations.<sup>49</sup>

## 6. East-West Electricity Exchanges

Similar to the East European Mir grid, a transnational electricity grid existed in the West. The UCPTE network had been established in 1951 and linked the national grids of Austria, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), France, Italy, Luxembourg, the

46 P. Jansen, *Energiepolitik unter dem Eindruck der beiden Ölpreiskrisen. Die Beispiele der ČSSR, DDR, Polens und Ungarns*, in: G. Gutmann, K.C. Thalheim and W. Wöhlke (eds.), *Das Energieproblem in Ostmitteleuropa. Part II: Energiepolitik und Energieverbund in den mitteleuropäischen RGW-Staaten*, Marburg 1984, pp. 24-25.

47 J. Bethkenhagen, *Stromwirtschaft im RGW. Trotz Kapazitätserweiterung bleibt Versorgung angespannt*, in: *Wochenbericht DIW* 36 (1988), p. 486.

48 S. Albinowski, *Ekonomiczne Przesłanki Rezygnacji z Budowy Elektrowni Jądrowych w Polsce do 2000 r.*, in: *Gospodarka planowa* (1989) 10-12, p. 25.

49 AAN, 1878/17/13, p. 27 (*Sprawozdanie delegacji polskiej z 3 posiedzenia Stałej Komisji RWPG ds. Współpracy w Dziedzinie Energii Elektrycznej i Energetyki Jądrowej w Sofii od 9. do 13. października 1989 r.*; Warsaw, October 1989).

Netherlands, and Switzerland. A linking of Mir and the UCPTE grids would have had the same advantages, which led to the interconnection of national systems on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the Mir grid worked with a higher frequency deviation, though both networks officially operated on a frequency of 50 hertz.<sup>50</sup> This difference ruled out synchronization. An alternative was the so-called island mode, which means the isolated operation of a power plant is linked by a cross-border transmission line to a neighbouring electricity grid. In 1956, Austria and Czechoslovakia constructed such a transmission line between the Bisamberg and Sokolnice substations. In 1965, a similar link followed between the Austrian substation Wien-Südost and Hungarian substation Győr. Some years earlier, additional cross-border lines between Hungary and Yugoslavia (Szege-Subotica) as well as between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (Niš-Sofia Iztok) had already been put into operation.<sup>51</sup> These transmission lines were of minor significance, but the cases of Austria and Yugoslavia are quite instructive. After cutting the last cross-border lines between East and West Berlin in the beginning of the 1950s, neutral Austria and non-aligned Yugoslavia were the only countries in Central Europe with connections to CMEA countries. At that time, both Austria and Yugoslavia were members of the UCPTE.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1970s, the picture changed. Significant price increases in the West European energy sector drew the attention of socialist governments to international electricity trade. After lengthy negotiations, in 1975 Austria and Poland signed a treaty establishing electricity exchanges.<sup>53</sup> A back-to-back station near the Dürnröhr substation as well as a power line running to Slavětice, Czechoslovakia were constructed.<sup>54</sup> The involvement of the Swiss electricity company Laufenburg, which was an important stakeholder on West European electricity markets, indicates the significance of the project.

Due to détente in East-West relations and the Helsinki Accords in 1975, new plans to connect grids were suggested. In his speech at the seventh session of the Polish United Workers' Party in December 1975, Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev proposed a pan-European energy conference as a response to existing challenges with regard to the global oil crisis. The idea involved the merger of East and West European electricity grids

50 The higher frequency deviation in the Mir grid was related to the lack or belated deployment of reserve power and to the lack of automatic frequency adaptation. Within the UCPTE grid constantly sufficient back-up capacities were available in order to stabilize the grid. The balancing was automated. In the Mir grid, only Soviet power plants were responsible for the regulation of frequency and balancing was conducted by hand, i.e. by the Central Dispatching Office. See W. Kiwit, *Großverbundsysteme in Europa. Fakten und Grenzen*, in: *Energiewirtschaftliche Tagesfragen* 40 (1990) 11, p. 765.

51 M. Hegemann, *Kurze Geschichte des RGW*, Berlin 1980, p. 136.

52 While Austria was one of the founding members of UCPTE in 1951, Yugoslavia was a founding member of the SUDEL-group. Simultaneously, SUDEL-members were associated with UCPTE. In 1987, Yugoslavia became a full member of UCPTE.

53 The motivation was the complementarity of Austrian and Polish energy mixes. While Austria could produce plenty of electricity deriving from its hydroelectric power stations in the Alps (especially in summer time), Poland could offer electricity from conventional thermal power stations fuelled with hard coal.

54 W. Fremuth, *Österreich als Stromdrehzscheibe zwischen Ost und West*, in: R. Dietz and K. Mack (eds.), *Energie, Umwelt und Zusammenarbeit in Europa*, Vienna 1987, p. 144.

and joint investments in large energy complexes.<sup>55</sup> Other stakeholders tried to benefit from the political thaw in the mid-1970s as well. With considerable assistance from the UNECE, in 1977 Greece and Bulgaria agreed on electricity exchanges and the construction of a power line between Thessaloniki and Blagoevgrad. Furthermore, the UNECE electricity committee examined the construction of an electricity highway of 1,000 kV running from the nuclear power station at Kursk, Soviet Union via Kiev, Lviv, Gottwaldov, and Munich to Laufenburg, Switzerland.<sup>56</sup>

For CMEA countries, the export of electrical energy was an additional source for urgently needed hard currency earnings. The question of electricity re-exports to the West was controversially discussed in connection with the construction of the nuclear power plants in Khmelnitskiĭ and Yuzhnoukrainsk. While delegations from Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania pressed for the removal of the paragraph prohibiting electricity re-exports, the Soviet side insisted on the ban.<sup>57</sup> The reason for this was that the Soviet Union itself planned to export electricity to the West. One proposal was to deliver electricity to West Berlin and further to the FRG from a planned nuclear power plant near Kaliningrad. Although this proposal must have been attractive to energy-poor Berlin, the project did not materialize due to the still complicated geopolitical situation.<sup>58</sup>

Due to the increasingly strained energy supply situation in most East European countries, the import of electricity from the West was considered in the late 1980s. The GDR with its increasing problems in the field of lignite mining was especially interested. In 1988, the GDR and FRG agreed to construct a cross-border transmission line through the GDR to West Berlin. In September 1989, the first section between Helmstedt, FRG and Wolmirstedt, GDR became operational.<sup>59</sup> After 1989, the fundamentally changing political landscape facilitated cooperation. Political barriers faded away and technical problems became the focus of governments' attention. An interesting example was the cooperation between West Germany and Romania in early 1990. In order to deliver 400 MW, both sides had to make use of all existing cross-border links between the UCPTE and the Mir grid. First, the electricity was transferred to Austria within the synchronized UCPTE grid. The electricity was further transmitted (1) through the back-to-back station near Dürnrrohr to Czechoslovakia (2) via a transmission line from substation Wien-Südost to Győr, Hungary, and (3) to the Yugoslav grid, which was part of the UCPTE network. A turbine at the Djerdap hydroelectric power station directed an equivalent amount of electricity of (3) to the neighbouring Porțile de Fier (the Iron Gate I Hydroelectric Power Station) on the Romanian side of the Danube. The electricity equivalents

55 AAN, 1764/7/11, pp. 146–147 (Protokol pervogo zasedaniya soveta po nauchno-tekhnicheskomu sotrudnichestvu v oblasti toplivno-energeticheskikh problem; Moscow, 20–22 October 1976).

56 Y.N. Savenko, Tendentsii Razvitiya Obmena Élektroénergieĭ mezhdú Énergosistemami Evropeĭskikh Stran, in: Ékonomicheskoe Sotrudnichestvo Stran-Chlenov SÉV (1982) 3, p. 72.

57 AAN, 1878/8/260, p. 26 (Sprawozdanie z drugiego posiedzenia wiceministrów energetyki krajów RWPG w Moskwie w dniach 10–13.X.1977 r.; Warsaw, 8 November 1977).

58 Ibid., p. 178.

59 J. Thiry, Interconnection of European Electric Power Systems: Present Situation and Prospects up to the Year 2000, in: OECD, Seminar on East West Energy Trade, Paris 1992, p. 165.

of (1) and (2) were transferred from a Hungarian power station to Romanian customers in the border region.<sup>60</sup> This kind of electricity delivery was possible because of the commitment of all involved and illustrated the (technical) obstacles and possibilities of East-West electricity deliveries in the beginning of the 1990s.

## 7. Conclusion

The Mir grid was officially established in 1959. Local and regional cross-border links, which formed the core of the Mir network, had existed since the Second World War or were put into operation in the 1950s. Until 1967, all East European countries as well as the southwestern part of the Soviet Union were connected to the network. The 1970s saw a significant increase in joint construction bringing Eastern Europe even closer to the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The zenith of this integration process was reached in 1979 and 1981 with agreements on the joint construction of two nuclear power plants in Khmelnitskiĭ and Yuzhnoukrainsk with corresponding long-distance, high-voltage transmission lines. The 1980s, however, revealed the limits of the Mir network. National construction schemes of nuclear power plants fell behind plans. Additionally, the socialist pricing system could not prevent energy importing CMEA countries from paying ever increasing amounts for energy imports even within the bloc. Consequently, the focus shifted towards national energy resources with significant consequences for the environment and the health of the population. Severe winter weather or breakdowns of central components of the national grids had the potential to paralyse domestic electricity supplies. These developments put a heavy economic burden on the energy sectors of East European planned economies. Due to the political détente, since the 1970s East-West cooperation in the field of electricity deliveries has gained momentum. However, large-scale imports of electricity from the West were no feasible alternative to Soviet deliveries. The energy-hungry CMEA countries could only be paid with non-competitive consumer goods on global markets.

As shown above, the CMEA played an important role in the development of the Mir network by continuously planning its further expansion, which lasted several decades. Especially in the 1970s, far-reaching construction plans went hand in hand with the extension of organizational structures within or related to the CMEA. Joint investments in substations, power plants, and institutions like the CDO and Interatomenergo stimulated the integration process. A look into contemporary journals reveals that the successful construction of grid components was highlighted to stress the friendship and mutual assistance of socialist countries. The expansion of Mir reflects a general pattern that can be found in the oil and gas sector, too. However, only in the case of electricity was the role of the CMEA successful in the creation of a transborder network, since the

60 W. Kiwit, Großverbundsysteme in Europa. Fakten und Grenzen, in: *Energiewirtschaftliche Tagesfragen* 40 (1990) 11, p. 768.

matching of supply and demand necessitated intense cooperation. The disintegration of the socialist bloc and the dissolution of the CMEA in 1991 was a deathblow for the Mir grid. Without the institutional support of the CMEA and related institutions such as the CDO, the functioning of Mir could no longer be guaranteed. Due to the relatively close interconnection of the Czechoslovak, Hungarian, and Polish grids, a substitute had to be put in place and was found in the form of the CENTREL system. Similar to the military and political developments, a quick unification with the West European UCPTE system was the ultimate goal and, therefore, all electricity links to the former Soviet Union had to be shut down. The synchronization of the CENTREL and UCPTE networks was realized in 1995, which means that the electrical unification preceded the military and political integration into NATO and the EU by several years.

# **Creative Tension: The Role of Conflict in Shaping Transnational Identity at Comecon**

**Simon Godard**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Das Zusammentreffen nationaler und internationaler Interessen im Rahmen einer internationalen Organisation wie dem Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (RGW) führt unvermeidlich zu Konflikten. Durch eine Mikroanalyse spezifischer Auseinandersetzungen innerhalb des RGW versucht dieser Artikel, die Gestaltungskraft dieser Konflikte zu bestimmen. Es werden Auseinandersetzungen zwischen internationalen Beamten, die für den RGW arbeiteten, und Vertretern ihrer Herkunftsländer erforscht, um die Logik der Konflikte und ihrer Auflösung zu verstehen. In den Konflikten entsteht bei den Akteuren die Frage nach dem Rationalitätsprinzip ihres Handelns. Im Artikel wird eine Typologie von Konflikten entwickelt. So können RGW-Mitarbeiter erstens ihren Kollegen, die aus den Mitgliedsländern zu einem Treffen im RGW kommen, deren internationale Inkompetenz vorwerfen – und damit gleichzeitig die eigenen besonderen transnationalen Fähigkeiten betonen. Zweitens entscheiden sich manche dafür, an internationalen Verhandlungen nicht teilzunehmen, wenn sie sich dem Versuch ihrer Instrumentalisierung für nationale Ziele auf internationaler Ebene ausgesetzt sehen, um so dem unvermeidbaren Konflikt mit Vertretern ihrer Herkunftsländer aus dem Weg zu gehen. In seltenen Fällen kann die Auseinandersetzung drittens auch zu einem offenen Konflikt führen, was die internationalen Beamten allerdings zu vermeiden versuchen. Die Erforschung dieser drei Modalitäten von Konflikten erlaubt es, das transnationale Selbstbewusstsein der RGW-Mitarbeiter als Entstehung einer doppelten Loyalität zu beschreiben. Die Berücksichtigung der Benutzung des Begriffs „gemeinsames Interesse der Mitgliedsländer“, das die RGW-Mitarbeiter in ihren öffentlichen Äußerungen entwickeln, ermöglicht dem Historiker, deren doppelte Einbettung sowohl in nationalen als auch in internationalen Machtnetzwerken zu verstehen, aus der heraus sie gleichzeitig einen transnationalen und einen RGW-spezifischen Standpunkt durchzusetzen versuchen.

The meeting of national and international interests within the framework of an international organization, such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), inevitably leads to conflict. Through a micro-analysis of specific disputes within the CMEA, this article endeavours to determine the creative power of these conflicts. Disputes between CMEA officials and representatives from those officials' country of origin are examined to understand the logic of the conflicts and their resolution. In the conflicts, the question of the rationality principle is raised among actors with reference to their actions. This article develops a typology of conflicts. First, at international meetings, CMEA officials might reproach their national counterparts for having insufficient international competence, while concomitantly stressing their transnational expertise. Second, some CMEA staff avoided conflict, by not attending negotiations where officials from their country of origin might try to use them to advance nationalist goals at the international level. Third, in a few cases, conflicts of interest did lead to open conflict, an outcome CMEA officials tried to avoid. Exploring these three modalities of conflict allows us to characterize the transnational self-awareness of CMEA workers as arising from a dual loyalty. Factoring in CMEA officials' use of the phrase "the common interest of the member states" in their public statements allows the historian to understand their double embedding in national and international networks of power from which they tried to enforce a transnational and CMEA-specific point of view.

## 1. Introduction

Albina D. and Peter Hübler, two former agents of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon), described the atmosphere in the organization as being far from one of "peace, joy and harmony".<sup>1</sup> The adversarial atmosphere, which existed in the socialist world between the Comecon member states themselves, is quite well known.<sup>2</sup> The originality of this chapter lies in its focus on the articulation of national and international interests at the Comecon, examining the way the experts who worked in Moscow, as international civil servants of the Council's secretariat or in the member states' permanent representation offices, dealt with conflicts arising in their day-to-day activities. Indeed, the experts did so in different ways revealing how the Comecon community was not a homogeneous social group. Microanalysis of conflicts with an international scope allows for re-evaluating the Council's apparent failure in cooperation as a creative tension. The development of a transnational identity among the civil servants cannot be taken for granted or considered a linear process progressively undermining their loyalty toward their countries and fostering conflict.<sup>3</sup> Shaping the socialist bloc as a symbolic framework (appropriated by its experts) was a challenge for the Comecon secretariat, not the

1 Interview Albina D. and Peter Hübler, in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc par l'économie. Configuration des territoires et des identités socialistes au CAEM*, PhD Thesis, Geneva, 2014, appendices, p. 139, p. 298.

2 R. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars. Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade*, Princeton 1996; See also the article by Suvi Kansikas in this issue.

3 Y. Buchet de Neuilly, *Devenir diplomate multilatéral. Le sens pratique des calculs appropriés*, in: *Culture & Conflicts* 75 (2009), p. 76.

natural outcome of cooperation. As a way to operationalize the largely qualitative measure of the acculturation that took place at the Council, the following analysis offers an interpretation of the sense of the organization given by the Comecon agents' reactions to specific conflicts (opposing them with representatives of their country).<sup>4</sup> The way the Comecon agents resolved conflicts highlights a complex socialization process in which they preserved the possibility to combine national and international loyalty within the organization.<sup>5</sup>

This contribution first describes the conditions of the emergence of conflicts at the Comecon, while questioning the shaping of the concept of "common interest" within the organization. The use of this concept in situations of conflict is then analysed in order to understand how the Comecon experts mastered two loyalties and illustrated their specific transnational acculturation.

## 2. A Disputed Recombination of Identities

### 2.1. The Comecon Agents: National Ambassadors or Autonomous Go-Betweens?

Although the Comecon experts working for the international secretariat as well as at the permanent representation offices of their countries were fairly autonomous from their national embassies in Moscow, they belonged to powerful oversight bodies. The so-called "basis organizations" structured and monitored the social life and the professional activities of the Council's agents on a national basis.<sup>6</sup> Each national group had one specifically dedicated to the secretariat's staff members and their colleagues at the permanent representation offices. The different Comecon basis organizations also coordinated with each other, organizing the social life of the international collective. However, their first task was to defend the interests of their party, and consequently of their country, in international negotiations.

Yet, already in 1964, the basis organization of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany dealt with the question of a possible gap between defending the interests of the GDR and the specific duties of international civil servants. It argued that the defence of East German interests would benefit the whole socialist community and therefore set a clear hierarchy between the authorities, which Comecon agents had to comply with:

4 C. Shore, *La socialisation de l'administration de l'Union européenne. Une approche anthropologique des phénomènes d'europanisation et de supranationalisme*, in: H. Michel and C. Robert (eds.), *La fabrique des "Européens". Processus de socialisation et construction européenne*, Strasbourg 2010, pp. 169-196.

5 *Ibid.*, pp. 5-28; J. T. Checkel, *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe: Introduction and Framework*, in: *International Organization* 59 (2005) 4, pp. 801-826.

6 S. Kott, *Communism day-to-day. State Enterprises in East German Society*, Ann Arbor 2014.

*We must fully understand, that the points of view of the member states are the only one existing at the Comecon. [...] The elaboration of the secretariat's point of view always has to be based on the points of view of the member states.*<sup>7</sup>

In the eyes of their countries, Comecon experts remained first and foremost technical ambassadors who had to maintain national opinions while working at the international level. Although its existence was acknowledged, the point of view of the secretariat of the Council possessed no autonomous legitimacy. This ambiguous position was well perceived by the agents delegated to the Comecon, especially in the permanent representation offices. According to Peter Hübler, who worked at the East German permanent representation office as an advisor between 1962 and 1967 and again between 1980 and 1986,

*the attitude of almost all countries and almost all members of staff was: I have to pay attention that my country suffers no prejudice [...] the approach at the Comecon was not determined by a positive, but by a negative interest, that is to say, paying attention.*<sup>8</sup>

International civil servants were fully aware of the multiple constraints in which they were embedded. Contesting the goals set by their governments to the Comecon was impossible. Nevertheless, only through active participation in international negotiations, based on economic and technical, and not on political rationality, did their foreign colleagues begin to consider them reliable partners thus allowing them to defend the opinion of their governments in the elaboration of international agreements.

In the early 1960s, prominent personalities such as the Hungarian permanent representative at the Comecon, Antal Apro, started criticizing the strong influence of the member states' governments on experts involved in international negotiations. In a letter to the secretary of the Council, Apro wrote in 1961:

*In their meetings these specialists, according to the instructions they have received, do not defend the interest of the member states of the Comecon as a whole, but only the apparent interest of the country that delegated them and consequently, cannot elaborate proposals that would be advantageous for the whole [socialist] camp.*<sup>9</sup>

For the first time, the concept of a specific interest of the socialist camp as a whole was used, even though it still referred to an aggregated interest of the member states. Thus, the definition of Comecon agents as national ambassadors could be criticized. International civil servants rapidly understood that the exclusive defence of their countries' national interests would lead to sub-optimal situations at the Comecon.

7 Foundation for the archives of the parties and mass-organizations of the GDR (hereafter SAPMO-BArch), DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 18 April 1964, f. 13.

8 Interview with Peter Hübler, in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc*, p. 258.

9 German federal archives (hereafter BArch), DE1-61271, Brief von Apro an Faddejew, 2 November 1961.

Indeed, the acculturation process in the international organization was neither the origin of a shift in identity among international civil servants,<sup>10</sup> nor did pre-existing international socialization at the national level alone explain their commitment to the Council.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the cultural hybridization experienced by Comecon agents reveals how the frontier between national and international levels has to be considered a transitional space and not a clear dividing line.<sup>12</sup>

Studies about the socialization of international civil servants mainly focus on the European Commission and concentrate on a very limited number of high-ranking members of its staff or of the member states' permanent representation offices.<sup>13</sup> Instead, this text focuses on middle-ranking agents of the Comecon secretariat and of the member states' permanent representation offices. Unlike their counterparts at the European Commission, all international civil servants at the Comecon were delegated for four years by their government and could be recalled at any time. This precarious status distinguishes the Comecon from its Western counterpart and explains the necessity for the staff members to constantly articulate the global interest of the Comecon with the national interests of their countries.

Two different groups of experts can be characterized among Comecon agents. According to Kurt Borch, who served as an expert in a general direction of the secretariat in the early 1970s, before he took charge and became the deputy secretary of the Council in 1986,

*these member states' representatives were [...] politicians. That is to say, they mostly defended the interests of the country, and the members of the Comecon staff, they wanted that, to strengthen economically and politically the international community of states, and this together.*<sup>14</sup>

Middle-ranking Comecon cadres did not slip into a transnational space, cutting themselves from their national roots. Numerous agents understood their duty as a paradoxical injunction. They were not allowed to act in a political way and were supposed to deliver technical expertise to the international secretariat. In doing so, they embodied the political rhetoric of socialist internationalism, which their governments publically promoted.

10 J. Lewis, The Janus Face of Brussels: Socialization and Everyday Decision Making in the European Union, in: *International Organization* 59 (2005), pp. 937-971.

11 L. Hooghe, Several Roads Lead to International Norms, but Few Via International Socialization: A Case Study of the European Commission, in: *International Organization* 59 (2005), pp. 861-898.

12 J. Beyers, Multiple Embeddedness and Socialization in Europe: the Case of Council Officials, in: *International Organization* 59 (2005), pp. 899-936.

13 D. Georgakakis and M. de Lassalle, Genèse et structure d'un capital institutionnel européen. Les très hauts fonctionnaires de la Commission européenne, in: *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 166-167 (2007), pp. 38-53; On the opportunity to compare communist international organizations with Western international organizations, see L. Crump and S. Godard, Reassessing communist international organizations: A comparative analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in relation to their Cold War competitors, in: *Contemporary European History*, published online on 15 December 2017, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/contemporary-european-history/article/reassessing-communist-international-organisations-a-comparative-analysis-of-comecon-and-the-warsaw-pact-in-relation-to-their-cold-war-competitors/1AAAA7D09D79D7D48844585BEB556390>, accessed 15 December 2017.

14 Interview with Kurt Borch, in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc*, p. 181.

Confronted with these paradoxical requirements, the East German basis organization at the Comecon in 1963 discussed the questions: “What does it mean, representing the interests of the GDR at the Comecon; how do we combine our national conception [of cooperation] with the international division of labour?”<sup>15</sup> The point was to decide whether East German members of the Comecon staff had to act as diplomats, helping enforce directives elaborated in Berlin, or should consider their specific experience in the secretariat as an original learning process, giving them some professional autonomous legitimacy. Indeed, in an attempt at being recognized as specific economic diplomats, some agents of the organization were starting to consider bilateral and multilateral cooperation as two opposite poles of international relations.<sup>16</sup> Berlin subsumed this debate under a political discourse, imposing national loyalty first. In 1971, the basis organization had a discussion on

*the use in the actual context of Lenin’s theory according to which, ‘one should not think only about its own nation, but put higher the interests of all the nations’, that is to say, the question of the higher organic unity between socialist internationalism and socialist patriotism. The organic unity of the national and international interests guiding our party was correctly put forward and it was clearly exposed that there was no confrontation between ‘national’ and ‘international’.*<sup>17</sup>

The metaphor of the living organism allowed the party to install a naturalized physiological interdependence between the national and the international interest. However, this ideal vision did not match the reality of Comecon activity. According to Kurt Gregor, deputy secretary of the Council in the early 1960s, the international civil servants were not even in the position to act as mere transmission belts for national interests. As he put it

*almost all the colleagues complain [that] they rapidly do not possess concrete knowledge about the situation of their economic branch in the GDR [...]. Consequently, they cannot really take into account the point of view of the GDR in their international duty.*<sup>18</sup>

Because the Comecon was a space of abandonment neglected by its member states’ governments, the national instrumentalization of the Council’s agents was weak, which opened new opportunities for transnational acculturation.

## 2.2. Toward a “Common Interest” of the Socialist Community

To a certain extent, the discursive use of concepts like “unite strategy”, “mutual advantage”, or even “common interest” constituted a resource, which legitimized a socialization process specific to the international organization. Putting the common interest

15 SAPMO-BArch DY3023-81, Untersuchungen des ZK der SED in den SED-GO in Moskau, 10-20 December 1963, f. 31.

16 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 28 November 1966, f. 76.

17 Ibid., 27 March 1971, f. 231.

18 BArch N2512-29, Grundsatzdokumente für die Verbesserung der Arbeit im RGW, f. 149.

forward in political discourses established the bloc as a scale at which economic projects could be developed that were considered better solutions to common issues than the ones proposed at national levels. Thus, defining the common interest became a challenge for the Comecon. Marc Abélès advocates a flexible definition, according to which the common interest is

*an ideal scheme articulated around the representation of a Europe that is yet to come [...]. It is a 'floating signifier' [...] whose signified cannot be assigned: the European interest is an 'overflow of sense'.<sup>19</sup>*

Creating a common interest made sense out of the Council's activity and defined its future duties, although it remained most influential in discourse. However, the regular repetition of this "incantation"<sup>20</sup> in the European Commission's or in Comecon's discourses imposed the idea of its actual existence. Yet the administrative secretariat of the Comecon was not the executive branch of the organization, unlike the European Commission, and the use of the concept of a common interest relied on the tolerance of the member states' governments.

Contemporary actors made significant use of the notion. In a report by an Austrian bank published in the bulletin of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies in 1989, the activity of the Comecon was described as

*being more and more complicated over time, most of all when the idea of a 'common interest of the Community' taking into account the Comecon specific composition, associating a dominant superpower and small states with different levels of development, became untenable.<sup>21</sup>*

The quotation marks might indicate that the bank found the notion of common interest in the official publications distributed by the Comecon itself. Already by 1961, the organization had mentioned its quest to find "the interest of each state and of the whole socialist camp"<sup>22</sup> in the final communiqué of its 14th session. The state and socialist camp were not presented as antagonistic, but for the first time were explicitly distinguished and juxtaposed in the same sentence.

In 1964, the representative of the GDR at the Comecon exposed the "mutual advantage" his government should seek in the Council, which would not be incompatible with each member state pursuing its own national interest.<sup>23</sup> He echoed a technical debate, which took place simultaneously in the highest organs of the Comecon on the crucial issue of the economic rationality of the people's democracies importing raw materials and energies from the USSR. According to the minutes of the Executive Committee's bureau,

19 M. Abélès, Pour une anthropologie des institutions, in: L'Homme 35 (1995) 135, pp. 80-81.

20 M. Abélès and I. Bellier, La Commission européenne. Du compromis culturel à la culture politique du compromis, in: Revue française de science politique 46 (1996) 3, p. 449.

21 Stasi Archives (BStU) MFS HAXVIII-11088, Vierzig Jahre RGW-Tätigkeit, f. 264-270.

22 SAPMO-BArch BA32965-1961, Wirtschaftsbulletin des RGW, Nr. 7, April 1961.

23 SAPMO-BArch DY3023-789, Tagungen des Exekutivkomitees des Rates, 20 July 1964.

*for one or several member states of the Comecon, the import of fuel from the Soviet Union is advantageous. However, from the point of view of the common interest of the member states of the Comecon, this import is economically inadequate. In this case and in others, where there are contradictions between the interests of one or several member states and the common interests of the member states of the Comecon, these will be resolved through negotiations on the basis of the general principles of the Comecon.*<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, the pricing system for oil and raw materials established within the Comecon was advantageous for the people's democracies in comparison to prices on the world market.<sup>25</sup> As a consequence, intra-Comecon trade of these commodities was not only disadvantageous for the Soviet Union but also for the whole bloc. Low prices did not encourage the member states to modernize their industrial infrastructure, neither did they promote the rationalization of the extensive use of raw materials and energies in their production processes. The notion of common interest here was directly opposed to the interests of the member states and this opposition presented a potential source of conflicts, or at least sub-optimal decisions, for the bloc as a whole. It promoted a new way of thinking about multilateral economic cooperation – not as a negative or zero-sum game, in which gains and losses are determined within national borders, but as a positive-sum game on the bloc scale.

Nevertheless, the common interest was never decoupled from the national interests. It was always referred to in the Council's documents as an interest by juxtaposition, as the common interest "of the member states" and not "of the Comecon". Yet its Western equivalent was not different, since

*the common interest of the Community always needs to cohabit with the national interest. The change of scale characterizing the political culture of the Commission does not imply bringing in the national levels in a common unit that would be superior to its parties.*<sup>26</sup>

The identification of a common interest and its use in public discourses reveals the construction of a complex identity among Comecon agents, who seemed able to step away from national opinions on common economic issues, in order to propose an autonomous scientific synthesis. Thus the common interest, elaborated by the international organization as a compromise, helped establish a new identity whose "living incarnation" was the international civil servants themselves.<sup>27</sup>

National interests are usually associated with the influence of nation states, described as powerful imagined communities, whereas the weak symbolic attachment created by in-

24 BArch DE1-54441, Protokoll der 13. Tagung des Büros des Exekutivkomitees des RGW, 17-19 October 1964.

25 F. Lemoine, Les prix des échanges à l'intérieur du CAEM, in: NATO-Directorate of Economic Affairs, Comecon: progress and prospects, Brussels 1977, pp. 135-176.

26 M. Abélès and I. Bellier, La Commission européenne, p. 448.

27 M. Abélès, Homo communautarius, in: Riva Kastoryano (ed.), Quelle identité pour l'Europe? Le multiculturalisme à l'épreuve, Paris 1998, p. 45.

ternational organizations would shape a very superficial “European interest”.<sup>28</sup> However, studies on the European Commission’s civil servants have shown that

*the notion of ‘serving the Community’ has a meaning, which leads to the creation or the defence of the European interest in their professional activities, even when faced with interlocutors of their own nationality.*<sup>29</sup>

This analysis raises the question, whether or not the same professional socialization can be observed at the Comecon.

The Comecon was indeed soon promoted as a valuable, integrative community. This was true even in the member states, particularly during the debate about its transformation into a supranational planning commission in the first half of the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> In 1962, the newly created East German office for cooperation with the Comecon was assigned the task to “create a united socialist economic organism in the organs of the Comecon”.<sup>31</sup> In 1964, the members of the East German basis organization at the Council accomplished their goal announcing that “progressively a united economic organism of the member states of the Comecon and later of all countries of the socialist world-system is established”.<sup>32</sup> Once again, the metaphor of a living organism embodying socialism established the organization as a real imagined community.

This image was positively reinforced by the comparison made by several actors in the Council to the Soviet model of the federation of socialist republics. The Polish government referred to a well-known federal system when in 1969 it proposed financial solidarity within the Comecon.<sup>33</sup> Potential contributors, such as the GDR, rejected this revolutionary idea according to which the organic solidarity of the member states could imply financial transfers from the wealthiest to the poorest countries. Nonetheless, it resonated in the ears of Soviet authorities. In the same year, the Soviet permanent representative at the Comecon, Alexander Sademidko, stated that

*lots of things would be done more easily if we were a real community. This should not necessarily be a community similar to the national grouping that is the USSR with a redistribution of national wealth. Especially important would be that the states cooperate with more trust. [...] The principle should be to invest where the existing conditions are the most favourable.*<sup>34</sup>

28 L. Hooghe, *Several Roads*, p. 880.

29 I. Bellier, *A Europeanized Elite? An Anthropology of European Commission Officials*, in: *Yearbook of European Studies* 14 (2000), p. 145.

30 J. van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe*, New York 1989, pp. 63-80.

31 BACh DC20-10111, Statut des Büros für wirtschaftliche und technische Zusammenarbeit mit dem Ausland, 8 October 1962.

32 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 18 April 1964, f. 2.

33 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-195, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 27 Mai 1969, f. 60.

34 SAPMO-BArch DY3023-797, Gespräch zwischen Möke und Sademidko, 9 April 1969, f. 53.

Sademidko did not call for the transformation of the Comecon into an enlarged copy of the USSR. However, he drew an explicit parallel to the Soviet model and used the term socialist “community” in a positive sense.

The geopolitical concept of a socialist community entered discourses on multilateral economic cooperation in the late 1960s as a remote ideal whose implementation remained suspect to some people’s democracies. Yet it enjoyed great success among Comecon agents. In the early 1970s, the board of the East German basis organization at the Comecon even had to refute the idea, proclaiming that the technical divisions of the Council’s secretariat were “international ministries”.<sup>35</sup> The spread of this self-perception among international civil servants illustrates the progressive evolution of the framework defining their work.

However, this evolution was never a linear movement leading to the imposition of the common interest over the various national interests.<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, Comecon agents mainly advocated the subsidiarity of bloc interests to national interests. Common interest and the notion of subsidiarity refer to two different approaches of international cooperation. The common interest is associated with a centralizing and hierarchical vision of national and international interests, while subsidiarity is associated with decentralization and a non-hierarchical combination of these interests.<sup>37</sup> The experts of the Comecon used the idea of a common interest in the latter subsidiary approach, presenting the socialist community as a complementary and non-binding framework.

Heidelore K., who worked as expert of the nuclear energy division of the Council in the 1980s, exemplified the Comecon approach when she mentioned a project concerning the decommissioning of nuclear power plants. Such proposals were only rational on a bloc scale, even though they directly impacted a strategic industry. They could be discussed because the member states were only interested in building nuclear plants and did not have plans for their decommissioning.<sup>38</sup> Thus the socialist community can be considered a space established to coordinate very specific projects, rather than an integrated economic territory where international civil servants would oppose national economic structures.

Nevertheless, some conflicts arose between certain Comecon agents and their countries, which invites questions of the mechanisms behind the recombination of socialist identities within this group.

35 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 27 March 1971, f. 297.

36 J.-M. Coicaud, *Réflexions sur les organisations internationales et la légitimité internationale*, in: *Revue internationale des sciences sociales* 4 (2001), 170, pp. 579-580.

37 M. Abélès and I. Bellier, *La Commission européenne*, pp. 449-450.

38 Interview with Heidelore K., in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc*, p. 248.

### 3. Conflicts as Elements of the Reconfiguration of Socialist Identities at the Comecon

#### 3.1. Between a Well-Spread Culture of Dispute and Borderline Cases

Unlike most studies on the Comecon, which concentrate on the outcomes of international cooperation, the following analysis – based on original interviews with experts who worked for Comecon between the 1960s and the 1980s and documents from the Comecon and from the archives of the East German basis organization at the Council – focuses on the practice of negotiation at the Comecon. It reveals the influence on the international staff's socialization of the intertwining of their professional and personal life within the organization.

Conflicts between Comecon staff members and representatives of their countries allow for monitoring the transnational acculturation of the former, since they can be seen as a tool of socialization:

*If every reaction among men is socialisation, of course conflict must count as such, since it is one of the most intense reactions [...]. It is in reality the way to remove the dualism and to arrive at some form of unity.<sup>39</sup>*

Conflict paradoxically reinforces the cohesion of a society. It regularly arose between international civil servants working for the Council's secretariat and representatives of the member states employed in the permanent representations or enrolled as experts in national delegations participating in Comecon meetings. These conflicts reveal the challenges and limits of the reconfiguration of professional and personal identities in the process of shaping international economic cooperation. They attest to the culture of dispute, understood as fruitful discussion between agents representing diverging interests during moments of confrontation. The critical nature of social interaction during conflicts and the arbitration between two principles of legitimacy – national and international – makes it possible to analyse to what extent international civil servants of the Comecon willingly adopted new roles and perceptions about themselves and their duty.

When conflicts arose between an East German staff member of the Comecon secretariat and representatives of the GDR participating in a negotiation at the Council, the expectations Berlin had placed in "its" international civil servant collapsed. The Comecon expert no longer acted as the ambassador of the GDR's point of view, but rather he or she promoted solutions developed within the secretariat and considered rational at the bloc level.

This culture of dispute shows – regardless of the modalities of conflict resolution – how the defence of the common interest could appear in the discourse of international civil servants. Even the Polish and the East German permanent representatives considered diverging opinions helpful and in 1965 advocated for the freedom of the Council's sec-

39 Georg Simmel, *The sociology of conflict*. 1, in: *American Journal of Sociology* 9 (1903), p. 491.

retariat to address controversial topics. According to the Polish permanent representative Piotr Jaroszewicz,

*we do not delegate our comrades in the secretariat so that they represent there the interests of our country, but rather so that they analyse objectively the issues of our cooperation. It is the only way to understand the duties of the secretariat, otherwise, it cannot work at all.*<sup>40</sup>

His East German counterpart supported this analysis, saying that “the secretary and its deputies must encourage an autonomous work in the general directions and support initiatives of the staff. New questions and new projects must be presented to the member states without fear, even when the opinions of the member states on these topics are not known in advance, or even not taken into account.”<sup>41</sup>

High-level national representatives not only mentioned, but most importantly normalized the possibility of conflicts between them and the Council’s secretariat. They understood that a strict monitoring of multilateral cooperation by the member states’ governments could lead to economically sub-optimal situations, which would not only prevent the international organization from fulfilling its duties in the common interest of its members as a whole but also prevent decisions coinciding with their respective interests.

Conflicts arising between an international civil servant and the authorities of his country constitute a tool by which the reconfiguration of personal and professional identities at the Comecon may be measured. Conflicts form the only situations where the intellectual shaping of the rationality and the legitimacy of secretariat’s staff members’ actions can be questioned. The focalization on these particular conflicts reduces the number of sources available. Nevertheless, mission reports, debates of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany basis organization, and Stasi documents monitoring the international meetings describe several cases of conflict. Despite the limited number of data, the trivial character of the situations described sustains the hypothesis that these examples are the tip of the iceberg of conflict within the organization, which is not limited to its East German agents.

Three different forms of conflicts can be distinguished: the accusation of international incompetency, the passive resistance against respective member states’ attempts at taking control of the international cooperation, and finally, frontal opposition. In these three cases, conflict occurs when the balance of power within the international organization shifts. Conflicts provide information on the reverse of the “normal” situation when consensus was achieved at the Comecon.

In the first case, conflict arose between a Comecon staff member blaming his compatriots delegated by their government for not developing professional practices of international negotiation that conform to the specific norms defined by the secretariat. In other words, a Comecon expert put forward his knowledge of the informal definition of the

40 BArch DE1-51766, Bericht über die Tätigkeit des Sekretariats, 25 Mai 1965.

41 Ibid.

behaviour of a “good” international civil servant to delegitimize his compatriots working as “submarines” for the mere defence of national interest.<sup>42</sup>

In 1970 Josef Prohaska, head of the general direction for mechanical engineering of the secretariat and president of the basis organization of the Czechoslovak members of the Comecon staff, criticized the decision of his government to appoint Karel Polaček as chairman of the standing commission for mechanical engineering.<sup>43</sup> Polaček had already held this position between 1956 and 1967, before he returned to Prague and became the leader of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. Prohaska wrote a letter to the Czechoslovak government in which he conveyed his opinion that the appointment of Polaček was an “unfortunate choice” and tried to delay his confirmation. According to him, Polaček did not follow the evolution of the work of the commission and most importantly did not possess the appropriate network of influence in Czechoslovakia to enforce the implementation of Comecon agreements.

Thus, above all Prohaska criticized the missed opportunity to select a technically qualified expert who would have been willing and politically capable of promoting international economic cooperation. A personal conflict between him and Polaček, resulting from different opinions during the 1968 crisis in Czechoslovakia, might also partly explain this accusation of international incompetency. Polaček seems to have been removed from the Czechoslovak staff at the Comecon and from the circles of power in Prague because of his opposition to Šik’s policy. On the contrary, Prohaska, like most of the Czechoslovak agents at the Comecon, tended to support economic reforms and was relatively protected after 1968 by his position in the international organization. He judged Polaček in the light of his own expertise, acquired as head of a general direction of the secretariat, and viewed his compatriot as not possessing the skills necessary to master his task in the very specific Comecon space.

Albina D. experienced a similar situation, although criticism was reversed in her case. As she was working as an expert of the Council’s secretariat in the 1980s, she faced criticism from Soviet representatives. They blamed her for being too deeply involved in the international community of the secretariat and for defending the common interest more than the Soviet national interest. Albina D., who was born in the USSR, had married an East German before settling in the GDR. She was delegated by the East German government to work for the Council’s secretariat in 1986 and refused the notion of defending any particular national interest in her work: “Here at the Comecon, I was not a Russian. [...] I did not stand for the GDR, we were all Comecon and we had to defend common goals.”<sup>44</sup> Because of her internationalist stance, Soviet representatives threatened her. She called them “narrow-minded Russians”, who considered her situation an “intellectual disaster”, and in return accused them of international incompetency. In her opinion, their practice of international economic cooperation could at best be suboptimal, since they

42 I. Bellier, *A Europeanized Elite?*, p. 143.

43 BArch DC20-19980, Ständige Kommission Maschinenbau, f. 228-233.

44 Interview with Albina D., in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc*, p. 140.

were insufficiently aware of the specific culture developed by the secretariat. Albina D. made experts standing for national interests responsible for the failure of the Comecon. Thus, she revealed her own appropriation of an original transnational socialization based on the idea that international civil servants should, above all, promote the common interest before taking into account strategic economic calculations of the member states that delegated them in the first place.

Passive resistance against the national governments' attempts at defining Comecon cooperation as a mere coordination of national bargaining represents a second form of conflict within the organization. An East German expert illustrated this type of conflict in his report on a session of the standing commission for construction in 1962:

*During all the discussions, two Soviet comrades argued very concretely against the position of Nikulin [leader of the Soviet delegation], in this case comrade Lukinov, representative of the Council's secretariat, and comrade Dotshilin, expert of the USSR in the general direction for construction at the secretariat. In the evening following this discussion, comrade Dotshilin went to the head of the general direction for construction of the Comecon, comrade Lammert, and told him: "please make me responsible for another section. I cannot cope with comrade Nikulin anymore. This morning, we agreed on a decision within the working group. Now Nikulin formulates this decision in the exact opposite way".<sup>45</sup>*

Here, a Soviet agent of the international organization's secretariat tried to achieve a compromise between all national delegations when he faced opposition, or at least an evident unwillingness to cooperate, from the delegation of his country. Nonetheless, Dotshilin refused to support Nikulin's position and preferred asking his supervisor, an East German, to discharge him from the case. Aware of his inability to convince representatives of his own country to engage in a compromise based on the common interest of the whole bloc, Dotshilin escaped conflict and refused to participate any longer in the negotiation. His strategy reveals how agents managed to avoid having to choose between two supposedly alternative and exclusive loyalties: to their government or to the international organization.

The last form of conflict nevertheless suggests the possibility of a borderline transnational acculturation among certain agents of the organization. In some cases, experts engaged in open conflict with their country, putting the common interest above national interests. The civil servants who adopted such a radical attitude did not consider their position as brokers between national and international levels as an opportunity to develop a dual loyalty. The examples of W.L. and Gerhard Kosel illustrate this confrontational approach.

45 BStU, MfS AIM2169-87, IM "Hammer", Teil II, Band 1, Information über die Tagung der ständigen Kommission Bauwesen 19-24 November 1962, f. 225-230.

W.L. started his career at the Comecon in 1962 as an expert of the secretariat.<sup>46</sup> After going back to the GDR in the 1970s, he returned to the Council in 1981 where he held a very high-ranking position in the secretariat in which he faced difficulties defending both the autonomy of the Council and the interests of the GDR. The Stasi monitored his activity and criticized him for, according to Berlin's opinion, regularly putting his loyalty to the international organization first. In an article he wrote at the end of 1982, W.L. publicly exposed the main problems of the Comecon, urged for its strengthening, and criticized the deliberate non-cooperative attitude of several member states. Bypassing the national monitoring of public discourses about the organization, W.L. submitted his article to the GDR authorities and to the secretary of the Council at the same time without waiting for the authorization of the former. As a consequence, he was summoned to an interview with the East German permanent representative in Moscow who had to deliver the message

*that L. does not publically teach ministers or other high-ranking officials from the GDR during sessions and meetings of Comecon executive organs and that he does not dictate them what they have to think or to decide, but rather that he accepts the opinion of the GDR and above all, that he tries to impose it in performing his duty. He must give up his 'internationalist role', which he overemphasises too much, and feel bound to the GDR.*<sup>47</sup>

Although extremely rare, the case of L. is interesting for different reasons. It shows how violent conflicts could be between international civil servants and their own country as well as highlights how confrontation could be counterproductive, even though L. kept his position in the Council. Since he knowingly failed to comply with the national interest of his country, L. risked losing his ability to convince Berlin to participate in multilateral agreements that could have paved the way to the increased international cooperation he was advocating. Thus, keeping a dual social integration at the national and at international levels was a prerequisite for the effectiveness of the international civil servants' work at the Comecon.

Gerhard Kosel represents another rare case of a specific international socialization. Coming from Germany, Kosel lived in exile in the USSR from 1932 to 1954. He returned to his homeland, which had become the GDR, and became chairman of the standing commission for construction of the Comecon in 1958, a position he held until 1972. In 1987, at the age of 78, Kosel discussed recent evolutions of the international organization with agents of the secretariat in Moscow, who had mentioned their disappointment at the reforms weakening the Council and described the "dreadful atmosphere" prevailing in the international administration.<sup>48</sup> He offered to intervene with the East German Ministry in order to prevent the complete dissolution of the commission. Fifteen years

46 According to the BStU's right to privacy rule, applying to individuals, who have been spied on by the Stasi, we have anonymized this case.

47 BStU, MfS HAXVIII-2855, 25 January 1983, f. 21-22.

48 BStU, MfS AIM6945-88, IM "Thomas Mann", 19 November 1987, f. 278-279.

after leaving service in the organization, Kosel still cared about the Comecon. In July 1992, he wrote on the first page of his personal copy of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary's special edition of the journal of the standing commission for construction (published in 1978):

*In 19... the commission, under the chairmanship of W. Jünker, was dissolved. This dissolution was mainly organized at the instigation of the GDR – the traitor G. Mittag. During its last session in Berlin, all the leaders of the national delegations agreed that the commission should continue its work since it really benefited all the member states. Nevertheless, the dissolution was decided under pressure coming from Mittag. Even Jünker had a great fear of reprisals. The dissolution of the standing commission for construction, [was] an element of the dissolution of the USSR, of the GDR.<sup>49</sup>*

Even though it came one year after the dissolution of the Comecon, this violent statement was rooted in the discussion Kosel initiated in 1987. In this particular case, he directly opposed two conflicting interests: the common interest of the whole socialist camp and the interest of the GDR – Kosel himself siding with the international organization. W.L. and Kosel, both convinced communists who had lived a long time in the USSR before working for the Comecon, were in many ways exceptional cases. However, they can be considered the exceptions that prove the statement that conflict, in more or less violent and open forms, was everywhere at the Comecon. Conflict was the result of the frequent discrepancy between national interests, which the member states' governments asked "their" international civil servants to promote, and the common interest, which these experts shaped at the Comecon level.

### 3.2. Transnational Identity as the Practice of a Dual Loyalty

None of the conflicts analysed above led to a clear break between Comecon agents and their country. Historicizing the transnational acculturation process of the Council's agents in the long term helps explain why "there is not intrinsic contradiction between national and international norms".<sup>50</sup> The international civil servants of the Comecon did not display an instrumental loyalty to the organization, which would have revealed how they had mastered the rules of the multilateral game without actually committing to it and neither did they shed the defence of their national interests.<sup>51</sup> The common experience at the Comecon allowed them to develop a specific ethos.<sup>52</sup>

According to Jan Beyers, international civil servants do not shift their self-definition from national agents to transnational experts, but instead learn how to master multiple roles.<sup>53</sup>

49 BArch N2504-249, Tagebücher 6.-12. Tagung der ständigen Kommission Bauwesen, 1978.

50 L. Hooghe, *Several Roads*, p. 888.

51 J. Checkel, *International Institutions*, pp. 804-805.

52 D. Georgakakis, Comment les institutions (européennes) socialisent. Quelques hypothèses sur les fondements sociaux de la fabrique des euro-fonctionnaires, in: H. Michel and C. Robert (eds.), *La fabrique des "Européens"*, pp. 144-158.

53 J. Beyers, *Multiple Embeddedness*, p. 904.

In 1964, the basis organization of the East German experts at the Council laid out a non-hierarchical articulation of the national and international interests, stating that

*the defence of the interests of the GDR is the first partisan duty of all the comrades of our basis organisation. This does not imply a contradiction with the duties of the comrades as international civil servants of the Comecon, since defending the interests of the GDR is in the interest of the whole socialist states' community.*<sup>54</sup>

Even though the basis organization gave a very political answer to the question of the compatibility of different systems of social and professional entanglements, it highlights the concern of the international civil servants to publically debate about the tension between two principles of legitimacy in which they were embedded.

The socialization promoting compromise prevailed in the international organization because it was the most rational attitude to adopt for the three different types of actors. It was a professional necessity for each agent of the organization, an economic challenge for the member states, and an important issue for the international staff as a collective actor. Every day the experts of the Comecon were confronted with “a duty to find solutions”,<sup>55</sup> if they did not want to be individually side-lined by the secretariat or to be summoned to return to their country by their government. According to Günter H., who worked as an East German expert in the commission for the peaceful use of atomic energy and defined himself as a diplomat with an atypical career, people who started as nationalists “were immediately blown away”.<sup>56</sup>

The governments of the member states were also fully aware of the necessity to search for international compromises at the Comecon. International negotiations had a political and financial cost for the people's democracies, which were expecting economic gains in return. Thus, the member states encouraged the transnational empowerment of the agents they delegated to work for the Comecon. According to Kurt Borch,

*people naturally promoted the interests of their country in the secretariat [...] but always while keeping in mind 'I can carry through my point of view only if it takes into account the interests of the others in the first place' and then, it was our job to tell in return the institutions back home, which had delegated us, 'the idea that you have here, that we have, it does not work [...] we have to find a compromise.'*<sup>57</sup>

National experts delegated at the Comecon became brokers advocating the interest of compromises, which they then had to implement. This analysis unveils the social and cognitive rationale that the international civil servants and their national authorities had to take into account. However, the veto right that every partner kept on global solutions

54 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 18 April 1964, f. 13.

55 J. Lewis, *The Janus Face of Brussels*, p. 939.

56 Interview with Günter H., in: S. Godard, *Construire le bloc*, p. 190.

57 Interview with Kurt Borch, in: *Ibid.*, p. 180.

and the attempts by the governments of the people's democracies at always pushing their interests regularly ended up in empty multilateral agreements.<sup>58</sup>

The actual implementation of these agreements was left to bilateral negotiations, over which the Comecon experts had no power. Nevertheless, the Council remained one of the rare places in the socialist world, where experts could develop a transnational identity based on their professional experience.<sup>59</sup> Analysing the socialization of the European Commission civil servants, Jan Beyers stated that

*through European experiences – domestic actors get a better sense of other member states' interests, the salience of specific issues for the other actors, and the willingness to compromise. This not only has consequences for individual actor opportunities; it also leads to an esprit de corps and mutual understanding.*<sup>60</sup>

Unlike the economic or foreign trade experts of the national embassies in Moscow, the agents of the Comecon developed a professional identity oriented toward the quest for multilateral agreements, which they neither put above their national identity nor did the former replace the latter. This “cognitive blurring”<sup>61</sup> established the Council as a specific place for the transmutation of its staff's professional and personal identities at the international level. As a group, the international civil servants of the Comecon cultivated the originality of their acculturation, which became a resource mobilized in advocating their empowerment in front of the member state's governments.<sup>62</sup> Summing up its activity in the end of 1966, the East German basis organization at the Comecon explained that

*when working towards the implementation of our ideas, we have to take into account that the international work is complicated and requires, on top of fighting spirit, a good quantity of patience (Geduld).*<sup>63</sup>

Meaning both patience and tolerance, usage of the German term *Geduld*, shows how the Council's staff members promoted the difficulty and the originality of their work. They engaged the national governments in changing the way they thought about international relations in the socialist world in order to understand and to value their acculturation. Thus grass roots analysis of the conflicting internationalization of economic debates in the socialist world allows for describing the Comecon as interstitial space<sup>64</sup> in which

58 André Steiner, The Comecon. An Example of Failed Economic Integration, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 39 (2013), pp. 240-258.

59 L. Stanek, Socialist Networks and the Internationalization of Building Culture after 1945, in: *ABE Journal* 6 (2014).

60 J. Beyers, Multiple Embeddedness, p. 908.

61 J. Lewis, The Janus Face of Brussels, p. 967.

62 S. Godard, Le CAEM et la construction d'une diplomatie économique parallèle dans l'Europe socialiste (1962–1989), in: V. Genin, M. Osmond and T. Raineau (eds.), *Reinventer la diplomatie. Sociabilités, réseaux et pratiques diplomatiques en Europe depuis 1919*, Bruxelles 2016, pp. 171-187.

63 SAPMO-BArch DY30-IVA2-20-193, SED Grundorganisation RGW, 28 November 1966, f. 106.

64 P.-Y. Saunier, Circulations, connexions et espaces transnationaux, in: *Genèses* 57 (2004) 4, p. 117.

experts could simultaneously handle multiple roles between national and international levels, thus shaping the bloc as a new professional frame of reference.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article illustrates how Comecon agents remained embedded in power relations tying them to national interests. They discussed their status as national ambassadors and the relationship of that status with their duty as collaborators of an international organization. In this vivid debate, the experts of the Comecon refused any strict assignment to a single role and the simplistic alternative of choosing between national and international allegiance.

The progressive shaping *by* the international organization *for* its member states of the concept of the common interest of the socialist community initiated conflicts, which revealed how international civil servants perceived and used the transnational identity promoted at the Council. Conflicts existed at the Comecon and were even common, but they always found a resolution. Indeed, the staff members involved had learnt how to deal with multiple roles in the elaboration of compromises, intertwining the national and the international spheres instead of opposing them.

This analysis of individual conflicts and of the dual loyalty of the international civil servants proves how the transnational approach does not describe a new scale of action, situated above the nations, but rather it is a method for analysing in the same movement the interconnected relations beyond the national levels and between local, national, and international levels.<sup>65</sup>

65 P. Clavin, *Defining Transnationalism*, in: *Contemporary European History* 14 (2005) 4, pp. 421-439.

# **The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – A Restricted Cold War Actor**

**Suvi Kansikas**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Der Artikel behandelt eine Frage, die in der bisherigen Literatur über die Geschichte des RGW vernachlässigt wurde: Inwiefern betrieb diese Internationale Organisation eine eigene Außen(handels)politik? Tatsächlich gab es vor allem Anfang der 1970er Jahre im RGW Versuche, die Politik seiner Mitgliedsstaaten gegenüber der „nichtsozialistischen Welt“, insbesondere der Europäischen Gemeinschaft, zu koordinieren, was aber letztlich erfolglos blieb. Der Anstoß dazu kam von den Fortschritten der EG, die ab 1970 ihre gemeinsame Handelspolitik umsetzen wollte. Dem RGW ging es nicht darum, die Strukturen der EG zu kopieren, sondern den durch die EG-Politik behinderten Zugang seiner Mitglieder zum gemeinsamen Markt zu erleichtern. Der Aufsatz macht deutlich, dass die sozialistischen Staaten den RGW in erster Linie als Instrument zur Durchsetzung ihrer eigenen Ziele und Interessen ansahen. Die Debatte im RGW über die Politik gegenüber der EG zeigt auch, wie begrenzt die Macht der Sowjetunion im so genannten Ostblock war. Nach den Statuten des RGW konnten Entscheidungen nur einstimmig gefasst werden. Deshalb waren die kleineren Staaten in der Lage, Versuche der UdSSR, den RGW von einer zwischenstaatlichen in eine supranationale Organisation umzuwandeln, zu blockieren. Andererseits bewirkte das Einstimmigkeitsprinzip auch, dass der RGW nicht ohne Zustimmung der Sowjetunion agieren konnte. Außerdem war die sowjetische Wirtschaftsmacht für die kleineren RGW-Staaten in möglichen Verhandlungen mit der EG sehr wertvoll. Vor allem deshalb akzeptierten die anderen RGW-Mitgliedsstaaten die führende Rolle der Sowjetunion in der EG-Politik.

This article analyses one aspect of CMEA history, which has been neglected in prior literature: its policy-making in the field of external trade politics. The CMEA attempted – unsuccessfully – to coordinate a common policy vis-à-vis the outside world, particularly the European Community, at the turn of the 1970s. The impetus for this came from the progress achieved by the EC, which was planning to implement a Common Commercial Policy starting from 1970. The CMEA did not endeavour to copy EC development, but to assist its members' access to the Common Market that would be hindered once the EC policy was implemented. Based on the findings of this study, the CMEA should be seen as an instrument that all members used to advance their particular aims and interests. The CMEA debate on its policy towards the EC shows the limits of Soviet power within the organisation and towards its smaller allies: due to the organization's decision-making principles, and more importantly, because the member states could resist it, the USSR was not able to override the intergovernmental CMEA. Nonetheless, due to the unanimity rule, the CMEA could not act without Soviet consent. Importantly, Soviet economic power was valuable for the small allies in possible negotiations with the EC. Therefore, to secure Soviet participation, the East Europeans accepted the Soviet leading role in the EC policymaking.

## 1. Introduction

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) sought to open relations with the European Community (EC)<sup>1</sup> during the *détente* period. In the summer of 1974, the organization authorized its Secretary Nikolai Fadeev to officially contact – albeit without granting formal recognition – the EC Commission. The next February, the two organizations held their first official meeting in Moscow. Nonetheless, it took the two countries more than a decade to finally establish official relations, which were created through a joint declaration in June 1988.<sup>2</sup>

In much of the Cold War literature, the CMEA is rarely mentioned. Apart from these contacts detailed above, the CMEA has been absent from the grand narrative.<sup>3</sup> In theory, therefore, the CMEA did not have an important part to play in the high-level conflict that was the Cold War. Three reasons can be given for the neglect: Firstly, the CMEA neither had a mechanism for foreign policy-making, nor the ambition to formulate one.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, foreign policy issues in the socialist bloc belonged to the authority of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>5</sup> And thirdly, in the East-West struggle the CMEA was significantly isolated;

1 The European Economic Community (EEC) was created in 1957, and in 1967, it was merged together with the European Coal and Steel Community and EURATOM to become the European Communities (EC).

2 T. Yamamoto, *Détente or Integration? EC Response to Soviet Policy Change towards the Common Market, 1970-75*, in: *Cold War History* 7 (2007) 1, p. 87.

3 Integrating the study of the Cold War and European integration history is a recent phenomenon. (P.N. Ludlow (ed.), *European integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965–1973*, Abingdon 2007). For instance Vojtech Mastny refers to the Cold War as a Warsaw Pact-NATO rivalry, mentioning neither the EC nor the CMEA (V. Mastny, *The New History of Cold War Alliances* in: *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4 (2002) 2, pp. 55–84).

4 A. Bloed, *The external relations of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance*, Dordrecht 1988, pp. 15-17.

5 In her recent book, Laurien Crump analyses the Warsaw Pact as a political rather than merely a military organi-

prior to Finland opening relations in 1973, not a single Western country had granted it formal recognition.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, foreign policy did not belong to CMEA competences. It was established to coordinate its members' trade flows and it did not envision a commonly agreed external policy or supranational decision-making. Its charter, adopted in 1959 and revised in 1962, did not contain any conditions according to which the member states could or should grant authority to the organization in this field.<sup>7</sup> However, as this article shows, the CMEA was dragged into Cold War struggles that it could not win because of its limited foreign policy capacity.

This chapter argues that the member states, though pursuing their own political and economic goals, pushed the CMEA first into negotiations on a common foreign trade policy, and consequently, into talks with the EC. The member states wanted to elevate the organization to the same international standing as its West European opponent, even though the competences of the two were different. The CMEA members needed a common external policy to counter the growing strength and competence in international – and particularly European – politics that the EC aspired to. As long as the socialist countries had an economic organization that the EC refused to acknowledge, they could continue to ignore the authority of the EC.

CMEA history is discussed in this article from a point of view that prior literature has neglected to analyse by analysing its two simultaneous roles as the mediator of socialist intra-bloc relations as well as of its relations with the non-socialist world. In the 1960s, already almost one-third of CMEA members' trade was conducted with capitalist countries, yet most previous studies on the CMEA regard it as an organization for intra-bloc cooperation that did not discuss foreign policy issues.<sup>8</sup> However, during the Cold War foreign trade was in fact high politics; the need to formulate a common foreign trade policy was part of the endeavour to maintain bloc cohesion in the face of a threat from the West. Principally, the CMEA negotiations on a common foreign trade policy included trade with all non-members. However, as the EC was the impetus that brought the CMEA to debate its external policies, a common policy vis-à-vis the EC was discussed in particular within the organization.

zation (L. Crump, *The Warsaw Pact reconsidered. International relations in Eastern Europe, 1955-69*, Abingdon 2015).

6 It should, however, be noted that the CMEA was represented at several international organizations whose membership was not limited to either one of the blocs in the East-West rivalry, and where the Council could therefore act more easily. The CMEA was granted observer status at the UN-ECOSOC in 1971, and had de facto membership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (S Godard, *Construire le « bloc » par l'économie. Configuration des territoires et des identités socialistes au Conseil d'Aide Économique Mutuelle (CAEM), 1949–1989*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Geneva, 2014, p. 278).

7 Bloed, *The External Relations*, p. 8.

8 E.g. R. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars: Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade*, Princeton 1996; A. Steiner, *The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance – An Example of Failed Economic Integration?* in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 39 (2013), pp. 240–258.

How did the CMEA make decisions in the field of foreign policy? What was its foreign policy jurisdiction? How much room did it have to manoeuvre in the Cold War bloc setting? This study answers these questions through an analysis of CMEA discussions on a counterstrategy vis-à-vis the EC in its effort to open relations in the early 1970s. The chapter illustrates the CMEA's limits of action in this regard, restricted as it was by its weak machinery as well as by the control from the political leadership. The chapter shows that the CMEA could not act against the wishes of the Soviet leadership, but it also shows that the CMEA policy-making process did not go the way the Soviet leadership wanted.

The chapter is constructed on two lines of analysis. On the one hand, it analyses the decision-making process through which the CMEA was enabled to take steps towards the EC. On the other hand, it analyses the issue of political control over the CMEA, and by definition, the Soviet role in the organization.<sup>9</sup> By foreign policy this article refers to co-ordinated political actions and policies targeted at the outside world, the non-members of the CMEA. Therefore, the issue of socialist intra-bloc economic relations falls outside of this analysis.

The debate on an external policy took place primarily within the Executive Committee, which had national representation from each member state. The chapter refers to materials of different CMEA bodies, as well as the reports of behind-the-scenes activities as noted by the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) representative to the CMEA. The CMEA received its primary source of instruction and guidance through the Soviet representative whose task it was to bring to the member states' attention the guidelines of the Soviet leadership – the Central Committee and the Politburo.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. CMEA and EC International Authority in Comparison

Established on a Romanian-Soviet initiative in January 1949 by the Soviet Union and five East European people's democracies, the CMEA was joined by Albania<sup>11</sup> later in the year and by the GDR in 1950. In the next decades it became a globally operating organization as it was joined by Mongolia in 1962, Cuba in 1972, and Vietnam in 1978. Aside from the enlargement, the CMEA authority in external affairs was initially very limited, as its main purpose and activity dealt with intra-bloc trade harmonization. There

9 There is in fact quite a limited amount of literature on the Soviet Union in the CMEA. Mikhail Lipkin and Wolfgang Mueller analyse the Soviet position on West European integration (M. Lipkin, *Sovetskii Sojuz i evropeiskaya integratsiya: seredina 1940kh-seredina 1969kh godov*, Moscow 2011; W. Mueller, *Recognition in Return for Détente? Brezhnev, the EEC, and the Moscow Treaty with West Germany, 1970–1973*, in: *Journal of Cold War Studies* 13 (2011) 4, pp. 79–100), whereas Marie Lavigne deals with the economics of intra-bloc commerce (M. Lavigne, *The Soviet Union inside Comecon*, in: *Soviet Studies* 35 (1983) 2, pp. 135–153. See also Erik Radisch's article in this special issue for Soviet discussions on the role and purpose of the CMEA).

10 Materials on the foreign policy-making of the CPSU from the Brezhnev years remain largely classified in Moscow archives.

11 In the early 1960s, Albania de facto withdrew from cooperation with the Soviet bloc.

was no multilaterally agreed goal of a common market, supranational decision-making, or a common foreign trade policy. This should not be taken to imply that individual member states did not have further-reaching endeavours than what could be attained in bloc-level negotiations. Quite the contrary in fact, and the major disputes within the organization touched upon exactly the question: How and how far can the members push their national priorities into the common agenda without risking a deadlock in the negotiations.<sup>12</sup>

The CMEA was an intergovernmental body, and until a revision in 1967, all decisions had to be made in unanimity. The amendment allowed countries to opt out of common projects, but this still did not overhaul unanimous voting; in common projects, there would be no majority rule voting, but consensus was needed to reach a decision. Accordingly, the Council did not have the power to force any decisions on its reluctant member, nor a supranational body similar to the EC Commission. Therefore it lacked jurisdiction independent of the member states' control. The only option for the Council or its secretary to act in external affairs was once there was consent from all members, which could be granted either in the Executive Committee or in the yearly session.<sup>13</sup>

The Soviet Union, even as the most powerful member of the CMEA, also lacked the means to intervene on the multilateral arena as its powers were restricted due to the organization's rules.<sup>14</sup> The only thing its CMEA representative could do was to put pressure on the allies in bilateral discussions and during multilateral negotiations by referring to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) policy line.

As the CMEA sought to open contacts with the EC, it was constantly reminded that the two were not equal counterparts. Whereas the EC's founding treaty set a goal of forming a supranational external policy, the CMEA had nothing of the sort. Towards the end of the 1960s, the EC started asserting itself into a new role in international affairs on several fronts: it introduced the Common Agricultural Policy in 1962; established the Common Market ahead of the planned schedule in 1965; and was about to assume authority over its members' trade with the Common Commercial Policy (CCP). Moreover in 1970, its members established a foreign policy coordination mechanism, the European Political Cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

In the political rivalry that the Cold War was, the two organizations were pitched against one another at the turn of the 1970s. The EC had set the deadline of 1970 for the adop-

12 In the early 1960s, the USSR pushed for supranational decision-making in the CMEA, causing the organization's first internal rift. E. Dragomir, Romania's participation in the Agricultural Conference in Moscow, 2–3 February 1960, in: *Cold War History* 13 (2013) 3, pp. 331–351. For a thorough discussion on the national-international interest dichotomy, see Simon Godard's article in this special issue.

13 Bloed, *The external relations*, p. 27.

14 There is an exciting new trend in literature on the socialist bloc that emphasizes the allies' leverage on their hegemon, the USSR (See for instance, L. Crump-Gabreëls and S. Godard, *Reassessing Communist International Organisations. A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in Relation to their Cold War Competitors*, in: *Contemporary European History* [forthcoming]. Unpublished manuscript, in possession of the author).

15 L. Ferrari, *Sometimes Speaking with a Single Voice. The European Community as an International Actor, 1969–1979*. Frankfurt am Main 2016.

tion of its CCP, which meant that the Commission would gain the sole right to initiate trade agreements. It is therefore not inconsequential that the CMEA, whose members refused to grant recognition to the EC, began to talk about a counter-strategy directed at the EC at this exact time. A common foreign trade policy was necessary mainly because the CMEA members needed to protect their growing trade with West European partners against the backdrop of the EC Commission taking authority in this field from its members. Also, for the Soviet Union, this was the only way to keep its allies from unilaterally breaching their policy of non-recognition.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. CMEA's First Effort at a Common External Trade Policy

The CMEA decided to negotiate an integration programme at the end of the 1960s. Such a major platform of economic cooperation needed to be carefully designed. Moreover, as it was to outline the bloc's economic policy for the next two decades, the member states needed to have a clear vision of what their domestic as well as the global economy would be like in a longer timeframe. During the negotiations, the member states realized that the process bore with it an opportunity to use the programme to counterbalance the growing prestige of the EC and, importantly, to protect their own national trade interests. Those interests, as is typical with any international organization, differed from country to country and the negotiations turned into a showcase of national lobbying and intra-bloc dispute.

As it turned out, as part of the negotiations on the new platform, which came to be called the Comprehensive Programme, the CMEA in fact sought to formulate its first common external trade policy. This goal was never reached within the Comprehensive Programme and in the end the fact that there had ever been efforts to conclude such a policy was undisclosed.

The issue of CMEA's trade relations with the non-socialist world was taken up at the Executive Committee in October 1970 at Hungary's request. Hungary wanted the CMEA to define its relations with the outside world and formulate a foreign policy. Hungary's request touched upon a crucial problem; since the CMEA members were trading not just within the bloc but more and more with the outside world, they needed to assess how the global economy would develop in the next 20 years and understand what this would mean for the CMEA and its members.<sup>17</sup>

16 S. Kansikas, Acknowledging economic realities. The CMEA policy change vis-à-vis the European Community, 1970–3, in: *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 21 (2014) 2, pp. 311–328.

17 Bundesarchiv/Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR [SAPMO], DY 30/3455, Information über die 50. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (Moskau, 15.-18.12.1970). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro. No date given. Importantly, several CMEA members were participants in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, membership of which bore a responsibility to raise the level of trade with other members. L.A. Haus, *Globalizing the GATT: The Soviet Union's Successor States, Eastern Europe, and the International Trading System*, Washington 1992.

Based on Hungary's proposal, the Executive Committee ordered the Secretariat to prepare an initial analysis of the legal and organizational questions that needed to be solved in case the CMEA would start formulating a common trade policy. The issue would then need to be integrated into the Comprehensive Programme. As it defined CMEA policies for the near future, it also had to address the organization's relations with the outside world.<sup>18</sup>

In the spring of 1971, the member states had agreed on almost all parts of the Comprehensive Programme. However, the talks on the external relations were still nowhere near their conclusion. This issue was stalling due to differences in perspective; the Soviet Union backed by the GDR and Bulgaria wanted to seal their policy of non-recognition of the EC, while the export-oriented Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia wanted the CMEA to open relations with the EC. Romania for its part was against any common policy as it did not want to see its hands tied in the matter.<sup>19</sup>

At the April Executive Committee meeting, the Soviet representative tried one last time to push for a common line, but its allies stuck to their grounds. After no compromise was achieved, the external policy was left entirely outside the official and public text of the Comprehensive Programme. The Executive Committee, however, was able to decide on an unofficial policy paper, which contained parts that dealt with policy towards third countries and their international organizations.<sup>20</sup>

The unofficial policy paper was a compromise as well. The text was almost 20 pages long and, as an appendix to the session protocol, had a binding character. It included a list of goals that the member states hoped to achieve and six areas in which they were to coordinate their actions. The goals included, for example, that the capitalist countries would drop all their discriminatory policies and grant most-favoured-nation (MFN) status to the CMEA countries or that they would continue bilateral trade relations with CMEA members. The six areas in which coordination of national policies would be divided into were: a) trade, economic, currency, financial, and credit policy; b) planning of foreign trade policy; c) science and technology; d) participation in other international organizations; e) raw material imports; and f) technology transfers.<sup>21</sup>

The policy paper did not contain any concrete guidelines as to how the envisioned goals could be achieved. In this sense it was not an action plan, but more of a wish list or instructions on how the CMEA members could establish a coordination mechanism for foreign trade ties. The CMEA was still far away from reaching a coherent foreign policy – this was acknowledged by the Executive Committee, which asked the Secretariat to

18 Ibid.

19 S. Kansikas, *Room to Manoeuvre? National interests and Coalition-Building in the CMEA, 1969-1974*, in: S. Autio-Sarasmo and K. Miklóssy (eds.), *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, Abingdon 2011, pp. 193–209.

20 SAPMO, DY 30/3457, Information über die 52. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (Moskau, 27.-29.4.1971). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 6.5.1971.

21 SAPMO, DY 20/22104, Anlage 3a zum Protokoll der XXV. Tagung des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe: Maßnahmen zur Koordinierung des Auftretens der interessierten Mitgliedsländer des RGW auf dem Gebiet der ökonomischen und wissenschaftlichen-technischen Politik gegenüber Drittländer und deren Internationalen Gruppierungen.

prepare a working paper on a common trade policy to be submitted for discussion within one year.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Council was tasked with preparing the first ever policy paper on the organization's external trade relations.

#### 4. Political Control over the CMEA

In October 1971, Hungarian authorities pledged again that the Executive Committee would discuss the organization's external relations, this time in particular with the EC;<sup>23</sup> the issue was placed on the agenda of the October 1971 Executive Committee meeting. Hungary's representative Péter Vályi underlined the set of complex foreign political, legal, material, and financial questions that needed to be solved concerning the topic. There were two questions the Executive Committee then needed to tackle: whether it had to start discussing a common foreign policy for the organization and, in particular, whether it should open direct contacts with the EC.<sup>24</sup>

Within a few months after the adoption of the Comprehensive Programme, external policy became the centre of attention on the CMEA agenda and this time the EC was specified as the prime object of CMEA external relations. Hungary's appeal and the Executive Committee discussion on it once more showed that many CMEA members regarded relations with the EC first and foremost as a political question. The decision would not be based on economic needs, but on political principles.

The first CMEA Executive Committee meeting of 1972 convened in Moscow in January. Since the previous one in October, the CMEA work had gained additional political flavour. So far relations with the EC had been discussed more as a technical issue and concerned how contacts could be made; who decided on who was to make contact; and who decided on how to proceed. Now the CMEA had to decide whether a political decision was necessary to settle on how to contact other international economic groupings, the EC in particular. Towards this end, the Secretariat had prepared a position paper regarding contacts with the EC – this was in fact a high-level foreign policy document of the CMEA.<sup>25</sup>

The organization was formulating a policy that dealt with its external relations, which in general could be regarded as a policy area that should be left to the Warsaw Pact to manage. As the CMEA seriously began to reconsider its relations with the EC, the foreign policy aspect of the discussion could no longer be sidestepped. The proposals of Hungary did not politicize the issue – they just made the foreign policy implications more evident.

22 SAPMO, DY 30/3457, Information über die 52. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (Moskau, 27.-29.4.1971). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 6.5.1971.

23 SAPMO, DC 20/12410, Laslo Papp to CMEA vice-Secretary Angelov-Todorov, 12.10.1971. Appendix: Die Auswirkungen des geplanten Ausbaus der EWG auf den Aussenhandel der Mitgliedsländer des RGW.

24 SAPMO, DY 30/3459, Information über die 55. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (Moskau 12.-14.10.1971). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 20.10.1971.

25 SAPMO, DC 20/22190, Protokoll der sechsfundfingsten Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. 18-20 January 1972, Moscow.

In its January meeting, the Executive Committee was not able to overcome this obstacle of its competences and the negotiations, in fact, reached a stalemate. This underlined the fact that the CMEA – an intergovernmental organization created primarily to handle trade flows between the socialist countries – was not empowered to make such a decision. It worked on the principle of consensus, whereby differences in view needed to be settled in order to reach a decision.

A means to break the impasse was ultimately found on the political level, at the Warsaw Pact. In the opening speech of the Political Consultative Committee (PCC) meeting in January 1972, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev underlined that the CMEA attitude towards the EC was not only an economic question but also a crucial political one. Accordingly, the socialist community needed to come up with a joint position.<sup>26</sup> An unofficial meeting between the party leaders sealed the timetable upon which the Council was to conclude its work;<sup>27</sup> the Executive Committee was ordered to finalize its EC policy – which it had negotiated for over a year – within three months time. The policy would then be discussed at the PCC.<sup>28</sup>

## 5. The CMEA in Paralysis

As was decreed by the bloc's highest leadership, the Executive Committee prepared to adopt a commonly accepted policy at its April meeting. The Secretariat had compiled a summary of different national positions. The Hungarian government had outlined the juridical issues related to possible contacts between the organizations in its policy paper. From a legal perspective, a CMEA-EC connection was possible, but it had to be considered as a political issue and decided by the competent political bodies. The Council session had the sole right to authenticate agreements, but in operative questions the Executive Committee could also make decisions. Hungary also pointed out that concrete trade negotiations would not be possible, as the CMEA had no mechanism for sharing power with the member states. On the other hand, Hungary argued, neither did the EC countries have sovereignty over their economic policy; they needed Commission authority to sign trade agreements with CMEA countries. This being the case, any agreement between the CMEA and the EC could only be a framework agreement and

26 Speech by the Head of the Soviet Delegation at the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, January 25, 1972 (<http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic97b2.html?lng=en&id=18122&navinfo=14465>). All internet pages were accessed on February 28, 2017.

27 Report to the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Council of Ministers on the Meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee in Prague, January 25-26, 1972 (<http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic8f1e.html?lng=en&id=18106&navinfo=14465>).

28 Minutes of Meeting of the HSWP Politburo February 1, 1972. Report on the Meeting of the Warsaw Treaty Political Consultative Committee in Prague, January 25-26, 1972. (<http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic79fd.html?lng=en&id=18105&navinfo=14465>).

only supplement bilateral intergovernmental agreements, which would be the main way to conduct trade.<sup>29</sup>

To push for a decision on the matter, the Soviet representative Mikhail Lesechko underscored that the CMEA needed to take the CPSU Politburo policy line as its reference point. This included five points: 1) relations with the EC were an important political question that could not be solved without considering the foreign political line of the entire bloc; 2) the issue had to be concluded in a way that would consolidate the socialist community; 3) they had to strengthen the coordination of their measures vis-à-vis the EC; 4) separate actions would bring harm and weaken their positions; and 5) no initiatives that could lead to official recognition of the EC were to follow.<sup>30</sup>

In the end, the April meeting was unable to reach a decision and it had to resort to convening an extraordinary one. The problem was – as many times before in CMEA history<sup>31</sup> – Romania, which objected to a common policy that would seal its hands.<sup>32</sup> CMEA rules would have allowed Romania to stay out of the common plans. Furthermore, there was no goal of a common market that would have necessitated its participation. However, the foreign policy aspect made it imperative for the Soviet Union to keep Romania on board, lest it would show cracks in bloc cohesion.

In mid-May 1972, the Soviet leadership intervened once again in CMEA affairs. At the Central Committee plenum, Brezhnev, referring to the Soviet leading role, informed his interlocutors that the CPSU Politburo had begun to work on a policy for the CMEA, which it would submit for discussion.<sup>33</sup> The newfound confidence Soviet representative Lesechko had shown at the previous Executive Committee meeting, it seems, was due to the support he was receiving from the CPSU leadership.

The CPSU Politburo drafted a policy document, entitled “Ground Rules for the Actions of CMEA Countries towards the EEC”. It was circulated in the members’ state and party institutions prior to the May 1972 Executive Committee meeting. The document contained nothing really new. Much of what was stated had already been discussed and decided in previous meetings of the Executive Committee and the Warsaw Pact PCC as well as in the secret part of the Comprehensive Programme. To ultimately conclude the

29 SAPMO, DY 30/3461, Information über die 57. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des RGW (Moskau, 18.-20.4.1972). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 26.4.1972. Appendix B: Kurzfassungen der offiziellen Standpunkte der VRB, UVR, VRP, SRR und CSSR zu Fragen der Beziehungen zwischen RGW und EWG.

30 Ibid. Appendix A: Kurzfassung der Ausführungen des Vertreters der UdSSR im Exekutivkomitee, Genossen Lesechko, auf der 57. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des RGW zu Fragen der Beziehungen zwischen RGW und EWG.

31 See for example, Dragomir, Romania’s participation in the Agricultural Conference in Moscow 2013.

32 SAPMO DC 20/22191, Protokoll der siebenundfünfzigsten Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe. 18.-20. April 1972, Moskau.

33 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii (Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, henceforth RGANI), f. 2, o. 3, d. 265, ll. 20-22. Protokol zasedaniya Plenuma TsK KPSS ot 19 maya 1972 g. Doklad L.I. Brezhneva na plenumu TsK KPSS 19 maya 1972.

policy-making problems of the CMEA, the Soviet leadership proposed a revision to the statute that would give the organization more powers to make binding decisions.<sup>34</sup> As it turned out, once again the Executive Committee could not push through the adoption of the policy paper, and consequently, a decision on it could not be made at the Moscow session in July 1972. The EC policy was in fact removed from the session agenda altogether. The rapid change of plans was most likely related to a fear of failing to find unity on the issue. There was a possibility that Romania would still not agree to the common position, which would only have demonstrated CMEA weakness and incapability. The Soviet-bloc behind-the-scenes disputes would have been brought into the open and the outside world would have seen the major cracks in the façade of bloc cohesion.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. The CPSU takes Action

After the failure to reach an agreement on the CMEA level, the CPSU Politburo set out to direct the organization towards a decision on its relations with the EC. It wanted to make sure the organization would follow strict preconditions for a possible rapprochement with the EC. These CPSU rules were clarified for the allies at the first Executive Committee meeting of 1973, convened in Moscow on 23–26 January. The Soviet representative Lesechko came to the meeting with a task from the CPSU Politburo, namely, to inform his colleagues that the Soviet leadership had taken the lead in CMEA decision-making.<sup>36</sup> This move shows how much value the CPSU Politburo put in reaching a desirable conclusion to the CMEA talks. Never before had the Soviet representative come to the negotiation tables with such an ultimatum from his leaders, who usually relied on more tacit pressure in bilateral and multilateral discussions prior to the actual meeting. The Politburo had, according to Lesechko's presentation, designed a new action plan for the Council. According to the plan, the CMEA Secretariat should first get in contact informally with the EC to discuss concrete possibilities of establishing further informal contacts between the organizations. CMEA Secretary Fadeev was to find out to what extent the EC was willing to negotiate. Depending on the results of these probes, that is, after finding out whether the EC actually wanted to talk, the CMEA could then establish formal contact with the EC on the appropriate level.<sup>37</sup>

The Executive Committee set out to execute this plan first by asking the Secretariat to prepare a memorandum based on the Politburo goals, which would carry the title "Proposals on possible manners, forms and contents of CMEA contacts with the EEC". It

34 SAPMO, DC 20/16863, Gerhard Weiss to Erich Honecker, Berlin, 19.5.1972. Appendix: Grundlinie des weiteren Vorgehens der RGW-Länder gegenüber der EWG, 18.5.1972.

35 S. Kansikas, *Socialist countries face the European Community. Soviet-bloc controversies over East-West trade*, Frankfurt am Main 2014, pp. 127–128.

36 SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2J 4473, Information über die 61. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des RGW (Moscow 23.-26.1.1973). Weiss to SED Politbüro, Berlin 2.2.1973.

37 Ibid.

needed to contain the political goals of the EC policy and it would be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting in April. Meanwhile, the Standing Commission on Foreign Trade was asked to create methods that would enable the CMEA to realize the economic aspects of the policy.<sup>38</sup>

Before it could go to the negotiating table with its powerful counterpart, the CMEA needed to strengthen its international authority and standing. To address the problem of CMEA authority in external affairs, the Executive Committee asked the Secretariat to formulate a plan that would define policy coordination and revise the competences of the CMEA organs.<sup>39</sup> This modification dealt with more than just practicalities. Although the formulation of the decision was vague, this was an effort to reform the CMEA decision-making procedure.

A new version of the CMEA policy towards the EC compiled by the Secretariat was sent to the leaders of the member states for final approval after it had been accepted at the April 1973 Executive Committee meeting. It outlined how and on what terms the CMEA could approach the EC. It was 10 pages long and gave an eight-principle answer to questions such as what kind of preparatory measures, both institutional and legal, the CMEA should take in case contacts with the EC were to materialize.<sup>40</sup> It proposed a very slow process with many preconditions, such as reciprocity from the EC side.<sup>41</sup> As it could not thwart the process of opening relations with the EC, the Soviet Politburo strived for the second best option: it sought to control the manner and timetable of those contacts.

A constant feature throughout the policy negotiations had been the need to change CMEA working mechanisms to redefine its international jurisdiction and raise its prestige to match that of the EC. In May 1973, the CMEA achieved some success in gaining international recognition when Finland signed a cooperation agreement, thus becoming the first capitalist country to recognize it as an international entity.

From the point of view of CMEA decision-makers, the agreement was proof that the CMEA had authority in international affairs. It was, in fact, able to conclude an agreement on behalf of its member states after they had given their consent for CMEA Secretary Fadeev to sign the agreement.<sup>42</sup> The EC took note of the relevance of the Finnish agreement to CMEA attempts at raising its international status. As a British Foreign Office memorandum pointed out, this agreement showed that the CMEA was able to form

38 SAPMO, DC 20/22195, Protokoll der einundsechzigsten Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe, 23.-26. Januar 1973, Moskau.

39 SAPMO, DC 20/22196, Beschluss des Exekutivkomitees des RGW vom 21. April 1973 zum Punkt XXIII der Tagesordnung der 62. Sitzung.

40 SAPMO, DY 30/14003, F. Hamouz (CMEA) to E. Honecker (SED Politbüro), 26.4.1973. Appendix: Vorschläge über mögliche Art, Formen und Inhalt der Kontakte des RGW zur EWG.

41 SAPMO, DY 30/13861, Information über die 62. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des RGW (Moskau, 17.-21.4.1973). Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 24.4.1973.

42 Trend Harry, Framework for COMECON-Finnish Economic Co-operation. 10.12.1973. OSA/Radio Free Europe Background Reports, <http://catalog.osaarchivum.org/catalog/osa:680d4e18-de51-48e9-b1ae-3e4d6e67b9bb>.

one side of a joint commission (article 2); to engage in future negotiations if necessary (article 7); and to conclude and ratify an agreement (article 8).<sup>43</sup>

## 7. Division of Labour in the Socialist Bloc

In mid-April 1974, two years after the Warsaw Pact PCC meeting that established the policy on how the CMEA would contact the EC, it met again. Brezhnev once more criticized the CMEA for inefficiency and slowness. He complained that the member states had not reached the desired pace in implementing the Comprehensive Programme. Brezhnev demanded that a new decision-making principle – which was, in fact, already being implemented – had to be enforced. Practical steps towards making contact with the EC were to be decided at the highest level of bloc decision-making. Towards this end, Brezhnev suggested that a summit of party and state leaders be organized during the next CMEA session planned to meet in Sofia, Bulgaria during July. The CMEA for its part would be left in charge of the practicalities related to economic management, such as drafting the agreement between the organizations.<sup>44</sup>

In June 1974, just weeks before the next CMEA session was scheduled to take place, the CMEA representatives were informed that the CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government would take a bigger role in CMEA affairs. The Soviet leadership was planning to bring to the Sofia session a motion that some of the CMEA decision-making, including relations with international economic organizations, should be shifted to the highest decision-making level. A high-level summit, decreed by the PCC meeting, would most likely take place in the summer of 1975.<sup>45</sup> The Sofia session was to formalize the division of labour that had already taken place. The CMEA and its organs were responsible for operational tasks whereas the decision-making power on foreign policy issues was to remain with the political leadership in the socialist bloc: the party and state leaders.

During the gathering in Sofia, the prime ministers held talks on contact between the CMEA and the EC. As the PCC had decreed, a high-level consultation – with party leaders and prime ministers – was needed to decide on a rapprochement with the EC. The discussions on the convening of such a summit were led by Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, who presented the Soviet view on the timetable and agenda of the summit.<sup>46</sup> The Soviet leadership was leading the way towards a political decision on relations with the EC and the CMEA role was reduced to executing orders from above.

43 British National Archive/Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 28/2194, Economic cooperation agreement between Finland and the CMEA. J.L. Bullard (FCO) to Sir T. Brimelow, 1.6.1973.

44 Speech by the Head of Soviet Delegation at the Meeting of the Warsaw Treaty's Political Consultative Committee, April 17-18, 1974, in Warsaw. (<http://php.isn.ethz.ch/lory1.ethz.ch/collections/colltopicd733.html?lng=en&id=29639&navinfo=14465>).

45 SAPMO, DC 20/17122, Information über eine Konsultation mit Genosse Lesechko zum Auftreten auf der 28. Ratstagung in Sofia. Gerhard Weiss to SED Politbüro, 10.6.1974.

46 SAPMO, DC 20/11304, Protokoll über die Beratung der Regierungschefs der Mitgliedsländer des RWG. Sofia 20. Juni 1974. No date and no author.

The CMEA session, too, took a stand regarding its capability to make such approaches; it decided to change the organization's charter and convention on legal capacity, privileges, and immunities.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, the CMEA “a) shall be empowered to make recommendations and decisions in the person of its organs acting within the terms of their reference; b) may conclude international agreements with member-countries of the Council and with other countries and international organisations”.<sup>48</sup>

This institutional change was most likely related to developments in CMEA-EC relations<sup>49</sup> and perhaps necessitated by the agreement signed with Finland the previous spring. The CMEA had for some time been discussing ways to improve its decision-making powers and international authority. The CPSU in particular had been criticizing the ineffectiveness of CMEA decision-making and cooperation. For instance, at the Central Committee plenum in May 1973, Brezhnev had made remarks to this end.<sup>50</sup> In the Crimea meeting the following July, Brezhnev had called for the restructuring of CMEA mechanisms.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the EC had made it clear that it did not consider the CMEA to be on the same footing as itself. If it wanted to provide an incentive for the EC to negotiate with it, the CMEA had to increase its decision-making powers.

The pivotal decision of the Council's Sofia session was to approach the EC on the level the EC had set as a prerequisite. The establishment of contact between the organizations would take place only at the level of the EC Commission and the CMEA Secretariat, which was a lower level than what the CMEA had been hoping for. The session authorized the Council Secretariat to take the practical steps towards establishing contacts with the EC Commission, and the first step was to invite the chair of the EC Commission to Moscow.<sup>52</sup>

Many studies have noted that the CMEA's decision on rapprochement with the EC was made at the Sofia session.<sup>53</sup> However, none of them have been able to reveal any details of the discussions. As behind-the-scenes discussions show, the initial CMEA position was that the EC demand of communicating to the Commission should be discarded. The CPSU Politburo had set a prerequisite of its own in the matter, namely, that concrete questions would be discussed in high-level, intergovernmental contacts. In their view, the EC Commission was less prestigious than an institution with government representation and politically a more problematic one. The CMEA was unwilling to give recognition to the EC Commission because the EC had not indicated clearly that it was willing to start

47 SAPMO, DC 20/22107, Protokoll der XXVIII. Tagung des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe, Sofia 1974.

48 Charter of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, Chapter III.

49 G. Zieger, The relationship between CMEA and EC, in: *Intereconomics* 13 (1978) 9–10, p. 218. The statute was amended on 21.6.1974, but it was in force only from 13.2.1976 onwards.

50 RGANI, f. 2, o. 3, d. 292, ll. 7-71. *Aprel'skii Plenum Tsentral'nogo Komiteta KPSS-a.* (1973). *O mezhdunarodnom deiatel'nosti TsK KPSS po osushchesvleniu reshenii XXIV s'ezda partii.* L.I. Brezhnev.

51 SAPMO, DY 30/11850, Niederschrift über das Treffen der Führer der kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien sozialistischer Länder auf der Krim (30./31. Juli 1973). No author, no date.

52 SAPMO, DC 20/11304, Information über die 28. Tagung des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (17.-21.6.1974 Sofia); Information über Verlauf der Diskussion 'Kontakte RGW-EWG'. No date and no author.

53 See for instance, Yamamoto, *Détente or Integration?*, pp. 75-94; 86.

negotiations.<sup>54</sup> After long deliberations, the session agreed to continue contacts on the level suggested by the EC, that is, with the Commission.<sup>55</sup> This was in clear contrast to the Politburo line and, as such, a major defeat for it. Equally importantly, the decision demonstrates that in the EC-CMEA relationship, the former possessed leverage to get its preconditions met, while the latter did not have the means to influence its Western counterpart.

Thus, in the summer of 1974, the CMEA finally came to a decision on how to establish its first contact with the EC. The member states had agreed on the procedure, timetable, and level of contact. To do this, they had to engage in endless debates for over three years. During this time it became necessary for the CMEA to revise its statute to allow the organization to act on behalf of its member states. To be able to continue its quest to establish working relations with the EC and to secure its member states' trade interests, the CMEA had to give *de facto* recognition to the EC supranational decision-making organ, the Commission. Moreover, the division of labour between the intergovernmental CMEA and the political leadership of the bloc, the PCC, had been defined.

On 16 September 1974, the Secretary of the CMEA, Nikolai Fadeev, sent a letter to President of the Commission François-Xavier Ortoli requesting that the Commission begin preliminary talks with the CMEA.<sup>56</sup> The first meeting between officials from both organizations took place in Moscow on 2–4 February 1975. On the EC side, the delegation was led by Director General for Foreign Relations Edmund Wellenstein and from the CMEA side, Director of the Foreign Trade Department Viacheslav Moissenko. The CMEA's goal was to start talks on the future visit of Ortoli and Moissenko put forward a proposal for the agenda and timetable of the Fadeev-Ortoli meeting. Possible questions for discussion included improvement of conditions for trade; possibilities to develop economic and scientific-technical cooperation; and the exchange of information.<sup>57</sup>

The meeting turned out to be a disappointment. No progress could be made through negotiations as the positions of the two sides were wide apart, not to mention the differences in each representative's ability to speak on behalf of their organization's member states. The EC Commission insisted that before the Fadeev-Ortoli meeting could take place, a precondition had to be met: the CMEA would need to be on the same international footing as the EC. That is, to be able to start negotiations for an agreement, the CMEA needed to have an institutional equivalent of the Commission.<sup>58</sup>

The reason for the absence of diplomatic relations between the organizations was political. Neither party wanted to give up their positions. The EC had agreed to the establishment of a Community--based foreign trade policy in the Treaty of Rome. The CMEA

54 Fadeev had approached the Danish presidency of the EC in August 1973, but did not receive an encouraging answer to his overture. SAPMO, DY 30/14003, Information über die 64. Sitzung des Exekutivkomitees des RGW (Moscow 25.-28.9.1973) Weiss to SED Politbüro, Berlin, 2.10.1973.

55 SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2J 5393, Kurt Hager to SED Politbüro, Berlin 23.7.1974.

56 Yamamoto, *Détente or Integration?*, p. 86.

57 SAPMO, DY 30/IV.2/2.036/59, Tschanter to Verner (Arbeitsgruppe RGW), 13.2.1975.

58 Yamamoto, *Détente or Integration?*, p. 87.

had engaged in an effort to formulate a foreign policy but subsequently surrendered that right to the political leadership of the bloc.

## 8. Conclusions

As economic integration on both sides of the Iron Curtain progressed, the EC and the CMEA had to deal with the issue of how they would organize their trade relations with non-members, and with one another. At the core of the CMEA's need to formulate a policy towards the EC was its member states' gradual admission of their dependence on the West European market. Its EC policy became a means to try to evade the subsequent detrimental effect of this dependency on their ideology and system. The policy was detached from the Comprehensive Programme negotiations as a separate field of policy-making, because – as the member states themselves acknowledged – it was a high-level foreign policy issue that the organization was not equipped or even allowed to resolve. In this sense, the CMEA functioned according to its statutes.

To be able to act on the international arena, which was brought on by the necessity to adapt to global changes, the CMEA would have had to have a well-functioning decision-making mechanism. This situation presented the Soviet leadership with the means to try to tighten control within the CMEA – an issue that had been vigorously opposed by Romania in the early 1960s when the Soviet Union had previously attempted this. The Soviet Union seems to have investigated ways to enhance the CMEA policy-making process through a reorganization of its mechanisms. The materials used for this study nevertheless show that the question was not included on the agenda of the Executive Committee. The only organizational decision that the CMEA took in the period under analysis was to amend its charter in 1974, which was done to enable the organization to engage in negotiations and consequently to sign international agreements with third parties. No major revision of CMEA powers was pushed through at the time even though Brezhnev repeatedly criticized the organization's inability to reach decisions because of excessive room for national manoeuvring.

The negotiations on the Comprehensive Programme and particularly on the policy towards the EC saw the rise of national lobbies to make the CMEA stand up for its members' trade interests and to oppose unwanted developments. National manoeuvring within the CMEA was made possible by the weak decision-making structure of the organization. The amendment of the Charter in 1967 to include the "interested-party principle",<sup>59</sup> to allow member states to opt out of a CMEA plan that they did not want to participate in, did not apply in this particular policy. The question at hand – a common policy towards the EC – was a high-level foreign policy issue. There could be no choice for the members not to participate. In the face of the Cold War, the socialist bloc had

59 Bloed, *The external Relations*, pp. 27-32.

to be unified. Unanimity was the principle adhered to in the face of the threat coming from the West.

Any proposal to change the CMEA working mechanisms would demonstrate the paradox that CMEA cooperation entailed for the Soviet allies. If they needed to let the Soviet Union have more control, could they simultaneously affect Soviet policy choices? Based on the findings of this study, the CMEA should be seen as an instrument that all members used to advance their particular aims and interests. It acted as a multilateral forum of debate and a channel for airing even radical views. It can no longer be labelled simply as a Soviet weapon to control its bloc. In fact, the CPSU was not able to overpower the inter-governmental CMEA due to the organization's decision-making principles and, more importantly, because the member states were not willing to let that happen. Therefore, the Soviet leadership failed in its two goals: to bind the member states into the policy of non-recognition of the EC through the Comprehensive Programme at the initial stage and to forbid the CMEA to establish contacts with the supranational EC Commission at the later stage.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the CMEA could not act without Soviet consent. Firstly, this was due to the unanimity rule, that is, the rapprochement with EC had to be accepted by all members. Secondly, there was a consensus of accepting the guiding role of the Soviet Union that was forcefully imposed on the allies after the Prague Spring through the Brezhnev Doctrine.<sup>60</sup> However, in this case, when estimating Soviet power over its allies there is one very rational reason as to why the East European states allowed the Soviet Union to lead the way towards a common position. They needed the Soviet Union to protect their economic interest vis-à-vis the EC. For the smaller CMEA states, the possibility that the Soviet leaders would only negotiate for their own relations with the EC was a particularly threatening one. This would leave them in a difficult situation. Their interests would no longer be protected and they would have to face the negotiators in Brussels alone. If they negotiated with the EC on an individual basis, each would be going up against a far superior economic power. With the Soviet Union on their side in the negotiations, they could rely on the main leverage that the socialist countries had, which was the vast raw material reserves of the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, the two organizations settled for an unofficial compromise and East-West trade continued without any institutional arrangement between the two. Official relations were established almost 15 years after the first meeting in 1988.

60 For a thorough discussion of the doctrine in Soviet-East European relations, see: M. Kramer, The Kremlin, The Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine. (<https://archive.org/details/TheKremlinThePragueSpringandtheBrezhnevDoctrinebyMarkKramer2009-09-01>, 2009).

# **The Grain-Meat Complex as a Source of International Integration of CMEA Countries**

**Christian Gerlach**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Der Aufsatz untersucht Getreideeinfuhren osteuropäischer RGW-Staaten in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren und ihre Rolle für die zunehmende globale Verflechtung dieser Staaten. Getreide diente in großen Mengen als Viehfutter. Ein hoher und steigender Fleischkonsum galt in diesen sozialistischen Staaten als Zeichen des Wohlstands und innenpolitische Notwendigkeit. Ungefähr ab 1972 schritten die sozialistischen Länder zu massiven Getreideimporten aus kapitalistischen Ländern, zeitweilig vor allem aus den USA. Dies trug in mehreren Volkswirtschaften Osteuropas stark zu einer hohen Auslandsverschuldung bei. Bemühungen zur Erhöhung der einheimischen Getreideproduktion stießen zunehmend an ihre Grenzen und wurden teilweise auch nur halbherzig verfolgt. Innerhalb des RGW herrschte auf dem Getreide-Fleisch-Sektor eine Politik bedingter Autarkie bei begrenzter, meist bilateraler Kooperation. Nach 1990 ging der Fleischkonsum in den bis dahin sozialistischen Ländern Osteuropas drastisch zurück und erholte sich nur langsam oder nie ganz. Globale Integration – auch von kommunistischen Regierungen verfolgt – führte in Osteuropa somit nur begrenzt zu höherem Konsum. Der Aufsatz beschreibt die Motivation wichtiger Interessengruppen in diesem Prozess und Zusammenhänge zwischen globaler und regionaler Verflechtung.

The article examines grain imports in CMEA countries in the 1970s and 1980s and how these imports affected these countries' growing global entanglements. In CMEA states, grain was largely used as animal feed. High and increasing levels of meat consumption were considered a sign of prosperity and a necessity for political stability. From roughly 1972, socialist countries began importing massive amounts of grain from capitalist countries, initially mainly the United States. These imports contributed substantially to some socialist countries' growing foreign debt. Efforts to increase domestic grain production were often pursued half-heartedly and only

had moderate success. Inside the CMEA, a de-facto policy of self-sufficiency, augmented by limited mostly bilateral cooperation, existed for the meat-grain sector. After 1990, meat consumption in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe fell sharply, and since that time it has only recovered slowly or not at all. Global integration – also pursued by Communist governments – thus led to only a limited increase in consumption. This essay describes the motivation of important stakeholders and the connection between global and regional integration.

## 1. Introduction

On 8 July 1972 the United States (US) government announced a three-year agreement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) concerning grain purchases, which President Richard Nixon modestly called “the largest long-term commercial grain purchase agreement ever made between two countries”.<sup>1</sup> In 1972, actual Soviet purchases abroad amounted to 28 million tons of grain, mainly wheat (19 million) and corn. Among those 20 million tons came from the US and cost over USD 1 billion.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, the volume of border-crossing grain trade globally was about 100 million tons per year.

This move marked a watershed. In 1972, the USSR turned from a net exporter to a major net importer of grain. As Soviet grain exports to other Eastern European countries dried out, their governments pursued a similar course of expanded consumption. Thus the Soviet change had severe implications for Eastern European countries as well, e.g. large grain imports from capitalist countries and a foreign debt problem. All of this was not about citizens eating more bread, *kasha*, or *müsli* – it reflected programmes of growing meat and dairy consumption. Grains are used as feed for livestock.

Some analysts swiftly identified this policy change as part of a larger turn. Although economic East-West relations had never completely ceased and occasional grain purchases (by the USSR) or more consistent ones (by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Poland, or Czechoslovakia) had been part of them, the events seemed to indicate a “reintegration [...] into the world market” of the PRC, Eastern Europe, and the USSR, inter alia given the doubling and trebling trade volumes with capitalist countries in 1972–1975.<sup>3</sup> International entanglement remained much lower than for comparable capitalist countries. However, after the economic reforms of the 1960s had betrayed hopes, socialist countries embarked on an import-led growth strategy based on imports of technology.<sup>4</sup>

In some regards, grain imports were a special case within this broader picture. Foodstuffs are, after all, raw materials. Furthermore, although the share of trade with capitalist

1 Press Statement, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Nixon files, NSC, Box 330, Grain Shipping.

2 Alfred C. Toepfer, „Marktbericht“, 14 September, 16 November and 14 December 1972, Alfred Toepfer-Archiv, Hamburg (ATA).

3 E. Mandel, *Die Krise: Weltwirtschaft 1974–1986*, Hamburg 1987, p. 157, see *ibid.*, pp. 128-137, 157-178.

4 J. van Brabant, *Economic Integration in Eastern Europe*, New York 1989, p. 84; I. Berend, *An Economic History of Twentieth Century Europe*, Cambridge UK 2006, pp. 183-185.

countries as compared to all foreign trade of socialist states was rising,<sup>5</sup> the latter's share of world exports dropped from 6.1 per cent in 1970 to 4.1 per cent in 1980 and 3.9 per cent in 1988.<sup>6</sup> However, in terms of food imports, the global share of socialist countries increased from 8.7 per cent in 1970 to 10.4 per cent in 1980, slightly dropping to 10.1 per cent in 1985. In the second half of the 1970s the level was around 12 per cent.<sup>7</sup> The west-east trade in food was more intense than in other economic sectors and continued to grow.

This article re-examines this process of increasing integration of socialist countries into the capitalist economy from 1972 to 1989. In particular, this contribution discusses actors and their policy objectives in this globalization process, inasmuch as the grain-meat complex is concerned. This paper describes how national policies and economic cooperation among socialist states and their entanglements with capitalist economies related as well as what full integration into the capitalist world economy after 1990 meant for the grain-meat economy and for consumers.

The views expressed are that of a scholar interested in global history and the food economy and not those of an Eastern Europeanist.<sup>8</sup> This paper draws from an array of archival sources and published material, in part reflecting outside views of Eastern Europe. This means that this article can only reconstruct certain macroeconomic developments and high-level decision-making. Neither the Cold War context nor its impact on the global grain economy are the center of this article.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Eastern European Consumerism and Meat

Since, at the latest, Joseph Stalin's times, Soviet leadership has strived to provide the country's citizens modestly with consumer goods. This policy was intensified under Nikita Khrushchev, whose idea it was to generate abundance for the Soviet people, prominently through increased grain production, thereby winning the competition of the systems against capitalism in the field of consumerism during peaceful coexistence.<sup>10</sup> After he was ousted, a meeting of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)

5 J. Borrego, *Metanational Capitalist Accumulation: Reintegration of Socialist States* and A. Abonyi, *Eastern Europe's Reintegration*, both in: C. Chase-Dunn, (ed.), *Socialist States in the World-System*, Beverly Hills et al. 1982, pp. 111-143, 181-201, esp. 182-183.

6 I. Salgo, *Between Two Fires? Foreign Economic Relations of Eastern Europe: Past, Present and Future(s)*, in: M. Lavigne, (ed.), *The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Global Economy*, Cambridge UK 1992, p. 209.

7 M. Lavigne, *International Political Economy and Socialism*, Cambridge 1991, p. 270; Abonyi, *Eastern Europe's Reintegration*, p. 183.

8 I am indebted to Jonas Flury for providing me with documents from the German Federal Archive (BAB) and the Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR (SAPMO) in Berlin about CMEA meetings.

9 C. Gerlach, *Das US-amerikanisch-sowjetische Getreidegeschäft 1972*, in: Bernd Greiner et al., (eds.), *Ökonomie im Kalten Krieg*, Hamburg 2010, pp. 480-500; C. Gerlach, *Die Welternährungskrise 1972 bis 1975*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 31 (2005) 4, pp. 546-585.

10 S. Merl, *Von Chruschtschows Konsumkonzeption zur Politik des 'Little Deal' unter Breschnew*, in: Greiner et al., *Ökonomie*, pp. 279-310, esp. p. 285; S. Merl, *Konsum in der Sowjetunion: Elemente der Systemstabilisierung*, in:

Central Committee in March 1965 made major corrections to agricultural policies to build up a stronger livestock industry, combined with higher procurement prices and less restrictions on private livestock raising. Instead of a source of capital accumulation, agriculture became a subsidized sector.<sup>11</sup>

In 1969/70, the Central Committee adopted a scheme for greatly increasing the consumption of meat, dairy, and eggs that was reflected in the new five-year plan for 1971–1975. Meat production was to rise by 23 per cent within five years and increased along these lines already in 1970. This plan was actually slightly overfulfilled.<sup>12</sup> Other Eastern European governments followed a similar course, which was reinforced after the food riots that helped bring down the Gomulka government in Poland in December 1970, a country where meat consumption was generally of great political importance.<sup>13</sup> To provide more meat to an urbanizing populace served as a sign of modest wealth that would ensure popular support in modern industrial socialist societies and responded to demands from the population. Meat consumption symbolized a certain status. In 1963, Khrushchev used the national average annual meat consumption as a yardstick for different levels of wealth among the countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).<sup>14</sup> Politically speaking, in 1970 there was no way to sink below any previously achieved standard of living.

Higher meat and dairy production was largely to be based on domestic grain and feeds. In fact, Soviet grain production grew substantially from 130.3 million tons per year on average during 1961–1965 to 167.6 million tons (1966–1970), 181.6 million tons (1971–1975), and 205 million tons (1976–1980).<sup>15</sup> Most of this was not eaten by humans. Soviet citizens directly consumed 44 million tons of grain in 1945 as opposed to 46 million in 1973 when 117 million tons of grain were fed to animals while only 65 million had been in 1965 (and much less in 1945).<sup>16</sup> Cereal production in the other Eastern European CMEA countries rose from 56 million tons in 1970 to 81.2 million in 1978, increasing by about one-third from 1970–1975. However, this increase was followed by stagnation. Yugoslavia showed a similar pattern while the PRC and North Korea were able to raise grain production further.<sup>17</sup>

Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 58, 2007, pp. 519–536; see also N. Chernyoshova, *Soviet Consumerism in the Brezhnev Era*, London and New York 2013.

11 A. Nove, *An Economic History of the USSR 1917–1991*, London et al. 1992, pp. 378–379.

12 With reference to a Central Committee Plenum on July 2–3, 1970: U.S. Agricultural Attaché Moscow, “Agricultural Situation Report”, 11 February 1971, NARA, RG 166, Ag.Att. and Counselor Reports, Box 33, SS USSR 1971 DR; idem, “USSR: Agricultural Situation”, 19 January 1976, Box 63, SS USSR 76 DR.

13 J. Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft: Der Schwarzmarkt in Polen 1944–1989*, Göttingen 2013, esp. p. 201.

14 „Notizen über die Beratung beim Genossen Chruschtschow – 20.2.1963”, 21 February 1963, SAPMO (Berlin) DY 30/3420, p. 32.

15 Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 379. Due to the peculiarities of Soviet grain harvest calculations, one may have doubts about these figures in absolute terms; relative trends, however, appear telling.

16 “USSR: Agricultural Highlights: Reflections on Soviet Grain Policy”, 21 November 1974, NARA, RG 166, Ag.Att. and Counselor Reports, Box 45, SS USSR 1974 DR.

17 A. Tirapolsky, *Food Self-Sufficiency in Eastern Europe*, in: *Eastern European Economies* 19 (1980) 1, pp. 7–8; R.

Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary were more or less self-suppliers of grain, but Poland, the GDR, and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR) required imports.<sup>18</sup> In the 1960s, Eastern European CMEA countries on average imported 7 to 8 million tons of grain annually.<sup>19</sup> For centuries until 1971 Russia had been a net exporter of grain. Exports decreased as a result of industrialization in the Soviet Union since the 1930s. The country was plagued by insecure climatic conditions that resulted in huge regional and overall annual variations in agricultural outputs. Usually, the Soviet authorities made their citizens tighten their belts after a bad harvest. If imports of a few million tons became necessary during some years in the 1960s, they largely relied on Canadian, Australian, or Argentinian grain, combined with a reduction of livestock; usually Soviet grain exports (chiefly to the GDR, CSSR, Poland, and India) exceeded imports.<sup>20</sup> 1972 marked a departure from this policy. Livestock populations were no longer killed off after a bad harvest. Major grain imports from capitalist countries became essential to Soviet and Eastern European meat and dairy production.

Looking to the outcome of increased grain imports in terms of meat consumption (see table 1), the 1970s were marked by an unusual increase. These gains levelled off in the 1980s and in Poland there was even a steep decline. From 1970 to 1975, meat production in European CMEA countries outside the Soviet Union increased from 6.8 to 8.8 million tons.<sup>21</sup> Meat consumption differed from country to country. Within the USSR, only the Baltic republics reached the relatively high East German and Czechoslovak levels by 1975.<sup>22</sup>

It should be added that the consumption of milk and milk products – traditionally varying strongly from country to country – was high in Poland and the USSR (where people also ate large amounts of fish), higher even than in the US, West Germany, and Britain, thus narrowing the gap in terms of animal product and protein consumption. Dairy consumption was on the rise (except for in Poland during the 1980s), but the gains during the 1970s were modest (notably in the Soviet Union), except for in Hungary and Bulgaria.<sup>23</sup>

Deutsch, *The Food Revolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Boulder and London 1986, p. 64; Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe: *Strukturen und Probleme*, Bonn 1987, p. 214.

18 Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, pp. 6-8.

19 Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Canberra, "Agricultural Developments and the Prospects for Trade with the Comecon Countries" (1974), p. 25, NARA, RG 166, Ag. Att. and Counselor Reports, Box 36, AL Australia 1974.

20 R. de Rochebrune et al. (eds.), *The World Food Crisis* (=Dossiers Jeune Afrique 2, January-June 1975), p. 66; D.G. Johnson, *World Food Problems and Prospects*, Washington 1975, pp. 27-28.

21 Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, pp. 10-11; Rat, p. 215.

22 I. Stebelsky, *Food Consumption Patterns in the Soviet Union*, in: J. Brada and K.-E. Wädekin (eds.), *Socialist Agriculture in Transition*, Boulder and London 1988, p. 104.

23 Sources as for table 1; Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, p. 22; C. Czaki et al., *Die Landwirtschaft der europäischen RGW-Länder am Anfang der 1980er Jahre*, in: Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe, p. 114.

Table 1. Consumption of meat and meat products in Eastern Europe, per capita and year in kilogrammes<sup>24</sup>

	USSR	GDR	CSSR	Poland	Hungary	Bulgaria
1960	40	55	56.8	49.9	47.6	32.7
1970	48	66	71.9	61.2	58.1	43.7
1980	57	89.4	84	82.1	73	65.9
1989	59	99.3	87	64	?	?

In the 1970s, Eastern European citizens' diets approached that of OECD countries in terms of caloric consumption from animal products and overall daily caloric intake.<sup>25</sup> Citizens of these socialist countries received plenty of food, though subsidized at high costs. Still, in some countries, experts and state authorities recommended higher levels.<sup>26</sup> Meat quality remained an issue. Shortages existed in the field of fruits, vegetables, and tropical products where import levels remained much lower.<sup>27</sup>

Some countries tried to keep meat prices stable. In the USSR, prices for meat were not raised between 1962 and the mid-1980s; other countries raised them markedly and repeatedly.<sup>28</sup>

It has to be noted that the levels of consumerism differed considerably from one socialist country to another. When categorized into three levels the share of a family's income spent on food between 1970 and 1981 was the lowest in the GDR and CSSR; the USSR, Hungary, and Bulgaria made up a middle group; and in Poland and Romania the food share was substantially higher.<sup>29</sup> So the relatively high meat consumption in Poland did not reflect the same level of prosperity as in the GDR, the CSSR, or even Hungary. A look at the possession of radios, TV sets, and cars per capita shows a similar ranking with the GDR and CSSR ahead; followed by Hungary; followed by a group consisting of Poland, Bulgaria, and the USSR; and ending with Romania.<sup>30</sup> This data – as well as

24 Data from Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 126-127; W. Liefert, *Grain Sector Reform and Food Security in the Countries of the FSU*, in: L. Smith and N. Spooner (eds.), *Cereals Sector Reform in the Former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe*, Wallingford and New York 1997, p. 98; P. Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers*, Cologne et al. 2002, p. 214. See Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe, p. 216; cf. Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft*, p. 203.

25 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture: Livestock in the Balance*, Rome 2009, p. 10; A. Szymanski, *Socialist World-System* in: Chase-Dunn, *Socialist States*, p. 72; Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, p. 144.

26 Van Brabant, *Economic Integration*, pp. 256-257; Stebelsky, *Food Consumption Patterns*, p. 105; R. Laird, *Grain as a Foreign Policy Tool in Dealing with the Soviets: A Contingency Plan*, in: R. Fraenkel et al. (eds.), *The Role of U.S. Agriculture in U.S. Foreign Policy*, New York 1979, p. 83.

27 C. Beaucourt, *East European Agricultural Trade Policy* in; Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, p. 426.

28 Nove, *An Economic History*, pp. 380, 388; Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 95, 97, 115; Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 275; Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft*, pp. 206-207.

29 Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 113, 116-117.

30 G. Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945–2000*, London et al. 1995, pp. 141, 143; see Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 386.

that of life expectancy and child mortality<sup>31</sup> – suggests that the Hungarian population was neither the wealthiest or best supplied with consumer goods among the socialist countries, including meat. “Goulash communism” was neither a Hungarian invention nor most successful in Hungary.

### 3. Eastern European Grain Imports: Genesis and Dimensions

The Soviet Union had repeatedly imported grain from the capitalist sphere. What changed in 1972, aside from the greater amounts purchased, was that the USSR bought grain from the US. Early in the Cold War, the latter had imposed a unilateral grain trade embargo on the Soviet Union. It was slightly loosened in 1963/64.<sup>32</sup> Soviet leaders’ attempts to overcome severe harvest losses in 1963 through imports may have been half-hearted, but limitations on US exports and their delays contributed to the need for a mass slaughter of 42 per cent of all hogs in the USSR. Poultry, as well, was strongly affected, unlike cattle inventories (which had recently been increased both for milk and meat production). Hog production was built up again during 1970–1975 and poultry production was replenished throughout the 1970s.<sup>33</sup>

Protracted US-Soviet negotiations preceded the 1972 deal. Between 1969 and 1971, the Nixon administration removed several legal obstacles to exports.<sup>34</sup> Following a lesser agreement in November 1971, Henry Kissinger and Leonid Brezhnev intervened. The Soviets, facing massive crop losses, agreed to commercial rather than preferential credit conditions and a shorter duration period than desired. However, they surprised the US by initiating sudden, simultaneous negotiations with several grain trading companies.<sup>35</sup> Soviet demand continued and was especially strong in 1975/76. Mutual interests led to a five-year agreement made in October 1975 that allowed the Soviet Union to buy six to eight million tons of grain annually without government consultations, albeit at higher prices than before. The US government wanted to ensure a certain level of demand after the end of the world food crisis while cushioning Soviet demand swings, which could potentially interfere with grain supplies for customers in Western Europe, Japan, and elsewhere. They failed to secure sizable Soviet oil deliveries in exchange, which was a secondary objective of the Nixon administration in the negotiations that is not in the

31 Therborn, *European Modernity*, pp. 166-168.

32 See T. Huskamp Peterson, *Sales, Surpluses and the Soviets: A Study in Political Economy* in: Fraenkel et al., *Role*, pp. 56-79.

33 CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, *Intelligence Memorandum, “Outlook for the 1972 Soviet Grain Harvest”* (confidential), p. 8, note 3, NARA, RG 16, USDA Gen.Corr., Box 5572, Grain 3, Jan 1-July 31, 1972; data for the 1970s in Szymanski, *Socialist World-System*, pp. 71-72.

34 NARA, RG 16, USDA Gen.Corr., Box 5572, Grain 3, January 1-July 31, 1972, 2 (especially the chronology provided in: “US/USSR Trade Negotiations Press Kit” (part V), July 1972), and ditto, August 1-October 15, 1972; F. Cain, *Das US-Handelsembargo und Europa*, in: Greiner et al., *Ökonomie*, pp. 446-50; Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 280.

35 Gerlach, *Getreidegeschäft*, pp. 483-485.

focus of this inquiry. The Soviets desired a clear and reliable grain supply. Once more, real deliveries surpassed the agreement.<sup>36</sup>

The Soviets had also urged a long-term agreement because of restricted, cancelled, delayed, or diverted deliveries from the US during the world food crisis. In January 1980, the Carter administration declared a grain export embargo against the USSR in response to Soviet troops marching into Afghanistan. However, prior to the embargo the Soviets bought a great deal of US grain, managed to tap the US market further with help of greedy grain trading companies, and satisfied their import needs from other exporters. The first country to breach the (unilateral) embargo was Argentina, which was ruled by a radically anti-Communist military junta. The US export ban brought Canada back as a massive supplier of grain to the USSR.<sup>37</sup> The international grain market was too diversified for an embargo against a major player like the Soviet Union (or China or even India) to be successful.<sup>38</sup> The US never regained the position of the USSR's leading grain supplier, despite another five-year agreement in 1983, which was extended in 1988. The USSR made further long-term deals with Argentina and Canada in the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> Two phases of Soviet imports can be distinguished. From 1972–1979, the USSR imported about 16 million tons of grain annually – between 54 and 99 per cent of which came from the US. Between 1980 and 1988, the imports averaged 39 million tons, but only a quarter to a third were of US origin.<sup>40</sup>

Other socialist countries followed suit. Poland secured a five-year grain purchase agreement with the US already in late 1972, which was mainly for feed grains. Despite some resistance by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), actual US exports exceeded the anticipated 7.5 million tons. Poland struck a major three-year agreement with Canada during the period 1977–1979.<sup>41</sup> From the mid-1970s, the GDR imported three to four million tons of feed grains per year from capitalist countries (according to a multi-year agreement in 1976, about half of this was planned to come from the US) and the CSSR imported two million.<sup>42</sup>

Grain and feed imports contributed to a major debt problem (especially in Poland, the GDR, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia) that mainly accumulated during the 1970s

36 Ibid., pp. 493–495; for oil, see R. Paarlberg, *The Failure of Food Power in: Fraenkel et al., Role*, pp. 40–42. Details in R. Porter, *The U.S.–U.S.S.R. Grain Agreement*, Cambridge MA et al. 1984. For their part, Japanese and Canadian representatives also advocated long-term agreements. See Seevers to Hinton, 31 October 1973, NARA, Nixon files, SF AG Box 2, Ex AG, September–December 1973.

37 J. Wessel and M. Hantman, *Getreidefieber: US-Agrarkrise, Konzernmacht und Welternährung*, Munich 1987, pp. 130–133; Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, pp. 281–282; Porter, *Grain Agreement*, pp. 119–136.

38 See R. Paarlberg, *Food Trade and Foreign Policy*, Ithaca and London 1985, pp. 170–212; Paarlberg, *The Failure of Food Power*, pp. 38–55.

39 Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, pp. 282–284; J. Hajda, *Changing Perspectives in East-West Agriculture Trade: United States-Soviet Relations, 1972–1984* in: Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, pp. 402–404.

40 Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 282; Hajda, *Changing Perspectives*, pp. 406–407.

41 Secret memo Whitaker for Ehrlichman, „U.S.-Polish Agricultural Trade Deal“ with enclosure, NARA, Nixon files, CF, Box 62, TA3-CO# (Exports); Alfred C. Toepfer, „Marktbericht“, 16 October 1975, ATA (for Canada, ditto, 12 May 1977 and 17 January 1974); „Meeting with Wheat Growers“, 8 October 1976, Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Paul C. Leach Files, Box 4, Agriculture – General, August–November 1976.

42 Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 86, 97; see Alfred C. Toepfer, „Marktbericht“, 18 November 1976, ATA.

and created economic and political dependencies.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, Soviet debts were relatively small because the USSR was largely able to balance imports with exports of raw materials.<sup>44</sup> Net agricultural imports accounted for more than 42 per cent of the East-West trade deficit in 1976.<sup>45</sup> In 1981, the Soviet Union imported agricultural products for USD 12 billion, or 40 per cent of all hard currency imports. The overall agricultural deficit of Eastern European CMEA countries, including the USSR, reached USD 0.9 billion in 1970, rose to 9.4 billion in 1980, and dropped to 4.6 billion in 1985. Soviet imports accounted for most of this, but per capita, the GDR had the highest deficit.<sup>46</sup> Grain, feed, and animal products made up 52 per cent of all agricultural imports into the USSR in 1980 and 61 per cent of the other European CMEA countries.<sup>47</sup> Between 1980 and 1986, 12–20 per cent of Soviet grain consumption was based on imports, largely from capitalist countries. In addition, 7–8 per cent of the meat consumed in the USSR was directly imported and mostly from socialist states. In the second half of the 1970s, nearly one-quarter of all meat in the CSSR was produced from imported feeds.<sup>48</sup> Although it received much less attention, the Soviet meat programme helped generate another big deal for the US economy when Armand Hammer finalized a twenty-year, USD 8 billion barter contract in April 1973 for the construction of fertilizer plants in the USSR.<sup>49</sup> Despite the development, Soviet fertilizer production grew only by about 1 per cent annually in the 1970s.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Agents of and Motives for the Grain trade Expansion

Global historians are in danger of describing large processes as anonymous and possibly automatic. Questions about proponents and opponents of closer global connections in the USSR and the US and their motives may help us to understand these processes better.

While more specific inquiries into the motivation of different Soviet actors will only be possible on the basis of Soviet records, three points can be made: First of all, Soviet representatives tried to establish long-term trade relations with capitalist countries. They did

43 Berend, *An Economic History*, pp. 184–185; L.K. Metcalf, *The Council of Mutual Economic Assistance: The Failure of Reform*, Boulder and New York 1997, pp. 130–131; Salgo, *Between two Fires*, p. 209.

44 A. Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe 1949 bis 1987*, Vienna and New York 1988, pp. 92–93; Szyman-ski, *Socialist World-System*, pp. 65, 73–74.

45 Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, pp. 4, 13.

46 Hajda, *Changing Perspectives*, p. 403; Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, pp. 270–271.

47 Beaucourt, *East European*, p. 427.

48 V. Nazarenko, *The Impact of Changes in Policies in Centrally Planned Economies on World Food Trade and Consumption*, in: J. Helmuth and S. Johnson, (eds.), *1988 World Food Conference Proceedings*, vol. 2, Ames 1989, p. 48; Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 95, 97.

49 J. Trager, *The Great Grain Robbery*, New York 1975, p. 91; Bell to Holtan, 14 October 1974, NARA, RG 16, USDA Gen.Corr., Box 5979, Grain, September–December 1975; L. Sobel, (ed.), *The World Food Crisis*, New York 1975, p. 69.

50 Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 386.

so because they desired reliable supplies; because this was compatible with their general way of planned economic operations; and because long-term trade relations could improve international political relations. This was voiced consistently by high-level Soviet actors.

To a degree, trade between socialist and capitalist countries was limited by embargos from the latter, which Eastern European politicians tried to overcome. The wish for trade relations was, to name some examples, expressed by Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin in 1957 as well as by First Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union Anastas Mikoyan and Khrushchev in 1959 and 1963.<sup>51</sup> In December 1971, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Vladimir Matskevich indicated that the Soviets sought a long-term grain deal with the US for a ten-year programme to raise meat consumption by a third.<sup>52</sup> Later they pursued a five- to six-year credit. In 1973, General Secretary Brezhnev expressed to a congressional delegation his interest in long-term US deliveries to the USSR.<sup>53</sup>

Soviet leaders sought closer economic relations with capitalist countries if agricultural conditions required it and there were financially acceptable conditions. They did so not as solicitors, but from a self-confident, or overconfident, position. Similar things apply to other Eastern European governments which tried to establish closer links to capitalist economies. Some also tried to enter the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in the late 1960s.<sup>54</sup> Official contacts between the CMEA and the European Economic Community (EEC) started in 1973.<sup>55</sup>

Secondly, Soviet political and trade representatives pressed for the best possible business conditions. In the 1972 grain deal they were so successful (benefitting, too, from US subsidies), that there was a public outcry and an investigation of the US Congress concerning this so-called “Great American Grain Robbery”.<sup>56</sup> A former USDA official concluded: “They beat us at our own game – capitalism.”<sup>57</sup> The Soviets blocked US attempts to regularly receive (bilaterally or through international organizations) information about their crop situation. This information was relevant to economic issues such as American selling tactics and pricing as well as Cold War-related security concerns. The Soviet side wished to avoid food-related political dependence,<sup>58</sup> while some US politicians openly propagated the use of “food power” against the USSR.<sup>59</sup>

51 Huskamp Peterson, *Sales, Surpluses and the Soviets*, pp. 64-67.

52 Peterson to Nixon, confidential memo, 9 December 1971, “Visit with Russian Agriculture Minister”, NARA, Nixon papers, CF, Box 8, CO 158 USSR 1971-74.

53 Minutes of the meeting, 23 April 1973, NARA, Nixon papers, CF, Box 1, AG 1971-74.

54 Metcalf, *Council*, p. 95.

55 D. Jajesniak-Quast, *Polen, die CSSR und die Europäische Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft während des Kalten Krieges*, in: Greiner et al., *Ökonomie*, pp. 380-381. See also the article by Suvi Kansikas in this volume.

56 Trager, *Robbery*; W. Broehl, *Cargill – Going Global*, Hanover and London 1998, pp. 163-227; North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), *Weizen als Waffe*, Reinbek 1976, pp. 21-23.

57 “Russ grain deal ‘blessing’, says expert”, in: *San Jose Examiner*, 1 August 1975, in NARA, RG 16, USDA Gen.Corr., Box 5980, Grain 3, September-October 1975.

58 Gerlach, *Getreidegeschäft*, pp. 486-487; Gerlach, *Welternährungskrise*, pp. 577-78.

59 Several examples in NACLA, *Weizen*; Laird, *Grain as a Foreign Policy Tool*, pp. 80-89.

Thirdly, after heavy reliance on the US during 1972–1979, the Soviets returned to their earlier policy of diversifying import destinations due to the US grain export embargo in 1980/81.

On the American side, struggles between interest groups (representing farm policy, domestic economic policy, foreign policy, and “global welfare and development policy”) led to several shifts in US grain export policy during 1972–1976.<sup>60</sup>

Among the opponents to trade with the Soviets were usually military leaders and veterans’ associations.<sup>61</sup> Within the US Congress negative reactions outnumbered positive ones, the former caused by Cold Warriors among the constituencies,<sup>62</sup> the latter mostly coming from states with large farming communities interested in export dollars. But the fiercest rejection usually came from the labour unions, in particular from the long-shoremen. Hostile to communists, they wanted to prevent new food price hikes for US consumers due to large exports and wished to protect US shipping interests and, consequently, jobs on ships.<sup>63</sup>

One of the usual proponents of trading with the USSR was the USDA.<sup>64</sup> However, they only became interested in long-term agreements when prices were down and grain surpluses accumulated. International grain trading companies took the same side.<sup>65</sup> US farmers seem to have been divided on the topic but were rarely asked.<sup>66</sup>

The position of the US State Department toward the grain trade was flexible (as was that of the press – and the CIA).<sup>67</sup> Kissinger, together with Richard Nixon, pursued a policy of détente and entanglement of the socialist countries from which they would not be able to disassociate themselves. They made economic relations and food a part of it and an instrument to ensure friendly relations. Everything was done in accordance with the Nixon doctrine based on a new “multipolar international order”.<sup>68</sup>

60 I.M. Destler, *United States Food Policy 1972-1976: Reconciling Domestic and International Objectives*, in: *International Organization* 32 (1978) 3, pp. 617-653, esp. p. 618.

61 For instance Huskamp Peterson, *Sales, Surpluses and the Soviets*, p. 70.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 63, 66.

63 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70; Paarlberg, *The Failure of Food Power*, pp. 41-42; Destler, *United States*, pp. 644-649; Porter, *Grain Agreement*, pp. 11, 45-47, 56-58; Ford Library, Paul C. Leach Files, Box 4, *Grain Sales to the U.S.S.R.*; News from Illinois Farm Bureau, “Farm Bureau President Assails Ford-Meany Deal”, 10 September 1975, Ford Library, L. William Seidman Files, Box 172, Butz, Earl (2).

64 “Press Conference with Secretary Earl L. Butz, Moscow, Russia”, 12 April 1972, NARA, RG 16, USDA Gen. Corr., Box 5571, Grain 3, Oct 16, 1972-; “Press Kit” (as note 34).

65 Huskamp Peterson, *Sales, Surpluses and the Soviets*, pp. 62, 68.

66 Porter, *Grain Agreement*, pp. 104-107, 125-126.

67 Huskamp Peterson, *Sales, Surpluses and the Soviets*, pp. 60, 69; Porter, *Grain Agreement*, p. 122.

68 H.-D. Jacobsen, *Das Koordinationskomitee für Multilaterale Exportkontrollen*, in: Greiner, *Ökonomie*, pp. 428-429; Gerlach, *Getreidegeschäft*, pp. 490-493; Richard Nixon, “A New Foreign Policy for a New World”, 10 June 1972, NARA Nixon records, NSC, Box 329.

## 5. Facing Globalization in Socialist Countries, 1972–1989: Nationalist Responses

If all of this was part of globalization, how did communist governments respond to its challenges? It seems that their measures were production-oriented, defensive, nationalist, and largely uncoordinated.

In the field of grain imports it was every nation for itself. After 1973 until about 1985, the Soviet Union raised their tacit subsidies for CMEA countries to around USD 5 to 6 billion annually – but largely through oil exports at rates under the world market price.<sup>69</sup> The USSR was a net exporter of oil, but not of grain after 1972. The other CMEA countries increased their imports from capitalist countries not only because their demand had risen, but also because Soviet help in this field decreased.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the Soviet move of 1972 contradicted very recent fundamental CMEA plans. In July 1971, the CMEA comprehensive programme had stated that trade of agricultural and food products with third countries was to be “developed,” but that the import demand of CMEA members should “largely” be covered by deliveries among CMEA countries.<sup>71</sup> In July 1972, the month when the US-USSR grain deal was announced, the CMEA still recommended that member states make fertilizers and pesticides a point of emphasis *after* 1975, underestimating the urgency of the situation.<sup>72</sup>

Relationships between global and regional integration were complex and shifting. The Soviet move to raise meat consumption (to catch up with the rest of Eastern Europe) forced the other socialist states to finance their own grain imports. But European CMEA countries depended on trade with the other members to very different degrees. Romania’s dependency on foreign trade rate was 38.7 per cent, while Bulgaria’s and Czechoslovakia’s dependence was over two thirds in 1981.<sup>73</sup> Other trends furthered closer integration within CMEA. Protectionist integration policies within the EEC (focusing on agriculture) thwarted some business of CMEA countries, forcing them to step up cooperation among each other.<sup>74</sup> During the 1970s, the trade among socialist countries grew almost as steeply as did their trade with the capitalist sphere.<sup>75</sup> This was a response to hard currency debt problems, decreasing competitiveness, and sinking growth rates. Much has been said about the “negative integration” in CMEA (shrinking shares of trade among socialist countries in proportion to their foreign trade as a whole), but in the late 1970s and in part during the early 1980s this trend was reversed, especially in the USSR.<sup>76</sup>

69 See M. Marrese and J. Vanous, *Soviet Subsidiation of Trade with Eastern Europe*, Berkeley 1983, esp. pp. 3, 38, 43-44, 49-50; also Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, pp. 98, 102-103, 105, 111.

70 See Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 282; Beaucourt, *East European*, p. 427.

71 „Komplexprogramm [...]“, July 1971, BAB DC 20/20104, pp. 93-94 of the document.

72 „Protokoll der XXVI. Tagung des RGW“, July 1972, BAB DC 20/22105, p. 14 of the document.

73 Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, p. 88.

74 Metcalf, *Council*, pp. 92, 95, 97.

75 Zwass, *Der Rat für gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe*, p. 91.

76 Nove, *An Economic History*, p. 393; Abonyi, *Eastern Europe’s Reintegration*, p. 182; Metcalf, *Council*, p. 120; Szymanski, *Socialist World-System*, p. 74.

Closer cooperation also materialized in the food sector and encouraged by the CMEA. From 1974 to 1978, several council meetings called for the member states to increase the production of food for exportation within the CMEA and to provide producers with price incentives to this end (while each nation was to focus on covering its own demand).<sup>77</sup>

But beyond declarations, the CMEA showed little multilateral effort to improve grain and meat production. Even the declarations were telling. Acknowledging the need to improve consumer supply and reduce imports for hard currency, the CMEA's 1978 target programme emphasized the importance of agriculture, planned information exchange, and joint research, but not internationally cooperative specializations in production. Already in the 1960s efforts at CMEA cooperation in order to modernize meat production were limited to bilateral knowledge exchange (which included Yugoslavia, an associated country).<sup>78</sup> Between 1970 and 1988, the CMEA's International Investment Bank channelled a mere 2 per cent of their credits to agriculture.<sup>79</sup> A CMEA meeting ranked food diversification among the most important economic issues, but product specialization was only planned for fruits, vegetables, wine, tobacco, malt, and hops<sup>80</sup> and all with unclear goals. The CMEA often announced that national specialization should be studied, but reported no concrete decisions and reserved cooperative efforts mostly for the production of a few relevant special chemical agents. Usually it was stated that each country should maximize production to cover its own demand in food grain, feeds, and livestock.<sup>81</sup> In combination with secondary mutual agricultural exports, this amounted to conditional autarky. Of course, tendencies to work toward food self-reliance are strong in many nations, it is just that socialism largely did not overcome them.

In tune with the vague CMEA suggestions, member states adopted different policies to raise grain and meat production, or rather their different approaches may have prevented a common effort. The USSR intensified and subsidized agriculture after 1965. Despite a comfortable foreign debt position, the Soviet government restricted grain imports (on a high level) in the second half of the 1970s before becoming the world's biggest grain importer in the 1980s when Soviet grain harvests dropped substantially in 1981–1985.<sup>82</sup> As a countermeasure, and a response to the embargo of 1980/81, the CPSU adopted a plan for raising food production in 1982, leading to considerable investments and some production increases in the Gorbachev era.<sup>83</sup> Soviet meat and milk production virtually

77 CMEA meeting protocols for 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, 1974–76, and "Kommuniqué der XXXII. Tagung des RGW", June 1978, BAB, DC 22107, 22108, 22109 and 22111, respectively.

78 See Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers*, pp. 81, 83, 85–86, 92, 97.

79 Van Brabant, *Economic Integration*, pp. 92–93, 257; Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 276.

80 Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, p. 5; Beaucourt, *East European*, p. 422.

81 See „Protokoll der XIII. Ratsagung des RGW“, July 1960, BAB DC 20/22092; „Komplexprogramm“, July 1971, BAB DC 20/22092, pp. 93–100 of the document; „Protokoll der 30. Tagung des RGW“, July 1976, BAB DC 20/22109, pp. 19–21 of the document.

82 Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 282; Nove, *An Economic History*, pp. 379–380.

83 See Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, esp. pp. 52–57; Hajda, *Changing Perspectives*, p. 402.

stagnated in 1978–1983.<sup>84</sup> Inefficiency added to the problems; the seeding rate was high, the feeding was inefficient, the feeds lacked protein, and there was much waste in grain storage.<sup>85</sup>

The Soviet effort contrasted to the dropping share of investments in agriculture (in comparison to all investments) in all other Eastern European countries in the early 1980s, despite lip service paid to the contrary.<sup>86</sup> Before 1980, Hungary (with some interruption) and, less intensely, Poland had shown a contrary tendency.<sup>87</sup> In violation of promises, grain acreages virtually stagnated as well from 1970–1984.<sup>88</sup>

Concerning the grain-meat complex, there was another interesting differentiation between socialist countries. All socialist countries tried to avoid meat imports and, if necessary, imported feeds. Poland produced about as much meat as it consumed (but exported meat products), while the Soviet Union produced slightly less than its consumption rate. Some countries generated much more than their own citizens used, especially Hungary and the GDR.<sup>89</sup> Hungary delivered about half of its surplus to the USSR, a rate steeply increased in the 1970s. Though more than half of Hungarian agricultural exports were channeled to CMEA partners, Hungary's agricultural trade balance with the West was still positive.<sup>90</sup> While Bulgaria and Hungary (for the most part) could export meat without major grain imports, the GDR, Romania, and Czechoslovakia imported grain, to a certain point, in order to export meat. The GDR's exports were especially important to West Germany and, above all, to West Berlin.<sup>91</sup> This strategy (which was already in place around 1960 but intensified thereafter)<sup>92</sup> was meant to slightly improve the trade balance with capitalist countries, building on relatively low production costs, instead of further increasing meat supplies for domestic consumers.

A similar picture of production-oriented nationalism emerged during the preparation of and from the contributions of socialist countries' representatives to the World Food Conference of November 1974 that was convened against the backdrop of the world food crisis. There is no evidence that Soviet politicians or experts were concerned that their country had contributed to causing the crisis (by its sudden huge purchases). PRC emissaries blamed imperialism and the world trade system for a large part of the world food problem. By contrast, Soviets and other delegates from Eastern Europe and Cuba emphasized that land reform was necessary to abolish big estates and minifarms, which

84 B. Severin, *The USSR: The Livestock Feed Issue* in: Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, p. 355.

85 P. Raup, *Assessing the Significance of the Soviet Market for United States Agricultural Exports* in: Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, esp. pp. 410, 420; Severin, *The USSR*, pp. 347-348, 352.

86 Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, p. 274; Z. Fallenbuchl, *An Overview of the Role of Agriculture in the Polish Economic Crisis* in: Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, pp. 127-128.

87 *Ibid.*; Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 70-71.

88 Czákí et al., *Die Landwirtschaft*, p. 111.

89 See I. Benet, *Hungarian Agriculture in the 1970s and 1980s*, in: Brada and Wädekin, *Socialist Agriculture*, p. 193, and Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 126-127.

90 Beaucourt, *East European*, p. 428; Severin, *The USSR*, p. 378; Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft*, p. 205.

91 Lavigne, *International Political Economy*, pp. 278-279.

92 See Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers*, pp. 50, 65-66, 84, 94, 115, 121, 124; Nazarenko, *The Impact of Changes*, p. 47.

would open the door for more use of technical inputs such as fertilizer and machinery, thus raising production; this change would automatically solve the hunger issue.<sup>93</sup> So the USSR co-sponsored a resolution on the establishment of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.<sup>94</sup> Such production-oriented outlooks were compatible with those of many delegates from the capitalist world.

## 6. Lean Years: Meat Consumption in Capitalist Eastern Europe After 1990

Communist politicians wished to supply citizens with more meat as a sign of modest prosperity and for political pacification. Using meat consumption as a case in point, their Cold War critics insisted that socialism is unable to provide for a country and that it is thus inferior to other systems.<sup>95</sup> If meat consumption does indicate wealth and status, what happened after 1990 implies a dramatic and persistent decline in living standards for many Eastern Europeans in capitalist systems, compared to those in socialist ones.

Generally, the formerly socialist countries experienced steep falls in meat consumption in the early 1990s, followed by a slow rise in average consumption. That rise became steeper by the mid-2000s, followed by another modest drop after 2008. From 1993 to 2005 the daily per capita intake of energy from livestock products (including dairy and eggs) in Eastern Europe and the USSR hovered around a level about 15 per cent lower than it was during 1975–1990.<sup>96</sup> In Russia, after meat and dairy intake dropped by one-third in the early 1990s, the consumption of meat and meat products per capita climbed back to 62 kilogrammes by 2006,<sup>97</sup> almost reaching the level of the 1980s, but dairy intake was still much lower than during Soviet times.<sup>98</sup> Ukrainian meat lovers fared much worse, consuming 60 kilogrammes in 1975 but only 45.7 kilogrammes in 2007.<sup>99</sup> In Hungary meat consumption by the mid-2000s still stood at about 65 kilogrammes, down from 76 to 77 kilogrammes on average during the 1977–1980 period.<sup>100</sup> In Poland, consumption

93 UN Press Section, Office of Public Information, Press Release EC2579, 12 February 1974, and Adel Beshai, "An edited resumé of the points made by all delegates at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Prep Com", ca. April 1974, both in FAO Archive, RG 22/4A.

94 FAO Archive, RG 22/WFC-Docs. of the Committees (documents from 1974).

95 Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft*, pp. 200–260, and Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers*, write narratives of failure of socialism.

96 FAO, *The State of Food* (2009), p. 10.

97 FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, Rome 1996, p. 235.; E.N. Trifonova, *Forecast Scenario for the Development of the Meat Market in Russia until 2020*, in: *Studies on Russian Economic Development* 21 (2010) 1, p. 104.

98 Da Russophile, "Russia Overtaking USSR, Converging With West, On Food, Housing Consumption", 18 August 2012, <http://darussophile.com/2012/08/18/russia-overtaking-ussr-converging-with-west-on-food-housing-consumption/> (accessed 4 October 2012).

99 Ukrainian Ministry for Development and Trade, "Situation in meat and meat products market", 2009, <http://www.ukrexport.gov.ua/eng/economy/ukr/2213.html> (accessed 12 October 2012); Stebelsky, *Food Consumption Patterns*, p. 104.

100 Data for 1977–80 from Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, p. 21, and Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, pp. 126–127.

dropped less steeply in the early 1990s and the 1990 level was surpassed in 2006, but did not reach the levels of the mid-1970s to the early 1980s.<sup>101</sup>

These developments throughout Eastern Europe imply that what happened after 1990 was not just a kind of “normalization” after Soviet policies had driven agricultural production to climatically unsustainable levels. People may have curtailed their meat-eating, opting to spend their money on newly available consumer goods, but this does not explain the slow recovery of consumption. The same goes for a certain scepticism toward meat eating in some European countries that took ground from the 1990s onwards, contributing to stagnating or decreasing meat consumption in a number of states in Western Europe. Rather, it can be said that Eastern European citizens spent less on meat due to a massive drop in real incomes. Due to agrarian reforms and low demand, meat and dairy *production* also plummeted everywhere in the early 1990s, particularly in Hungary and Bulgaria.<sup>102</sup> Given the much lower use of machinery and fertilizer, yields, acreage, and production of the most important grains often fell.<sup>103</sup> Cereal imports also dropped – in Poland from 3 to 3.6 million tons annually (1986–1990) to 0.5 to 0.6 million tons in the 1990s.<sup>104</sup>

The interpretation that decreasing meat consumption indicates widespread impoverishment is also supported by the rise of cheap meats (above all poultry) and the decline in beef consumption, a phenomenon that can also be observed in the US and other capitalist countries since the 1970s. In Poland (a traditionally pork consuming country where socialist governments had cultivated beef consumption), the average inhabitant ate 17.4 kilogrammes of beef in 1988 as compared to 2.5 kilogrammes in 2011. By contrast, per capita consumption of poultry rose from 7.6 to 24 kilogrammes.<sup>105</sup> Hungary showed a similar development since 1970, which accelerated after 1989. For similar reasons of economization, the GDR (another pork consuming country) had propagated chicken consumption since the 1960s with health-related arguments, but experienced limited success.<sup>106</sup> In Russia, where beef is traditionally favored over other meats, beef continued to make up 31 per cent of meat and meat product consumption in 2006.<sup>107</sup>

Generally speaking, we can assume that meat consumption became more unevenly spread among the populace, which reflected growing inequality. The longer meat and dairy consumption levels in Eastern Europe are down from 1970s and 1980s levels, the

101 Compare CEEC Agri Policy, “Situation and perspective for the meat sector in Poland”, 2007, [www.euroquality-files.net/cecag/Report4/Section1countryreport/CECLAPrept4section1POLAND.pdf](http://www.euroquality-files.net/cecag/Report4/Section1countryreport/CECLAPrept4section1POLAND.pdf) (accessed 4 October 2012), p. 10, to Tirapolsky, *Food Self Sufficiency*, p. 21 and Deutsch, *Food Revolution*, p. 126.

102 See data in Liefert, *Grain Sector Reform*, pp. 99–100.

103 G. Raskó, *Cereals Sector Reform in Hungary*, in: Smith and Spooner, *Cereals*, pp. 156, 158; M. Stockbridge, *Strategic Aspects of Cereal Sector Reform in the Russian Federation*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 196, 204.

104 G. Hughes, *Grain Sector Reform in Poland*, in Smith and Spooner, *Cereals*, p. 144; similarly for Belarus FAO, *The State of Food* (1996), p. 236; different picture for Hungary in Raskó, *Cereals Sector Reform*, p. 156.

105 A. Mileham, *Polish campaign to drive domestic consumption*, 10 July 2012, <http://www.globalmeatnews.com/Industry-Markets/Polish-campaign-to-drive-domestic-consumption> (accessed 4 October 2012); CEEC Agri Policy, “Situation and Perspective for the meat sector”, p. 10; see Kochanowski, *Jenseits der Planwirtschaft*, p. 206.

106 See Poutrus, *Die Erfindung des Goldbroilers*, esp. pp. 41, 46, 51, 213–214.

107 Trifonova, *Forecast Scenario*, p. 107.

less this can be attributed to past systemic errors in socialism or transitional problems due to a change of societal systems and the more it would appear as being caused by problems inherent to capitalism.

## 7. Conclusion

Socialist governments were seeking more intense exchanges with capitalist countries *inter alia* in order to provide meat and dairy for their population. Socialist countries, and Soviet leaders in particular, were not lured into this business by the West, and in fact they pursued it persistently and against considerable resistance in the US. To this extent, it was not always capitalist countries that pursued economic globalization and socialist ones who resisted it.<sup>108</sup> However, this policy of grain importation reached certain limits by the mid-1970s. Meat consumption leveled off. Later, full integration into the capitalist world system after 1990 did not lead to a rise, but instead to a marked decrease in meat and dairy consumption. Neither in the 1980s under socialist governments, nor since the 1990s under capitalist ones (including EU membership), did closer global entanglements prove to be a sustainable strategy to increase the meat consumption of the population of Eastern Europe above a certain level.

Intensifying economic relations with capitalist countries led to a major debt problem by the second half of the 1970s, which enforced import restrictions. The USSR tried to avoid such a debt problem, also by temporary limitations to importation. In some capital intensive sectors politicians found temporary relief in closer cooperation between CMEA countries, but in the field of agriculture multilateral approaches did not seem to offer viable alternatives. However, attempting to be independent did not help either. Bilateral cooperation among socialist countries, encouraged by the CMEA, had some limited impact, as had attempts to earn hard currency by buying grain from capitalist countries and to sell meat produced with that grain to them. This kind of spin-off business also demonstrated that planners saw a general necessity to intensify international economic relations, instead of a realistic chance to roll back, unless one risked losses in the population's standard of living.

108 This contradicts some accounts of globalisation such as P. Fässler, *Globalisierung*, Cologne 2007, pp. 125-126.

# **Post-CMEA Economic Relations of Former Soviet Bloc Countries and Russia: Continuity and Change**

**Martin Dangerfield**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Dieser Artikel analysiert, wie sich die Wirtschafts- und Handelsbeziehungen der Tschechischen Republik, Ungarns und der Slowakei mit Russland in den zwanzig Jahren seit der Auflösung des RGW entwickelt haben. Die wichtigsten Ergebnisse sind: Erstens lassen sich zwei unterschiedliche Phasen im Handelsmuster identifizieren. Nach einer langen Periode der Stagnation vor dem EU-Beitritt ist Russland inzwischen wieder ein wichtiger Exportmarkt für alle drei Staaten. Zweitens war aus ökonomischer Perspektive in allen drei ostmitteleuropäischen Staaten der Aufbau von Exportkapazitäten während der Vorbereitung des Beitritts wichtiger als die Erlangung der Mitgliedschaft selbst. Drittens prägt die im Rahmen des RGW entstandene Energieabhängigkeit bis heute die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen zwischen Tschechien, Ungarn und der Slowakei einerseits sowie Russland andererseits. Viertens war die zunehmende Bedeutung bilateraler zwischenstaatlicher Instrumente, die der Förderung der handelswirtschaftlichen Zusammenarbeit zwischen Russland und den drei Ländern dienen, ein wesentliches Merkmal der Zeit nach 2004. Fünftens existierten bei den wichtigsten politischen Parteien in jedem der drei Länder jeweils unterschiedliche Positionen zu den Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit Russland. Dennoch hatten Regierungswechsel sowohl in Bezug auf die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zu Russland als auch auf das Ausmaß der Handels- und Wirtschaftskooperation, insbesondere in der Zeit nach 2004, offenbar nur marginale Effekte.

This article reflects on how the economic and trade relations of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia with Russia have developed in the twenty years since the abolition of the CMEA. The article's main findings are as follows. First, there have been two distinct phases in post-CMEA trade patterns. After a long period of stagnation prior to EU accession, Russia has since become a significant export market for all three states. For the three, the build-up of export

capacity during EU pre-accession was arguably more important than EU entry per se. Second, energy dependency, a key CMEA-era interconnection, has remained a significant feature of economic relations between Russia and the three throughout the post-CMEA era. Third, the growing importance of bilateral intergovernmental instruments charged with promoting trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the three has been a notable feature of the post-2004 period. Fourth, the main political parties in each of the three tended to take different positions on economic relations with Russia. Yet changes of government seem to have been rather marginal in terms of both the conduct of economic relations with Russia and levels of trade and economic cooperation, especially in the post-2004 period.

## 1. Introduction

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) was gripped by an intense policy debate stimulated by overall economic stagnation and particularly acute crises in the member states that had borrowed heavily to finance imports from the West. While the Soviet preference was for a renewed emphasis on regional autarky and a future strategy of “turning inwards”, radical voices in Hungary were calling for stronger engagement with the world economy, which would entail a fundamental overhaul of domestic foreign trade systems and a shift from plan coordination to full blown market integration in the CMEA. In 1985, Hungarian economist András Köves wrote that “a decline in East-West trade would not only lower living standards but also increase present economic tensions, slow down growth even further, stagnate productivity and thus widen the present technological gap between the West and the socialist countries”.<sup>1</sup> In addition, CMEA cooperation would also be seriously harmed:

*To restrict relations with the developed capitalist countries would not result in any acceleration of integration processes within the CMEA, nor in the increasing role of cooperation in the solution of economic tasks with which member-countries are faced.*<sup>2</sup>

This chapter reflects on how economic and trade relations between the three “small” Visegrad Group (VG) states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia – and Russia have developed in the 20 years since the abolition of the CMEA and the eventual switch to the kind of trade and integration arrangements advocated by Hungarian economists and other like-minded radical economists elsewhere in the CMEA. It begins with some brief remarks on the impact the collapse of the CMEA had on the trade of Czechoslovakia and Hungary with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The second section focuses on the long period of transition in relations between Russia and the three states from 1993–2003. It covers developments in exports to and imports from Russia, highlighting some key determinants of the trade patterns that characterized this period.

1 A. Köves, *The CMEA Countries in the World Economy: Turning Inwards or Turning Outwards?*, Budapest 1985, p. 144.

2 Ibid.

The role of post-CMEA regional integration processes (specifically the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)) is also discussed. Finally, it considers the impact of political perspectives on Russia on the development of economic relations. The main political parties in each of the three states tend towards different rhetoric on the question of relations with Russia, raising the question of how changing governments have affected both the conduct of economic relations with Russia as well as the outcomes in terms of levels of trade and economic cooperation. The third, and most substantive, section covers the period 2004–2010 and therefore incorporates the consequences of European Union (EU) membership on economic relations with Russia. It highlights post-2004 trade trends and considers the main factors that have been influencing the dramatic growth of the three states' exports to Russia. Furthermore, it focuses on key energy sector partnerships that are the most visible remnant of the CMEA-era integration and which remain a dominant element of economic relations between Russia and the three states. Additionally, it notes the reinvigoration of broad-based intergovernmental instruments charged with promoting trade and economic cooperation with Russia and asks whether this is another example of certain CMEA "traditions" that have survived. Finally, this chapter revisits the relationship between domestic politics within the three states and foreign trade strategies towards Russia during the post-2004 era.

## **2. Collapse of the CMEA and the "End" of the Soviet Market**

The period between the end of communism and EU accession was essentially a long and rather protracted period of transition in Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak overall relations with the USSR and subsequently with Russia. During the CMEA-era there were of course no direct economic relations with Russia, therefore the main reference point is economic relations with the USSR. Though the USSR remained the states' dominant trade partner throughout the socialist period, the percentage share of total trade accounted for by the USSR diminished throughout the lifetime of the CMEA. By 1989, Czechoslovakia's exports to the USSR were some 30.5 per cent of its total exports, while Hungary's were somewhat less at 25.1 per cent. Exports to the OECD countries made up 31.2 per cent of Czechoslovakia's exports and 43.1 per cent of Hungary's.<sup>3</sup> By the time the CMEA collapsed both countries, but especially Hungary, had already experienced considerable westward trade re-orientation. It seems safe to assume that a substantial decline in the relative importance of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) as a trade partner occurred over the lifetime of the CMEA, even if its strategic position as an energy supplier remained stable.

As is well known, the end of communism precipitated a huge adjustment in the external trade of all the ex-CMEA countries that entailed a dramatic reduction in their mutual trade. For all the Central and Eastern European (CEE) CMEA states this trade collapse

3 M. Dangerfield, *Subregional Economic Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe*, Cheltenham 2000, p. 32.

centred mainly on the USSR and began in 1990, even before the key “switchover” to the use of world market prices and settlement in convertible currency. In 1990 the USSR cut oil deliveries to the CEE by 30 per cent and the CEE states responded with equivalent cuts in their own exports to the USSR. The disruption accelerated spectacularly in early 1991. The USSR’s imports from and exports to the CEE fell by around 60 per cent and 50 per cent respectively during the first quarter of 1991 compared with the same period in 1990.<sup>4</sup> A further complication was the question of what would happen to the transferable rouble balances that existed at the point of the switchover and how the debts/surpluses would be resolved.

Thus relations with the USSR from 1990/91 were essentially a “divorce process” that involved a drastic adjustment of bilateral economic and political ties according to the new post-Cold War reality. However, as many commentators pointed out at the time, the CEE states did not look to deliberately shrink trade with the USSR drastically, mindful of the potential recessionary consequences and of the need to pay their energy bills under the new, post-CMEA trading conditions. Similarly, it was not the Soviet intention to consciously slash imports from the other CMEA countries due to the tremendous harm this could (and did) bring to many sectors of the Soviet economy. Trade collapsed regardless, however, in the main due to deepening economic and political chaos in the USSR as the planning system crumbled and a deeply damaging phase of non-system ensued. Thus the USSR’s cuts in imports from the five states were not “because they had found other sources on more favourable terms but simply because they had no choice.”<sup>5</sup> The CEE states learnt from this damaging forced retreat from the increasingly chaotic and unpredictable Soviet market that a strategic trade reorientation was not only politically justified but a practical economic necessity as well.

### 3. Economic Relations with Russia during the EU Pre-accession Years

#### 3.1. Key Challenges: Structural Deficits and Stagnant Exports

Once the USSR and all the attendant ideological and “imperial” baggage had gone, Hungary and the newly independent Czech and Slovak republics had to develop their relations with Russia – also a newly independent state – in conditions that were fundamentally different from – but nevertheless involved a substantial legacy of – the Soviet era. As far as economic relations with Russia were concerned, the three states faced some common key challenges during the 1990s and early 2000s. These included the need to ensure stable energy supplies in the context of total supply dependency on Russia; the need to put in place a large number of bilateral agreements covering a whole variety of issues; the need to tackle large trade imbalances that quickly emerged as an established feature of their residual trade with Russia and which mainly reflected the energy import

4 Ibid., p. 17.

5 Köves, *The CMEA Countries*, pp. 72-73.

bill; the urge to raise the level of exports to Russia and make trade relations less asymmetrical (for economic reasons and because of feelings of vulnerability); and the need to resolve the abovementioned Soviet-era transferable rouble debts that Russia inherited, which needed agreement on how they would be paid, what the convertible currency value would be, and how costs of Russian troop withdrawal would be offset. The amounts of transferable rouble debts were USD 1.6 billion owed to Slovakia, USD 1.7 billion to Hungary, and USD 3.7 billion to the Czech Republic.<sup>6</sup>

Trade relations with Russia settled down into the same broad pattern for all three countries and remained more or less stable over the 1993–2003 period. With Russia having inherited the Soviet role of the monopoly supplier of gas and oil, imports were largely consisting of fossil fuels, delivered via the pipeline infrastructures constructed during the CMEA-era.<sup>7</sup> Energy trade was the core determinant of the structural trade deficit with Russia. Another key similarity was the inability to correct this imbalance with export growth. With some modest fluctuations along the way, the USD values of Czech and Slovak exports to Russia were the same in 2003 as in 1993 meaning a substantial fall in real terms. Hungary's situation was even less favourable, showing a huge fall in the nominal value of exports to Russia with the 2003 USD value only 58 per cent of the 1992 total. Steadily increasing import bills meant that all three countries' deficits increased greatly, with a 255 per cent increase in the case of the Czech Republic, 218 per cent for Slovakia (1993–2003), and 408 per cent for Hungary (1992–2003). Table 1 (see Appendix) contains the data on the three states' trade with Russia between 1992 and 2003.

Numerous factors, well documented at the time, accounted for these post-CMEA trade patterns between Russia and the three states. Clearly one important reason had to do with the nature of the CMEA exchanges which included large scale exchange of CEE "soft" goods for Soviet "hard" goods (essentially energy and other raw materials). Thus a considerable portion of CEE exports to the USSR were not viable after 1990. Second, general chaos and weak demand in the Soviet, and subsequently in the Russian, market coupled with Russia's own strategic westward orientation during the Yeltsin period were also important. As Votápek noted, for the Czech Republic at least a basic problem was

*the undercapitalisation of Czech exporters and consequently a higher sensitivity to risks that trading with Russia poses: the failure of Russian counterparts to fulfil contracts and difficulties in retrieving receivables.*<sup>8</sup>

The third factor was the large-scale reorientation of trade to the West, encouraged by economic necessity as well as foreign and security policy imperatives. Table 2 illustrates

6 A. Duleba, Slovakia's Policy towards Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus, in: K. Pelczyńska-Nalęcz et al. (eds.), *Eastern Policy of the Enlarged European Union*, Bratislava 2003, pp. 143-180.

7 By the end of the 1990s the Czech Republic had taken advantage of its opportunity to diversification its gas supply to some extent, though not enough to make it substantially different from Hungary and Slovakia in terms of the basic structure and asymmetry in trade with Russia.

8 V. Votápek, Policy of the Czech Republic towards Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus, in: K. Pelczyńska-Nalęcz et al. (eds.), *Eastern Policy of the Enlarged European Union*, Bratislava 2003, pp. 89-108.

the degree of trade reorientation that had occurred by the mid-1990s. The signing of Europe Agreements with rapid moves towards free trade with the EU obviously stimulated further growth of trade with Western Europe and consolidated the strategic reorientation that was in fact already underway in 1990. Lavigne pointed out that a Soviet-Hungarian bilateral agreement was reached in March 1990 after

*Hungary had suspended, in January 1990, the export licences granted to the Hungarian enterprises to sell to the USSR, then renewed them on a case-by-case basis, so as to divert as few goods as possible to the CMEA market and prevent the export to the USSR of goods saleable to the West.<sup>9</sup>*

### 3.2. Post-CMEA Integration without Russia – CEFTA

Though dwarfed by the value of the collapse of their individual trade with the USSR, the decline of the mutual trade between the five states was still significant. Yet the prospects for reviving those trade relations and putting them on sound commercial footings turned out to be much more favourable because the common goal of EU membership also gave rise to the CEFTA. Russia was, of course, outside these dual processes. Convened in the framework of the VG, CEFTA was a regional integration initiative founded exclusively by and for the CEE and was, therefore, the closest thing to a revival of sorts of the CMEA grouping. CEFTA was created under the terms of the Cracow Treaty signed in December 1992 by the governments of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland who thereby agreed to begin mutual trade liberalization. By the time it became operational (1 March 1993) there were four members. The subsequent accessions of Bulgaria (1997) and Romania (1999) completed the ex-CMEA contingent, with Slovenia having entered in 1996. The prime objective of CEFTA was to completely liberalize trade in industrial products by 2001 and substantially liberalize agricultural trade. Though initial expectations were low and the VG leaders were keen to play down its significance, encouraging a shady existence for CEFTA (in order to pre-empt any talk that this could become an alternative to EU membership), CEFTA achieved some very positive results. Between 1993 and 1998 intra-CEFTA trade grew fast: Czech exports to CEFTA increased by 365 per cent over that period. Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak exports to CEFTA grew by 442 per cent, 298 per cent, and 304 per cent respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst the exact impact of the reintegration effects of CEFTA vis-à-vis economic relations with Russia was never analysed, it seems fairly safe to assert that the gravitational pull of preferential trade within CEFTA did not have a positive influence. Indeed, by 1997 the level of intra-CEFTA trade was in stark contrast to the Soviet domination of intra-CMEA trade and marginal role of trade among the rest: Czech exports to CEFTA were eight times greater than exports to Russia, Hungary's were three times greater, and

9 M. Lavigne, *International Political Economy and Socialism*, Cambridge 2001, p. 380.

10 Dangerfield, *Subregional Economic Cooperation*, pp. 152-155.

Slovakia's were sixteen times greater. As for Russia's omission from CEFTA, three factors were of particular importance. First, CEFTA's creation and early existence was against the backdrop of the so-called "CMEA syndrome" which basically meant a reluctance to participate in integration organizations with any ex-CMEA partner, but especially Russia. EU pressure, exerted during Europe Agreement negotiations, was an important driver of the VG states' mutual trade liberalization and also restricted the scope of CEFTA to those countries in line for EU associate membership. Second, as well as the absence of any agenda to include it, Russia itself showed no interest in CEFTA either in terms of membership or desire to influence it in any way, not even after Ukraine expressed membership aspirations in 1995. Third, Russia was excluded because of the specific character of CEFTA as an actual bona fide part of the EU pre-accession process. CEFTA became increasingly acknowledged as a device for future EU members to foster their mutual integration en route to the EU. Its enlargement criteria, established in Brno during the second annual summit of the prime ministers of CEFTA countries in September 1995, stipulated that prospective CEFTA members must have accomplished the following: be a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO); have signed a Europe Agreement with the EU; and have signed bilateral free trade agreements with all existing CEFTA members. At this point the identity of CEFTA was clarified as a club for those post-communist states committed to Euro-Atlantic integration and acknowledged by the EU as future members.

### 3.3. Domestic Politics and Strategic Relations with Russia: Impact on Trade Dynamics

It is interesting to consider the broad influence of political relations with Russia during this long transition period. The lack of any regional framework to revive trade relations with Russia was not compensated for by any bilateral initiatives. CMEA syndrome aside, the prospects for revitalized economic links were not helped by certain political constraints that emerged in the early 1990s. Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement and constant striving to block the accession of former CMEA partners was the core problem, though frustration with Russia's failure to meet commitments in resolving the terms of and actually paying off CMEA-era debt was also a source of tension. Yet this narrative is too simplistic in itself as there were in fact some notable differences in governmental attitudes towards Russia, both within and between countries, in play during this period. The political background and ideologies of the party in power caused some volatility in political relations with Russia. There were certainly periods where economic relations with Russia did have higher priority, especially in the case of Slovakia, but these varied in levels of cordiality in political relations with Russia and were never really reflected one way or the other in actual trade levels.

After the Velvet Divorce, Czech and Slovak relations with Russia moved in opposite directions. The strong Czech preoccupation with its endeavour to gain membership in NATO and the EU coupled with the convenient geopolitical position of the Czech Re-

public – it no longer bordered any ex-Soviet states – meant that foreign policy towards Russia was characterized by disinterest and lack of engagement, thus “Russia disappeared from the cognitive map of both the Czech political elite and the population at large.”<sup>11</sup> However, a residual fear of Russia remained. Opposition to NATO entry was read as evidence of Russian ambitions to retain its strong influence in Central Europe and underscored the importance of the Czech Republic joining NATO and the EU. Otherwise, over this period, which endured until 1999, Czech interest was focused on specific economic issues, in particular the security of gas and oil supplies and striving for progress on the repayment of Russia’s debt to the Czech Republic. Trade and integration with the EU (and to some extent CEFTA) were, however, the undisputed strategic priorities. Slovakia, by contrast, became increasingly disenfranchised from Euro-Atlantic integration due to the authoritarian tendencies of the government led by Vladimír Mečiar. Therefore, Slovakia followed a distinct Eastern agenda based on notions of a special relationship with Russia centred on aspirations for close economic relations that would maintain the levels of trade that characterized the CMEA-era. Even before the split of Czechoslovakia and collapse of the USSR, Mečiar revealed his clear ambition to rescue the Slovak military industrial complex which was at the core of Slovakia’s high level of exposure to the Soviet market. In 1991 Mečiar stated that

*[o]ur diagnosis is not complicated. If we manage to remain oriented on the eastern market and preserve trade with the USSR, we shall have lower unemployment [...] the Soviets have given us general approval for the export of weapons produced under their licence.<sup>12</sup>*

Despite close political links with Russia and the signing of various bilateral agreements on economic cooperation – including some initial moves towards a Slovak-Russia free trade agreement in 1996 – Slovak ambitions to revive their economy via demand from Russia were not realized. As Table 1 shows, exports did not grow at all and the main trend was an alarming deterioration in Slovakia’s balance of trade due to fast rising oil and gas import costs.

Slovak and Czech relations with Russia converged after Mikuláš Dzurinda replaced Mečiar in September 1998. Slovakia immediately renewed its commitment to EU and NATO accession. Repercussions of the commitment did not entail an unfriendly tone in political relations with Russia. As official government announcements in October 1998 stressed, Russia remained a key economic partner especially as far as imports of strategic energy resources were concerned. The objective was “to have ‘correct’, ‘balanced’, ‘partner-like’ and ‘mutually advantageous’ relations with Russia”.<sup>13</sup> Czech relations with Rus-

11 P. Kratochvíl and P. Kuchyňková, *Between the Return to Europe and the Eastern Enticement - Czech Relations to Russia*, 2009, <http://www.fakprojekt.hu/docs/05-Kratochvil-Kuchynkova.pdf> (accessed 9 December 2011), p. 63.

12 Duleba, *Slovakia’s Policy Towards Russia*, p. 146.

13 A. Duleba, *Slovakia’s Relations with Russia and Eastern Neighbours*, 2009, <http://www.fakprojekt.hu/docs/04-Duleba.pdf> (accessed 9 December 2011), p. 16.

sia seemed to ease after the final confirmation in 1997 that NATO enlargement would go along with the election of a more Russia-friendly government. Votápek noted that

*there was an ever more positive view of the mutual relations in the Czech Republic, too. In the summer of 1998, when the minority social democratic cabinet took office, it declared the development of relations with Russia as one of its foreign policy priorities.*<sup>14</sup>

Turning now to Hungary, official political attitudes towards Russia and stress on the importance of economic ties tended to oscillate during this time. Póti identifies four main phases after 1990. Following the divorce phase, “peaceful co-existence” characterized the 1992–1994 period in which – with the “ideological content” of tensions between the USSR and Hungary now gone – relations between Russia and Hungary gradually stabilized. Nonetheless, there was a surviving element of “distrust and fear of instability (on the Hungarian side) and growing opposition (on the issue of NATO enlargement) on the Russian side”.<sup>15</sup> The subsequent 1994–1998 period of “normality” was interesting because the election of a leftist leaning government under Gyula Horn led to more emphasis on relations with Russia, including giving high priority to trade within the Russian market. Several issues caused relations to deteriorate after 1998, culminating in Russia’s decision to cancel Prime Minister Kasyanov’s official visit in early 2001.<sup>16</sup> Government change in Hungary played a key role with the new centre-right Fidesz/MDF government led by Viktor Orbán, which, both in its rhetoric and policy choices, inclined to a far more cautious and suspicious stance on Russia. The “general attitude of the Orbán government towards Russia was characterised by the perception of a kind of cultural supremacy, a combined anti-communism / Russianism that still associated Moscow with the past, the fear of Russia’s imperial resurgence, its lack of diplomatic style and the fashionable trend of neglecting Russia”.<sup>17</sup> This “distancing” prevailed until the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), in its longstanding alliance with the Alliance of Free Democrats – Hungarian Liberal Party (SZDSZ), won the 2002 elections in Hungary. In the context of Putin’s changed approach to Central Europe noted above, the centre-left government, led by Péter Medgyessy, again reversed course and declared the need to “reset” relations with Russia, especially for trading reasons.

In sum, despite the differences in official political attitudes towards Russia and variations in the extent to which there were inclinations to cultivate closer economic relations, the results in terms of actual levels and patterns of exports to Russia were very similar. In

14 Votápek, Policy of the Czech Republic, p. 97.

15 L. Póti, The Good, the Bad and the Non-existent: the Hungarian Policy towards the Ukraine, Russia and Belarus, 1991–2002, in: K. Pelczyńska-Nalęcz et al. (eds.), Eastern Policy of the Enlarged European Union, Bratislava 2003, pp. 59–87, p. 80.

16 Several issues caused bilateral problems. For example, in April 1999, Hungarian border guards held up a joint Russia/Belarus convoy of humanitarian aid destined for Belgrade for many hours, alleging it breached the UN embargo on Yugoslavia. Also, the Hungarian government abruptly reversed a decision to upgrade its Mig-24 fighter planes by a joint Russian-German company in favour of a leasing deal for Swedish-British F-16s. (See, Póti, The Good, the Bad, pp. 83–84).

17 Póti, The Good, the Bad, p. 83.

fact there were no real perceptible differences in the experiences of each of the countries. The case of Slovakia in the 1994–1998 period, where the revival of CMEA-era levels of trade with Russia was the core economic (and foreign policy) strategy, provides the most notable evidence that stagnation of export trade with Russia was not so much connected to the state of political ties, but rather to underlying economic conditions on both sides. The stagnant and turmoil-ridden Russian economy was of overriding importance, along with structural limitations of the three states that affected export potential to Russia at that time, especially in Slovakia.

#### **4. Economic Relations with Russia after EU Accession**

This section looks at some aspects of economic relations between Russia and the three states since EU accession. It covers four areas: the main trade trends since EU accession and the key determinants of post-2004 trends; the three states' energy trade relationship with Russia which remains the major vestige of the socialist integration experience; bilateral intergovernmental economic cooperation between Russia and the three states; and some observations about the relationship between governments' perspectives on relations with Russia and the conduct of economic relations during the post-2004 years.

##### **4.1. Trade with Russia after EU Accession – New Trends**

As noted above, during the transition period exports of the three states to Russia lacked dynamism and were characterized instead by either stagnation or shrinkage. By contrast, since EU accession exports to Russia have shown very strong growth. Between 2004–2010 Czech exports increased by 347 per cent, Hungarian by 350 per cent, and Slovak by 713 per cent (Table 3). In 2010, Czech exports to Russia accounted for 16.7 per cent of total extra-EU exports, compared to 10.8 per cent in 2004. For Hungary 15.6 per cent in 2010 compared to 19.8 per cent and for Slovakia 25.4 per cent and 9.1 per cent respectively (Table 4). In terms of the commodity structure of trade, Czech exports to Russia are in a wide range of manufactured industrial goods, comprised mainly of machinery and transport equipment (especially cars), chemicals, food products, and construction materials. Slovakia's main export lines to Russia are machinery and transport equipment (especially cars), chemical and allied products, other industrial goods, and fabrics. Hungary's most important exports to Russia are in machinery and transport equipment, pharmaceuticals, chemical and allied products, and foodstuffs. As for imports from Russia, these are dominated by raw materials, oil, and gas, which account for around 85 per cent, 90 per cent, and 90 per cent of the imports of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary respectively.

An obvious question concerns the influence of EU membership on trade with Russia and the extent to which factors connected to EU entry accounted for the surge in growth of exports to Russia which became apparent after 2003. It seems that there is no strong evidence that the actual EU entry per se was the key cause of the observed trade growth.

However, certain economic consequences of the longer term process of EU accession played a major role in terms of the economic development and changing capacities experienced by the three states. The large inflows of foreign direct investment built up export capacities, including in the sectors that are now most important in exports to Russia and which have experienced rapid growth in recent years (e.g. passenger cars). The changing capacities of the three states enabled them to benefit from the boom in Russian imports that took off after 2000. This in turn was on the back of high levels of economic growth in Russia and the Russian state's use of buoyant oil revenues to significantly raise household incomes (especially of state employees in major cities) as well as fuel consumer spending. Between 2005 and 2010 the value of Russia's imports more than doubled from USD 79 billion to USD 197 billion, having reached a pre-crisis peak of USD 230 billion in 2008.<sup>18</sup> In addition to the three states, most EU states experienced strong growth in their exports to Russia, demonstrating that the growth of the three states' exports was mainly part of a wider trend. Overall EU exports to Russia more or less doubled in value between 2004–2010 (Table 3). The other ex-CMEA states followed this trend as well with Poland's exports growing by 211 per cent, those of Romania by 528 per cent, and Bulgaria's by 224 per cent.

#### 4.2. EU Entry and Energy Dependence

When it comes to CMEA-era interconnections that are still present today in the economic relations between Russia and the three states, the major and most obvious case has to do with energy dependence and Russia's role – inherited from the USSR – as the main supplier of oil and gas. Deep integration of the energy sector was among the few notable successes of socialist economic integration and is not so easy to undo as other communist era linkages. The physical infrastructure for oil and gas supply and transit is still very much operational and vital today as Russia remains the principal supplier of oil and natural gas. As with the other ex-CMEA members, energy supply and security has remained a major aspect of current Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak economic and political relations with Russia throughout the post-CMEA/post-USSR era. Russia maintained the Soviet reputation as a reliable supplier after the end of the CMEA. There were no supply disruptions during the EU pre-accession period, even during testy phases in political relations and perceived instability in Russia. Slovakia and Hungary kept their traditional levels of dependency on Russian supplies and sought further integration, while the Czech Republic followed a diversification policy, its advantageous geographical location easing the logistical task of building up other supply sources. By 2001 its dependence on Russian oil and gas had dropped by around 25 per cent and 30 per cent respectively.<sup>19</sup> As far as energy security / dependency issues since EU entry are concerned, the biggest questions are focused on gas. Dependency on Russia is high in all three cases but does

18 Data on Russian growth, consumer spending and imports from the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, [http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat\\_main/rosstat/en/main/](http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/main/) (accessed 15 October 2012).

19 Votápek, *Policy of the Czech*, p. 98.

vary. In 2009, Russia provided 83 per cent of Hungary's total gas imports and 70 per cent of total gas consumption. For Slovakia the amounts were 94.5 per cent and 100 per cent respectively. For the Czech Republic the amounts were 69 per cent and 81 per cent. Hungary and Slovakia are supplied primarily by pipelines coming through Ukraine from Russia. Around 30 per cent of Czech gas imports come from Norway via the Olbernhau border transfer station.<sup>20</sup> Supply contracts are negotiated by the main gas transmission system operators in each country – RWE Transgas Net in the Czech Republic, FGSZ Ltd in Hungary, and Slovenský plynárenský priemysel, a.s. in Slovakia – all of which have tended to work on the basis of long term deals with Gazexport. Gas supply became an increasingly hot topic after Russia's disputes with Ukraine disrupted supplies, first in 2007 and again in 2009. The 2009 crisis, which occurred at the coldest time of the year and caused public anxiety about energy security to increase considerably, shifted diversification of gas supply to the forefront of the energy policy agenda.<sup>21</sup>

Shortly after the 2009 crisis the Czech Republic and Slovakia both declared their official support for the Nabucco gas pipeline project backed by the EU.<sup>22</sup> Hungary of course was already an established proponent of Nabucco. Diversification is, however, not a short term game due to infrastructure issues and because "pipeline politics" are rather complex. Commercial interests of the main energy companies play a key role, including transit fees (another remnant of CMEA-era arrangements). Also, dependency on Russian gas coming through Ukraine may (then at least) have been construed as the issue rather than dependency on Russian gas per se. Hence Hungary's concomitant support for and involvement in Russia's South Stream pipeline and former Hungarian Prime Minister Gyurcsány's 2009 statement that "Hungary is interested in having as many pipelines as possible."<sup>23</sup> In April 2012, MOL, a Hungarian energy and oil company, announced its withdrawal from the Nabucco project. Despite speculation that this reflected Hungary's stand-off with the EU over various controversial political reforms, Orbán stated that Hungary was switching allegiance to Russia's South Stream alternative for "very simple economic reasons".<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the Nabucco project has been flagging for some time and other major stakeholders had already expressed major doubts, including RWE of Germany.<sup>25</sup> Either way, diversification strategies are fluid, with economic and po-

20 Gas statistics are taken from the Energy Delta Institute (EDI) database. Available at: <http://www.energydelta.org/mainmenu/edi-intelligence-2/our-services/Country-gas-profiles> (accessed 10 May 2012).

21 See A. NOSKO AND P. LANG, Lessons from Prague: How the Czech Republic Has Enhanced Its Energy Security, in: IAGS Journal of Energy Security, 2010, JULY.

22 See Duleba, Slovakia's Relations with Russia, M. Topolánek, Speech at the Nabucco Summit, 2009, <http://www.eu2009.cz/en/news-and-documents/speeches-interviews/speech-by-mirek-topolaneck-at-nabucco-summit-7778/> (accessed 30 April 2012).

23 EurActive, Russia wins Hungary's support for South Stream pipeline, 11 March 2009, <http://www.euractiv.com/energy/russia-wins-hungary-supportsouth-stream-pipeline/article-180126> (accessed 11 May 2012).

24 G. Chazan, MOL to drop share in Nabucco pipeline, Financial Times, 26 April 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bb333a08-8fbb-11e1-beaa-00144feab49a.html#axzz1tcZG13aw> (accessed 30 April 2012).

25 J. Hromadko, K. Hinkel, and A. Torello, RWE may reconsider Nabucco Pipeline, Wall Street Journal, 18 January 2012. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204468004577166273792137122.html> (accessed 10 May 2012).

litical motivations not always easy to disentangle. Oil and gas dependence on Russia is clearly the most visible and significant remnant of CMEA-era integration. The question of whether EU membership has unleashed a strong dynamic for further diversification and a longer term strategy of disengagement from dependency on Russia remains rather ambiguous.

Nuclear electricity generation is another important, albeit lower profile, aspect of energy relations with Russia. As with the oil and gas supply, the nuclear energy industry is another significant leftover from the CMEA. Whereas the impact of EU membership on the sustainability of gas and oil dependency on Russia has at least been subject to discourses about possible alternative sources, the situation on nuclear energy is rather clear. The Russian role looks secure and may even become more significant. Nuclear power is a key part of the energy mix in all three countries, accounting for 33 per cent of domestic electricity supply in the Czech Republic and Hungary and over half (55 per cent) in Slovakia. This energy comes from six reactors in the Czech Republic and four each in Hungary and Slovakia.<sup>26</sup> All the reactors are from the Soviet-era, commissioned and constructed by Soviet partners and these days the Russian nuclear energy giant Rosatom is a key partner. Rosatom subsidiary, TVEL, is the exclusive supplier of nuclear fuel to the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia. In the past Russia has received spent fuel for processing on its territory. Rosatom also plays a key role in the supply of spare parts for reactors and scheduling maintenance. Additionally, Rosatom has been involved in certain crisis operations. In Hungary, for example, following a serious incident in April 2003 in which water contamination from the fuel rod cleaning system occurred, specialists from TVEL carried out the decontamination work with their Hungarian counterparts. As with pipeline systems, changes to this part of the energy infrastructure cannot be made except in the longer term and would be very expensive. In any case there seems to be strong commitment to continue with current arrangements and possibly even to expand Russian involvement. During 2011 Russia and Hungary held talks on Russian companies' involvement in the planned modernization of the Paks Nuclear Power Plant in Hungary. In 2009 Russia and Slovakia signed a long term deal in nuclear power engineering that involved, amongst other things, Slovakia's "support for the participation of Russian companies in modernizing Slovakia's reactors".<sup>27</sup> Nuclear energy is also an official field of bilateral economic, scientific, and technological cooperation between Russia and Slovakia. As for the Czech Republic, in 2010 TVEL replaced Westinghouse as the supplier of fuel for the Czech Temelín plant until 2020. Furthermore, the Rosatom subsidiary Atomstroyexport was in one of the consortia that bid and was in strong contention to win the (now suspended) tender to build two new reactors at the Temelín plant

26 Nuclear Energy Agency, Country Profile: Czech Republic, 2010, <http://www.oecd-nea.org/general/profiles/czech.html> (accessed 10 June 2011), Nuclear Energy Agency, Country Profile: Hungary, 2010, <http://www.oecd-nea.org/general/profiles/hungary.html> (accessed 10 June 2011), Nuclear Energy Agency, Country Profile: Slovak Republic, 2010, [http://www.oecd-nea.org/general/profiles/slovak\\_republic.html](http://www.oecd-nea.org/general/profiles/slovak_republic.html) (accessed 10 June 2011).

27 See Russia, Slovakia sign long-term nuclear power deal, [www.http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091117/156872704.html](http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091117/156872704.html) (accessed 10 June 2011).

in the Czech Republic. It remains to be seen how the fear of significant Russian presence within strategic sectors will affect the future developments of nuclear power capacity. Yet it is also the case that the involvement of Russian companies has strong internal support. For now, the nuclear energy partnership is an important, stable, and trouble-free (i.e. has not suffered from any equivalent of the gas crises) dimension of bilateral relations with Russia.

#### 4.3. Intergovernmental Cooperation on Trade and Economic Relations

Bilateral intergovernmental commissions for the promotion of trade and economic cooperation were set up in the aftermath of the collapse of the CMEA and subsequently of the USSR in an attempt to salvage the viable parts of mutual trade and handle various practical aspects of post-CMEA/post-USSR economic relations. Established in the early 1990s in the framework of the need to establish a whole range of bilateral agreements with the newly independent Russian Federation, the commissions played useful initial roles in negotiating bilateral trade arrangements and resolving transferable rouble debts. They gradually faded from view, however, and seemed to have fulfilled their purpose by the time of EU accession. Duleba observed that the abolition of the Slovak commission, by the Dzurinda government in 2002, was an “example of the narrowing of the bilateral tools of Slovak foreign policy in relations with East European countries in the field of foreign trade”.<sup>28</sup> The bilateral commissions have undergone somewhat of a revival in the post-2004 period as governments of the three states have sought to more actively promote exports to Russia and further develop the business/economic partnership. Not long after EU accession, these bodies were revived, reinvigorated, invested with new purpose, and given much higher priority. Perhaps more a case of suggestions of echoes of CMEA-era practices rather than direct descendants of socialist economic integration, the bilateral intergovernmental bodies are now firmly entrusted with the task of promoting trade and various aspects of economic cooperation between Russia and each of the three states. The Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak bilateral intergovernmental commissions with Russia bring together leading politicians, civil servants, regional actors, and industrialists for extended meetings that can cover specific contracts and map out medium- and long-term economic cooperation.<sup>29</sup> In addition to sectoral cooperation and promotion of business links, the commissions are currently working with political authorities in

28 A. Duleba, *Slovakia's Relations with Russia and eastern Neighbours*, <http://www.fakprojekt.hu/docs/04-Duleba.pdf> Accessed 9 December 2011, p. 2. The Slovak-Russia bilateral commission was re-established in 2005.

29 The legacy of Czechoslovakia means that there are strong enduring ties between Czech and Slovak companies and business associations that also cooperate, both with each other and with the Russian ones, in order to promote their mutual commercial interests in Russia. For example a business fair to promote Czech and Slovak companies in Russia was held in October 2009 in Moscow. The list of participants in the 'Days of Czech and Slovak Businesses' included "Business Council for Cooperation with the Czech Republic, the Business Council for Cooperation with Slovakia, the Business Council of entrepreneurs of the Czech Republic for Cooperation with Russia, and the Slovakia-Russia Business Council. The Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was actively involved in the event organization." See Government of the Russian Federation (2009) 'Press Conference', 10 November [premier.gov.ru/eng/events/pressconferences/8257](http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/pressconferences/8257) (accessed 11 May 2012).

regions outside the main centres of Moscow and St. Petersburg. To give an example from Slovak-Russian bilateral relations, the current cooperation agreement between the regions of Zlín in Slovakia and Yaroslavl Oblast in Russia envisages cooperation in the following fields: tourism, spa business, agriculture, industry, and job creation.

Though an assessment of the precise impact of these intergovernmental commissions is not within the scope of this paper (and it may be too early to gauge their effectiveness) some observations can be made. First, they illustrate that contrary to CEE states initial assumptions, EU entry did not in fact mean that all competence in economic and trade relations with Russia was now gone (to the Brussels level). Many possible avenues for productive bilateral cooperation on trade and economic relations in fact remained open. Second, official statements seem to affirm that these bilateral bodies are regarded positively and can be good vehicles for trade development and other forms of economic cooperation. They can certainly be regarded as useful channels for intergovernmental communication and dialogue even during times when relations at the diplomatic level may be going through a tense phase. They even seem to be vehicles for shielding official economic relations from negative fallout of difficulties that may be occurring at the diplomatic level. This observation is supported by the following examples of positive rhetoric about these bodies. The meeting of the Hungarian-Russian Intergovernmental Committee for Economic Cooperation that took place in Moscow during March 2011 discussed “cooperation opportunities in the field of energy, agriculture, finances and transport” and signed a “joint declaration of modernisation and partnership” that “outlines the long-term cooperation opportunities for business organisations, and creates a framework for cooperation between the two governments in modernisation, research and development”.<sup>30</sup> The October 2010 Moscow meeting of Czech-Russian Intergovernmental Commission for Economic, Industrial and Scientific Cooperation involved two days of bilateral talks and expressed “support for important Czech-Russian projects or the utilisation of the possibilities offered by the EU-RF initiative Partnership for Modernisation and Cooperation”.<sup>31</sup> In a press statement during his 2009 visit to Bratislava, Vladimir Putin remarked that the Slovak-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Cooperation in the Economy, Science and Technology had an important role in “expanding business connections, investment partnerships, and cooperation in high-technology industries”.<sup>32</sup> Third, the extent to which these intergovernmental commissions actually represent some kind of continuity with CMEA-type relations would be more pertinent if these bodies were exclusive to ex-CMEA states but they are not as

30 See Hungarian-Russian Negotiations Concluded by Signature of Modernisation Declaration, <http://www.kormany.hu/en/ministry-of-national-development/news/hungarian-russian-negotiations-concluded-by-signature-of-modernisation-declaration> (accessed 20 June 2011).

31 P. Vlček, Czech Republic and Russia to support the expansion of cooperation in high priority industrial sectors, Press Release of the Czech Ministry for Industry and Trade, 19 October 2010, <http://www.mpo.cz/dokument80139.html> (accessed 18 January 2011).

32 Government of the Russian Federation, “Following bilateral talks, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico delivered their statements to the press”, 16 November 2009, [http://www.pchrb.ru/en/press\\_center/news/index.php/index.php?id4=429](http://www.pchrb.ru/en/press_center/news/index.php/index.php?id4=429) (accessed 18 January 2011).

many states (EU, non-EU, and non-European) actually have similarly named intergovernmental cooperation bodies with Russia.<sup>33</sup> The question, again not within the scope of this contribution, would be whether there is anything distinct about the commissions of the ex-CMEA states.

#### 4.4. Alternative Perspectives on Russia and Economic and Business Relations

This section provides some comments about government attitudes towards Russia in the three states and the conduct of economic relations with Russia. First, the main political parties of the three states (at least of the 2004–2010 period) have been polarized on the question of relations with Russia. In each country centre-right parties tend to be Russia-cautious or even Russia-hostile, at least when it comes to their rhetoric, while left-leaning parties represent the Russia-friendly wing of the political spectrum.<sup>34</sup> The revival and reinvigoration of the intergovernmental commissions after EU accession has been associated with left-leaning governments. After two years out of office, the current Direction – Social Democracy (SMER) party-run government in Slovakia, for example, has made the Slovak-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Cooperation in the Economy, Science and Technology a high priority and is currently investing quite heavily in increasing its role and effectiveness. Secondly, the tendency of the left-leaning parties to prioritize economic relations with Russia reflects the significance of CMEA / socialist era networks of government officials and the natural ability of their (USSR-educated) leaders to be comfortable in Moscow and enjoy close and friendly relations with their Russian counterparts. The third point is that the significance of the left-right divide on relations with Russia is far less significant these days than it was in the pre-accession period and has been undergoing definite refinement as the post-accession period has progressed. Regardless of parties' political rhetoric about Russia it is clear that the growing significance of economic relations with Russia contributes to the current situation where pragmatism outweighs, or at least is not too compromised by, ideological or values-based foreign policy stances on Russia. In the case of the Czech Republic, the political tensions of recent years – including the ramifications of the proposal to locate part of the United States' ballistic missile defence system in the Czech Republic and Poland and various criticisms of the Russian state (over its democracy, human rights records, actions in Georgia, etc.) that came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – did not prevent a largely “business as usual” approach in the economic and business sphere. An important role in this was played by the Czech Ministry of Industry and Trade whose influence on Czech relations with Russia has grown, as Kratochvil informs us,

33 Intergovernmental Cooperation bodies exist between Russia and Japan, India, Canada, UK, South Africa, Brazil etc. For example for Japan see <http://www.russia-emb.jp/english/embassy/economic.html> and for the UK see <http://rustrade.org.uk/eng/?cat=23>.

34 It should be mentioned that in Slovakia the party divisions over Russia have traditionally been milder than in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

*in direct proportion with the increasing importance of Czech-Russian trade relations. Contrasting with the problematic political relations (especially during 2007 and 2008), the representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade strived to separate the political and the economic dimension of the mutual relations.<sup>35</sup>*

It is fair to assume that the Slovak Ministry of Economy and Hungarian Ministry of Economy and Transport are also important actors in relations with Russia. Finally, the case of Hungary over the last two years has shown that even parties prone to particularly strong anti-Russia rhetoric, upon gaining power, can rapidly learn the need to be pragmatic. When entering office the current government of Viktor Orbán seemed to rapidly jettison its anti-Russia credentials. After that election in April 2010, various meetings of important bilateral economic cooperation committees were cancelled by the Russian side and Orbán's first meeting with Putin in November 2010 was unproductive with a very negative impact on the talks caused by "the Kremlin's mistrust and Hungary's lack of interesting assets".<sup>36</sup> Rácz noted that the Orbán government refrained from any criticism of the 2011 Russian parliamentary elections, no doubt mindful of the serious effects provocative rhetoric can have on Russia's willingness to do business.<sup>37</sup> Also, the current Hungarian enthusiasm for participation in the South Stream gas pipeline is somewhat at odds with comments made by Orbán in 2008 when he accused Gyurcsány of "treason" for signing the agreement on Hungary's participation.

## 5. Conclusions

The post-1991 economic relations of Russia with former CMEA members is a rather neglected topic. The changing fortunes of their exports to Russia after the 2004 EU enlargement have not been the subject of any detailed analysis. Though this is only a preliminary investigation and provides some details for only three of the ex-CMEA contingent of current EU members, it seems clear enough that actual EU membership per se was not the key factor that ignited rapid growth in Visegrad countries' exports to Russia. Rather, changing capacities in export-oriented industries based on inward investment during and after the EU pre-accession period eventually fed into trade relations with Russia. This has been in the context of a surge in Russia's economic growth and the accompanying import boom and emergence of an increasingly financially empowered consumer society in Russia.

As far as the longer term impact of socialist economic integration on contemporary economic relations is concerned, the most obvious enduring legacy of the CMEA is

35 P. Kratochvíl, *Russia in the Czech Foreign Policy* in: M. Kořan (ed.), *Czech Foreign Policy in 2007–2009: An Analysis*, Prague 2010, pp. 196–212, p.206.

36 M. Ugrosdy, *Money Alone Won't Buy Putin*, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, January 2011, <http://csis.org/blog/money-alone-wont-buy-putin> (accessed 10 May 2012).

37 A. Rácz, *Hungary*, in: A. Lobjakas and M. Mölder, (eds), *EU-Russia Watch 2012*, Tartu 2012, pp. 63–70.

energy dependence, with Russia having maintained its traditional role as natural gas and oil supplier. There is no strong evidence that EU membership will inevitably lead the three Visegrad countries to follow a deliberate strategy of eroding the energy relationship with Russia, though diversification narratives did strengthen after the 2009 natural gas supply crisis. This is in contrast with the other Visegrad partner, Poland, which is relying on shale gas and the development of a nuclear energy program (it has no nuclear power stations at present) precisely to reduce its dependence on Russian gas.<sup>38</sup>

For the three states, nuclear power is actually another, but much lower profile, strand of the CMEA-era energy relationship and appears to be a stable and maybe even developing aspect of the energy partnership with Russia.

Bilateral cooperation with Russia in trade has been given new impetus since EU accessions, with the resurrection of intergovernmental commissions initially set up in the immediate post-CMEA period. As Russia has such arrangements with many countries they should not be seen as some kind of legacy of the CMEA, but further research may show that the experience of the socialist era may be relevant to the particular scope and operation of bilateral cooperation between Russia and ex-CMEA countries. However, when it comes to political perspectives on economic relations with Russia, the legacy of the socialist period is clear. Present-day left-leaning politicians who were once “reform communists” are clearly strong supporters of close economic ties with Russia, which have been important parts of the economic and trade policy agendas during their terms in government. Yet the growth of export trade to Russia has grown so spectacularly in recent years that even though centre-right parties have sought to use anti-Russia rhetoric for electoral purposes, once in office they adjust their positions for reasons of sheer pragmatism. Furthermore, the impact of differing party attitudes to Russia has been even more diluted because of the increasingly important roles played by the economy/trade ministries.

Though it did not become evident until the post-accession period, the sentiments of the ultra-radical Hungarian economists of the 1980s, referred to in the introduction, have proved largely accurate. Nevertheless, this transformation remains somewhat one-sided. Internal reform deficiencies and lack of major economic restructuring have shown that Russia has not managed to shake off its Soviet inheritance and remains primarily an exporter of energy. The three states, on the other hand, have steadily grown and diversified their exports to Russia on the back of major foreign direct investment led industrial restructuring. Though beyond the scope and purpose of this paper it should nevertheless be mentioned that the nature and significance of economic relations with Russia, not only for the three states but for all EU members, had become particularly resonant by mid-2014 due to the application of economic sanctions on Russia. Nevertheless, there have been quiet attempts by individual member states to minimize the impact on their own trade with Russia. Indeed, for the three states, their Intergovernmental Trade and

38 See World Nuclear Association, Nuclear Power in Poland, [http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf132\\_poland.html](http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/inf132_poland.html) (accessed 30 April 2012).

Economy Commissions have become important instruments for this very purpose. In an eerie echo of the CMEA-era, CEE states' current struggle over how far to try to avoid economically damaging reductions in exports to Russia is certainly not a strategic dilemma they would ever have expected to once more be confronted with.<sup>39</sup>

## Appendix. Statistical Tables

Table 1.

Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak Trade with Russia, 1992–2003 (USD, millions)

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Czech Exports	N/A	593	548	630	694	767	650	379	385	490	517	584
Czech Imports	N/A	1280	1264	1876	2004	1851	1579	1388	2074	2001	1844	2339
Czech balance	N/A	(687)	(715)	(1246)	(1310)	(1084)	(929)	(1009)	(1689)	(1511)	(1327)	(1755)
Hung. Exports	1133	945	807	822	776	968	661	356	455	472	455	653
Hung. Imports	1674	2399	1746	1840	2021	1963	1666	1631	2589	2369	2284	2859
Hung. balance	(540.6)	(1454)	(939)	(1018)	(1245)	(995)	(1005)	(1275)	(2134)	(1897)	(1829)	(2206)
Slovak Exports	N/A	256	278	331	308	333	203	103	106	130	143	267
Slovak Imports	N/A	1236	1199	1456	1934	1619	1357	1347	2156	2171	2803	2409
Slovak balance	N/A	(980)	(921)	(1125)	(1626)	(1286)	(1154)	(1244)	(2050)	(2041)	(1940)	(2141)

Sources: National Statistical Office of Hungary; National Statistical Office of Slovakia; National Statistical Office of the Czech Republic.

39 For an analysis of ex-CMEA states relations with Russia in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, see M. Dangerfield, 'New Member States' Economic Relations with Russia: 'Europeanisation' or Bilateral Preferences?' in: M. Mannin and P. Flény (eds.), *The European Union and its Eastern neighbourhood. Europeanisation and its 21<sup>st</sup> century contradictions*, Manchester, forthcoming.

Table 2.  
Reorientation of CEE-6 trade: Exports, 1989–1995 (per cent)

CEE-6 exports to:	1989	1995
Former CMEA	47	23
EU-15	35	63
USA	2	2
Japan	1	1
Rest of the World	15	11

Source: Reproduced from Grabbe, H. and Hughes, K., *Enlarging the EU Eastwards*, London 1998, p. 13.

Table 3.  
Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak Trade with Russia 2004–2010 (EUR, millions)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Index 2010/2004
Czech Exports	770	1132	1504	2081	2911	1877	2672	347
Czech Imports	2184	3392	4224	3930	5987	3721	4885	224
Czech Balance	(1414)	(2260)	(2720)	(1849)	(3076)	(1844)	(2213)	
Hungary Exports	738	943	1617	2229	2666	2124	2583	350
Hungary Imports	2875	3962	5118	4793	6651	4091	5196	180
Hungary Balance	(2137)	(3019)	(3501)	(2564)	(3985)	(1967)	(2613)	
Slovakia Exports	271	398	549	959	1811	1416	1933	713
Slovakia Imports	2207	2980	4029	4017	5258	3473	4679	212
Slovakia Balance	(1936)	(2582)	(3480)	(3058)	(3447)	(2057)	(2746)	
EU 27 Exports	83954	112611	140961	144948	178294	118122	160709	191

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat. *Statistics in focus*, 69/2011, European Commission, Brussels 2011.

Table 4.  
Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak Trade with Russia as per cent of total extra-EU trade, 2004–2010

<b>Exports</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Czech Republic	10.8	12.5	13.9	15.8	19.4	15.2	16.7
Hungary	9.8	9.8	13.0	15.2	16.6	16.8	15.6
Slovakia	9.1	12.1	12.5	17.0	25.6	24.9	25.4
EU27	4.8	5.4	6.2	7.2	7.9	6.0	6.3
<b>Imports</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
Czech Republic	19.7	29.7	29.2	22.9	26.8	22.5	20.4
Hungary	18.8	24.7	27.6	22.5	28.2	23.4	24.2
Slovakia	43.5	48.2	45.2	35.8	38.9	34.6	34.0
EU27	8.2	9.5	10.3	10.0	11.3	9.6	10.5

Source: Eurostat

Table 5.  
Energy Security – Dependence On Russian Natural Gas: Imports from Russia as per cent of total gas imports of new EU member states in 2009

Czech Republic	69
Hungary	83
Slovakia	94
Poland	82
Bulgaria	92
Romania	27
Slovenia	52
Estonia	100
Latvia	100
Lithuania	100

Source: I. Samson (ed.), *Visegrad Countries, the EU and Russia. Challenges and Opportunities for a Common Security Identity*. Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Bratislava 2010.

Table 6.  
Nuclear Electricity Generation in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia

	No. of Soviet-built reactors	Percentage of nuclear power in total domestic electricity generation
Czech Republic	6	33
Hungary	4	33
Slovakia	4	55

Source: M. Dangerfield, *The Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia*, in: M. David, J. Gowe and H. Haukkala (eds.), *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making*, London 2013.

# **Conclusions: The Multiple International Dimensions of Comecon. New Interpretations of Old Phenomena<sup>1</sup>**

**Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast**

## **ABSTRACTS**

Die in diesem Themenheft präsentierten Forschungsergebnisse stellen die bislang in der Literatur dominierende These von sozialistischen Ländern, die einzeln oder als im RGW formierter „Block“ nach Autarkie gestrebt hätten, infrage. Quantitativ ist natürlich die Einbeziehung der RGW-Länder in den Weltmarkt nie groß gewesen. Nach dem Zusammenbruch des Sozialismus während der Transformation zur Marktwirtschaft erscheinen indes die Länder Ostmitteleuropas noch stärker de-globalisiert als zu RGW-Zeiten. Seit den 1990er Jahren und vor allem nach dem EU-Beitritt 2004 entwickelte sich die Region zwar zu einem wichtigen Ziel von ausländischen Direktinvestitionen, fungierte jedoch vorrangig als „verlängerte Werkbank“ des Westens. Die niedrige Qualität der Einbeziehung der Volkswirtschaften dieser Region ist somit ein historisches Phänomen („old phenomena“), das von Ivan T. Berend zutreffend als „Detour from the periphery to the periphery“ beschrieben wurde.

Bei der Beurteilung der Qualität wirtschaftlicher Verflechtungen ist es aber auch hilfreich, die transnationalen Aktivitäten bestimmter Akteure und die Entwicklung entsprechender Netzwerke zu analysieren. Der Nutzen einer Betrachtung der Geschichte der sozialistischen Integration im Alltag bzw. „von unten“ wird in vielen Beiträgen des Heftes evident. Auch während des Kalten Krieges, als die (gesamt)europäische Kommunikation unterbrochen schien, wurde über wirtschaftliche Integration nachgedacht und diskutiert. Diese Debatten sollten sowohl im Zusammenhang mit Integrationsversuchen der 1920er Jahre als auch mit den Visegrád-Bemühungen der 1990er Jahre gesehen werden.

1 I would like to thank Falk Flade and Anna Labentz for translating this article from German to English, and Mark Keck-Szajbel for proofreading it.

The research presented in this thematic issue challenges a thesis that to date has dominated literature on former CMEA countries, namely that individually or as a Bloc, they sought self-sufficiency. Quantitatively, these countries involvement in world markets has of course never been extensive. In fact, during the post-socialist transition to an open-market economy, the East Central European countries appeared more de-globalized than during the CMEA period. Although these countries became an important site of direct foreign investment in the 1990s (and even more so after EU accession in 2004), they primarily functioned as an “extended workbench” of the West. The qualitatively low involvement of the national economies of this region in the world economy is thus an “old phenomena,” which Ivan T. Berend rightly described as a “detour from the periphery to the periphery.”

However, when assessing the character of economic interdependencies, it is also helpful to analyse the transnational activities of specific actors and the development of corresponding networks. The benefit of examining the history of socialist integration from the perspective of everyday life or “from below” is demonstrated by many of the contributions to this volume. Even during the Cold War when European-wide communication seemingly had broken down, economic integration was contemplated and discussed. These discussions should be seen in relation to efforts at integration in the 1920s and those of the Visegrad countries in the 1990s.

The contributions to this special issue dedicated to exploring the role of the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) within the global economy challenge the widespread assumption about the autarkic tendencies in Comecon countries. It is safe to say that the impact of Comecon countries on the global marketplace was not, in quantitative terms, large. While this observation certainly holds true for the period prior to 1945, it is equally applicable for the era following the political and economic transformations of 1989, whereby the share of exports from East Central European countries decreased even further. As demonstrated by Martin Dangerfield in this special issue, the share decreased from 15 per cent in 1989 to 11 per cent in 1995. This clearly indicates that the countries of East Central Europe became even more “deglobalized” after the transformation in the 1990s than they were during the existence of Comecon.

When taking a closer look at the global ranking of leading export or import nations, one will not find an East Central European country on the list. In 2015, no country in this region was among the 20 largest import or export nations. Due to its export of raw materials, only Russia ranked 15th on this list in 2015.<sup>2</sup> So what, if anything, is new about the economic position of the East in the world?

The weak economic integration of the region is an “old phenomenon”. Ivan Berend correctly refers to it as a “detour from the periphery to the periphery”.<sup>3</sup> Peripheries are characterized by the fact that, while they are part of the global economy, they are structurally disadvantaged. This pattern is true for East Central Europe to date, and is applicable

2 <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/37013/umfrage/ranking-der-top-20-exportlaender-weltweit/> (accessed 4 April 2017).

3 I.T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993. Detour from the periphery to the periphery*, Cambridge 1996.

to the time of Comecon's existence as well. In the twentieth century, the main share of global trade took place among most developed industrial nations, whereby Comecon managed to have a small share.

A comprehensive set of "post-socialist" monographs from East Central Europe about Comecon and its position in the global economy has yet to be written. Until today, the only monograph on this topic, published after 1990, was written in the USA and is uniquely based on archival material as well as interviews with Comecon experts from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Russia.<sup>4</sup> Against this backdrop, it appears reasonable to ask about the precursors and models of integration in East Central Europe after 1989 – the Visegrád countries, the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), and finally the European Union (EU) – in order to explore the respective historical contexts as well as the influence of the *longue durée* on the developments of socialist integration.<sup>5</sup>

When quantitative methods fail, qualitative approaches can be helpful. A transnational history that concentrates on actors and networks has emerged in recent works and has proven to be instrumental for research on East Central Europe and Comecon. The contributions to this special issue demonstrate the added value of decentralizing the history of socialist integration. In particular, the research of Jerzy Chodorowski on the human element in the doctrine and praxis of European economic integration shows the remarkable relevance of actorhood in understanding these processes.<sup>6</sup> Simon Godard's and Erik Radisch's analysis of actors and their concepts of Comecon give new insights into this field of research. The close examination of primary sources, as well as qualitative social research, show Comecon in another light – as a network of actors.

The network approach is fundamental to the examination of East Central Europe due to the specific networks found in the region. Many of these networks stem from the nineteenth century, that is, before the rise of the nation-state. Especially for this region, non-governmental actors and the development of an "international European society" of scientists and economists served as a basis for a European mindset. Two historians of technology – Thomas Misa and Johan Schot – labelled this kind of integration a "Hidden Integration",<sup>7</sup> a concept that can be applied in an analogous and promising way to Comecon.<sup>8</sup> Unlike politicians, experts, economists, and scientists were active within the

4 Cf. R.W. Stone, *Satellites and commissars. Strategy and conflict in the politics of Soviet Bloc trade*, Princeton 1996; there are at least newer publications of this kind regarding a sectoral cooperation, see: F. Flade, *Energy Infrastructures in the Eastern Bloc. Poland and the Construction of Transnational Electricity, Oil, and Gas Systems*, Wiesbaden 2017.

5 The demand for such research was made by East Central European economic historians already prior to the 11th World Economic History Congress in Milan in 1994. Cf. J. Skodlarski, *The Origin of the Visegrad Group*, in: V. Průcha (ed.), *The System of Centrally Planned Economies in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe after World War II and the Causes of its Decay*, Prague 1994, pp. 148-156.

6 J. Chodorowski, *Osoba ludzka w doktrynie i praktyce europejskich wspólnot gospodarczych*, Poznań 1990.

7 T. Misa and J. Schot, *Inventing Europe: Technology and the Hidden Integration of Europe*, *History and Technology* 21/1 (2005), pp. 1-20.

8 Cf. D. Jajeśniak-Quast, "Hidden Integration." *RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken*, in: *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 1 (2014), pp. 179-195.

networks of the scientific community already before 1945.<sup>9</sup> The contributions of Godard and Radisch show that these networks were also maintained in Comecon. Therefore, understanding Comecon calls for new interpretations of the old phenomena.

This old phenomenon encapsulates multiple international dimensions of Europe, both East and West. This phenomenon is what historians call a transnational perspective on an enlarged history of European integration.<sup>10</sup> They focus on the formation and evolution of organizations, structures, and processes designed to facilitate and govern cross-border flows.<sup>11</sup> What calls for more attention is the “hidden integration of Europe”, which entails a reinterpretation of the old phenomenon in order to unravel the variety of forms of integration that have been invisible to the eyes of the ordinary citizens of Europe.<sup>12</sup> These forms were often conceived and actually accomplished by experts who preferred to work behind closed doors, hidden from the public eye.<sup>13</sup> Initially, these experts responded to practical coordination issues resulting from the rapidly growing movement of information, goods, and people across borders. The working methods of these organizations, technocrats, and experts (as in Comecon) included experts meeting, committees, exhibitions, fairs, etc., which went back to the nineteenth century.

Transnational entanglement is nothing new. The formation of Comecon, as well as the European Economic Community (EEC), was the result of transnational interrelated effects and mutual influences. Falk Flade’s contribution on the subject of energy infrastructures shows that science and technology played a key role in the ambitious economic and social planning during the Cold War. Throughout the decades of Cold War competition, science and technology became increasingly important as vital societal resources, enjoying growing support in the East as well as in the West. The arms race and geopolitical competition brought forth new forms of entanglements that spanned the Iron Curtain, such as technocratic internationalism. Scientists and researchers were often obliged to remain loyal to the state and the party. At the same time, they were committed to the sci-

9 On the use of the term “scientific community” as well as the historical development using the example of Great Britain and the German states, cf. A. Schwarz, *Der Schlüssel zur modernen Welt. Wissenschaftspopularisierung in Großbritannien und Deutschland im Übergang zur Moderne (ca. 1870–1914)*, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 64–71. On the role of Polish lawyers in the “scientific community” of the interwar period, see: C. Kraft, *Europa im Blick der polnischen Juristen. Rechtsordnung und juristische Profession in Polen im Spannungsfeld zwischen Nation und Europa 1918–1939*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, at p. 13, 60.

10 Some historians also use the notion of Europeanization, which refers to outcomes (such as convergence in law or practices) than processes. See, for example, M. Conway and K.K. Patel, *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century. Historical Approaches*, Basingstoke 2010.

11 This definition is based on P.Y. Saunier, *Learning by Doing. Notes about the Making of the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, in: *Journal of Modern European History* 6/2 (2008), pp. 159–180. For an introduction to the transnational perspective on European integration, see W. Kaiser, B. Leucht and M. Rasmussen (eds.), *The History of the European Union. Origins of a Trans- and Supranational Polity, 1950–72*, Abingdon 2009.

12 Misa and Schot, *Inventing Europe*.

13 W. Kaiser and J. Schot, *Writing the Rules for Europe. Experts, Cartels, and International Organizations*, Basingstoke 2014, pp. 4f.

entific community and working methods, which were universal and transnational and, therefore, independent of the political system.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the Iron Curtain and the reduction of pan-European contacts, an army of experts in the academies of science in individual Comecon countries studied international journals as well as summarized and translated articles. The number of translations been made during the existence of Comecon was enormous: Conferences, exchange programmes, technology fairs, and exhibitions were the places for transnational circulation in Comecon. This technocratic internationalism stems from the internationalism of the nineteenth century. Therefore, even this kind of entanglement is an old phenomenon.

The contributions in this volume show that continuous and reflective exploration of new sources produces new and surprising insights. Comecon coordinated and initiated joint projects in many branches of the economy and infrastructure. The analysis of different bottom-up cooperation and integration attempts opened up new insights into the framework of planned economies. The contributions of Suvi Kansikas and Christian Gerlach show that Comecon countries made use of different approaches to gain access to the world market.

First, Comecon countries made use of international organizations acting on the global level in order to continue pan-European dialogue. After the Second World War, this was especially true for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The Temporary Sub-Commission on the Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas and the UNECE were de facto links between the periods before and after the war. Especially during the looming Cold War between 1945 and 1949, the legacy of the League of Nations, which was the European project of the interwar period, collided with the socialist transformation in East Central Europe. Therefore, it is my intention to soften the often applied caesura year of 1945, inasmuch as this year overshadows the very important transition periods of 1944–1946 as well as 1946–1949.

Second, Comecon countries tried to make use of European integration efforts, which evolved independently from the EEC after the Second World War. These approaches include the European rapprochement led by neutral countries and integration alliances such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and NORDEK (a plan for increased economic cooperation and integration among Nordic countries) after the Second World War. The contribution by Suvi Kansikas addresses these approaches in an impressive way. As a neutral country, Finland signed a cooperation agreement with Comecon in May 1973 and became the first capitalist country acknowledging Comecon as an international organization. As a result, new possibilities for Comecon countries opened up to maintain trade with Western Europe in the hot phase of the Cold War. The strategy of Comecon countries to redirect commodity flows and increase trade with EFTA countries can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the common market of the

14 K. Gestwa and S. Rohdewald, *Verflechtungsstudien. Naturwissenschaft und Technik im Kalten Krieg*, in: *Ost-europa* 10 (2009), pp. 5–14, at 9–10.

“smaller Europe”.<sup>15</sup> Growing trade volumes with neutral countries can be seen as another consequence of the integration processes in Western Europe. After the foundation of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), other West European countries became increasingly interesting for Comecon foreign trade. Due to the political neutrality of Finland and Sweden, Scandinavia played a major role in this. Third, there was a mixture between the attempt for regional integration on the one side and global integration on the other. Comecon’s approach to involve peripheral countries outside Europe (such as Mongolia, Cuba, or Vietnam) is only one aspect. The contribution of Christian Gerlach on agriculture trade reveals another global dimension of Comecon. The history of grain import (especially from the USA) to the Comecon countries in the 1970s points to the increasing global entanglement of Comecon. Gerlach also addresses the accession negotiations of individual Comecon countries to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which have to be seen in this context. Of importance are the liberalization efforts inside GATT as well as the talks of the Kennedy Round (1964–1967), which evened out many quantitative restrictions – the so-called quota regulations – that applied to specific trade items and commodity groups. These restrictions also applied to the trade between EEC and Comecon countries. However, the fact that most of the East Central European countries were not GATT members and, therefore, could not gain from trade liberalization, was problematic. Although the GATT’s founding agreement laid down that member countries should become free-market economies, the organization was characterized by relative flexibility and many exemptions. The best example of this strong pragmatism inside GATT was the relation to the EEC, which was acknowledged by GATT in spite of formal violations of global free trade. Comecon countries also counted on this pragmatism, and the Polish government applied for full membership. Following the Kennedy Round in 1967, this request was accepted, and Poland became the first Comecon country to join GATT after 1947/48. Other socialist GATT member countries like Cuba, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia had been members already before the communist siege of power, as they had been among the 23 GATT founding members and stayed contracting partners. Finally, the last way was an attempt to force regional integration. The industry associations of Comecon or the sectoral cooperation were a part of the attempt at “bottom-up” regional integration. During the period of Comecon, there were networks of international experts as well as organizations that communicated special forms of “governance”.<sup>16</sup> The weakness of official political institutions and the lack of societal trust in the state institutions, as well as in the legislation, furthered the formation of expert networks based on the transfer of knowledge and efficiency.<sup>17</sup> In the majority of cases, and especially in the

15 See: D. Jajeśniak-Quast, Reaktionen auf die westeuropäische Wirtschaftsintegration in Ostmitteleuropa. Die Tschechoslowakei und Polen von den fünfziger bis zu den siebziger Jahren, in: *ZeitRäume. Potsdamer Almanach* 2007, pp. 140-151.

16 Cf. R. Jessen and R. Bessel (eds.), *Die Grenzen der Diktatur. Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR*, Göttingen 1996.

17 Cf. A. Oberender, Die Partei der Patrone und Klienten. Formen personaler Herrschaft unter Leonid Brežnev, in: A.

socialist bloc, the establishment of such systems served as a compensation for existing deficits.<sup>18</sup> To date, only few authors have broached the issue of socialist societies in their studies about networks.<sup>19</sup> One reason for that is the difficulty to precisely define these connections and clearly distinguish them from other phenomena. Another reason might be the fact that, as a matter of principle, socialist social systems have not been adequately researched. In order to analyse the phenomenon of networks in socialist societies, one has to take into consideration the overlapping theoretical definitions, as observed in economic history, sociology, and political science.

Despite nationalization and centralization, one can observe a continuing presence of networks after the Second World War. In the course of de-Stalinization after 1956 and a more open debate in the communist parties of East Central Europe, as well as in the course of reform debates in the 1960s amongst economic elites, East Central European societies experienced a major bottom-up influence for the first time. Expert networks were created in order to broaden international cooperation in the overall structure of Comecon. As Radisch and Flade show in their articles for this volume, industry associations such as Intermetall, Interatomenergo, and the Central Dispatching Office (CDO) were founded in that period in order to more efficiently organize the division of labour. The causes for that were the economic reforms that took place in almost all socialist countries.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1960s, a completely different economic climate prevailed in comparison to the previous decade. Now, the search for new techniques of international cooperation between various planned economies was at the centre of attention. This aspect was even considered to be of greater importance than the question concerning necessary changes in the domestic systems. After the death of Stalin in 1953, important innovations were no longer blocked.<sup>21</sup> Experts in particular recognized the unique possibility to pursue their own ideas after the liberalization of Stalinist structures. It was in this atmosphere that some of the first international, socialist industry associations were founded, such as Intermetall and Agromasch.

Despite the strong autarkical tendencies in Comecon, a division of labour solely based on “socialist cooperation” could not suffice for the requirements of all technical parameters. That explains the increasing frequency of contacts with the West in the beginning of the 1970s. In order to progressively study the developments in the fields of agriculture and industry, especially in Western Europe and the USA, members of socialist industry

Schuhmann (ed.), *Vernetzte Improvisationen. Gesellschaftliche Subsysteme in Ostmitteleuropa und in der DDR*, Köln 2008, pp. 57-76.

18 A. Schuhmann, *Einleitung*, in: Schuhmann, *Vernetzte Improvisationen*, pp. 9-20, at 9.

19 Cf. F. Sattler, *Unternehmerische und kompensatorische Netzwerke. Anregungen der Unternehmensgeschichte für die Analyse von wirtschaftlichen Netzwerkstrukturen in staatssozialistischen Gesellschaften*, in: Schuhmann, *Vernetzte Improvisationen*, pp. 139-155.

20 See: C. Boyer (ed.), *Zur Physiognomie sozialistischer Wirtschaftsreformen. Die SU, Polen, die Tschechoslowakei, Ungarn, die DDR und Jugoslawien im Vergleich*, Frankfurt am Main 2007; C. Boyer (ed.), *Sozialistische Wirtschaftsreformen. Tschechoslowakei und DDR im Vergleich*, Frankfurt am Main 2006.

21 M. Kaser, *Comecon. Integration Problems of the Planned Economies*, London 1967, p. 5.

associations visited foreign exhibitions and trade fairs as well as researched foreign patents and scientific prospects in journals or in exhibition catalogues. Furthermore, experts studied Western machine technologies through items purchased by the state. Because of the lack of foreign currency, the experts strove toward reducing parallel imports of machines from Western Europe in order to close the gap with their own technological standards. The industry associations' main aim was to standardize and unify licenses as well as machine acquisition for research purposes.

Nevertheless, it was not just the research results to be acquired from West European technology that were of relevance, but an exchange in the opposite direction – the sale of products to the West. For this reason, socialist industry associations organized international exhibitions and fairs, to which they invited Western companies. There had also been individual attempts to include Western companies into the organizations. Product quality was a permanent topic of discussion, also with regard to contacts in Western Europe. In the context of the expertise of other international organizations and the Comecon's Regular Commission for Standardization, this discourse influenced a number of regulations and produced results such as the international agreement SEPROSEV – a quality assessment and certification system. This agreement was signed by the Bulgarian, Cuban, Czechoslovak, East German, Hungarian, Mongolian, Polish, Romanian, Soviet, and Vietnamese governments in Moscow on 14 October 1988. After it came into force on 1 January 1989, the convention was also recognized by the Secretariat of the United Nations according to Article 102 of the UN Charter. The governments of the contracting states were obliged to align their products according to the technical specification standards in SEPROSEV and other (intern)national norms.<sup>22</sup> The experts agreed that the first positive effects of SEPROSEV were not to be expected before 1991. However, due to the unexpected historical events in East Central Europe, these predictions remained unfulfilled. Martin Dangerfield's article shows that even after the breakup of Comecon, attempts at an East Central European integration in the form of the Visegrád states were not abandoned.

This special edition reveals the complex ways in which Comecon was involved in the global economy, and the multiple international dimensions of Comecon. Comecon was an international organization! That being said, it is odd that Madeleine Herren-Oesch fails to mention Comecon in her standard volume on international organizations since 1865.<sup>23</sup> In it, Herren-Oesch describes a global history of international order, while remaining silent about Comecon – an organization that assembled countries not only from (Eastern) Europe, but also from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Even the EEC recognized Comecon as an international organization during the Helsinki Summit, while the parallel integration processes initiated mutual economic relations.

22 See: Bundesarchiv Berlin, MLFN, Sign. DK 103/63, Gesetzesblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin 1988, Teil II Nr. 5, pp. 97-103.

23 M. Herren-Oesch, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*, Darmstadt 2009.

The multiple international dimensions of Comecon consist in the specific integration of Comecon, which should not just be understood as a process of expansion of existing bonds. In fact, this points to the dynamic of integration and disintegration processes. Historians define economic “integration” as the gradual abolition of economic barriers between independent states and as an increasing entanglement of their national economies as well as the merging of merchandise and markets.<sup>24</sup> This process not only took place within the customs union of the EEC, but also in the free-trade area within EFTA and the North European countries within NORDEK. These alternative integration models partly developed as a reaction to the foundation of the EEC, operating in mutual competition. The articles assembled in this volume show that it is possible to refer to Comecon as one alternative integration process in East Central Europe.

Gerold Ambrosius, Christian Henrich-Franke, Guido Thiemeyer, and Cornelius Neutsch, in dealing with European integration and European regional studies, point out the inflationary usage of the term “integration”.<sup>25</sup> In order to cover as many variations of East Central European integration efforts as possible, Comecon cannot be ignored. Gerold Ambrosius depicts many possible variations of economic integration in Europe since the nineteenth century. They concern the entanglements of merchandise and service markets and of labour and capital markets as well as the convergence of economically relevant parameters, standards, and norms.<sup>26</sup>

Integration may not only be understood as a process of expansion within existing bonds. One has to question the interactions and transfers, which upon all integration efforts rest, but which also serve as discursive formation of delimitations. In that way, it is not only possible to untangle the ambiguity of transfer directions but also to illustrate – neither in the interwar period nor in the time of the socialist people’s republics – that there was never a fixed “East Central Europe” in a clear cut “Europe”. It was only the mutual reference that contributed to a discursive construction and consolidation of these ideas. It becomes clear that even during socialism, when (all) European communication seemed interrupted, there were discussions about economic integration. These discussions reach back to other integration attempts in the 1920s as well as with the Visegrád states in the 1990s. At the centre of this volume are the actors and practices of this transfer process. Economy experts and researchers were taken as much into consideration as cultural-political concepts and everyday contacts. Despite the numerous obstacles, the scientific community remained a barrier-free realm from the interwar era to the Cold War.<sup>27</sup>

24 Cf. T. Eger, H. Fritz and H.-J. Wagener, *Europäische Integration. Recht und Ökonomie, Geschichte und Politik*, München 2006, pp. 22-24.

25 Cf. C. Henrich-Franke, C. Neutsch and G. Thiemeyer (eds.), *Internationalismus und Europäische Integration im Vergleich. Fallstudien zu Währungen, Landwirtschaft, Verkehrs- und Nachrichtenwesen*, Baden-Baden 2001, p. 8; and: G. Ambrosius, C. Henrich-Franke and C. Neutsch (eds.), *Internationale Politik und Integration europäischer Infrastruktur in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Baden-Baden 2012.

26 G. Ambrosius, *Wirtschaftsintegration in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Ein wirtschaftshistorisches Forschungsprogramm*, in: Henrich-Franke et al., *Internationalismus*, pp. 13-37, at 13.

27 Cf. J. Niederhut, *Grenzlose Gemeinschaft? Die scientific community im Kalten Krieg*, in: *Osteuropa* 59/10 (2009), pp. 57-68.

In light of all this, it needs to be stated once more that integration is always a mutual process, constantly challenging even those states that are considered integrated. It is this mutual character of integration that makes it an excellent research object. A historical analysis of socialist integration processes within Comecon obliges that the newest approaches in historiography are studied: for instance, models of comparison, entanglement, transfer, and transnational history. One must focus on the forms of entanglements that transcend the nation-state, such as structural connections, interdependences, transfers, and mutual perceptions. Comecon research, hence, entails new interpretations of old phenomena.<sup>28</sup>

28 K.K. Patel, Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte, in: Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 52 (2004), pp. 625-645. Further reading recommendations and inspirations can be found at P.Y. Saunier, Learning by Doing. Notes about the Making of the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History, in: Journal of Modern European History 6 (2008), pp. 159-180.

# BERICHT

## **Brüche und Transformationen Zum Fifth European Global History Congress 2017 Budapest (31. August – 3. September 2017)**

**Norbert Fabian**

Stärker als bei den vorangehenden Kongressen rückten in Budapest Themen der osteuropäischen Geschichte mit ihren Revolutionen und Transformationen und die Geschichte des Habsburger Empire und der Sowjetunion in den Vordergrund.<sup>1</sup> So diskutierte z. B. eine von Mikhail Lipkin (Moskau) organisierte Sektion die Rolle Chruschtschows neu und fragte, inwieweit dieser Revolutionär oder pragmatischer Reformers gewesen sei. Kritisiert wurde dabei auch ein wiederauflebender, irrationaler Stalin-Kult in Russland.<sup>2</sup> In einem teils kontrovers verlaufenen Plenary Round Table zum Sozialismus in einer vergleichenden, globalhistorisch-sozialwissenschaftlichen Perspektive betonte Marcel von der Linden (Amsterdam) den engen, symbiotischen Zusammenhang von Demokratie und Sozialismus in der Geschichte der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung – ein Zusammenhang, den erst W. I. Lenin und dann insbesondere Stalin in der Sowjetunion unterbrochen hätten. Angeführt wurden zudem die Bedeutung von Sozialstaatlichkeit und Mitbestimmung für ein modernes Verständnis von demokratischem Sozialismus und sozialer Demokratie auch in Osteuropa und in einer globalen Perspektive.

1 Selbstverständlich kann hier nur beispielhaft über einige Sektionen berichtet werden, das Programm des Fifth European Congress on World and Global History, Budapest 2017 (ENIUHG) und die Abstracts zu den Sektionen und Papers findet sich online unter <http://research.uni-leipzig.de/~eniugh/congress/programme/>.

2 Zu Chruschtschow und zur Geschichte Russlands und der Sowjetunion im 20. Jahrhundert siehe zudem etwa die neuere Darstellung aus einer kritisch-demokratischen Sicht von O. Figes, Hundert Jahre Revolution, München 2015, u. a. S. 293ff. Allerdings arbeitet Figes mit einem kaum geschichtstheoretisch reflektierten Revolutionsbegriff. Zur jüngeren Zeitgeschichte U. Engel, F. Hadler, M. Middell (eds.), 1989 in a Global Perspective, Leipzig 2015.

Weiterführend diskutiert wurden zugleich Themen vorangehender Kongresse: So seien bei der Publikation globalgeschichtlicher Themen eine erhebliche Zunahme und Fortschritte zu verzeichnen. Dies belegte Sven Beckert (Harvard) auch statistisch in dem gut besuchten Roundtable *World and global history – Next steps to go*. Dennoch bleibe die Nationalgeschichte von erheblicher Relevanz. Anzustreben seien jedenfalls mehr vergleichende empirische Studien zur Welt- und Globalgeschichte.

Marcel van der Linden (Amsterdam) verwies auf die Unvermeidbarkeit von Teamwork bei globalgeschichtlichen Forschungen und plädierte für eine stärkere Einbeziehung der Sozialgeschichte. Auch die von Susan Zimmermann (Budapest) engagiert eingeforderte Gender-Geschichte sei u. a. in Schichtungs- und Klassenanalysen mit einzubringen. Matthias Middell (Leipzig) stellte abschließend die Notwendigkeit heraus, Fragen der didaktischen Vermittlung von Globalgeschichte an Universitäten und Schulen stärker zu beachten.

Die von Kenneth Pomeranz aufgeworfene Diskussion über „The Great Divergence“ hat unbestritten erheblich zur Entwicklung von Globalgeschichte beigetragen. Tirthankar Roy (London) führte mit der Vorstellung des Projekts einer *Global Economic History*<sup>3</sup> in der Sektion *Economic change in global history 1500–2000* diese Diskussion weiter und thematisierte verstärkt methodologische und konzeptionelle Fragestellungen. Neben einer intensiveren Berücksichtigung von Indien und Afrika wurden reziproke Vergleiche auch von außereuropäischen Entwicklungen etwa zwischen China und Japan angeregt. Dabei sollte sich Wirtschaftsgeschichte zugleich als Sozial- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte verstehen und politische Faktoren angemessen einbeziehen.

Die Sektion *Economy – reformation – revolution: Transformations to and in modernity* griff die zwischen Maurice Dobb, Paul Sweezy und anderen in den 1950 und 1970er Jahren geführten Diskussionen über Übergänge vom Feudalismus zum Kapitalismus erneut auf.<sup>4</sup> Im Anschluss v. a. an den britischen Ökonomen und Historiker Stuart Holland<sup>5</sup> wurde das Modell einer *mixed economy* für Analysen von Transformationsprozessen bereits seit dem späten Mittelalter neu mit herangezogen. Herauszustellen seien zudem strukturelle gesellschaftliche Kausalitäten anstelle eines *prime movers* und Interdependenzen sozioökonomischer, soziokultureller und soziopolitischer Faktoren. Angela Huang (Lübeck) untersuchte dann die aufkommende Textilproduktion und die Textilexporte im Han-

3 Verwiesen sei auf G.Riello, Tirthankar Roy, *How India Clothed the World*, Leiden/Brill 2013 aus der Serie *Global Economic History*; G. Riello, P. Parthasarathi (eds.), *The Spinning World. A Global History of Cotton Textiles, 1200–1850*, Oxford 2009; S. Beckert, *King Cotton. Eine Geschichte des globalen Kapitalismus*, München 2015; P. Vries, *Ursprünge des modernen Wirtschaftswachstums. England, China und die Welt in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2013; R. Studer, *The Great Divergence Reconsidered: Europe, India and the Rise to Global Economic Power*, Cambridge 2015.

4 *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, London 1976 (introduction by Rodney Hilton); neuere Beiträge in: E. Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism. A Longer View*, London 1999/2017<sup>3</sup>; A. Sinha, *Europe in Transition. From Feudalism to Industrialization*, New Delhi 2010/2017<sup>3</sup>, S. 745ff.

5 S. Holland, *Capital versus the Regions*, London 1976; ders., *The Regional Problem*, London 1976; ders., *The Socialist Challenge*, London 1978<sup>3</sup>; ders., *The Global Economy. From Meso to Macroeconomics*, London 1987; ders., *The European Imperative*, Nottingham 1993 (foreword by Jacques Delors); etc.

seraum als Ansätze zu einer frühen Proto-Industrialisierung.<sup>6</sup> Deutlich wurde auch hier die Relevanz mesoökonomisch-regionaler Entwicklungen für Übergänge zur Moderne. In der Doppelsektion *The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars as a conjuncture in global economic history* betonte Patrick O'Brien (London) das erneute Aufkommen merkantilistischer Produktionsformen während der Napoleonischen Kriege in Großbritannien. Dazu führte er insbesondere die Verstärkung von effizientem Schiffbau für die britische Navy an. Hingegen zeigte Marjolein 't Hart (Amsterdam) für die Niederlande eher kontinuierliche Entwicklungen auf, während Carlos Santiago (Madrid) für Spanien auf weitere, längerfristig wirksame Faktoren verwies. In seinem abschließenden Kommentar warf Peer Vries (Amsterdam) vergleichende, auch kontrafaktische Fragestellungen auf und plädierte für die Annahme eines sehr breiten Spektrums von Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten.

Teils weitergeführt wurde diese Diskussion in der Sektion *War impact on commercial exchange and merchant networks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*. Den ganz erheblichen Umfang von Schmuggel auch über halblegale Lizenzen während der Napoleonischen Kriege belegte Margrit Schulte-Beerbühl (Düsseldorf). Geschmuggelt wurden etwa Holz und Materialien für den Schiffbau aus dem Baltikum und Skandinavien. Möglichkeiten für Schmuggel mit Hilfe kleiner Schiffe für kleine Händler boten Ostfriesland mit seiner unübersichtlichen Wattenlandschaft, Helgoland und die englische Küste. Silvia Marzagalli (Nizza) betonte die Flexibilität von Kaufleuten, die in erheblichem Umfang den Weg über die USA für Importe nutzten. Darauf hingewiesen wurde zudem, dass aus überlieferten Statistiken wohl lediglich Minimumzahlen zu erschließen sind.

In einer von Marcel van der Linden vom Amsterdamer Institute of Social History moderierten Book Launch stellte Andrea Komlosy (Wien) eine neue englische Ausgabe ihrer Globalgeschichte der Arbeit vom 13. bis 21. Jahrhundert vor.<sup>7</sup> Hierin wirft sie auch von einer feministischen Perspektive her Licht auf die komplexe Koexistenz und Kombination vielfacher Formen von Arbeit in unterschiedlichen Kontexten, regional und weltweit.

6 A. Huang, *Die Textilien des Hanseraums. Produktion und Distribution einer spätmittelalterlichen Fernhandelsware*, Köln 2015.

7 A. Komlosy, *Work. The Last 1,000 Years*, London 2018; *Arbeit. Eine globalhistorische Perspektive. 13. bis 21. Jahrhundert*, Wien 2014<sup>3</sup>.

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## BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN

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**Wolfgang Reinhard: Staatsmacht und Staatskredit. Kulturelle Tradition und politische Moderne (Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 56), Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 2017, 69 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Markus A. Denzel, Leipzig

Die 2015 im Rahmen des Deutsch-Chinesischen Wissenschaftsforums an der Beijing Daxue (Peking Universität) entstandene knapp 70seitige Studie des renommierten Historikers Wolfgang Reinhard untersucht die Bedeutung des Staatskredits für die Entstehung des modernen Staates, der dem Autor als „der wichtigste Exportartikel Europas“ während der Europäischen Expansion gilt (S. 5). Seine grundlegende These ist, dass „der moderne Staat ... in Europa Hand in Hand mit dem öffentlichen Kredit, genauer dem Kriegskredit, entstanden [ist]. ... Durch den Staatskredit wurde dabei machtpolitisch Schwäche in Stärke verwandelt“ (S. 20) – oder anders ausgedrückt: Die politische Macht des europäischen Staates und letztlich seine Überlegenheit über außereuropäische

Reiche resultierte aus seinem Vermögen, sich vor allem im Kriegsfall durch Kreditaufnahme zu finanzieren.

Als Voraussetzungen für die Vergabe von öffentlichem Kredit in Europa sieht Wolfgang Reinhard die Stadtwirtschaft und die Kapitalbildung durch expandierende Handelsaktivitäten. Der öffentliche Kredit basierte auf einer „einzigartigen Symbiose von Politik und Kapital“ (S. 22), d.h. letztlich auf einer – in Asien überhaupt nicht vorstellbaren – ‚Partnerschaft‘ zwischen Herrschenden und Kaufmanns-Bankiers, die auf der Unantastbarkeit des Privateigentums und einer seit der griechischen Antike nachweisbaren, jahrhundertelangen Erfahrung in diesem Geschäft beruhte. Seit dem Mittelalter nahm die öffentliche, rechtlich immer stärker geschützte Kreditaufnahme in zahlreichen europäischen Staaten zu. Im England des 18. Jh.s erlangte dieses System im Gefolge andauernder Kriege gegen Frankreich – nach einigen Krisen – durch staatliche bzw. parlamentarische Garantie des öffentlichen Kredits in einer *financial revolution* seine Vollendung. Entscheidend für den langfristigen Erfolg dieses Kreditsystems war neben der Konsolidierung der Schuld, der Möglichkeit des Handels mit Staatsanleihen und einer ausgereiften Finanzorganisation vor allem das „Vertrauen in die Solidität des britischen Kredits, die durch

die interessengeleitete Symbiose von Regierung, Unterhaus und Geldgebern zustande gekommen war“ (S. 47).

Während die europäischen Staaten im 19. Jh. das englische System der öffentlichen Kreditvergabe übernahmen, war dies im chinesischen, osmanischen und Mogul-Reich nicht der Fall, und auch eine vergleichbare eigenständige derartige Entwicklung fand nicht statt. Gründe dafür sind unterschiedliche Traditionen von Eigentum, Recht und Herrschaft, aber auch die fehlende Notwendigkeit für derartige öffentliche Kredite. Diese Staaten verfügten über einen weitaus größeren Reichtum als und konnten zudem auf die Ressourcen ihrer Untertanen fast unbeschränkt zugreifen. Daher wurde privates Kapital nicht benötigt und nicht in organisierter Form für öffentliche Kredite bereit, auch wenn die Voraussetzungen dafür (Handelskapital und Stadtwirtschaft) vorhanden gewesen wären. Die asiatischen Potentaten finanzierten ihre Kriege weitgehend selbst, ja streckten sogar aus der Privatschatulle kurzfristige Kredite für die Reichskasse vor (so etwa der osmanische Sultan), weshalb die politische Modernisierung nicht durch konsolidierte, garantierte öffentliche Kredite initiiert wurde. Als sie im späteren 19. Jh. auf Kredite angewiesen waren, fehlten entsprechende Tradition und Erfahrung sowie einheimische Kreditgeber. Die Konsequenz, eine zunehmende Abhängigkeit der asiatischen Reiche von europäischen Kreditgebern vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg, ist bekannt. Soweit die Argumentation des Autors.

Wolfgang Reinhard gelingt mit seinem großen Essay bzw. seiner konzis gefassten Monographie ein genialer Wurf: In seiner kontrastiven Analyse der divergierenden

Entwicklungen in Europa und Asien, wie Reiche sich zu modernen Staaten entwickelten, oder auch nicht, und welche Konsequenzen dies für ihre Machtentfaltung hatte, wird die entscheidende Rolle des Staatskredits für diesen Prozess in nicht zu verkennender Weise verdeutlicht. Was zunächst als ein Nachteil erscheinen mochte, nämlich mangelnder Reichtum und fehlende Zugriffsmöglichkeiten auf den Besitz der Untertanen, konnten die Machthaber in Europa seit dem Mittelalter in den Vorteil einer öffentlichen, rechtlich geschützten Kreditaufnahme umwandeln. Diese kulturelle Tradition trug wesentlich zur Herausbildung von moderner *Staatsmacht* bei, die nicht nur zu einer „Verstaatlichung der Welt“ führte, wie Wolfgang Reinhard es ausdrücken würde, sondern auch zu einer politisch-militärischen Überlegenheit gegenüber den asiatischen Reiche im 19. Jh. Mit seiner tiefgreifend analytischen und sehr gut lesbaren Studie leistet Wolfgang Reinhard einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Verständnis des spezifischen Unterschieds zwischen europäischem Staat und asiatischem Reich – ein Unterschied, der bis in das *Staatsverständnis* des aktuellen China hineinreicht.

**Daniel Schulz: Die Krise des Republikanismus (= Schriftenreihe der Sektion Politische Theorie und Ideengeschichte in der Deutschen Vereinigung für Politische Wissenschaft, Bd. 29), Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 2015, 306 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Helmut Goerlich, Leipzig

Die Arbeit ist als Habilitationsschrift entstanden bei Hans Vorländer (Dresden), ihre auswärtigen Gutachter waren Herfried Münkler und Emanuel Richter. Das Thema hat Konjunktur. Selbst bei den Juristen ist „Republik“ aktuell,<sup>1</sup> während „Republikanismus“ eher von Politik- oder Geschichtswissenschaft gepflegt wird, mindestens solange wie die deutsche Rechtswissenschaft ihrer weithin traditionellen und keineswegs republikanisch gegründeten Staatslehre verhaftet bleibt.<sup>2</sup>

Der Einleitung folgt eine methodische Reflexion zum Kontext diskursiver Geltungsräume und zu den politischen Reflexionsbegriffen solcher Sinnzusammenhänge. Darauf findet man drei Perspektiven der Studie benannt, nämlich die der republikanischen Orthodoxie, diejenige einer äußerst kritischen Negativität und schließlich die einer Rekonstruktion. Das erste Kapitel zur „liberal-republikanischen Leitdifferenz“ befasst sich mit der Renaissance der Republik, der englischen Verfassung und der französischen Rezeption. Danach wird die revolutionäre Libe-

ralisierung des Republikanismus beleuchtet, schließlich „Tugend“ und „Interesse“. Das zweite Kapitel verhandelt unter dem Stichwort „republikanische Orthodoxie im 20. Jahrhundert“ den amerikanischen Kommunitarismus, die liberale Ordnung, die Liberalismus-Republikanismus-Debatte der Cambridge School und schließlich die Transzendenzkrise der französischen Republik. Das dritte Kapitel, nun zum negativen Republikanismus, befasst sich mit Foucault unter der Überschrift „Diskursive Macht und die Dekonstruktion der Freiheit“, mit Bourdieu (Symbolische Macht und Dekonstruktion der Gleichheit) und mit Derrida (Dekonstruktivistische Politiktheorie der Brüderlichkeit) und schließt mit einer Erörterung von „Radikale[r] Theorie und anti-liberale[r] Demokratie“. Das vierte Kapitel ist der Rekonstruktion im Einzelnen gewidmet; zuerst Claude Lefort (Zivilgesellschaftliche Demokratie und das Politische), dann Marcel Gauchet (Antipolitik der Menschenrechte und entzauberte Welt) sowie schließlich Pierre Rosanvallon (Die Mischverfassung der Moderne). Vermissen mag man in diesen ersten Kapiteln einen Blick in verschiedene kleinere Staaten, die republikanische Traditionselemente aufweisen, selbst wenn sie heute Monarchien sind – wie etwa Dänemark und Schweden –, oder in die Schweiz, die schließlich seit langem Republik und Nachbar ist. Hier mag aber die lokale Tradition dominieren, weniger der nationale Rahmen, zumal entscheidende Modernisierungsschübe erst nach dem Sonderbund im 19. Jh. einsetzten. Es ist zu vermuten, dass die Schweiz in Theorie und Praxis des Republikanismus nicht so stark hervorgetreten ist, dass sie hier einen Platz erhält. Ähnliches mag für die Niederlande

gelten, die anfänglich in der republikanischen Theorie des rationalen Naturrechts eine große Rolle spielten.

Daher bringt das fünfte Kapitel eine deutsche Reprise ohne eidgenössische oder holländische Erträge ein und behandelt die bundesrepublikanische Demokratietheorie mit ihrem Blick nach Westen. Vorge stellt wird hier die Gründergeneration der deutschen Politikwissenschaft, eingeordnet zwischen Rousseau-Kritik und Tocqueville-Renaissance sowie in den Gegensatz zwischen materieller und formeller Demokratie, sodann wird sie beschrieben als „verflüssigte Volkssouveränität“ auf dem Weg zum „postdemokratischen Souveränitätsverlust“. Daran schließen im sechsten Kapitel Reflexionen zu Repräsentation und wiederentdeckter Urteilskraft an, zuerst unter den alten republikanischen Begriffen „Lösen, Deliberieren, Urteilen“, dann mit der Frage „Verfassungsdemokratie oder direkte Demokratie?“ und schließlich mit dem Programm „Demokratisierung der repräsentativen Demokratie“. Das letzte Kapitel befasst sich mit republikanischem Denken im Lichte der politischen Ordnung der Gegenwart unter den Stichworten Freiheit und Verfassung, Recht und Macht, symbolische Repräsentation, Souveränität und schließlich transnationale politische „Ordnungsbildung“. Damit endet die Schrift mit einer Reflexion des republikanischen Krisenbewusstseins, wie es immer in Zeiten des Wandels auftrat, geprägt von einer Realanalyse ohne Abstriche und einem pragmatischen Sinn für das Mögliche. Das mindert das Gewicht des Republikanismus nicht, verschafft ihm vielmehr einen Ort – einen Ort übrigens, den er in der deutschen Doktrinbildung seit den Nachwirkungen der Debatten

zur Zeit der Paulskirche nicht mehr hatte<sup>3</sup>, weil die „Republik“ mit dem schönen Lied des Hecker'schen Haufens in Südbaden unterging und durch einen kruden Monarchismus verdrängt wurde, der eine theorie- oder verfassungsgeschichtliche Reflexion allenfalls noch im deutschen Gymnasium für den kurzen Abschnitt der Lektüre Ciceros duldete, die aber dann auch in das augusteische Zeitalter mündete, das man in Bismarcks politischen Leistungen manchmal wiederkehren sah. Von „Republik“ also keine Spur, nicht einmal im Sinne einer Fürstenrepublik der Bismarck'schen Verfassung, da diese Republik in monarchischem Gottesgnadentum und vaterländischer Untertanentreue ertränkt wurde. So konnte nach 1918 auch keine Bereitschaft entstehen, die neue, demokratische „Republik“ zu stützen und zu erhalten.

Mit dem Verlust der Bereitschaft, republikanischem Denken Raum zu geben, ging auch die republikanische Herangehensweise an Probleme von Freiheit und Herrschaft verloren. Daher endete die republikanische Feinfühligkeit für die Geltungsvoraussetzungen guter Ordnung in den Grobheiten der Anbetung der Macht. Der normativen Kraft des Faktischen wurde nicht mehr die faktische Macht des Normativen gegenübergestellt, auch nicht in seiner Affinität zu zeitlich orientierten Perspektiven im Sinne einer allmählichen Verwirklichung normativer Ansprüche insbesondere des Verfassungsrechts. Die Vielfalt republikanischer Macht- und Konflikttheorien versank in der Dumpfheit des Wilhelminischen Machtrausches und dem Klirren der schimmernden Wehr einer Militarisierung von Staat und Gesellschaft vom einfachen Reserveoffizier

bis zur uniformierten Reichsregierung im Sonntagsstaat – was nebenbei auch noch den Krieg verniedlichte. Die Fragilität politischer Institutionen vergaß man ebenso wie ihre Endlichkeit. Der Verlust des Sinnes für Kontext und Narrative der Freiheit nahm Freiheiten ihre republikanische Pflege und damit ihre Bestandsgarantien. Vergessen waren damit auch die Notwendigkeit einer steten Zuordnung von Recht und Macht, Freiheit und Verfassung, symbolischer Repräsentation und in ihr geteilter Souveränität, wie sie nun in transnationalen Ordnungen erneut auftauchen, die wiederum republikanischer Reflexionen im angesprochenen Sinne bedürfen.<sup>4</sup> Die Geborgenheit von unterwürfigen Einheitsfiktionen und umfassenden Schutzgöttern ungeteilter Herrschaft ist leichter zu verabschieden, wenn man sich bewusst macht, dass Freiheit gerade darin liegt, Herrschaft zu teilen. Das zwingt, die Teile als solche zu reflektieren und zu urteilen, um eine Wahl zwischen Alternativen treffen zu können. In diesem Sinne sind republikanische Bedachtheit und Umsicht Voraussetzungen eines fortgesetzten Vollzugs der verfassunggebenden Gewalt des Volkes, die sich nicht in punktuellen Willensakten, sondern durch kontinuierliches Leben im Umfeld und mit den Mitteln einer Republik manifestiert.<sup>5</sup> Dann kann Demokratie nicht in flachen Schemata – etwa à la mode von materieller und bloß formaler Demokratie – erklärt, wohl aber in ihrem Gehalt entleert werden, wie dies eine oft anerkannte Doktrin bis hin zum Bundesverfassungsgericht mancherorts zu tun geneigt ist.<sup>6</sup>

Es dürfte deutlich geworden sein, welchen Wert die vorliegende Untersuchung hat – auch für Verfassungsrechtler und po-

litische Praktiker, die sich mit dem täglichen Geschäft des Lebens einer Republik herumschlagen. Eine Republik, die noch immer wenige kennen, weil ihnen nicht einmal die Krise der Republik als Republik, geschweige denn die Krisen des Republikanismus bewusst sind. Dagegen kann helfen, mit diesem Buch auf die Spur zu gehen und den Republikanismus zur Kenntnis zu nehmen. Die Arbeit weist weit über die Grenzen der üblichen Habilitationsschriften und des politikwissenschaftlichen Wissenschaftsbetriebes hinaus. Theorielastige Teile werden von großen Abschnitten begleitet, die in zugänglicher Sprache geschrieben sind. Hier liegt nicht nur ein akademischer Leistungsnachweis vor, sondern ein Beitrag zum politischen Gemeinwesen. Das stützt die durchdachte Analyse der Strukturen und der Anforderungen an eine Wissenschaft von der Republik, die diese erhält, fortbildet und entwickelt. Dabei werden die unterschiedlichen Ansätze des Republikanismus in der amerikanischen, der englischen und der französischen Theorie vor der Folie der ihnen zugrundeliegenden geschichtlichen Erfahrungen entwickelt. Das macht die Studie anschaulich, wobei auch die Defizite republikanischer Erfahrung in anderen Gesellschaften sichtbar werden. Für die deutsche Entwicklung der politischen Wissenschaften seit der Nachkriegszeit findet man so die Erträge der republikanischen Theorie und der politischen Erfahrung transatlantisch erschlossen. Damit rundet sich der Anschluss an die westlichen wissenschaftlichen Traditionen ab. Von dieser Leistung wird sich niemand mehr lösen wollen, zumal die Republik des Grundgesetzes der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nur auf diesem Weg zu einem angemesse-

nen Verständnis ihrer eigenen Grundlagen gelangen kann, die seit der Paulskirche und der Nationalversammlung in Weimar manchen, obschon sonst oft verschüttetes, Gemeingut blieben.

Anmerkungen:

- 1 Vgl. K. Nowrot, Das Republikprinzip in der Rechtsordnungsgemeinschaft. Methodische Annäherungen an die Normalität eines Verfassungsprinzips, 2014; dazu H. Goerlich, Die Verwaltung 48 (2015), S. 290 ff.
- 2 Dazu kritisch C. Schönberger, Der „German Approach“. Die deutsche Staatsrechtslehre im Wissenschaftsvergleich, mit Beiträgen von außen von A. Takada, Die Eigenschaften der deutschen Staatsrechtslehre und ihr künftigen Herausforderungen, und A. Jakab, Staatslehre – Eine deutsche Kuriosität, FJP 4 (2015).
- 3 Für eine Quelle, die in die Schweiz führt, A. Kley, Kants republikanisches Erbe. Flucht und Rückkehr des freiheitlich-republikanischen Kant – eine staatsphilosophische Zeitreise, 2013.
- 4 Hierzu verweist Schulz auf T. Thiel, Republikanismus und die Europäische Union. Eine Neubestimmung des Diskurses um die Legitimität europäischen Regierens, 2012; dazu auch B. Assenbrunner, Europäische Demokratie und nationalstaatlicher Partikularismus. Theoretischer Entwicklungsrahmen, unionsrechtliche Ansätze und Perspektiven europäischer Demokratie nach dem Reformvertrag von Lissabon, 2012.
- 5 Dazu in Kritik an E.-W. Böckenförde H. Goerlich, Die Legitimation von Verfassung, Recht und Staat bei E.-W. Böckenförde, in: R. Mehring/M. Otto (Hrsg.), Voraussetzungen und Garantien des Staates. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenfördes Staatsverständnis, 2014, S. 194 ff.
- 6 Erwa E.-W. Böckenförde, Demokratie als Verfassungsprinzip, HDStR Bd. I, 1987, § 22 Rn. 14 ff.; ein Beitrag, der seit BVerfGE 83, 60 (72) bis BVerfGE 123, 267 (341 ff.) die Rechtsprechung befruchtet hat; für einen kritischen Bericht zum Hintergrund B.-O. Bryde, Ausländerwahlrecht revisited, in: M. Krajewski u. a. (Hrsg.), Gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen des Rechts, GS für H. Rittstieg, 2015, S. 99 ff.

**Zachary Lockman: Field Notes. The Making of Middle East Studies in the United States, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2016, 351 p.**

Rezensiert von  
Cyrus Schayegh, Geneva

A leading Middle Eastern historian, Zachary Lockman (New York University) wrote monographs on Egypt, leftism, and Palestine before publishing, in 2010, *Contenting Visions of the Middle East*.<sup>1</sup> The highly instructive *Field Notes* usefully complements that work. An archivally rich account of key players in U.S. Middle Eastern area studies (specifically, foundations including Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Ford) it details “how the sausage is made” (xvi) by closely reading foundation reports from the 1920s–1980s. Foundations evidently formed only one part of a broader area studies landscape. Other players included the government, whose role earlier scholars like Timothy Mitchell highlighted, and universities that, while securing government and foundation funds, dedicated own resources to area studies, too. Examples include Princeton, to which Lockman dedicates most of the fourth chapter, and Harvard, which in 1955 recruited the also organizationally initiative orientalist H.A.R. Gibb from Oxford.

Still, foundations mattered. They acted before most universities, Rockefeller e.g. before World War II; their funding benefited multiple universities; and they were

instrumental in attempts to define area studies. Bodies they created comprised the Rockefeller-funded American Council of Learned Societies (founded 1919 [3ff.]), the Carnegie- and Ford-funded Social Science Research Council's (SSRC) Committee on World Area Research (CWAR; founded 1946 [42ff.]), and the SSRC's Committee on the Near and Middle East (founded 1951 [117ff.]). Lockman *en passant* also discusses organizations that were not directly foundation-related, like the American Association for Middle East Studies (founded in 1959 [160ff.]); here, his notes on Israeli/Zionist connections and on Arab (American) activities in the USA can be read with other recent monographs.<sup>2</sup>

Areas were defined in different ways, which moreover shifted. Thus, after 1945 the Near East turned into the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> And whereas CWAR in 1946 asserted that "the world's civilization can be grouped into thirty or forty significant Areas" (p. 43), funded area studies could be counted on the fingers of two hands. Moreover, methodological debates were never solved (see e.g. p. 81, 90, 94, 118, 157, 226, 243, 254, 262). Some scholars, like Gibb, emphasized expertise in distinct languages, while others, many at the SSRC, insisted on comparatively usable, cross-area social scientific tools. Related, a red thread running through Lockman's monograph is foundations' and scholars' inability of making area studies a discipline. Common methods, themes, or perspectives never emerged, and early interdisciplinary promises foundered.

Consequently, an inferiority complex *vis-à-vis* the social sciences and history, aggravated by funding fears, persistently racked

area studies. This complex was not quite justified, as Lockman points out. Even when modestly understood as a "common geographic focus [with] ... an essentially institutional, pedagogical and social rather than intellectual basis," area studies can create added intellectual value (p. 255). Social science methods are not fixed, either,<sup>4</sup> and "the social sciences (and the discipline of history) were also transformed ... by their encounter with area studies, ... question[ing] whether the claims of Western social science were truly universal" (p. 261). Still, it is instructive to follow up-close, in innumerable committee reports, area studies specialists' hand ringing. And "failure" mattered: first around 1970 when the "bonanza" (p. 142) of the 1950s–1960s abated (p. 205ff.); again in 1996 when the SSRC turned to global studies. Although recalibrated, this decision affected knowledge production.

Underlying Lockman's story is the argument that U.S. area studies were not only or even mainly, and not initially, created by Washington, and cannot be simply understood as a function of U.S. Cold War strategy. He here pushes back against scholars like Mitchell (p. 256–257).<sup>5</sup> While recognizing pre-war roots, the latter posited a World War II break, and stressed U.S. area studies' Cold War nature. By backdating his periodization, Lockman complicates that genealogy and the resultant explanation of area studies' nature, too.

Two critiques can be made. Firstly, Lockman insufficiently links his account to other analyses of foundations, including their overlap, also in personnel, with Washington.<sup>6</sup> Related, his argument underplays, though he empirically recognizes (e.g. p. 52, 57–59, 72, 101, 112ff.), that

in the Cold War and before, foundations, just like Washington, acted with (their vision of) U.S. strategic interests in mind. (Hence, their special attention to Russian and East Asian Studies! [p. 115].) Secondly, Lockman's forte, his U.S.-centricity, is a weakness, too. Area studies have been both transnational and national.<sup>7</sup> More specifically, even a U.S.-centric story has inextricably transnational dimensions. Some, Lockman mentions en passant, like French and British orientalist models for U.S. area studies [p. 21, 74, 81], which he however deems less important than others. Three others can be mentioned. One is foundations' financing of area studies and other area-related fields also outside the United States.<sup>8</sup> Also, U.S. universities, partly with foundation support, from the 1950s invited Middle Eastern academics.<sup>9</sup> These ties were Cold War related; moreover, they can be seen to have deep, even pre-modern roots.<sup>10</sup> Last, that Latin America was the initial U.S. area studies field shows how much reasons of empire carried academic weight even before 1914 (p. 34; also p. 22, 62, 164, 219). One may ask how Latin American studies roots paved institutional ways for later area studies. These critiques notwithstanding, Lockman's monograph is an empirically rich and conceptually innovative contribution to the history of area studies. It belongs on the shelf of anybody working in these fields, which continue to help shape debates in the social sciences and humanities.

#### Notes

- 1 Contending Visions of the Middle East. The History and Politics of Orientalism, 2nd ed. Cambridge 2010.
- 2 S. Yaqub, *Imperfect Strangers. Americans, Arabs, and U.S.-Middle East Relations in the 1970s*, Ithaca 2016; also L. Deeb, Winegar Jessica,

- Anthropology's Politics. Disciplining the Middle East, Stanford 2016.
- 3 O. Khalil, *The Crossroads of the World. U.S. and British Foreign Policy and the Construct of the Middle East*, in: *Diplomatic History* 38 (2014), p. 299–344.
- 4 T. McDonald (ed.), *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, Ann Arbor 1996.
- 5 T. Mitchell, *The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science*, in: D. Szanton (ed.), *The Politics of Knowledge. Area Studies and the Disciplines*, Berkeley 2004, pp. 74–118; similarly: H. Harootunian, *History's Disquiet*, New York 2000, p. 41; B. Kolluoglu-Kirli, *From Orientalism to Area Studies*, in: *New Centennial Review* 3 (2003), p. 93–111, here p. 97, 108.
- 6 I. Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century*, New York 2012.
- 7 M. Bossaert/E. Szurek, *Transturcologiques. Vers une histoire transnationale des études turques (XVIIIe-XXe siècle)*, in: *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 24 (2017), p. 1–23.
- 8 J. Meloy, *Arab and Middle Eastern Studies at AUB. Between Local Concerns and Global Pressures*, in: N. El Cheikh; B. Orfali (eds.), *150 Years AUB*, Beirut 2016, p. 85–94; C. Schayegh, *The Man in the Middle. Developmentalism and Cold War at AUB's Economic Research Institute in-between the U.S. and the Middle East*, in: *150 Years AUB*, p. 105–119; C. Schayegh, *The Inter-war Germination of Development and Modernization Theory and Practice. Politics, Institution Building, and Knowledge Production between the Rockefeller Foundation and the American University of Beirut*, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 41 (2015), p. 649–684.
- 9 See e.g. (Princeton Near Eastern Studies chair) Cuyler Young to (AUB history professor) Constantin Zurayq, Princeton, January 24, 1957, Folder 2, Box 8, Group AC164, Seeley Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University (SMML/PU); Young to (senior Iran Plan Organization member) Khodadad Farmanfarmaian, Princeton, September 17, 1962, Folder 6, Box 4, Group AC164, SMML/PU.
- 10 J.-P. Ghobrial, *The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory*, in: *Past&Present* 222 (2014), p. 51–93.

**Jörg Goldberg: Die Emanzipation des Südens. Die Neuerfindung des Kapitalismus aus Tradition und Weltmarkt, Köln: PapyRossa Verlag 2015, 326 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Tijo Salverda, Köln

After completing the reading, I was left wondering. The emancipation of the 'Global South' is a highly relevant topic, yet what exactly is the book's aim, and for which audience?

In a dense presentation of figures, historical developments, and interpretations of capitalism, it is not always evident what the author's intentions are. At the start of the book (p. 9), Goldberg rightly points to the fact that current forms of modes of production are facing their limits, due to an increasing pressure on the globe's capacities. In the book's last paragraph (p. 314), he comes back to it and, again rightly, argues that a larger say of the 'Global South' in global regulations does not automatically lead to a stronger focus on sustainability and human rights instead of on efficiency and private property. With his central focus of capitalist modes of production throughout the book, this is a very worthwhile investigation – even without including the 'Global South'. Yet in between the first and last pages of the book Goldberg does not treat the question in much detail. It is symbolic one of the book's limitations: the author opens up too

many (relevant) thoughts and leads, which eventually harms the book's coherence.

More closely resembling the book's actual content appears Goldberg's intention to better understand the integration of 'Global South' countries into global capitalism that occurred over the last decades. A very worthwhile investigation. He also lives much more up to it. Notwithstanding, it probably depends on the audience whether his analysis of the integration offers much new. If the intended audience is academic, certainly the ones with already a substantial knowledge about global capitalism and/or the 'Global South', book may not offers sufficient new insights though, it still contains several interesting thoughts. For an audience that wants to better understand the latest developments, however, the book may serve its purposes. With an abundance of figures and illustrations of historical developments, it provides a wide overview about how regions like Asia, Africa, and Latin America have adapted to the latest expansion of global capitalism. In the first part Goldberg discusses the changing position of the 'Global South' and the relevance of European institutions within the development of modern capitalism. With among others the illustration of a number of tables, he convincingly demonstrates that (compared to fifty to hundred-fifty years ago, depending on the table) contribution of Western countries to the world economy has shrunk substantially. Countries within the 'Global South', conversely, have increased their part. This is in itself a good start to indicate that we are witnessing a significant global shift within the world economy. Subsequently, Goldberg includes a historical analysis of capitalism as a European invention. Al-

though I share his opinion that a strong historical foundation helps to understand the developments he investigates, I also started to have some reservations about how the book exactly hangs together.

Goldberg's prose is very dense and structural, and with a lot of (additional) questions the coherence of the argument becomes somewhat obscured. The depth of his argument rather comes from discussing known theories and developments than that he links this to new insights. Whether this matters, as said, may depend on the reader. Yet for me it would have been a more convincing read if the book had included tangible and telling examples that would have supported and exemplified Goldberg's argument. I would probably have easier followed what he was after, while these examples at the same time might have provided the reader with new insights. For example, with author's treatment of (capitalist) modes of production, Marx could certainly not have failed. References to Marx also help to point to the tensions between the unifying tendencies of capitalist structures and local and historical specificities. Yet Goldberg never really drifts off with interesting (new) findings and illustrations of how exactly Marxian thought is helpful in understanding these developments.

When the intention of the book is to provide the reader with a better understanding of how countries within the 'Global South' successfully reinforced their position within the global economy, then I would have been keen to learn more about why a treatment of modes of production is of key relevance to understanding this integration – or lack thereof. Goldberg seems to implicitly start from the assump-

tion that many people/readers/thinkers/academics consider the 'Global South's' changing position not self-evident, because many countries within these regions were until recently characterised by non-capitalist modes of production. There may well be people who still start from this assumption, though (in my own bubble) I encounter few who still support this idea. Yet even if this had been the case, it would have been helpful to explicitly include tensions between different modes of production from the historical overview of European capitalism onwards. On page 60, for example, Goldberg states that the institutions we in Europe associate with modern capitalism are in reality much older. From a comparative perspective, it would have been insightful to learn how these institutions exactly adapted to the (gradual) introduction of capitalism. What were the struggles? What were the tensions between non-capitalist modes of production (which were also very much present in Europe) and capitalist modes of production? How did people (gradually) embrace capitalist thinking? Plenty of examples demonstrate that also in Europe this was not self-evident, yet now we learn comparatively little about it. For the coherence with the second part of the book, however, this would have been helpful.

There a number of regions in the 'Global South' are discussed. As the author had already mentioned on page 28, there are too many varieties to speak of 'the' ascent of the 'Global South'. To demonstrate some of these varieties, he discusses China, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America in more detail. China, the book's fourth chapter, is of course central to the book's quest, since it nowadays is a global economic power-

house. The reasons why China, economically at par with Europe two hundred years ago, lagged behind have received plenty of attention over the years. Also, there has been much scholarly work devoted to how the country managed to catch up over the last decades. Goldberg's intention, it seems, is to illustrate China's changing position through its institutions, such as a central state (and decentralisation), kin and family, and private property. In his discussion on the role of institutions in the ascent of capitalism, this is important. It helps to counter the assumption that countries with remarkably different institutions than the ones central to capitalist development in the West cannot also embrace capitalist modes of production. Though this analysis is not very new, for readers without a good knowledge of China the chapter in itself provides a concise overview.

Sub-Sahara Africa, Goldberg's main terrain of expertise, subsequently deals particular with the role of natural resources and the continent's informal economy. Contrary to the doom scenarios about Africa, the author also sees a number of hopeful developments (p. 172), such as the diversification of African economies, the fact that African countries may increase their say in international treaties, and better control over multinational firms operating within their boundaries. The chapter contains relevant information, but coming back to the coherence of the book, it would have been helpful to have a more explicit analysis of why and how developments within the continent can be compared to China, both for their similarities and differences. With Goldberg's longstanding relationship with the continent, I would equally have been pleased to learn more about particu-

lar cases – apart from South Africa – and how within these, for example, diversification took shape, an important element of a more mature economy after all. What exactly is different today than say thirty years ago, and why? And how have African institutions contributed to this change? Also, what about the role of the alleged increase of middle classes on the continent as well as the role of mobile money, a development in which a number of African countries are at the global forefront – especially compared to Germany.

In chapter 6, Goldberg moves on to Latin America. Central themes here are class and skin colour, which have been important characteristics of economic exclusion in the region. Goldberg again provides a concise overview of (historical) developments on the continent, including the dominance of family conglomerates. But with his treatment of the relevance of nation building and nationalism (in line with Benedict Anderson), it also adds another layer to the confusion about the book's coherence and intentions. I am not against including nationalism and ethnicity, as in actually all cases these phenomena may play important roles, yet by including them only in this chapter they somewhat obscures the book's comparative aim. It is another example of the fact that though many of the themes Goldberg include are relevant in their own right, they also distract the reader from what the main argument is – at least, this reader.

In part three, Goldberg finally intends to all bring it together. In light of what seems to be his main argument, he presents a number of relevant observations, such as the fact that the variety of forms and institutions does not prevent the spread of

capitalist modes of production. We may, according to him, actually witness a growing differentiation, since countries in the ‘Global South’ will more and more emancipate from a capitalism dominated by European and North-American countries (p. 276). This, he probably rightly points out, does not contradict an increasing integration of global markets for commodities, services, information, and capital. Yet participation within global markets is, in the end of the day brokered by nation states. Nation states, accordingly, remain important, and thus also the varieties of institutions between them. I think these are very valid observations, yet I would have hoped to learn more about what the differences and similarities are and how exactly these matter in the (un)successful integration into the global economy. Following from the successful ascent of ‘Global South’ countries, moreover, it also begs the question whether particular institutions in the West contribute to its descent. For most of the world’s inhabitants this probably matters little, because as Goldberg (correctly) highlights, capitalism in the ‘Global South’ is not more sympathetic as in the West and the other way around. Why this is exactly the case, however, probably deserves another investigation.

**Hennie van Vuuren: Apartheid Guns and Money. A Tale of Profit, Auckland Park: Jacana Media 2017, 624 p.**

Reviewed by  
Robin Möser, Leipzig

The book we have here at hands fills a significant gap in the understanding of how the South African state, during the years of Apartheid, was engaged in criminal arms deals, thereby ensuring the minority regime’s survival. It also shows how South Africans secretly managed to influence international opinion in favour of Apartheid in many ways, when things turned against them following campaigns by the Anti-Apartheid Movement and international sanctions and embargoes.

Illuminating insights into how sanction-busting under successive heads of government and the private sector flourished are provided in this important book. Important corruption is still a major issue in South Africa today and can be traced back to Apartheid days and must be considered a lasting continuity. While demonstrating in detail how sanctions were broken and secret funds spent to obtain state of the art weapons, the author cautions that more research needs to be done to bring to light Apartheid’s well-kept secrets.

The book counts 624 pages and is divided into 13 chapters, preceded by an introduction. In the latter, van Vuuren discusses seven “myths”, which serve as underlying reference points in the remainder of the

book: popular assumptions that corruption is a racial phenomenon (1), the popular believe that freedom signalled a clean break with the past (2), that Apartheid South Africa was an isolated state (3) and self-sufficient (4), as well as that Apartheid was unprofitable (5), its defeat inevitable (6) and that all this wrong cannot be undone (7).

The author makes use of a wealth of archival material (often newly discovered by himself and his research team), existing memoirs of key actors and over 110 interviews with people from the government, the business and the security sector. Methodically appealing is the way in which all this is interweaved, particularly court statements and affidavits, pertaining to a case in which a well-known arms dealer of Portuguese origin, sued the Armaments Cooperation of South Africa (Arm Scor). The statements given are masterfully pieced together with information drawn from other deals that took place during the Apartheid years and cross-checked with the obtained archival material.

In the first three chapters, subsumed under the title "The Secret State", the author embarks on a detailed endeavour to illustrate how the "arms money-laundering machine" (p. 23) functioned and central players, such as the military and Arm Scor, are introduced. In this section, he reveals criminal undertakings of the "deep state" (p. 30) that contributed to the longevity of Apartheid rule. These economic crimes were of such a magnitude that they even dwarf the so-called Muldergate Scandal of the late 1970s (p. 56).

The following section, called "Banking on Apartheid", is devoted to the question on how the dealmakers transferred money to

safe havens in Belgium, Luxemburg and Switzerland, whose bankers readily accommodated South African capital. In the case of the Suisse, they bought gold from the Cape in return for cash urgently needed by Pretoria to keep up liquidity (pp. 139-141). It is illustrated how money flowed across the globe to and from South Africa. The staggering number of 844 accounts that Arm Scor held with 196 banks in 27 countries (pp. 176-177) illustrates the concerted efforts by those in charge to circumvent financial sanctions and arms embargoes.

The next section, "The Big Five", covers the permanent members of the UN Security Council, France, the Soviet Union (and Eastern Europe), the United States, the United Kingdom as well as China. While it is generally known that the UK, France and the US were favourably inclined towards South Africa during the Cold War, Soviet and Chinese involvement in arms deals and exchange of intelligence information with Pretoria is not widely known. Van Vuuren shows how South Africans established contact with their Soviet counterparts and concluded deals that brought Moscow's weapons to the battlefields of Southern Africa (p. 258). Furthermore, the SADF was killing SWAPO fighters in Southern Angola, whom China supported, all the while Pretoria was securing weapons shipments from the People's Republic (pp. 395-402), can be regarded surprisingly at odds with the Chinese ideology of supporting African liberation movements.

The following part, "Proxies, Players and Pariahs", dwells upon relations that South Africa had with countries such as Israel, Chile, Taiwan, Argentine and others during the Apartheid years, covering military,

intelligence and financial issues. Here, it is revealed for the first time that Argentinian and South African officials discussed to stage three coups against incumbent governments in countries such as Haiti, Albania and Yugoslavia. However, this apparently never progressed beyond paper studies (pp. 455-461).

The last section includes one chapter in which the author raises the question of how to deal with the legacy of Apartheid-era economic crimes in the present. He makes three suggestions: to open archives for researchers to free the secrets (1), to unmask the deep state, because corruption in South Africa is as bad now as it was during Apartheid (2), and to challenge the impunity of those implicated (3).

The book is thoroughly researched and van Vuuren and his team can only be applauded for the meticulous job they have done by going through approximately 40.000 pages in 25 archives across the globe. While some of the information is not new, i.e. the section on South African relations with Israel rests largely on a book by Sasha Polakow-Suransky<sup>1</sup>, and most of the information on the Department of Foreign Affairs' sanction-busting activities comes from the autobiography of Marc Burger<sup>2</sup>, the information is used to contextualize hitherto unknown secrets, thereby illuminating new facets of the story.

At times information is repeated and some formulations come across somewhat sensational, although this does not infringe on the conclusive narrative the author presents. In addition, sometimes the plethora of names of people, companies and project names can be overwhelming, even for the familiar reader.

Over the past years, human and economic crimes during Apartheid have been subject to an increasing number of books, but I can think of no publication that dissects it in such a convincingly structured density, all the while coming in an easily readable style. The graphs and maps illustrate the most important findings and they are especially valuable to pointedly sum up the respective chapter's main message. The analogies van Vuuren draws to present-day South Africa's political and corporate cultures are breath-taking. One must only think of the Gupta family, state capture and the shrinking media freedom under President Jacob Zuma, to acknowledge that "Apartheid Guns and Money" is indeed an important and timely book.

Notes

- 1 S. Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance. Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa*, Auckland Park 2010.
- 2 M. Burger, *Not the Whole Truth*, Kindle Edition 2013.

**Manfred Kossok: Sozialismus an der Peripherie. Späte Schriften, hrsg. von Jörn Schütrumpf, Berlin: Karl Dietz Verlag 2016, 127 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Matthias Middell, Leipzig

Dieses Büchlein enthält eine Auswahl von sieben Texten des 1993 verstorbenen Leipziger Historikers Manfred Kossok mit einem knappen, aber thesenstarken Vorwort des Herausgebers. Man liest sowohl

die Texte als auch das Vorwort mit Gewinn und erfährt Einführung in die historische Debatte einer erst 25 Jahre zurückliegenden, aber doch für Manchen schon fast vergessenen Epoche. Gleichzeitig sind die aufgeworfenen Fragen nach der Rolle des Sozialismus in der Geschichte des 20. Jh.s und nach dem Platz der Revolution in historischen Narrativen und Erklärungen gerade erst wieder auf die Tagesordnung der historischen Zunft zurückgekehrt, nunmehr mit einer globalen Perspektive, die vor zweieinhalb Jahrzehnten eher selten war und für die Manfred Kossok unter den ostdeutschen Fachhistorikern fast allein stand und die ihm inzwischen breitere internationale Anerkennung verschafft hat.<sup>1</sup> Der programmatische Text „Zur Methodologie der vergleichenden Revolutionsgeschichte der Neuzeit“, der zuerst 1974 gemeinsam mit Walter Markov veröffentlicht wurde, findet sich hier in einer – wie Jörn Schütrumpf per Fußnote anmerkt – um „alle nur noch historiographie- und/oder ideologiegeschichtlich interessanten Passagen“ gekürzten Fassung. Alle anderen Texte stammen aus der Zeit nach 1989 und sind publizistische Äußerungen zum Tagesgeschehen bzw. Aufsätze für Sammelbände. Sie sind durchweg in der dreibändigen Ausgabe der Schriften Kossoks enthalten<sup>2</sup>, aber hier in handlichem Format für eine breitere Leserschaft bereitgestellt, die an der titelführenden Deutung der Geschichte des Realsozialismus ein besonderes Interesse haben mag. Die Eingangsthese des Vorwortes lautet, Kossok habe als Professor für Allgemeine Geschichte der Neuzeit an der Leipziger Karl-Marx-Universität zwischen den 1950er und den späten 1980er Jahren vergleichende Revolutionsgeschichte mit einer

klaren „roten Linie“ 1917 betrieben – für die Zeit davor die verfügbaren Denkräume ausgeschöpft und das „verminte Gelände“ des 20. Jahrhunderts gemieden.<sup>3</sup>

Nach 1989 habe er jedoch als einer der ersten unter den ostdeutschen Historikern ein tatsächlich intellektuell tiefeschürfendes *Mea Culpa* gesprochen und ganz entschieden für die Anwendung der revolutionsvergleichenden Einsichten auf den Realsozialismus plädiert (S. 12). Diese These steuert die Auswahl der abgedruckten Aufsätze, die vor allem um drei Themen kreisen: der Revolutionscharakter des Jahres 1989; die Rolle des Historikers im „Gehäuse der selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit“ und die globalgeschichtliche Einordnung der Revolutionen seit 1917.

Dem Revolutionshistoriker blieb der revolutionäre Charakter der Ereignisse seit dem Sommer 1989 nicht verborgen, auch wenn er das Ergebnis dieser Revolution eher unerfreulich fand und ihr zwar die richtigen Verlierer, aber auch die falschen Sieger attestierte. Mit Sympathie hatte Kossok bereits früh das demokratische Engagement verfolgt und zunächst Hoffnungen in eine Erneuerung der DDR-Gesellschaft von unten gesetzt und sich später mit seinen öffentlichen Interventionen gegen Nationalismus und für eine kosmopolitische Kultur der aus der Revolution hervorgehenden Gesellschaft engagiert. Seine Studierenden folgten dem Bemühen, die Moderne globalgeschichtlich einzuordnen, auch dann noch in großer Zahl, als seine Vorlesung nicht mehr angekündigt wurde, weil Professoren neuen Rechts um Publikum rangen. Der Revolutionshistoriker Kossok gruppierte seine Analyse weiter um die „Sternstunden der Menschheitsgeschichte“ (Stefan Zweig), aber die Op-

tik kehrte sich um: statt Revolutions- als Weltgeschichte ging es nun um den Platz der Revolutionen als Ausnahmezustand in einer globalen Geschichtsbetrachtung.

Unentschieden blieb dabei die Einschätzung des Thermidor, jenes widersprüchlichen Momentes in der Französischen Revolution, als sich die eher gewaltmüde Mehrheit im Konvent gegen Maximilien Robespierre und seine engsten Anhänger wandte und mit Leben des „Unbestechlichen“ auch die stetig anschwellende Radikalisierung des Kampfes gegen Revolutionsfeinde beendete. Im Rückblick auf die russische Oktoberrevolution folgt Kossok seinem akademischen Lehrer Walter Markov, der schon in den 1950er Jahren darauf hingewiesen hatte, dass die Jakobiner ihre Rolle ausgespielt hatten, nachdem sie die Bauernbefreiung von Feudallasten komplett durchgesetzt, das Kriegsglück auf den europäischen Schlachtfeldern durch die Mobilisierung einer Volksarmee (*levée en masse*) gewendet und die Abschaffung der Sklaverei gesetzgeberisch verankert hatten. Eine weitere sozialpolitische Radikalisierung war mit ihnen nicht zu haben, weshalb die Überbietungsrhetorik nunmehr in eine immer schneller drehende Gewaltspirale mündete.

Markov kam in seinen Erinnerungsgesprächen mit dem Publizisten Thomas Grimm auf das Thema zurück und beklagte, dass wohl Lenin und Stalin ähnliche Verdienste beim Sieg über äußere Feinde zuzurechnen seien, aber sowohl die soziale Demokratisierung der Revolution früh stecken geblieben sei als auch die Gewaltspirale nicht angehalten werden konnte.<sup>4</sup> Kossok schließt hier an, wenn er die *terreur* des Jahres 1793/94 als transitorischen Zustand beschreibt, der – um den

Preis der Rücknahme vieler Erwartungen an das soziale Ergebnis der Revolution – zugunsten der Etablierung einer Zivilgesellschaft beendet werden muss. Der Umschlagpunkt allerdings, dies ist ihm wichtig zu betonen, liegt nicht am Beginn der *terreur*, die zunächst noch notwendig war, um überhaupt das bislang Erreichte zu sichern, sondern in jenem Moment (September 1793), als die Jakobiner begannen die Pariser Massen zu entwaffnen und bürokratischer Kontrolle unterwarfen. Wo eine solche Einhegung der revolutionären Dynamik allerdings nicht geschieht und der Ausnahmezustand scheinbar auf Dauer gestellt wird, ist mit der Herausbildung von Diktatur und ebenfalls einer Beschränkung der sozialen Errungenschaften zu rechnen. Allgemeiner gesprochen: der Thermidor ist kein fixer Punkt im Kalender, er kann zu früh kommen (und das Revolutionsergebnis zunichtemachen), er kann aber zu spät stattfinden (und damit die Revolution in schieren gewaltsamen Machterhalt führen).

Die Selbstkritik des Historikers Kossok zielte auf den Umgang mit dieser inhärenten Widersprüchlichkeit der Revolution: die Fixierung auf eine letztlich unerfüllbar bleibende Hoffnung, die Revolution möge vollständige soziale Demokratisierung bewirken, habe übersehen lassen, welche politischen Folgen dieser Traum (und seine Verteidigung durch marxistische Revolutionshistoriker) habe. Schüttrumpf weist zu Recht darauf hin, dass sich Manfred Kossok an verschiedenen Stellen nach 1989 selbstkritisch geäußert hat. Es sei allerdings auch darauf hingewiesen, dass diese Einsichten keineswegs neu und erst durch den Umbruch 1989 ausgelöst wurden. Liest man sei-

nen Aufsatz über die „heroische Illusion“ in der bürgerlichen Revolution<sup>5</sup> aus dem Jahr 1985 oder wiederum Markovs Einlassungen zu den Widersprüchen des Jakobinismus<sup>6</sup> von 1955, dann erscheint vieles nicht ganz so neu. Mit der Feststellung der Widersprüchlichkeit des Robespierismus war der Grundton von Euphorie auf Tragik gestimmt: Die Revolution bleibt eine Lokomotive der Weltgeschichte (so das oft zitierte Diktum von Marx), d. h. sie war (und ist) ebenso unvermeidlich wie unberechenbar und vor allem notwendiger Weise zum Scheitern ihrer anfänglichen Idealvorstellungen verdammt, deren Mobilisierungskraft die Akteure zusammenbringt und Mut fassen lässt, gegen die Verhältnisse aufzubegehren, deren partielle Erfüllung aber auch die temporäre Koalition in ihre unterschiedliche Interessen verfolgende Teile zerfallen lässt. Dem analytisch vorgehenden Historiker mag es gelingen, dies kühlen Verstandes zu beobachten und zu beschreiben, aber als Teilhaber der geschichtlichen Kämpfe ist das Mitleiden mit den Opfern neuer sozialer Ausgrenzung nur schwer zu vermeiden – Tragik des Irrsins und Scheiterns eingeschlossen. Fatalerweise (aber vielleicht auch verständlicherweise) wurde diese tiefere Autopsie der Tragik von Revolutionen 1989-93 kaum gehört. Auf der offenen Bühne des Bochumer Historikertag 1990 geriet Kossoks Bemühen um Differenzierung zwischen die Mühlensteine einer aus dem Osten angereisten pseudo-jakobinischen Radikalität und einer westlichen Irritation, der die historische wie aktuelle Referenz auf das Revolutionäre fremd erschien.<sup>7</sup>

Das dritte Thema schließlich, die Deutung des 20. Jh.s als Epoche peripherer

Revolutionen trägt die deutlichen Spuren der Auseinandersetzung Kossoks mit Immanuel Wallerstein und Eric Hobsbawm. Die Erklärung für Sieg oder Scheitern von Revolutionen einfach an der Qualität des Personals festzumachen, behagte ihm nicht. Die Einordnung in größeren sozio-ökonomischen Wandel findet sich an vielen Stellen seines Werkes: Für das 20. Jh. fiel ihm auf, dass Revolutionen an den Rändern des von Wallerstein postulierten Weltsystems auftraten und den Protest gegen die einheimischen Machthaber mit dem Widerstand gegen eine periphere Positionierung in den globalen Wertschöpfungsketten und im internationalen System der Verteilung von Macht und Reichtum verbanden. Dagegen blieb es im Zentrum des vorgestellten Weltsystems erstaunlich ruhig.

Hieraus folgerte Kossok nun zweierlei: Revolutionen an der Peripherie konnten durchaus erfolgreich sein, aber sie waren kaum in der Lage, eine alternative sozio-ökonomische Ordnung zu entwickeln, weil es ihnen dafür am nötigen technologischen Entwicklungsstand, an der Transformation ihrer Arbeitsorganisation und an der politischen Repräsentation neuer Lebensentwürfe fehlte. Insofern addiert sich der nicht enden wollenden Gewaltspirale im russischen Fall auch eine Einordnung in die kapitalistische Weltordnung ganz unabhängig von staatlichem Eigentum an Produktionsmitteln und weitgehender Kontrolle über den internationalen Zahlungsverkehr. Die Hoffnung, dass eine antikapitalistisch motivierte Revolution an der Peripherie des Weltsystems gegen künftige Widersprüche des Kapitalismus immun und deshalb auch gegen weitere revolutionäre Erschütterungen gefeit sei,

hatte sich spätestens 1989 als Illusion erwiesen.

Es genüge allerdings nicht, so Kossok weiter, nunmehr eine These aus Hobsbawms „short twentieth century“ aufgreifend<sup>8</sup>, die Revolutionsabstinenz im Zentrum einfach festzustellen. Sie sei vielmehr auch ein Produkt der Revolutionen an der Peripherie, denn deren Häufung belebte die Sorge um vergleichbare Erschütterungen in der politischen Klasse im Zentrum. Hieraus ergab sich eine Bereitschaft zur sozialen Umverteilung der Gewinne aus ungerechten globalen Wirtschaftsverhältnissen. Diese Intuition verweist auf die jüngere Ungleichheitsforschung, die einen Zusammenhang zwischen gesellschaftsinterner Ungleichheitsdämpfung und interregionaler Ungleichheitszunahme für weitere Teile des 20. Jh.s ermittelt hat. Und zweifellos hat der Wohlfahrtsstaat west- und zentraleuropäischer Prägung eine Reihe von Anregungen aus den realsozialistischen Staaten aufgegriffen. Als Manfred Kossok seine Idee der peripheren Revolution formulierte, war noch kaum abzusehen, welche Folgen das Jahr 1989 auf den Fortgang sozioökonomischer Transformationen und des Revolutionsgeschehens haben würde. Revolutionen hat es seitdem zahlreiche weitere gegeben. Die Korrelation (wenn es denn eine ist) zwischen innerstaatlicher und transregionaler Ungleichheit hat sich allerdings seit den 1980er Jahren (in unterschiedlichem Maße für die USA und für Westeuropa bzw. Ostasien) umgekehrt: während die globale Ungleichheit abnimmt (vor allem in Folge der wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung in China mit seiner riesigen Bevölkerung), nimmt diejenige innerhalb der westlichen Gesellschaften massiv zu.<sup>9</sup> Dies kann da-

mit zusammenhängen, dass der Druck der peripheren Revolutionen nachgelassen hat oder dass die Konfiguration des Wallersteinschen Weltsystems einem tiefgreifenden Wandel unterliegt.

Es scheint, als hätte die Kossoksche Hypothese wieder einmal Hegels Diktum bestätigt, dass die Eule der Minerva ihren Flug in der Dämmerung antritt, oder anders gesagt: dass es uns erst dann gelingen kann, eine historische Entwicklung begrifflich auf den Punkt zu bringen, wenn das beobachtete Phänomen bereits für einige Zeit in der Welt ist und sich gerade erneut zu wandeln beginnt.

#### Anmerkungen

- 1 Abgesehen von Kossoks Teilnahme an dem bald zu Prominenz gelangten Band Ralph Buultjens/ Bruce Mazlish (Hrsg.), *Conceptualizing Global History*, Boulder 1993 hat sich in jüngerer Zeit die von Immanuel Wallerstein begründete Zeitschrift *Review* in Binghampton Kossoks Werk gewidmet (Themenheft 2018) und ein von Manuel Chust besorgter Band sich mit Kossoks Revolutionsinterpretation beschäftigt: Manuel Chust Calero (Hrsg.), *De revoluciones, Guerra Fría y muros historiográficos. Acerca de la obra de Manfred Kossok*, Zaragoza 2017.
- 2 Manfred Kossok, *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Bd. 1: *Kolonialgeschichte und Unabhängigkeitsbewegung in Lateinamerika*, Bd. 2: *Vergleichende Revolutionsgeschichte der Neuzeit*, Bd. 3: *Zwischen Reform und Revolution. Übergänge von der Universal- zur Globalgeschichte*, Leipzig 2000.
- 3 Ob dies dem Lateinamerikahistoriker Kossok, der sich sehr intensiv mit zeitgeschichtlichen Themen auseinandergesetzt hat, sei hier dahingestellt, denn dem Herausgeber geht es erkennbar um Äußerungen zum Realsozialismus in der DDR, nicht um die Zeitgeschichte insgesamt. Misslicher ist da schon, dass Kossoks Einlassungen etwa zur Reform der DDR-Hochschulen 1984 Schütrumpfs Ansprüchen an eine explizite Sozialismusbewertung offenkundig ebenfalls nicht zu genügen scheinen.
- 4 W. Markov, *Zwiesprache mit dem Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1989, S. 196-202.

- 5 Manfred Kossok, Realität und Utopie des Jakobinismus. Zur ‚heroischen Illusion‘ in der bürgerlichen Revolution, in: Manfred Kossok (Hrsg.), *Ausgewählte Schriften*, Bd. 3: Zwischen Reform und Revolution. Übergänge von der Universal- zur Globalgeschichte, Leipzig 2000, S. 95–107.
- 6 W. Markov, Grenzen des Jakobinerstaates, in: *Grundpositionen der französischen Aufklärung*, hrsg. von W. Krauss und H. Mayer, Berlin 1955, S. 209–242; ders., Die Utopia des Citoyen, in: *Festschrift. Ernst Bloch zum 70. Geburtstag*, Berlin 1955, 229–240.
- 7 K.-H. Janßen, DDR-Professoren auf der Anklagebank. Die Abrechnung, in: *Die ZEIT* v. 5.10.1990 (online: <http://www.zeit.de/1990/41/die-abrechnung>).
- 8 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Age of extremes. The short twentieth century, 1914-1991*, London, New York 1994.
- 9 Branko Milanović, *Worlds Apart: Measuring International and Global Inequality*, Princeton 2005; Thomas Piketty, *Le capital au XXIe siècle*, Paris 2013.

**Thomas Zimmer: Welt ohne Krankheit. Geschichte der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik 1940–1970, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2017, 439 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Klaas Dykmann, Kopenhagen

Thomas Zimmer (Universität Freiburg) hat mit seiner zweifach mit Preisen bedachten Dissertation eine Forschungslücke in der deutschen Historiographie zur Weltgesundheitspolitik in der zweiten Hälfte des 20. Jh.s geschlossen. Seine Studie befasst sich mit der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik zwischen 1940 und 1970 und behandelt demnach die Weltgesundheitsor-

ganisation (WHO) von der Gründung bis zur einsetzenden Ernüchterung bezüglich der von der WHO geführten Ausrottungsprogramme, die zu einer Neuorientierung der Weltgesundheitspolitik beitrug.

Das Buch besteht aus einer Einleitung sowie fünf Hauptkapiteln. Das erste Kapitel bietet eine Art Vorgeschichte der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik von 1851 bis 1940. Im zweiten Hauptabschnitt erfahren wir mehr zur Etablierung der WHO in den Jahren 1940 bis 1946. Das dritte Kapitel behandelt die „Weltgesundheit“ in den internationalen Beziehungen, dem folgt die Erörterung des weltweiten Kampfes gegen bestimmte Krankheiten in den 1950er Jahren. Das fünfte Hauptkapitel analysiert die Weltgesundheitspolitik der 1960er Jahre. Zimmer nennt vier Untersuchungsfelder – Planungen für eine Weltgesundheits Einrichtung, das Malariaausrottungsprogramm (MEP), das nationale MEP in Indien sowie Umbrüche als Folge des Scheiterns des MEP. In seine Studie verfolgt er vier Akteure mit ihren Perspektiven: die der WHO, die USA, Indien und Gesundheitsexperten

Der Forschungsstand wird umfassend, kenntnisreich und nach Kategorien geordnet, abgehandelt. Thomas Zimmers Studie liegen Quellen aus Archiven in Großbritannien, Indien, der Schweiz (WHO) und den USA zugrunde. Als Forschungsperspektive empfiehlt der Verfasser Recherchen in den Archiven der ehemaligen UdSSR und ihrer Verbündeten (S. 18). Zimmer zeigt in vielen Abschnitten, dass er auf Basis des Forschungsstandes und seiner Archivrecherche den Puls der Zeit zu fühlen vermag (bspw. S. 124ff.). Der Autor erkennt in der interdisziplinären Literatur zwei gegensätzliche Erzählungen: Zum

einen das Narrativ der kontinuierlichen Entwicklung einer Weltgesundheitspolitik seit Mitte des 19. Jh.s. Studien, die sich mit begrenzteren Themen oder Aspekten befassen, lehnen eine solche Linie zumeist ab (S. 20f.-). Zum kritisiert Zimmer auf erfrischende Weise das vorherrschende Narrativ einer die Weltgesundheitspolitik dominierenden „westlichen Medizin“ (S. 23). Er spricht dieser eine „lineare, kontinuierliche Vorgeschichte“ ab und identifiziert rückblickend „vielmehr distinkte Entwicklungen mit jeweils spezifischen Logiken und Dynamiken (...) – man könnte wohl sagen: Vorgeschichten –, die sich teilweise zeitlich versetzt, teils parallel zueinander ausbildeten“ (S. 55). Dies ist sicher eine zutreffende Analyse, aber ließe sich nicht Ähnliches für die meisten Politikfelder auf internationaler Ebene konstatieren? Die WHO kann nach Zimmer auf zwei Kontinuitäten zurückblicken: institutionelle Anleihen bei der Gesundheitsorganisation des Völkerbunds sowie die Tätigkeit der Rockefeller-Stiftung (S. 55). Der Autor verweist zudem auf die Bedeutung des Zusammenhangs von Krieg und Krankheiten bei der Gründung der Weltgesundheitsorganisation. So wurde das Insektizid DDT für den Krieg entwickelt, insbesondere um Malariafällen vorzubeugen und trug zur Hoffnung bei, die Ausrottbarkeit der Krankheit erreichen zu können (S. 56). Zimmer führt weiter aus: „Darüber hinaus geben die Initiativen der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik in besonderer Weise Auskunft über den Ideenhaushalt der 1940er Jahre. Sie verweisen auf eine spezifische Polarisierung, die den Zeitgeist bestimmte. Die Jahre nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg sind nicht einfach als eine Phase optimistischer Auf-

brüche zu verstehen; ebenso wenig waren sie aber allein durch apokalyptische Ängste gekennzeichnet.“ Beide Gefühle waren aufeinander bezogen: Weltbürgertum und Weltgesundheitspolitik sind daher weniger als Ausdruck naiver Hoffnung, sondern eher als radikale Antwort auf empfundene Bedrohungen zu bewerten (S. 126).

Im dritten Kapitel zur Weltgesundheitspolitik in den internationalen Beziehungen zeichnet der Verfasser Konfliktlinien der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik nach und befasst sich mit dem Verhältnis der USA zur WHO. Hier bietet er eine gelungene Darstellung der Debatten in den USA, welche die Verzögerung der Ratifizierung der WHO-Verfassung nach sich zogen. Die WHO war offensichtlich keine neutrale und ausschließlich technische Agentur, von Weltpolitik unbehelligt. Neben regionalen Konflikten betraf auch der Ost-West-Konflikt die Gesundheitsorganisation und deren Politik.<sup>1</sup> Ab 1949 beendeten die Sowjetunion und ihre Verbündeten die Zusammenarbeit mit der WHO. Sie warfen den USA und westlichen Staaten vor, die WHO als Instrument für kapitalistische Ausnutzung zu gebrauchen. Die offizielle Begründung lautete jedoch, dass die WHO eine zu großen Teil der immensen Mitgliedsbeiträge für die Selbstverwaltung verwende anstatt für Prävention und Bekämpfung von Krankheiten einzusetzen (S. 146).

Des Weiteren befasst sich Zimmer mit den Kontroversen um die Mitgliedschaft, Geburtenkontrolle und die Bedeutung des Ost-West-Konflikts: Beispielsweise kann die Kontroverse um Israels Mitgliedschaft in der WHO-Regionalorganisation für das Östliche Mittelmeer als ein Beweis herangezogen werden, „dass sich die meisten

weltpolitischen Konflikte der Nachkriegszeit notwendigerweise auch in der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik auswirken und sich konkret im globalen Forum, das die WHO darstellte, manifestierten“ (S. 156f.). Zudem zeugte das mangelnde Engagement für einer Stärkung des „Menschenrechts auf Gesundheit“ in den ersten Jahren der WHO vom Bemühen der Organisation, sich aus „politischen“ Konflikten weitestgehend herauszuhalten (S. 182). Zimmer stellt die offenkundige Frage nach dem „unpolitischen“ Charakter der Sonderorganisationen und betrachtet in diesem Zusammenhang die Rolle von Experten (S. 183ff), welche in der WHO sogar institutionell fixiert wurde. Das Exekutivorgan der WHO schließt Experten mit ein, welche „unparteiisch“ und am Wohle der gesamten Menschheit orientiert seien (S. 185). Trotz aller Kritik an den Experten im Exekutivrat sahen diese sich als Speerspitze für eine bessere Zukunft der Menschheit und „leiteten [daraus] den Anspruch ab, die Menschheit in eine friedliche Zukunft zu führen, in der politische Konflikte und Streitereien nur noch eine entfernte Erinnerung darstellen würden“ (S. 194).

Das vierte Kapitel befasst sich mit dem Kampf gegen verschiedene Krankheiten in den 1950er Jahren. Trotz einer Definition von Gesundheit in der WHO-Verfassung, die die gesellschaftlichen Umstände berücksichtigt und der Sozialmedizin nahe steht konzentrierte sich die WHO in den 1950er Jahren auf Krankheitsbekämpfung. Experten aus den USA und Großbritannien rieten der WHO anfangs, erst einmal Projekte voranzutreiben, mit denen sie die einflussreichen Mitgliedsländer beeindrucken konnten („demonstration

projects“) – und nicht von Anfang an auf die generelle Verbesserung der Gesundheitslage zu setzen. „Greifbare Ergebnisse“ seien gefragt, und dieses Credo schien seit den 1980er Jahren eine Wiederbelebung zu erfahren.<sup>2</sup> In der von der UN ausgerufenen Entwicklungsdekade der 1960er Jahre nahm die WHO eine wichtige Rolle ein zwischen Industriestaaten und „Entwicklungsländern“. Jedoch war dies selten auf nationaler Ebene der Fall – in Indien spielte die WHO beispielsweise kaum eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Malaria bekämpfung (S. 298). Auf logistischer und programmatischer Ebene zeigte sich die WHO allerdings sehr einflussreich: „ausnahmslos alle nationalen Programme [folgten] den Strategien (...), die in Genf ausgearbeitet worden waren.“ Die nahezu unhinterfragte Übernahme der Vorgaben aus dem Hauptquartier resultierte laut Zimmer aus der Akzeptanz der WHO als fachliche Autorität (S. 300).

In seiner Analyse der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik in den 1960er Jahren hebt Zimmer unter anderem auf die Bedeutung des Bevölkerungswachstums für die gesundheitspolitische Diskussion ab. Er zeigt darüber hinaus überzeugend die vielfältigen lokalen, nationalen und internationalen Gründe für das Ende des Malariaausrottungsprogrammes (MEP), wobei auch in diesem Kapitel der Schwerpunkt auf dem indischen Beispiel liegt.

Nach einer differenzierten Betrachtung des Malariaausrottungsprogrammes kommt Zimmer zu dem Schluss, dass es sich keineswegs um ein vollkommenes Scheitern auf ganzer Front handelte, wenngleich das gesetzte Ziel der Ausrottung trotz zahlreicher oft übersehener Erfolge nicht erreicht wurde. Spätere Einschätzungen

des MEP gestehen dem Programm durchaus Teilerfolge zu: „Diese Konjunkturen in der Bewertung des MEP weisen eine interessante Parallele zur Renaissance der Entwicklungspolitik und speziell modernisierungstheoretischer Ansätze seit den neunziger Jahren auf“ (S. 345). Das auf das empfundene Scheitern der Malariaausrottung folgende Basisversorgungsmodell der Primary Health Care behandelt Zimmer nur recht knapp (S. 348-352). In Bezug auf das andere umfassende, aber erfolgreiche vertikale Ausrottungsprogramm im Untersuchungszeitraum – die Pockenausrottung – formuliert Zimmer inspirierende Zweifel am Narrativ der eindrucksvollen Erfolgsgeschichte einer auf Kooperation der beiden Supermächte basierenden Krankheitsausrottung.

Abschließend kann nach Zimmer die Geschichte der internationalen Gesundheitspolitik ab 1945 nicht als „kontinuierliche Entwicklung“ geschrieben werden und ist auch nicht als ausschließlich westliches Projekt anzusehen (S. 363). Darüber hinaus kann die Gesundheitszusammenarbeit nur in Verbindung mit anderen Politikbereichen verstanden werden („Weltfrieden“, ökonomische Entwicklung, Bevölkerungspolitik). Schließlich sei es schwierig, einen Erfolg oder ein Scheitern der Weltgesundheitspolitik zu konstatieren (S. 364). Im Schlusskapitel behandelt Zimmer die gesundheitspolitischen Entwicklungen seit den 1970er Jahren und geht aber über das Thema seiner Studie hinaus. Er macht zu recht eine globalere Sicht auf Gesundheit sowohl nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg als auch zu Beginn des 21. Jh.s (Ausbreitung eines westlichen Lebensstils) aus und zieht einige Parallelen (S. 378).

Die Arbeit wirft einige Fragen auf: Warum endet die Abhandlung bereits 1970 und wurde beim Aufkommen der Primary Health Care nicht fortgesetzt? Wäre nicht auch die Koexistenz von Ausrottungsprogrammen wie die gegen Malaria und die Pocken auf der einen Seite und auf der anderen Seite die Proklamierung und höchst unterschiedliche Ausführung der PHC-Konzepte vielerorts eine Untersuchung wert gewesen? Dies hätte die Studie abgerundet, da gerade die 1970er und untergänzlich anderen Vorzeichen die 1980er von überkreuzenden Dynamiken der so genannten Nord-Süd- und Ost-West-Konflikte sowie einer generellen Debatte über Medizin und Gesundheit (zumindest in westlichen Gesellschaften) bestimmt waren.

Insgesamt stellt Zimmers eindrucksvoll und wohlformuliert geschriebene Doktorarbeit eine hervorragende Studie zum Thema Weltgesundheitspolitik dar, die nicht nur für die Geschichtswissenschaft von Interesse sein dürfte.

#### Anmerkungen:

- 1 J. Siddiqi World Health and World Politics. The World Health Organization and the UN System, London 1995.
- 2 T. M. Brown / M. Cueto / E. Fee, The World Health Organization and the Transition from 'International' to 'Global' Public Health (= JLI Working Paper 1-1, A Joint Learning Initiative: Human Resources for Health and Development), März 2004, S. 11f.

**Darina Volf: Über Riesen und Zwerge. Tschechoslowakische Amerika- und Sowjetunionbilder 1948–1989, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017, 395 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Martina Winkler, Kiel

An Büchern über Stereotype gibt es keinen Mangel. Die intensive Nationalismusforschung, oft verbunden mit verschiedenen Konzepten des Orientalismusproblems, schuf in den 1990er Jahren die Basis für ausgiebige theoretische Untersuchungen und Fallstudien zu Selbst- und Fremdbildern. Dass sich noch in den 2010er Jahren eine Doktorandin einem Thema aus diesem Bereich zuwendet, ist dennoch nachvollziehbar: Die Frage nach dem Umgang tschechoslowakischer Öffentlichkeiten zwischen 1948 und 1989 mit der Sowjetunion einerseits und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika einerseits ist ohne Frage reizvoll. Wir haben es zu tun mit ideologischen Vorgaben von kommunistischer Seite, mit amerikafreundlichen Traditionen auf politischer und populärkultureller Ebene, slavischen und eventuell panslavischen Kontinuitäten, mit den besonderen Strukturen des Kalten Krieges und natürlich den besonderen Traumata von München einerseits und 1968 andererseits.

Darina Volf geht in ihrer nun publizierten Dissertation diesem Thema nach und zeichnet das Bild eines dichotomischen Weltbildes, in dem die Sowjetunion einer-

seits und die USA andererseits wichtige Identifikationspole bildeten. Dabei unterscheidet sie zwischen der Ära zwischen 1948 und 1956, den 1960er Jahren und der Normalisierungszeit von 1969/70 bis 1989, wobei die letzten Jahre noch einmal extra als Perestroika-Zeit differenziert werden. Die erste Phase ist von sehr begrenzten Freiräumen, aggressiver Rhetorik gegen die USA und kritikloser Idealisierung der Sowjetunion gekennzeichnet. Die 1960er Jahre ermöglichten zumindest neue Nuancen beim Blick auf beide Großmächte; die beschleunigten Reformen von 1968 und die Invasion von August veränderten den Blick auf die Sowjetunion radikal – wie nachhaltig und tiefgreifend dieser Wandel war, muss letztlich offenbleiben. Die Normalisierungszeit seit 1969/70 dann war bestimmt von den Strukturen des Spätsozialismus und seinem gesellschaftlichen Konsens, was unter anderem auch für die Darstellung von Sowjetunion und USA galt.

Darina Volf zeichnet diese Entwicklung mit einem großen Quellenreichtum nach und verbindet Textquellen mit visuellem Material. Ergänzt werden die publizierten Quellen (von denen einige nicht einfach zu finden sind, insbesondere die hier umfassend genutzten halblegalen Publikationen vom August 1968) mit Archivquellen aus Prag, Bratislava und kleineren tschechischen Archiven. Dieses Material wird sehr detailliert dargestellt und nacherzählt, wobei zum Teil Redundanzen nicht fehlen – insbesondere die sehr eindeutigen schwarz-weiß-Darstellungen der 1950er Jahre müssen in ihrer propagandistischen Klarheit nicht unbedingt wieder und wieder erklärt werden. Interessanter wäre vielmehr eine Einordnung beispielsweise

in die Strukturen des Kalten Krieges und eine Anwendung der neueren Forschung zu diesem Bereich – die leider weitgehend ignoriert wird – gewesen. Weitere Forschungsdebatten, welche die Autorin hätte fruchtbar machen können, sind beispielsweise die Auseinandersetzungen zum Thema Vertrauen (dies wird in einer Fußnote kurz abgehandelt) oder natürlich die intensiven Diskussionen zur Bedeutung von Ideologie und Alltag. Alexey Yurchak wird zitiert (Pavel Kolář und Martin Sabrow allerdings, um nur zwei Namen zu nennen, leider nicht, Michal Pullmann nur sehr lakonisch), aber die aktuellen Grundfragen zum Funktionieren sozialistischer, insbesondere spätsozialistischer Gesellschaften, werden nur an der Oberfläche berührt. Und so erscheint die Ankündigung, das Buch wolle den traditionellen Gegensatz von Regime und Gesellschaft aufbrechen, nicht erfüllt: vielmehr ist ständig die Rede von der Parteiführung einerseits und „der Gesellschaft“ andererseits. Schade ist auch, dass gerade der zentrale Begriff des Antiamerikanismus relativ unreflektiert bleibt. Wie verhalten sich antikapitalistische Propaganda und Stereotype zu „Amerika“ zueinander? Was überhaupt wird mit diesem Begriff „Amerika“ erfasst? Auch für die Sowjetunion hätten ähnliche Fragen gestellt werden können, beispielsweise mit einer Analyse der Begriffe „russisch“ und „sowjetisch“.

Insgesamt bildet dieses Buch eine reiche Fundgrube an Material für alle, die sich mit Stereotypen befassen, insbesondere auch für die universitäre Lehre. Auf der Ebene der Analyse bleibt es leider in vieler Hinsicht hinter den Möglichkeiten des Themas und auch hinter dem Stand der Forschung zurück.

**Moritz Mälzer: Auf der Suche nach der neuen Universität. Die Entstehung der „Reformuniversitäten“ Konstanz und Bielefeld in den 1960er Jahren (= Studien zur Zivilgesellschaft, Bd. 13), Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016, 512 S.**

Rezensiert  
von Ulrike Breitsprecher, Leipzig

Moritz Mälzer beschäftigt sich in seiner Dissertation mit den Reformbestrebungen der 1960er Jahre in der Hochschulpolitik der Bundesrepublik. Als konkrete Beispiele beleuchtet Mälzer den Prozess von der Ankündigung bis zur Realisierung der Neugründungen der Universitäten Konstanz (1959 bis 1976) und Bielefeld (1964 bis 1979). Nach einer Reihe von Universitätsneugründungen in der Nachkriegszeit durch die Alliierten (zum Beispiel die Volluniversitäten Mainz, Saarbrücken und die FU, aber auch Hochschulen bzw. Akademien der Arbeit in Dortmund, Hamburg und Wilhelmshaven) kündigten mit etwas zeitlichem Abstand und der vollen Souveränität auf dem Gebiet der Hochschulbildung die Bundesländer Baden-Württemberg, Bremen, Nordrhein-Westfalen und Bayern die Gründung von Universitäten an. Insgesamt erhöhte sich die Anzahl der bundesrepublikanischen Universitäten von 18 im Jahr 1960 auf 45 im Jahr 1980. Die Neugründungen sollten vorrangig den Druck auf die bestehenden

Universitäten mindern, die der stetig steigenden Studentenzahlen kaum mehr Herr wurden. Teilweise wurden die Neugründungen auch als regionale Infrastrukturmaßnahme angesehen. Oftmals wurden von den Initiatoren aber auch Reformvorschläge an die Neugründungen geknüpft. Der Großteil rückte vom Humboldtschen Universitätsideal ab, da die Universität als ein Ort der Elitenrekrutierung und -ausbildung kritisiert, die Philosophische Fakultät nicht mehr als zusammenhaltende Einheit begriffen und die Fokussierung auf Persönlichkeitsbildung statt Berufsbildung in Frage gestellt wurde. Begründet wurde die Notwendigkeit von neuen, reformierten Universitäten unter anderem damit, dass einige Fächer wie zum Beispiel die Soziologie im internationalen Vergleich unterrepräsentiert wären, die Universitäten einen anderen Erziehungsauftrag bräuchten oder mehr Forschungsfreiraum haben sollten. In Konstanz wurde eine Universität gegründet, die ohne die Ausbildungsfächer Medizin und Theologie auskommen sollte, die aber auch ihre Studiengänge und -abschlüsse abweichend von den existierenden Normen gestaltete. So sollte es beispielsweise kein juristisches Vollstudium und kein Rigorosum mehr geben. Auch die Universitätsstruktur, u. a. die Gliederung in Institute, sollte verändert werden. Zudem wurde ein neues Zulassungsverfahren der Studierenden beschlossen und die studentische Mitbestimmung in begrenztem Maße zugelassen. In Bielefeld sollte die themenbezogene Forschung gestärkt werden, indem das Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Forschung gegründet wurde. Ein Wort, das damals nur wenig Bekanntheit genoss. Erklärtes Ziel war es, die Forschung an die Universität zurückzuholen, um sie nicht

den außeruniversitären Einrichtungen zu überlassen, und damit die Einheit von Forschung und Lehre wiederherzustellen. Die neue Universität sollte nur eine begrenzte Zahl von Studenten aufnehmen, die in Seminargruppen organisiert sein sollten, die wiederum einen guten Betreuungsschlüssel ermöglichen würden. Lehre sollte auch durch den Mittelbau abgedeckt werden, damit die Professoren mehr Gelegenheit zur Forschung hätten. Die Universität richtete zudem eine Pressestelle ein und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit sollte um Legitimation werben. Aber auch die Pflege eines Alumninetzwerks sowie die Übernahme von Politikberatung sollten zum Profil der reformierten Universität gehören.

Neben den Kritikern dieser Ideen vertraten auch eine Reihe von Wissenschaftlern und Politikern den Standpunkt, dass die alten Universitäten schlichtweg ausgebaut werden müssten, um der Expansion der Studentenzahlen und damit dem weltweiten Trend gerecht zu werden. Diese Positionen wurden nicht nur auf der politischen oder universitären Ebene ausgetauscht, sondern fanden auch Widerhall in der Öffentlichkeit, so dass an der Auseinandersetzung, wohin sich die bundesrepublikanische Hochschulpolitik entwickeln sollte, eine große Anzahl von wissenschaftlichen und politischen Gremienvertretern, aber auch viele Einzelstimmen beteiligt war. Die Zahl der Akteure vergrößerte sich, weil der Bereich Wissenschaft zunehmend institutionalisiert und erweitert wurde. Nicht nur durch die Gründung des Wissenschaftsrats, die erweiterten Möglichkeiten der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft und die Interventionen einiger finanzstarker Stiftungen (wie die Thyssen- oder Volkswagenstiftung), sondern auch durch den

Bedeutungsgewinn von außeruniversitären Forschungs- und Ausbildungseinrichtungen (wie der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft oder der bereits genannten Akademien der Arbeit) weitete sich das Spektrum erheblich.

Mälzers Arbeit reiht sich inhaltlich in eine seit den 1990er Jahren an Breite und Differenziertheit gewinnende Universitätsgeschichte ein. Die vergleichende Perspektive Mälzers betrachtet zudem nicht nur die Institution Universität, sondern auch die Akteure und ihre Ideen im Entstehungsprozess der Reformuniversitäten.

Mälzer lässt sich von den Fragen leiten, welches Funktionsverständnis von Universitäten die untersuchten Akteure haben und welche Inspirationsquellen sie bei der Herausbildung von Reformvorstellungen leiteten. Bezüglich der ersten Fragestellung beschreibt Mälzer die Trias Forschung, Bildung und Ausbildung als Kernaufgaben von Universitäten sowie ihr Verhältnis zueinander und ihre Gewichtung in der Nachkriegszeit. Mit dem Beginn einer weit reichenden Diskussion über die Notwendigkeit von hochschulpolitischen Reformen und Neugründungen von Universitäten wurden gleichzeitig auch die genannten Bereiche jeweils einzeln intensiver debattiert. Die Reformvorschläge waren immer gekoppelt an eine Betonung oder Abwertung eines dieser Bereiche, um auf die wahrgenommenen Krisen und Probleme der traditionellen Universitäten in der Bundesrepublik zu antworten. Beispielweise konnte die vielbeschworene Einheit von Forschung und Lehre aufgrund der immer höheren Studentenzahlen nur noch schwer aufrecht erhalten werden, weshalb die neue Universität in Bielefeld das Zentrum für Interdis-

ziplinäre Forschung einrichtete, welches den Professoren Raum und Zeit zur Forschung geben sollte. Die zweite Fragestellung schließt daran an, indem Mälzer die Akteure der Diskussion über die Zukunft der Universitäten genauer betrachtet, um die Ursprünge ihrer Ideen und Positionen näher zu ergründen. Teilweise wurden die Ideen auf Reisen ins Ausland, etwa nach England, in die USA oder die Niederlande aufgegriffen, teilweise ergaben sie sich aus der historischen Situation, in der sich die Akteure kurz nach dem Nationalsozialismus wiederfanden. In den langen Debatten, inwieweit eine Universität auch zur Persönlichkeitsbildung der Studenten beizutragen habe, wurde die Erfahrung des Nationalsozialismus sowohl als Argument für, aber auch gegen Gemeinschaftsaktivitäten, wie Sport- und Musikunterricht oder die obligatorische Unterbringung in Wohnheimen angebracht. Gerade die Studentenschaft wehrte sich energisch gegen den Formungswillen durch Professoren. Die Universität Konstanz entschied sich dementsprechend für Wohnheime, aber ohne dort ebenfalls untergebrachte Hochschulangehörige und ohne Gemeinschaftsaktivitäten.

Trotz alternativer Möglichkeiten wie Bochum oder Regensburg wählt Mälzer als Untersuchungsbeispiele die Neugründungen der Universitäten Bielefeld und Konstanz. Konstanz als die erste, Bielefeld als die letzte Neugründung hatten jeweils einen geistes-, aber auch sozialwissenschaftlichen Schwerpunkt quasi als Kompromiss zwischen den Anhängern der traditionellen und der modernen Universität. Beide Neugründungen wurden durch eine ganze Bandbreite an wissenschaftlichen und landespolitischen Akteure mitbe-

stimmt, wobei die wenigsten in den jeweiligen Städten vor Ort ansässig waren. Auch gab es keine Vorgängerinstitution, auf die die neue Universität aufgesetzt werden konnte.

Die Debatten um die Neugründungen der Universitäten Bielefeld und Konstanz bilden den Hauptteil der vorliegenden Dissertation von Mälzer. Dabei beleuchtet er nicht nur die Konzeptionen und ihre Ziele sowie den Verlauf von der ersten Idee über Krisen bis zur Eröffnung, sondern auch die Rezeption der Gründungen aus der Perspektive der Kritiker, aber auch der „Gründungsväter“. Gleichzeitig bettet Mälzer die beiden Beispiele in eine weitreichende historische Klammer, indem er nicht nur auf die gesellschaftliche und hochschulpolitische Situation in den 1950er Jahren eingeht, sondern auch die Zeit nach dem Gründungszeitalter beschreibt. Geschickt verwebt Mälzer die Positionen und Argumente der Akteure, seien es Vertreter der Wissenschaft oder staatlicher Gremien, mit den Stimmen der Öffentlichkeit, und argumentiert überzeugend dicht. Gleichzeitig bettet er die jahrelangen Diskussionen um die beiden Neugründungen sehr präzise in den hochschulpolitischen Kontext der Bundesrepublik der 1960er Jahre ein. Die lückenlose Darstellung ermöglicht es ein sehr plastisches Bild dieser Geschehnisse und der Zeit zu gewinnen. Die Arbeit beruht auf einer sehr breiten Archivrecherche und einer ebenfalls umfassenden Untersuchung der zeitgenössischen Publizistik sowie der Publikationen der Akteure, die an den Neugründungen federführend beteiligt waren. Mälzer gelingt es, seine Arbeit sehr breit aufzufächern und trotzdem sehr eng am Thema langzuführen. Er geht zum ei-

nen über das engere Thema, die Neugründungen Bielefeld und Konstanz, hinaus und befasst sich beispielsweise mit den Gesamthochschulplänen von Ralf Dahrendorf, und überwindet zum anderen den zeitlichen Rahmen, indem er die weitere Geschichte der beiden Universitäten verfolgt, zusätzlich bis in die 1990er Jahre hinein das Neugründungsgeschehen anhand von Erfurt und Bremen beleuchtet.

Mälzer bezieht die retrospektive Bewertung der Akteure über Erfolg oder Scheitern der Reformversuche zu den Jubiläen der Neugründungen in seine abschließende Analyse mit ein. Dieser Teil kann als inoffizielles Fazit der Arbeit gelesen werden, gerade da der resümierende Schluss eher kurzgehalten ist. Die treibenden Kräfte hinter den Neugründungen in Bielefeld und Konstanz gingen überraschend hart mit den eigenen Projekten ins Gericht und erachten sie als gescheitert. Leider überlässt Mälzer die Bewertung über Erfolg oder Nichterfolg fast ausschließlich den Protagonisten, ohne nochmals selbst eine kritische Reflektion der Neugründungen, aber auch der verschiedenen Akteurspositionen zu formulieren. In einigen Kapiteln liest sich die Arbeit wie eine Biographie Helmut Schelsky's, einem Initiator der Neugründung der Universität Bielefeld, was sicherlich durch seine Funktion bedingt ist, jedoch bleibt die Frage, ob er tatsächlich so herausragte, wie Mälzers Arbeit suggeriert.

Wünschenswert wären mehr Bezüge zu ähnlichen, vielleicht zeitlich versetzten Reformansätzen in andere Länder gewesen. Gerade ein Blick auf die Entwicklung im anderen deutschen Staat, der ähnliche historische Ausgangsbedingungen, wenn auch eine andere alliierte Besatzungsmacht

hatte, wäre hilfreich gewesen. Inwieweit sich parallel Reformideen auf gleiche Problemlagen, wie beispielsweise die Zunahme der Studentenzahlen oder der Nachholbedarf in einigen Fächern, entwickelten und wieweit es einen Austausch zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten gegeben hat, hätte ergänzt werden können.

Nichtsdestoweniger überzeugt Mälzers Arbeit ebenfalls durch eine sehr gelungene Leserführung, die das Thema und die Fragen immer im Blick hat sowie ohne unnötige Wiederholungen auskommt. Zudem fallen die vielen und sehr sinnvoll ausgewählten Zitate auf, die die Positionen der Akteure und die Stimmung der unterschiedlichen Phasen sehr plastisch vermitteln. Mälzer schließt mit seiner Arbeit nicht nur eine Forschungslücke über die Entstehung der beiden Neugründungen der Universitäten Bielefeld und Konstanz und die Herkunft der Reformansätze, sondern beim Lesen versteht man mehr und mehr Mälzers Ansinnen einen „Beitrag zu einer imaginären geschichtswissenschaftlichen Teildisziplin ‚Reformgeschichte‘“ leisten zu wollen, denn die Arbeit unterstreicht den gewinnbringenden Ansatz, sich über Reformideen der Zeitgeschichte zu nähern.

**Steffi Marung: Die wandernde Grenze. Die EU, Polen und der Wandel politischer Räume, 1990–2010, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013, 400 S.**

Rezensiert von  
Stefan Troebst, Leipzig

Dass für eine „Wir-Gruppe“ die negative Abgrenzung von „denen“ identifikatorisch von größerer Bedeutung ist als die positive Bestimmung binnenintegrativer Faktoren, ist seit Fredrik Barth ein Allgemeinplatz der Sozialanthropologie, der mit einiger Berechtigung auch auf die 500-Millionen-„Wir-Gruppe“ der Europäischen Union bzw. zumindest ihre hauptamtlichen Akteure übertragen werden kann. Nun hatte es Barth allerdings mit relativ stabilen, zumal staatenlosen „ethnic groups and boundaries“ zu tun, wohingegen die Ostgrenze von EWG/EG/EU seit dem Beitritt Griechenlands 1981, der deutschen Wiedervereinigung mittels EG-Mitgliedsstatus für die neuen Bundesländer 1990, dem Beitritt Finnlands zur EU 1995 sowie den bislang drei Osterweiterungsschüben von 2004 (Estland, Lettland, Litauen, Polen, Tschechische Republik, Slowakei, Slowenien und Ungarn), 2007 (Rumänien und Bulgarien) und 2013 (Kroatien) in permanenter Ostbewegung befindlich war (und auch weiterhin ist, zumindest was den restlichen „Westlichen Balkan“ betrifft). Welche Folgen eine solche ständig neuer Selbstvergewisserung bedürftiger Expansion samt „Arrondierung des EUropä-

ischen Raums in einer globalisierten Welt“ hat, untersucht Steffi Marung mit dem Fokus auf den in Bewegung befindlichen EU-Außengrenzen nach Osten und Südosten, auf Grenz- und Migrationsregime sowie auf das, was sie „Ergänzungsraum“ nennt. Damit sind die seit 2004 von der Europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik bzw. seit 2008 von der auf polnische und schwedische Initiative hin formulierten Östlichen Partnerschaft inkludierten Staaten gemeint, also Moldova, die Ukraine, Georgien, Armenien, Aserbaidschan und – aus politischen Gründen eingeschränkt – Belarus, wohingegen der diesbezüglich ambivalente unmittelbare EU-Anrainer Russländische Föderation nicht einbezogen ist. Die „Wir“-Perspektive der EU kennt also, wie die Autorin augenfällig demonstriert, zwei qualitativ unterschiedliche Arten von „denen“. Dabei spielt die geographische Distanz keine Rolle, denkt man etwa an den ca. 1.000 Kilometer entfernten Südkaukasus einerseits und die russländische EU-Enklave Kaliningrad/Königsberg andererseits.

Die Autorin nähert sich ihrem Thema in akteurszentrierter Perspektive, und dies auf drei Ebenen, nämlich auf derjenigen „Brüssels“, auf der nationalen – hier exemplarisch der polnischen – sowie auf der regionalen, genauer: derjenigen der polnisch-ukrainischen Grenzregion. Entsprechend ist die interdisziplinäre, Politik- und Geschichtswissenschaft kombinierende Arbeit in drei Hauptteile sowie Einleitung und Resümee gegliedert. Zwar sind diese drei Untersuchungsebenen als Felder politischen Handelns stark divergent, da die jeweiligen Akteure mitunter diametral entgegengesetzte Ziele verfolgen, doch stehen sie unzweifelhaft kommunizierenden

Röhren gleich in permanenter Interaktion. Dies kann die Autorin besonders eindrücklich am Beispiel der Interessendivergenz zwischen der EU und ihrem neuen Mitgliedsstaat Polen demonstrieren: In Warschau gilt es, übergeordnet-„europäische“ Interessen mit nationalpartikularen und mesoregionalen möglichst friktionsarm zu synchronisieren, wohingegen der Brüsseler EU-Apparat Lernprozesse bezüglich post-imperialer Reflexe in der Ostpolitik Polens zu absolvieren hatte.

Wie die Autorin überzeugend darlegt, hatte Brüssel zwar „der polnischen Argumentation der langen Dauer kein ähnlich tief verwurzelt Narrativ entgegenzusetzen“, akzeptierte aber schließlich die von Warschau eingeforderte besondere, da historisch begründete Kompetenz für die östlichen Nachbarn der Union einschließlich der „Rolle eines Fürsprechers und Mittlers“ (S. 346). Frappierend und zugleich faszinierend, dass die ihrer Anlage nach gänzlich „ahistorisch“ denkenden Vertreter des „alten“ Europa in der Wetstraat allmählich der polnischen Erzählung von der multiethnischen Adelsrepublik partiell folgten.

In ähnlich innovativer Weise hat die Autorin mit Blick auf ihre drei Analyseebenen „die Begriffe des Ergänzungsraums und der Zivilisierungsmission in Auseinandersetzung mit den Quellen entwickelt“ und bietet diese als „Deutung der hier rekonstruierten Konstellation“ an (S. 20). Gemeint ist damit, dass es im Interesse der EU, zumal derjenigen ihrer Mitgliedsstaaten, deren östliche Staatsgrenze zugleich die Ostgrenze der EU ist, liegt, jenseits dieser Grenze eine politische Pufferzonen zu solchen Weltregionen zu schaffen, die aktuell oder potentiell ge-

fahrenträchtig sind – die „eingefrorenen“ postsowjetischen Konflikte im Dnjestr-Tal oder in Abchasien etwa, weiter der Iran, der Mittlere Osten insgesamt, aber auch der Süden der Russländischen Föderation (Tschetschenien, Dagestan u. a.). Zugleich, so das Argument, ist eine politisch-ökonomische Ausrichtung dieses Raumes auf die EU – und damit nicht auf andere Machtpole wie etwa Russland – angestrebt. Dabei zielt diese Einbindungsstrategie mit ihren ökonomischen, sicherheitspolitischen und „zivilisatorischen“ Elementen mitnichten auf eine neuerliche Osterweiterung der Union, schließt eine solche aber auch nicht explizit aus.

Aus der Perspektive des Historikers nimmt dabei die unhistorisch-„postmoderne“ Begriffsprägung des Ergänzungsraums, die aus einem kolonialen Kontext abgeleitet ist und von dort in den EU-Kontext transponiert wird (S. 47-50) wunder. Zwar wird die nationalsozialistische, auf Südosteuropa (nicht „Ostmitteleuropa“, S. 48) bezogene Politik der Schaffung damals so genannter „wirtschaftlicher Ergänzungsräume“ gestreift, aber weder expliziert noch in terminologischer Hinsicht problematisiert. Es mag sein, dass die NS-Wortprägung „Ergänzungsraum“ heute als ideologisch dekontaminiert gelten kann, doch hätte dies der Begründung bedurft. Das Wiener Forschungsprojekt „Ergänzungsraum Südosteuropa“. Konzepte und Strategien des ‚Mitteluropäischen Wirtschaftstages‘ (MWT) und die Europapolitik im Zeichen der Südosterweiterung“ kommt eben deswegen ohne Periodisierungsmarken aus, weil sich der NS-Kontext in zeithistorischer Perspektive von selbst versteht.<sup>1</sup> Zwischen den Osterweiterungen des „Dritten Reiches“ vom

Anschluss Österreichs 1938 bis zur Errichtung des Reichskommissariats Ukraine 1941 und den genannten der EU von 2004 bis 2007 besteht ein fundamentaler, nicht lediglich gradueller Unterschied, der begrifflich nicht eingeebnet werden sollte. Dies trifft in ähnlicher Weise auf den von der Autorin verwendeten Terminus der *mission civilisatrice* zu (S. 45-47), wie er in den portugiesischen und französischen Kolonialreichen des 19. und beginnenden 20. Jh.s Anwendung fand und von dem Briten Rudyard Kipling 1899 auf die Formel *The White Man's Burden* gebracht wurde. Das Projekt der Demokratieentwicklung beispielsweise in Belarus' ist ein schwieriges und der Autokrat Lukašënka mag die Brüsseler Unterstützung für die demokratische Opposition im Lande als „koloniales“ Gebaren kritisieren, doch sind Barrosos Anflüge von Arroganz mit Kiplings kulturellem Überwertigkeitswahn definitiv nicht zu vergleichen. Möglicherweise stellt hier der Terminus der Konditionalität eine Alternative dar – auch wenn er zum *EU-speech* gehört.

So zweckmäßig die Konzentration auf ENP/EP und damit auf die westliche GUS samt dem speziellen polnisch-ukrainischen Fall auch ist, so auffällig ist doch die Ausblendung des teils ähnlich, teils anders gelagerten Beispiels des „Westlichen Balkan“. Ist das – wie schon einmal zu anderer Zeit – ein „Ergänzungsraum“ gleich der GUS oder doch eine Beitrittsregion in spe? Sinnvoll wäre überdies ein Blick auf das massenhafte Phänomen „individueller Osterweiterung“ der EU gewesen, d.h. auf die Ausgabe von EU-Reisepässen an Bürger von Nicht-EU-Staaten, wie dies etwa in Rumänien bezüglich Bürger der benachbarten Republik Moldova oder

in Bulgarien im Falle von Makedoniern üblich ist. Und die durchgängige Verwendung des Begriffes *kresy* für den polnischen Blick nach Osten ist in doppelter Hinsicht irreführend: Zwar bezeichnete er ursprünglich die territorialen Zugewinne des frühneuzeitlichen polnisch-litauischen Commonwealth, steht aber im 20. Jh. und bis heute vor allem für die Ostgebiete der Zweiten Polnischen Republik der Zwischenkriegszeit, die 1944/46 sowjetisch wurden und heute litauisch, belarusisch und ukrainisch sind.

Was die Autorin mit *kresy* bezeichnet, lässt sich in den territorial wesentlich umfassenderen Begriff des „Intermarium“ (*Międzymorze*) fassen, taucht doch das polnische Wappentier, der Adler, seine eine Schwinge in mythologisch-historischer Perspektive in die Ostsee und die andere ins Schwarze Meer. Nicht zufällig belegte der polnische Außenminister Józef Beck die eine seiner quasi-imperialen Konzeptionen mit dem Begriff „Intermarium“. Diese wäre gleich der anderen, dem „Dritten Europa“ (neben dem „ersten“ Mussolinis und dem „zweiten“ Hitlers), ebenso zu nennen wie die Beck'schen Anläufe zu einer friedlichen Durchdringung dieses „Dritten Europa“ mit Warschau als Gravitationszentrum, etwa durch den Aufbau eines engmaschigen Streckennetzes der polnischen Fluggesellschaft LOT oder durch den Versuch, Bukarest und Sofia zum Bau einer Brücke über die Donau zu bewegen, um dergestalt eine Straßenverbindung zwischen Polen und der Levante herzustellen. Während diese polnische Idee erst unter kommunistischem Vorzeichen 1954 realisiert wurde, ist die Verwirklichung des Vorhabens der EU, ihre beiden neuen Mitgliedsstaaten zum Bau

einer zweiten Donau-Brücke zu bewegen, 2013 – nach nur sechs Jahren Bauzeit – gelungen. (In einem historisierenden Reflex hat die nationalpopulistische Regierung Polens 2016 den Versuch unternommen, die „Intermarium“-Konzeption der Zwischenkriegszeit unter dem Rubrum „Drei Meere“ [*Trójmorze*] – gemeint sind Ostsee, Adria und Schwarzes Meer – zu revitalisieren, und das erneut mit infrastrukturellen Großprojekten, nämlich mit einem als „Via Carpathia“ bezeichneten Verkehrskorridor zwischen den Hafenstädten Klaipėda in Litauen und Thessaloniki in Griechenland sowie Pipelines für US-amerikanisches Flüssiggas von einem LNG-Terminal auf der kroatischen Insel Krk nach Polen.)

Die Schwäche der Rzeczpospolita Polska im 18. Jh. resultierte als expansionsanreizendes Vakuum nicht nur in den Teilungen des Unionsstaates durch Russland, Habsburg und Preußen, sondern auch in der deutschen Redewendung, dass „Polen jetzt offen“ sei. Der Beitritt Polens zur EU führte, wenn man diese Analogie über mehr als zwei Jahrhunderte hinweg ziehen will, zur „Öffnung“ nicht nur der ehemaligen Ostgebiete des sowjetischerseits westverschobenen Polen. Vielmehr kam es auch und gerade auf Warschauer Initiative hin zu einer weitergehenden Öffnung nach Osten in Gestalt der EU-Nachbarschaftspolitik. Was das eine, der Beitritt Polens zur EU 2004, mit dem anderen, der Europäischen Nachbarschaftspolitik bzw. heute der Östlichen Partnerschaft, zu tun hat, hat Steffi Marung in ihrer interdisziplinären Dissertation mustergültig erklärt. Sie hat dabei überdies die Europa-Perzeption maßgeblicher EU-Akteure samt dem Prozess der Adaption dieser Perzeption an den parallelen Prozess einer

multiplen „Osterweiterung“ im konkreten wie metaphorischen Sinne beleuchtet und damit nicht nur die „EUropäisierung des polnischen Projekts“ (S. 229), sondern die – um im Duktus zu bleiben – „Polono-Lithuanisierung“ des EU-europäischen Projekts“ in argumentativer Klarheit sowie auf breitem Quellenfundament und gut lesbarer Form herausgearbeitet. Ungeachtet der Frage, ob es für Steffi Marungs Studie des Postulats einer transnationalen

Geschichte bedurft hätte, wird hier überzeugend demonstriert, wie erhellend die Kenntnis der Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas bei der Bewältigung der Herausforderungen der Gegenwart „EUropas“ ist.

Anmerkung:

- 1 Carl Freytag: Deutschlands „Drang nach Südosten“. Der Mitteleuropäische Wirtschaftstag und der „Ergänzungsraum Südosteuropa“ 1931–1945. Göttingen 2012 (= *Zeitgeschichte im Kontext*, 7).

**2017**

## **im Fachforum Connections erschienene Rezensionen**

Das elektronische Fachforum Connections erschien seit 2004 unter dem Titel „Geschichte.Transnational“ als Teil des Informationsdienstes H-Soz+Kult.

Seit 2016 hat es sein Erscheinen unter dem Titel „Transnational, Cross-Regional, and Global Connections. A Journal for Historians and Area Specialists“ fortgesetzt und findet sich unter der Adresse <http://www.connections.clio-online.net/>

Im Folgenden geben wir eine Übersicht über die 2017 erschienenen Buchbesprechungen, die diejenigen in *Comparativ* ergänzen und einer gemeinsamen Rezensionspolitik folgen.

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## **Autorinnen und Autoren**

**Ulrike Breitsprecher**

M.A., Universität Leipzig  
breitsprecher@uni-leipzig.de

**Martin Dangerfield**

Prof. Dr., University of Wolverhampton, Department of History, Politics and War Studies  
m.dangerfield@wlv.ac.uk

**Markus A. Denzel**

Prof. Dr., Universität Leipzig, Historisches Seminar  
denzel@rz.uni-leipzig.de

**Klaas Dykmann**

Prof. Dr., Roskilde University  
dykmann@ruc.dk

**Norbert Fabian**

Ruhruniversität Bochum, Institut für soziale Bewegungen  
nobfabian@t-online.de

**Falk Flade**

Dr., Center for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies (ZIP), Frankfurt / Oder  
flade@europa-uni.de

**Christian Gerlach**

Prof. Dr., Universität Bern, Historisches Institut  
christian.gerlach@hist.unibe.ch

**Simon Godard**

Dr., Univ. Grenoble Alpes, CNRS, Sciences Po Grenoble  
simon.godard@sciencespo-grenoble.fr

**Helmut Goerlich**

Univ.-Prof. Dr. i. R., Leipzig  
helmut.goerlich@gmx.de

**Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast**

Prof. Dr., Center for Interdisciplinary Polish Studies (ZIP), Frankfurt/Oder  
jajesniak-Quast@europa-uni.de

**Suvi Kansikas**

Dr., Network for European Studies, Helsinki  
suvi.kansikas@helsinki.fi

**Matthias Middell**

Prof. Dr., Universität Leipzig, Global and European Studies Institute  
middell@uni-leipzig.de

**Robin Möser**

M.A., Universität Leipzig  
robin.moerer@gmx.net

**Uwe Müller**

Dr., Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa (GWZO), Leipzig  
uwe.mueller@leibniz-gwzo.de

**Erik Radisch**

M.A., Universität Passau, Philosophische Fakultät, Lehrstuhl für Digital Humanities  
erik.radisch@uni-passau.de

**Tijo Salverda**

Dr., Universität Köln  
tijo@tijosalverda.nl

**Cyrus Schayegh**

Prof. Dr., Graduate Institute, Geneva  
cyrus.schayegh@graduateinstitute.ch

**Stefan Troebst**

Prof. Dr., Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa (GWZO),  
Leipzig  
stefan.troebst@leibniz-gwzo.de

**Martina Winkler**

Prof. Dr., Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel  
mwinkler@oeg.uni-kiel.de