MAJOR PLATFORMS OF INTER-BLOC KNOW-HOW EXCHANGE IN THE 1950s AND 1960s IN THE CASE OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

ÇEKOSLOVAKYA ÖRNEĞİNDE 1950'LER VE 1960'LARDA BLOKLAR ARASI BİLGİ ALIŞVERİŞİNİN BAŞLICA PLATFORMLARI

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Abstract
Through the case study of Czechoslovakia, this article analyses the main platforms through which projects of economic and scientific-technical cooperation between the two sides of the Iron Curtain were implemented in the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis is placed on mapping the changes that each platform of East-West cooperation underwent over time and on characterizing the impact that these transformations had on the development of international cooperation. In the first place, the role of conferences and scientific-technical societies is examined. In addition, considerable space is also devoted to the rediscovery of the long-overlooked international fairs and inter-company visits that allowed face-to-face contact between experts in the environment of industrial plants and laboratories. The analysis of the role and development of the various platforms of inter-bloc cooperation draws heavily on the archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries. In addition, the testimonies of individual scientists and experts who participated in international cooperation projects in the 1950s and 1960s provide important support for the article. Although the emphasis of the analysis is on the case study of the Czechoslovak economy, its connection to other member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance requires that the Czechoslovak experience be placed in the broader framework of the pan-socialist milieu.

Öz
Bu makale, Çekoslovakya örneği üzerinden, 1950'ler ve 1960'larda Demir Perde'nin iki yakası arasında ekonomik ve bilimsel ve teknik işbirliği projelerinin hayata geçirildiği ana platformları analiz etmektedir. Doğu-Batı işbirliğinin her bir platformunun zaman içinde geçirdiği değişimlerin haritasının çıkarılması ve bu dönüşümlerin uluslararası işbirliğinin gelişimi üzerindeki etkisinin karakterize edilmesi üzerinde durulmaktadır. İlk etapta konferansların ve bilimsel-teknik toplulukların rolü incelenmektedir. Buna ek olarak, uzun süredir göz ardı edilen uluslararası fuarların yeniden keşfine ve endüstriyel tesisler ve laboratuvarlar ortamında uzmanlar arasında yüz yüze temasa olanak tanıyan şirketler arası ziyaretlere de önemli bir yer ayrılmıştır. Bloklar arası işbirliğinin çeşitli platformlarının rolü ve gelişiminin analizi, Çekoslovak sanayi bakanlıklarının arşivlerinden büyük ölçüde yararlanmaktadır. Ayrıca, 1950'li ve 1960'lı yıllarda uluslararası işbirliği projelerine katılan bireysel bilim insanları ve uzmanların tanıklıkları da makaleye önemli bir destek sağlamaktadır. Analizin vurgusu Çekoslovak ekonomisi üzerine olsa da, Karşılıklı Ekonomik Yardımlaşma Konseyi'nin diğer üye ülkeleriyle olan bağlantısı, Çekoslovak deneyiminin pan-sosyalist ortamın daha geniş çerçevesine yerleştirilmesini gerektirmektedir.

Introduction

The cooperation between the Eastern and Western blocs during the Cold War has been a topic shrouded in obscurity due to its historiographical marginalization and misinterpretation of primary, generally highly politicized sources. However, even the secondary sources represented by Ernst (1987), Průcha (2009) and other Central European authors often address only the macroeconomic and political issues of East-West cooperation and thus do not penetrate to the core of the causes, consequences and forms of cross-Curtain contacts. Some progress in this regard is observed among the contemporary generation of historians represented by Fava (2007), Těšínská (2006) and Krakovsky (2014), who, however, often focus on selected case studies and thus do not provide a more comprehensive syncretistic picture of international economic cooperation in the 1950s and 1960s.

The aim of this article is to harness both the macroeconomic and political essays of Central European senior authors and the case studies of the younger generation of historians, and to amplify and extend these with primary sources from both Czechoslovak and Soviet ministries and from different international organizations such as the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other key platforms of East-West interaction. The article concentrates on the years 1953-1968, which correspond to the period of Antonín Novotný's tenure as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC). The leadership of Antonín Novotný followed the era of Klement Gottwald, who was the head of Communist Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 1953. The choice of the period under study is not accidental. In 1953 not only Klement Gottwald but also Joseph Stalin died and the first attempts to revise the Stalinist approach to the management of international economic cooperation began to permeate the Eastern Bloc. The Novotny era was then characterized by a gradual intensification of these reform efforts, which came to full flower during the Prague Spring.

Although between 1953 and 1968 there was a noticeable strengthening of East-West ties not only within Czechoslovakia, this development was not linear and was characterized by a series of retrograde measures that forced the Soviet satellites to revamp their bonds with the Soviet economic and scientific-technical base. In this vein, the article seeks to map selected key turning points that led to the kick-starting of particular development phases of Czechoslovak East-West cooperation in the crucial period of the 1950s and 1960s. The hypothesis that is being tested in the

paper is that the periods 1948-1953 and 1953-1968 differed from each other in several key points. In the first place, there is a visible shift between the two eras from politicized and generic platforms of cross-curtain cooperation to more technical and depoliticized ones. It can also be assumed that the role of all-encompassing organizations such as GATT, ECE or the International Labor Organization (ILO) underwent a significant transformation after 1953 and that in the following years new scientific societies, trade fairs, research institutes and other international platforms became the drivers of inter-bloc cooperation.

In addition to charting the transformation of the type of platforms, this paper focuses on identifying the drivers of these changes, including the role of the destalinization of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the implications of the Geneva Summit, and other key events of the mid-1950s. An integral part of the paper is the characterization of the transformation of the system of operation of each cooperation platform. In this respect, the study seeks to build on the research of Posejpalová-Kohoutová (1969, pp. 34-35) and analyze the development of Czechoslovak involvement in inter-bloc cooperation projects. The hypothesis here is that cooperation was not newly limited to politicized participation at general macro-levels such as the annual sessions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or multilateral negotiations such as the Torquay Round, but rather that during the 1960s Eastern Bloc experts also took part in international cooperation through purely scientific or administrative posts. In addition to outlining the transformation of the type of platforms and the ways in which Eastern experts have been involved in their work, it is crucial to characterize the changes in the scientific disciplines covered by East-West cooperation. A central question in this regard is whether it was only the natural sciences that enjoyed the development of cooperation, or whether there was also some improvement in the field of humanities.

The article itself is divided into three main sections, each of which analyses East-West cooperation in a specific category of platforms. The first category includes international conferences and scientific-technical societies. The two platforms exhibited similar features, including the composition of experts, a narrow and purely scientific focus, and the mode of know-how exchange. Another, in the secondary literature hitherto rather marginalized category of platforms that enjoyed a great flowering in the Novotný era were international fairs that gathered a large number of both political functionaries and purely technical experts and became an important

venue for negotiating specific deals and projects of scientific-technical cooperation. In this respect, the thesis draws on Freeze's analyses, which it supplements with newly discovered archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries. The third central category of inter-bloc cooperation platforms analyzed in this paper are inter-company visits and study tours, which proved to be a fruitful source of Western know-how for socialist enterprises. Moreover, the newly accessible archives of the Czechoslovak Automobile Works, National Enterprise, (AZNP) suggest that the transfer of technology and information through the Iron Curtain in the eastern direction did not only take place during visits to Western enterprises, but was also carried out in the context of the hosting of Western experts in the economies of socialist states.

All these aspects characterizing the platforms of East-West cooperation constitute the central framework of the present article. Its aim is not only to analyze each platform but it also seeks to place them in the broader context of the Cold War.

NEW BRANCHING OF CONFERENCES & SCIENTIFIC-TECHNICAL SOCIETIES

A comparative analysis of a wide range of reports, statistics, correspondence and other primary sources reveals significant differences between the Gottwald and Novotný eras in the types of platforms that were used to negotiate and subsequently implement individual inter-bloc cooperation projects. Whereas under Gottwald inter-bloc cooperation was often implemented through a narrow circle of rather politicized organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), GATT or ECE, the subsequent Novotný era, characterized by the gradual liberalization leading to the easing of international tensions, made it possible to expand this restricted range of platforms to include scientific societies, conferences, symposia and other technical venues (NA, 1208/967, inv. n. 481-482, c. 635-638, inv. n. 525, c. 702).[1] In addition, thanks to increasing support from the progressively de-Stalinizing CPC, there was also a clear intensification of the organization of these platforms/venues directly in the territory of Czechoslovakia.

Although many contemporary historians, such as Ernst and Průcha, who adopt a macro-historical and macroeconomic approach, do not address in detail the causes and phases of the popularization of these platforms, new archival findings make it possible to examine these particular aspects through a hitherto unapplied lens

[1] NA stands for Czech National Archives located in Prague, Czech Republic, the following numbers in the X/Y format indicate the number of the finding aid (X) and of the fond (Y). Inv. n. stands for inventory number, c. stands for carton, sign. stands for signature.

(Ernst, 1987). Primary sources reveal that among the first significant impetuses for the development of Czechoslovak inter-bloc cooperation through scientific-technical conferences and symposia was the 1955 Geneva Summit, which did not limit itself to ideological-political disputes but instead sought to remove barriers to trade, secure a peaceful use of energy and strengthen scientific-technical cooperation (Austrian State Treaty, Summit and Foreign Ministers Meetings, 1955). The international *détente* that followed the Summit thus constituted a strong incentive for the development of additional platforms of inter-bloc dialogue.

However, the improvement in East-West relations that followed the Summit was not in itself sufficient to intensify the cooperation of Czechoslovak scientists on the platform of cross-Curtain conferences and scientific societies. One of the main reasons was that the Czechoslovak de-Stalinization process was in many ways slower than in other member states of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Therefore, an important factor in establishing inter-bloc cooperation through conferences and other similar venues turned out to be the ability of Czechoslovak scientists to convince CPC leadership of the importance of these platforms for the fulfillment of Czechoslovak economic plans. This was the case for Otto Wichterle (1992, p. 55), who successfully lobbied Prime Minister Viliam Široký to enable him to attend Western conferences and establish contacts with prominent Western chemists. This networking later allowed Wichterle to lecture in capitalist countries, to organize a month-long tour for Czechoslovak scientists in the USA and host a Symposium on Macromolecules in 1957, which was attended by more than 900 scientists from 20 countries (Wichterle, 1992, p. 55; Institute of Macromolecular Chemistry of the Czech Academy of Sciences; Morawetz, 2008, pp. 200-201).

In addition to chemistry, Czechoslovak cooperation through conferences, symposia and other analogous platforms was intensified also in the fields of physics, geophysics, cosmology and other areas. Although most of the secondary literature is silent on this issue, Olšáková and the archives of the Eisenhower Presidential Library draw particular attention to the International Geophysical Year (IGY), which was a series of conferences and research projects that took place from July 1, 1957 to December 31, 1958. The IGY can be considered a watershed event in the development of Czechoslovak inter-bloc cooperation for several reasons. First, it established a new model of multilateral cooperation based on a unique network of cross-Curtain know-how sharing (Olšáková, 2017, p. 100; Eisenhower Presidential Library, International Geophysical Year (IGY) series). Moreover, it was one of the first events that

demonstrated the possibility of prioritizing the interests of science at the expense of political reasoning and at the same time the ability of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia to act without the consent of Moscow. Czechoslovak scientists had been preparing for their participation in IGY as early as 1953, when they held a conference to discuss the opportunities for joining the different activities of the project. In this case, Czechoslovak intelligentsia acted without the blessing of the CPSU, which showed their strong interest in developing inter-bloc ties despite possible political inconveniences. Although the CPSU later protested against this individualistic approach, Czechoslovak scientists defended their participation in the IGY under the condition of Soviet supervision. As a result, for example, data from Czechoslovak observations of meteors collected within the IGY were shared with capitalist countries only after being processed by Moscow (Novák, Link, 1960; Olšáková, 2017, p. 111).

Nevertheless, although the CPSU maintained its control over data and information shared by Czechoslovak scientists, participation in the IGY should still be considered a turning point because it revealed new opportunities for multilateral inter-bloc know-how sharing and thus an important alternative to the previous one-sided orientation of Czechoslovak science towards the Eastern Bloc. This theory is supported by Olšáková (2017, p. 117), according to whom the IGY also provided an important impetus for the creation of an autonomous Czechoslovak national scientific community that was able to promote its own visions independent of the standpoints of CPSU leadership. For example, Czechoslovak scientists from the Warning and Communication Center of the Geophysical Institute participating in the IGY of their own volition initiated close cooperation with similar Western institutes, which led to a long-term sharing of measurements and the creation of an effective inter-bloc warning system (Olšáková, 2017, pp. 97-122; Zátopek, 1960, pp. 102-110).

Archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries show that the positive impact of these initial East-West conferences and projects sparked a wave of similar activities in the subsequent years. For example, data from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Energy demonstrate that its representatives were towards the end of the 1950s able to participate on several Western scientific-technical platforms, including sessions of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in Oslo, meetings of the International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRE) in Paris, the World Power Conference in Madrid, the Vienna Symposium on the Production of Fuel Cells and the Clean Air Conference in London (NA, 1188/961, inv. n. 32, c. 26, inv. n. 43, c. 28, inv. n. 29, 45). A similar intensification of Czechoslovak inter-bloc cooperation

was evident in the heavy industry sector, whose Minister Josef Reitmajer in the late 1950s supported greater involvement in the work of international scientific-technical platforms. Reitmajer's vision of inter-bloc cooperation was not limited to occasional participation in one-off conferences, but relied on more continuous and integrative forms of collaboration that included long-term memberships of Czechoslovak experts in the executive boards and administrative bodies of scientific societies and organizations (NA, 1171/1190, inv. n. 355, c. 309, inv. n. 357, c. 310, inv. n. 358, c. 311, inv. n. 361, c. 336-337). Reitmajer believed that this form of cooperation would enable involvement in more complex projects, which was later confirmed, for example, in the construction of Czechoslovak dams, which was facilitated by longer-term cooperation with the International Commission on Large Dams (NA, 1188/961, inv. n. 28, 29, 45).

Reitmajer's pioneering quest for more integrative, longer-term forms of cooperation on the platform of international societies and organizations was reflected in a number of other Czechoslovak industries. As a result, for instance, Czechoslovak research institutes initiated a long-term sharing of studies and measurements with the CIGRE, which enabled the development of new Czechoslovak methods of grid testing (NA, 1188/961, inv. n. 28, 29, 45). Similarly, a special energy committee was established within CAS to monitor and propose potential long-term inter-bloc projects in the energy sector (NA, 1188/961, inv. n. 43, c. 28, inv. n. 28. 29. 45). The benefits of longer-term involvement directly in the structure of inter-bloc scientific-technical societies were clearly visible in the case of the AZNP and Kovoprojekt, which successfully adopted casting methods shaped in the Alumni Association of the College of Foundry and Forge (*Association des anciens élèves de l'école supérieure de fonderie et de forge*). Similarly, long-term participation of the Czechoslovak Scientific-Technical Society (*Československá vědeckotechnická společnost*) in the work of the International Commission on Illumination (CIE) facilitated and standardized the work of Czechoslovak meteorological institutes (NA, 1171/1190, inv. n. 355 c. 309, inv. n. 357, c. 310, inv. n. 358, c. 311, 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92).

A further intensification in the development of Czechoslovak scientific-technical cooperation through the platform of conferences and scientific societies/organizations was observable at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. Data from the archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries show that the number of Czechoslovak representatives participating in Western scientific-technical non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and conferences continued to increase

dynamically at that time (NA, 1208/967, inv. n. 525, c. 702; Škoda Auto Archive, fond AZNP, c. 324). In addition, the organization of Czechoslovak conferences with the participation of experts from capitalist countries also intensified. An example here is the International Conference on Semiconductor Physics (*Mezinárodní konference o fyzice polovodičů*) held in 1960 in Prague and the Annual Conference of the Czechoslovak Meteorological Society (*Výroční konference Československé meteorologické společnosti*) organized in 1964 in Liblice (1965, Meteorologické zprávy, pp. 22-23).

Although many historians acknowledge that the turn of the 1950s and 1960s was a certain breakthrough in the development of inter-bloc cooperation, there is no clear consensus among them as to the causes of this phenomenon. Czechoslovak archives, supplemented by findings from the fonds of major international organizations, indicate that one of the hitherto overlooked reasons may have been the rapid rapprochement and progress in cooperation achieved at the platform of the UNESCO and the Pugwash Conference. Although the USSR became a member of UNESCO in 1954, it was not until 1959 that Khrushchev decided to strengthen Soviet cooperation and resolved to a permanent membership in the organization (Porter, 2018). The change in the Soviet course was soon after also reflected in the activation of Czechoslovak participation. In the late 1950s, UNESCO organized a number of conferences with Czechoslovak involvement, as in the case of the Conference on Information Processing held in Paris in 1959. Czechoslovak experts later even became members of UNESCO advisory committees and participated in shaping inter-bloc cooperation in nuclear research, education, physics and biology. At that time, the Czechoslovak Commission for UNESCO was activated and began to cooperate with similar commissions from capitalist countries in the organization of educational seminars (NA, 1171/1190, inv. n. 355, c. 309, inv. n. 357, c. 310, inv. n. 358, c. 311).

Furthermore, UNESCO also proved to be key for Czechoslovak inter-bloc networking because it provided financial support for the organization of international conferences in Czechoslovakia. For example, in 1960 UNESCO funded the organization of the International Seminar on the Role of Club Institutions in Adult Education and the International Conference on Semiconductor Physics in Prague. In addition to funding conferences, UNESCO also supported the organization of exhibitions, including the 1960 exhibition Earth as a Planet (*Země jako planeta*), and assisted with the implementation of Czechoslovakia's pro-Western marketing strategy by the publication of articles on Czechoslovak traditional economic sectors in

UNESCO periodicals and brochures (NA, 1171/1190; UNESCO Archives, file EDV/FE/22.29). It should be acknowledged that UNESCO's assistance did not shy away even from organizing and financially backing study tours, exchange studies, visiting professorships and internships. Thanks to this support, dozens of Czechoslovak experts were able to work in research institutes and universities outside of the Eastern Bloc (NA, 1171/1190, inv. n. 355, c. 309, inv. n. 357, c. 310, inv. n. 358, c. 311).

In addition to UNESCO, other under-analyzed organizations, such as the aforementioned Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs, offered similarly pivotal impetuses for the development of Czechoslovak inter-bloc scientific-technical cooperation in the early 1960s (ACAS, file Ivan Málek, Pugwash - vol. 1, inv. n. 3374).[2] It must be admitted, however, that despite the vast potential of Pugwash to deconstruct the non-porosity of the Iron Curtain, the Czechoslovak path to a depoliticized cooperation on this platform was more difficult than in ECE committees and other technical bodies. The reason for this was that Pugwash often dealt with more ideologically sensitive issues, and the proactive approach of the USSR in this respect limited the maneuvering space for the Czechoslovak delegation. This was especially true from the early 1960s, when there was a visible strengthening of Soviet interest in the Pugwash's activities. At that time, the CPSU sought to politicize this platform, considering it an alternative to the World Peace Council, whose activities had become limited due to the escalation of the Sino-Soviet split (Staar, 1991, p. 86-87).

However, as fonds of the Archive of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs reveal, despite these politicization efforts from the Soviet side, advancing *détente* and final de-Stalinization within the CPC ranks enabled the Czechoslovak delegation to Pugwash to implement a number of constructive forms of inter-bloc cooperation. In 1964, Czechoslovak scientists managed to organize a Pugwash Conference in Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), which was attended by experts from a total of 19 countries from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Representatives of the Czechoslovak delegation in Karlovy Vary demonstrated their support for a barrier-free inter-bloc exchange of human capital and know-how and developed a dialogue on possible disarmament. Both Ivan Málek and František Šorm from the CAS participated and Šorm was even elected

[2] ACAS stands for Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Chairman of the Pugwash Committee (AMFA, TO-O, 1960-1964, USA (2)).[3] Although it may seem that the Conference was not successful due to its failure to initiate concrete constructive cooperation projects, it should be considered revolutionary as it succeeded in formulating a new vision of interaction between science and politics. Among its main consequences was that scientists, technologists and other *cognoscenti* resolved to take an active role in shaping the approach of their governments on issues of international scientific-technical cooperation. They started to regard themselves as advocates of the principles of science and not just as experts in their field (Olšáková, 2018, p. 226).

In 1964, the Czechoslovak government also organized sessions of the Pugwash Working Group on the Study of Security Issues in Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad). These events presented a unique platform for Czechoslovak scientists to discuss further development of inter-bloc cooperation with US, British and other Western experts including Henry Kissinger and William Gutteridge. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the issuance of a recommendation to create an inter-bloc network of scientists who would conduct joint research projects on issues of European integration, peaceful use of atomic energy and other political and military challenges of East-West security. A great contribution to the development of cooperation in these fields came from Antonín Šnejdárek, the Director of the Czechoslovak Institute for International Politics and Economics, who, from his position as chairman of some of the Pugwash sessions, was able to steer the evolution of inter-bloc cooperation according to his own vision (Šnejdárek, 1967, pp. 54-55).

However, at a general level, it must be admitted that Czechoslovak scientists did not have an easy task implementing the recommendations adopted at the sessions in Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně. One reason was that even within the de-Stalinized CPC there were many antagonistic forces that prevented the further development of inter-bloc cooperation in these politically sensitive areas. Therefore, although as a result of the Pugwash Conference, Czechoslovak scientists and their American colleagues successfully negotiated the establishment of a new scientific organization, this effort did not find support of the International Department of the CPC, which insisted on the Czechoslovak Pugwash Committee to withdraw from the project. Political reasons including the US interventions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic were named as the cause of the CPC's negative standpoint

[3] AMFA stands for Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

(ACAS, file 10, sign. 12). A major suppression of Czechoslovak activities in Pugwash came after the occupation by Warsaw Pact troops in the summer of 1968, since a number of Czechoslovak scientists who opposed the invasion were unable to follow through with their previous inter-bloc engagement. Although the CAS occasionally managed to send its representatives to Pugwash meetings in the following Husák era, no evidence of any significant initiative from the Czechoslovak side on inter-bloc cooperation after 1970 has been found in the Czechoslovak archives.

In addition to Pugwash, it is appropriate to mention selected UN platforms that by the end of the Novotný era had profiled themselves as important links between scientific-technical experts from both sides of the Iron Curtain. This was the case of the ILO, which, through its International Training Centre in Turin, provided courses for managers from the Eastern Bloc. Later, in the early 1970s, the ILO even helped to organize management seminars in Czechoslovakia, which greatly facilitated the export of Western corporate models to the East (International Labor Office, 1970; Kott, 2018, p. 126-130). Similar transfers of know-how took place within the ECE, which organized various symposia and conferences with the participation of Czechoslovak scientists. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assisted with the establishment of an unprecedented Computer Research Center in Czechoslovakia, which thereafter organized several inter-bloc statistical studies (UNLA, ECE annual reports 1960-1970; AMFA, MO-OMO, 1955-1965, c. 55; Wightman, 1957, pp. 1-12)[4].

A specific form of Czechoslovak involvement in the development of inter-bloc cooperation that was substantially strengthened during the second half of the Novotný era was the direct participation of Czechoslovak experts in the administration and management of international societies and organizations. For example, new archival findings indicate that Czechoslovak scientists participated in the management of the International Institution for Production Engineering Research (CIRP) as members of its board of directors in the early 1960s. Thanks to their proactive involvement, the General Assembly of the Institution was held in Prague in 1961. This had a positive impact on the further development of Czechoslovak inter-bloc cooperation, as it led to the establishment of a Working Group on Machines and Measurements, in whose program participated experts from the Czechoslovak Research Institute of Machine Tools and Machining (*Výzkumný ústav obráběcích*

[4] UNLA stands for United Nations Library & Archives Geneva.

strojů a obrábění) (NA, 1171/1190, inv. n. 355, c. 309, inv. n. 357, c. 310, inv. n. 358, c. 311). Similarly, in the 1960s, the number of Czechoslovak experts in administrative, research and chair positions in the ECE, ILO, IAEA and other UN bodies began to increase (Těšínská, 2006, pp. 40-58; Posejpalová-Kohoutová, 1969, pp. 34-35).

Although further archival research would be needed to determine the specific forms, causes and consequences of the involvement of Czechoslovak experts in the work of international conferences and scientific societies/organizations, it is safe to conclude that, on a general level, the reactivation of Czechoslovak inter-bloc cooperation on these platforms played a positive role in the scientific-technical rapprochement of the two blocs and, consequently, in the development of the previously long-stagnant Czechoslovak economy.

INTERNATIONAL FAIRS: A REDISCOVERED GEM

Although Czechoslovak economists and historians such as Procházka, Ernst and Průcha do not engage in the analysis of East-West fairs and exhibitions, a number of primary sources suggest that these platforms often played a crucial positive role in the development of inter-bloc scientific-technical cooperation (Procházka, 1960; Ernst, 1987; Průcha, 2009). However, it must be admitted that the capacity of fairs to achieve a constructive development of East-West ties was not uniform across their entire spectrum and was influenced by a number of factors. While many international fairs and exhibitions were perceived by political leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain as ideological battlegrounds, others seemed to be significantly depoliticized. One of the decisive factors in this direction seemed to be the fairs' size and focus. While the large-scale and rather generally focused "Expo-type" exhibitions have not escaped a penetration of certain political elements into their platform, the more narrowly defined and technically oriented fairs, such as the Leipzig Trade Fair (*Leipziger Messe*) and the Poznań International Fair (*Międzynarodowe Targi Poznańskie*), provided more space for the development of depoliticized dialogues and exchange of scientific-technical know-how (Fairbanks (Jerry) Productions, 1964; Hamburgisches Welt-Wirtschafts-Archiv, sign. A10 L 183; BVV, 2019).

In Czechoslovakia, the main platform for organizing relatively depoliticized fairs proved to be the Brno Exhibition Center. Constructed in 1928, its representatives were throughout the 1930s and 1940s able to collect abundant experience in the organization of large-scale events, thanks to which they were later able to turn Brno

into one of the main platforms for international know-how sharing in the 1950s and 1960s. Among the main scientific-technical exhibitions of the Center was the International Engineering Fair (*Mezinárodní strojírenský veletrh*), which acted as an imaginary inter-bloc bridge, offering a unique platform for the pooling and dissemination of scientific-technical know-how between the two sides of the Iron Curtain.

Already the first annual International Engineering Fair held in 1959 proved to be a success, as it enabled the Czechoslovak industry to present its achievements, map the state of the foreign market, and establish long-term cooperation ties with Western machine builders. The Fair was attended by around 13,000 international visitors from 44 countries, and altogether 432 exhibitors from 29 countries presented their newest machines, vehicles, agricultural technology and other types of modern engineering equipment. The contribution of the first International Engineering Fair to the Czechoslovak economy can be represented by the fact that Czechoslovak foreign trade enterprises (FTEs) signed contracts worth more than 1 billion Czechoslovak crowns (CSK) during the first seven days of the event. Many of these contracts were for the importation of Western European high-tech equipment, such as the WST 150 machine for the construction of roads (Brněnské výstaviště, 2010; BVV, 2019). These limited findings indicate that, although strongly under-analyzed in secondary sources, international fairs presented a key tool for the deconstruction of the impenetrability of the Iron Curtain as early as the late 1950s. Besides, the popularity of the International Engineering Fair continued to grow in the following years. Between the first and the third year of the exhibition, the number of visitors and participating countries doubled (ČT24 Archive, Pětková září).

The growing potential of trade fairs did not escape the attention of the Czechoslovak government. In 1960, the Minister of Foreign Trade issued a decree on the establishment of the enterprise Brno Fairs and Exhibitions (*Brněnské veletrhy a výstavy*), which was supposed to ensure a more efficient management of future international fairs. To this end, the leadership of Brno Fairs and Exhibitions began to participate in the activities of the Union of International Trade Fairs (Vyhláška ministra zahraničního obchodu o zřízení podniku Brněnské veletrhy a výstavy, podniku pro pořádání veletrhů a výstav, Decree no. 104/1960, Sb). As fonds of the ECE archives in Geneva reveal, the Czechoslovak government also supported the organization of fairs in Czechoslovakia by adopting a package of measures to facilitate the participation of Western entities. These measures mostly involved the

simplification of border formalities, the acceleration of visa application procedures and the expansion of options for currency exchange. In addition, based on the recommendations of the ECE Inland Transport Committee, Czechoslovakia strengthened its aerial and railroad connections to the West (UNLA, E/ECE/265-277: 1957). The willingness of the Czechoslovak government to adopt these pro-Western measures clearly points to the strategic potential attached to the platform of international fairs and exhibitions.

One of the key roles of the International Engineering Fair in the development of inter-bloc cooperation was its ability to shift the opinions of Western experts, entrepreneurs and even government officials. Due to the lack of cross-Curtain contacts in previous years, many of them were initially sceptical about the progress of the Czechoslovak economy, science and technology, and therefore did not take much initiative in establishing new inter-bloc ties. However, the direct personal contact between capitalist entrepreneurs and Czechoslovak engineers and their products at the International Engineering Fair led to the deconstruction of the Western stereotypical image of a necessarily backward socialist production and to the establishment of deeper forms of inter-bloc cooperation. An example is the Czechoslovak textile engineering, which even in the first half of the 1960s struggled with a lack of commercial interest from Western importers. In this respect, reference can be made to the representatives of the British Platt & Co. and Courtaulds Ltd., who before 1966 assumed that the Czechoslovak textile technology had no use for the British economy. However, their participation at the 1966 Brno Engineering Fair broke down their stereotypical prejudice. Western businessmen from Britain, West Germany and Switzerland who attended the Fair declared the Czechoslovak newly developed KS 60 spinning machine a revolutionary technology and began to negotiate its purchase on the spot (Freeze, 2007, p. 15).

However, the precise degree of successful completion of individual purchase contracts remains concealed in the fonds of Czechoslovak archives. In this regard, a certain insight is provided by Freeze, who indicates that not all Western companies that negotiated a two-week test period of Czechoslovak machines were genuinely interested in their purchase, as they were instead conducting industrial espionage (Freeze, 2007, p. 15). Nevertheless, the fact that the revolutionary spindleless technology was eventually successfully sold to Japanese companies Toyoda and Daiwa as well as to the British Courtaulds clearly shows the key importance of the

Brno Engineering Fair in the development of inter-bloc cooperation (Freeze, 2007, p. 16).

At this point it must be admitted that although the International Engineering Fair was probably the most important Czechoslovak exhibition in terms of inter-bloc scientific-technical rapprochement, the Brno Trade Fairs and Exhibitions enterprise, especially later in the Husák era, organized a number of other international events with a significant participation of Western representatives. Particularly noteworthy in this respect were the International Fair of Consumer Goods (*Mezinárodní veletrh spotřebního zboží*) and the International Foundry Fair (*Mezinárodní slévárenský veletrh*) Fondex. During the Novotný era, the Czechoslovak government also supported the development of participation in inter-bloc economic and scientific-technical fairs held in the Western Bloc. In this context, exhibitions with notable Czechoslovak participation included the annual Hanover Fair, the Expo 1964 in Lausanne, the 1964 New York World Fair and the HemisFair '68, which took place in San Antonio, Texas (Galuška, 1968, pp. 24-25). In addition to participation in Western trade fairs, Czechoslovak involvement in inter-bloc exhibitions held in the East was also strengthened. In this regard, important fairs proved to be the Poznań International Fair in Poland and the Leipzig Trade Fair in East Germany (ČT24 Archive, Výstavy a veletrhy). Seminal publications on this topic include *World's Fairs in the Cold War: Science, Technology, and the Culture of Progress* (2019) or Péteri's *Sites of Convergence: The USSR and Communist Eastern Europe at International Fairs Abroad and at Home* (2012).

To evaluate the substance and contribution of individual fairs, it is necessary to consult the primary sources of Czechoslovak archives, as the secondary literature is scarce in this respect. Reports of the Czechoslovak delegation participating at the 1956 Hanover Fair have a positive undertone, because it was considered that the exhibition contributed to the improvement of Czechoslovak production capacities in many fields. In addition to taking part in the fair itself, the Czechoslovak representatives had the opportunity to visit a number of West German automotive and engineering companies, where the corporate organization and production system were studied. Participating Czechoslovak experts in their reports suggested that domestic tractor and motorcycle manufacturers in particular reorganize their assembly processes on the basis of the experience gained in West Germany (NA, 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92; Škoda Auto Archive, fond AZNP, c. 161, 431; AMFA, TO-O, 1945-1959, NSR, c. 15-16).

However, as reports of the Chief Technologist of the Ministry of Precision Engineering, Antonín Václavovic, show, the benefits of attending Western trade fairs were not always to the expectations of Czechoslovak experts, who complained that the Czechoslovak government often only supported politicized and too brief participation, which did not allow the full potential of inter-bloc exhibitions to be exploited (NA 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92).

The fact that many of the appeals of Czechoslovak experts for more effective cooperation at Western trade fairs soon found support of the Czechoslovak central authorities points to the crucial importance the government attached to this rediscovered form of inter-bloc cooperation. An example here is the composition of Czechoslovak delegations at Western fairs. While in the first half of the 1950s, the interests of the Czechoslovak economy were often represented by political delegations, towards the end of the 1950s, on the recommendation of Czechoslovak experts, the exhibition stands became usually occupied by technical *cognoscenti* familiar with the practical aspects of the goods presented. This transformation in the composition of Czechoslovak delegations then facilitated the negotiation of individual inter-bloc cooperation projects. Such was the case of the 1957 Helsinki Industrial Exhibition, where the Czechoslovak depoliticized delegation, represented by experts from the Kovo FTE, managed to conclude a number of contracts for the sale of Czechoslovak goods and licenses, especially in the field of optics and household appliances (NA 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92). The same was true of the Czechoslovak delegation at the 1958 exhibition of laboratory technology in England, which successfully negotiated with British companies for their assistance in the production of polarographs (NA 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92).

Although it must be admitted that the analyzed fairs constitute only a small sample of the whole range of international exhibitions in which Czechoslovak industry participated during the Novotný era, it is clear that these platforms witnessed a hitherto marginalized yet crucial inter-bloc exchange of know-how and technologies. This topic therefore deserves to become a target of additional historiographical efforts in the future.

COMPANY VISITS & STUDY TOURS: QUICKLY AND PRODUCTIVELY

In addition to participation in inter-bloc conferences, organizations and exhibitions, one of the other major sources of Western scientific-technical know-how turned out to be the visits of Czechoslovak representatives to capitalist production enterprises and research institutes. These events were often organized as part of

multi-day study tours that were held on the occasion of business negotiations, international scientific-research projects, trade fairs, conferences and other international activities. At times, they were also arranged independently with a clearly and narrowly defined research or commercial objective. As reports from Czechoslovak study tours to the UK and West Germany from the second half of the 1950s indicate, this type of cooperation was often seen as having a greater benefit for the Czechoslovak economy than other forms of inter-bloc activities (NA 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92, 1188/961, inv. n. 43, c. 28). However, despite these findings, secondary sources addressing the cooperation through company visits and study tours do not provide sufficient insight into the reasons for their popularity and fail to elaborate on their impact on the development of the Czechoslovak economy (Hálek, 2012; Posejpalová-Kohoutová, 1969; Nykryn, 1973; Nykryn, Štěpán, 1977).

In order to fill this gap, the archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries in Prague must be consulted in particular. These reveal that the key importance of visits and study tours was based on a number of factors. The separation from Western advances in science, technology and management that started during the Gottwald era led to the obsolescence of manufacturing processes, inefficient organization of workspaces, high failure rate of assembly lines and the inadaptability of Czechoslovak production to the rapidly changing market needs. In this regard, visits to capitalist companies, facilitated by the onset of inter-bloc *détente*, were perceived as one of the most direct and least time-consuming ways to catch up with Western progress. The advantage of this form of cooperation was further strengthened by the fact that the visited enterprises were often highly modernized, which enabled the transfer of complex know-how ranging from management methods and production standards to manufacturing procedures (NA, 1286/01/862, inv. n. 579, archival unit 8.080-13.709, c. 49, 1188/961, inv. n. 43, c. 28). In addition, company visits and study tours often revealed new opportunities for additional inter-bloc projects and encouraged the development of mutual trade. These claims are supported by fairly depoliticized reports of Czechoslovak experts submitted after their return from international visits, which indicate that this form of cooperation was seen as an important initial contact with Western enterprises that was recommended to be followed by more complex forms of cooperation (NA, 1204/953, inv. n. 29, sign. 056.3, c. 33).

Another reason why Czechoslovak experts considered visits in many respects a more advantageous form of cooperation was that the gap between the two blocs was often so profound that Czechoslovak companies could improve domestic production only on the basis of observations carried out during excursions to Western enterprises, without having to purchase additional licenses or equipment. The AZNP enterprise can be cited as an example of the possibility of obtaining valuable know-how by simple observation, since its representatives' visits to Western European metalworking companies led to the improvement of its compression molding shops. Similarly, visits to several factories in Hanover in 1956 enabled the improvement of the Czechoslovak organization of assembly lines (NA, 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92). Reports from Czechoslovak visits to Swiss, West German and other Western European companies in the second half of the 1950s indicate that in addition to the know-how gained by simple observation, it was possible to collect royalty-free information in the form of leaflets, catalogues and samples (NA, 1109/935, inv. n. 126, c. 92). Moreover, study tours offered a unique opportunity to get first-hand experience in using specific equipment and machines in practice, which was often perceived as a necessity before purchasing their licenses.

Although Hájek, supplemented by the aforementioned findings, might give the impression that the Czechoslovak trips to the West could have been exclusively for the benefit of Czechoslovak science and economy, the historical reality was different. Even during the Novotný era, Czechoslovak exports of machinery to Western European countries still continued to a limited extent. In this context, Czechoslovak experts from Technoexport (FTE) were often dispatched abroad to provide assistance in the installation and commissioning of machines, in their repair in the case of warranty claims and in the training of their operators. The secondment of Czechoslovak technicians to Western companies was especially frequent in cases of deliveries of entire production lines and other larger equipment that required specifically tailored installations. However, it must be admitted that even during these visits aimed at assisting capitalist clients, Czechoslovak technicians had the opportunity to get acquainted with Western production procedures and technologies, and subsequently transfer this know-how to their domestic environment (NA, 1102/948, inv. n. 93, c. 32; Freeze, 2007, pp. 1-29).

Another specific subtype of this form of cooperation consisted of visits of capitalist experts to Czechoslovak companies. As new findings from the AZNP archives in Mladá Boleslav indicate, despite the previous marginalization of this

phenomenon in the secondary literature, visits from Western experts represented a key form of know-how transfer between the two blocs. Since Škoda had a traditionally strong innovative capacity and inter-bloc business ties, the premises of AZNP works became one of Czechoslovakia's liveliest places for meetings of various international experts and the associated exchange of scientific-technical know-how. Although visits by Western *cognoscenti* began to gain in popularity in the second half of the 1950s, it was not until the middle of the following decade that this form of cooperation fully developed. Among the most common partners arriving to Czechoslovakia were representatives of Italian and Scandinavian car manufacturers such as Alfa Romeo, Volvo and Fiat, and West German and British producers of automotive parts (Škoda Auto Archive, fond AZNP, c. 541). AZNP archives provide specific examples of this form of cooperation. In the mid-1960s, representatives of the Italian Alfa Romeo visited the Škoda plant in Mladá Boleslav, where they analyzed its management and production system and proposed specific technical improvements. Similarly, a delegation of the British Rubbery Owen enterprise visited the AZNP works in 1967 and submitted a number of proposals for the improvement of its financial management and workplace organization (Škoda Auto Archive, fond AZNP, c. 156, 240).

Although secondary sources do not deal in depth with the inter-bloc dimension of inter-company visits, the limited amount of above analyzed archival material points to the hitherto unappreciated importance of this form of cooperation. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the restricted scope of this thesis does not allow for a more thorough examination of all aspects of inter-bloc company visits, and many specific projects and their particular contribution to the development of Czechoslovak science and economy continue to escape deserved attention.

Conclusion

This article examined the development of East-West cooperation platforms in the 1950s and 1960s. As it turned out, the passing of Stalin and Gottwald in 1953 was an important milestone that enabled the reform of the Eastern Bloc's approach to the exchange of technology and know-how through the Iron Curtain. While until 1953 cooperation was limited to a narrow range of rather politicized platforms, from the mid-1950s onwards a flourishing of new forms of East-West contacts could be observed. Organizations and forums such as the International Monetary Fund, the Economic Commission for Europe and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

lost their exclusive status and began to compete with a wide range of other cooperation platforms.

As the newly unearthed archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries and international organizations in Geneva have shown, the concept of destalinization alone does not provide a fully comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon of the transformation of East-West ties. On the contrary, it was only an initial impulse that allowed concrete steps towards political and economic rapprochement to be implemented. One of these steps turned out to be the 1955 Geneva Summit which, after seven years of drawing the Iron Curtain, addressed the possibilities of its penetration and sought to remove barriers to trade, secure a peaceful use of energy and strengthen scientific-technical cooperation. In addition, the personality of individual scientists proved to be a key factor in bringing the two blocs closer together, as these experts managed to persuade the CPC leadership, still entrenched in Stalinist thinking, to develop East-West contacts. Typical examples of such experts are Otto Wichterle and Ivan Málek, who were able to enforce their visions of international cooperation in science. On the other hand, however, some credit is also due to the early reformist wings of the CPC leadership, such as Josef Reitmajer, Minister of Heavy Industry, who endorsed the efforts of individual scientists and engineers.

The analysis of primary sources in the Prague and Geneva archives further enabled the identification of a wide range of organizations and platforms that helped to develop East-West cooperation in the mid-1950s. Among these, UNESCO and the Pugwash Conference should be singled out, as they were depoliticized early on and thus were able to function in a truly technical mode. The International Labor Organization also proved to be of a central importance, providing training for Eastern Bloc managers through its International Training Center. International projects, conferences and symposia have also become one of the main platforms for cross-Curtain collaboration. The Symposium on Macromolecules in 1957 was significant for the advancement of Czechoslovak chemistry and biology, and the International Geophysical Year held in 1957 and 1958 proved vital for physics, geophysics and cosmology.

Destalinization and East-West détente also enabled the development of cross-Curtain fairs and exhibitions. While many of the “Expo-type” platforms continued to be perceived by political leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain as ideological battlegrounds, a new wave of more narrowly defined and technically oriented fairs,

such as the Leipzig Trade Fair (*Leipziger Messe*) and the Poznań International Fair (*Międzynarodowe Targi Poznańskie*), provided space for the development of depoliticized dialogues and exchange of scientific-technical know-how. In Czechoslovakia, the International Engineering Fair proved to be pivotal, as since 1959 it has been a place of exchange of modern technologies and a venue for the conclusion of multi-million dollar business contracts.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the participation of Eastern experts in the management and administration of international organizations such as the Economic Commission for Europe, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the International Labor Organization intensified. This type of cooperation turned out to be essential for the development of longer-term technical projects, as it made it easier for Eastern European experts to navigate the system of international organizations and the opportunities they provided in the field of science and technology.

Last but not least, the article analyzed the nature of inter-company visits, which were often considered the most effective form of technology and know-how transfer through the Iron Curtain. The popularity of this platform lay mainly in the fact that visits to Western corporations were perceived as one of the most direct and least time-consuming ways to catch up with Western progress. An example of the effectiveness of this form of cooperation for the socialist economy can be seen in the AZNP enterprise, whose visits to Western European metalworking, design and automotive companies led to the improvement of its compression molding shops and chassis modernization. Alongside this, the Khrushchev Thaw also allowed an influx of Western experts into the Eastern Bloc. Since Škoda had a traditionally strong innovative capacity and inter-bloc business ties, the premises of AZNP works became one of the liveliest places in the Eastern Bloc for the exchange of scientific-technical know-how.

As these findings reveal, the East-West economic and scientific-technical cooperation was already at the beginning of the Novotný era a fairly extensive mechanism that guided the development of not only socialist economies. It would therefore merit additional research that would further concretize the contribution of the different cooperation platforms.

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Summary

Drawing on the case of Czechoslovakia, this article examines the development and nature of platforms of international cooperation between the Eastern and Western blocs in the 1950s and 1960s. The emphasis is placed not only on mapping the changes that each platform of cross-Curtain cooperation underwent over time but also on characterizing the impact that these transformations had on the development of international cooperation. To explore these research questions, both secondary sources from mainly Czechoslovak and Soviet historians and economists as well as primary sources including the archives of Czechoslovak industrial ministries and international organizations in Geneva are used.

Among the main objectives of the article is to highlight the difference between the Stalinist period in Czechoslovakia (1948-1953) and the subsequent Novotny era (1953-1968). While East-West cooperation before 1953 was limited to a narrow handful of select politicized macro-platforms such as ECOSOC and the International Monetary Fund, the advent of destalinization saw the blossoming of hitherto marginalized forums of inter-bloc contacts.

The primary sources consulted point to a number of reasons leading to this fundamental transformation of East-West cooperation platforms. In addition to destalinization itself, which in many respects merely provided an initial impetus, mention should be made of the 1955 Geneva Summit, which did not limit itself to ideological-political disputes as was common in earlier summits of this type, but instead sought to remove barriers to trade, secure a peaceful use of energy and strengthen scientific-technical cooperation.

The recollections of selected scholars, supplemented by travel reports from Czechoslovak ministries, show that individual cognoscenti played a key role, as their capacity and natural authority enabled them to persuade the at-the-core still Stalinist leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party to reconsider their approach to the question of inter-bloc cooperation. Other factors, including the sluggish development, the rejuvenation of the Soviet Presidium and Politburo, and the unsustainable balance of payments of the socialist market, also played an important role in transforming the various platforms of East-West contact.

All of these changes in the mid-1950s enabled the flourishing of cross-Curtain conferences and symposia. For example, the Symposium on Macromolecules in 1957 and the International Geophysical Year in 1957 and 1958 proved to be crucial for the advancement of Czechoslovak biology, chemistry, physics and cosmology. In addition, East-West scientific-technical contacts increased via UNESCO, Economic Commission for Europe, International Electrotechnical Commission, International Council on Large Electric Systems, Pugwash Conferences and other venues.

Primary sources of Czechoslovak industrial ministries also revealed the central role of international fairs and exhibitions, which in the mid-1950s developed into unique platforms offering both the possibility of concluding business contracts and the opportunity for technical meetings between scientists and thus the transfer of know-how. In this respect, the International Engineering Fair in Brno proved to be one of the main fairs in the Eastern Bloc. Already at its first edition in 1959, multimillion-dollar trade and cooperation agreements were concluded.

Last but not least, the present article analyzes the role of inter-company visits, which were often considered among Czechoslovak experts as the most effective source of Western know-how. Among the socialist enterprises that frequently sought this platform of cooperation was Automobile Works, National Enterprise, which not only regularly dispatched experts to Western enterprises but also hosted experts from Scandinavia, Italy and other capitalist countries.