



## INTRODUCTION

# Introduction to Everyday Internationalism: Socialist–South Connections and Mass Culture during the Cold War

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### Abstract

This Special Issue brings together scholars working in a variety of contexts to explore the concepts of solidarity and socialist internationalism as a mass phenomenon. While recent scholarship has begun to document linkages between the socialist and (post)colonial world during the Cold War, most of this work has eschewed a focus on the mass, social experience of internationalism, instead emphasizing the transformative role played by small groups of mobile elites. But if the direct experience of socialist internationalism was limited to a privileged few, how then was it experienced by the majority, for whom actual travel outside of their state was a distant possibility? This issue explores how socialist internationalism and its attendant practices of solidarity functioned within and between socialist societies. Where it does take border-transcending groups as its subject, it explores the socio-historical, everyday implications of this transnational story. For much of the Cold War, state and party-led practices of internationalism were a central component of everyday life, but little is known about these practices as they manifested on the ground. To shed light on this, this Special Issue explores how depictions of solidarity manifested in mass culture; how everyday practices emerged out of socialist internationalism and anti-imperialism; and how institutions that sought to bridge gaps between societies through solidarity emerged and then transformed or disappeared after 1989.

A 1977 photograph from a department store in East Berlin shows two portraits nestled among everyday food items. In between jars of Bockwurst and mustard stand portraits of Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, and Joachim Yhombi-Opango, the head of state of the Marxist-Leninist People's Republic of the Congo. Yhombi-Opango's rule would not last long after the photo was taken: he was deposed in 1979. But when he travelled to East Berlin two years earlier, Honecker assured him that he was a household name. "In our country", he told the Congolese leader, "it is very well known how much the People's Republic of the Congo is doing for the final liberation of the African Continent from



**Figure 1.** Portraits of Erich Honecker and Joachim Yhombi-Opango in an “HO” department store in East Berlin.

Source: Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung, Harald Schmitt, Schmitt\_04.

colonialism and racism”.<sup>1</sup> The photo (Figure 1) serves as a reminder not only of the idiosyncratic geopolitical ties socialist internationalism produced, but also of the many small claims it made on everyday experience. To live in a socialist state during the Cold War meant experiencing the daily ephemera of internationalism, in the workplace as well as in spaces of leisure, consumption, and the home.

East Germany (GDR)’s links to the People’s Republic of the Congo would prove transient, another example of the apparently Potemkin village-like nature of Eastern bloc solidarity campaigns, which, according to Kim Christiaens, have typically been seen as “a matter of ‘agitprop’ and ‘front organisations’ [...] fatally discredited by their association with the Soviet Union”.<sup>2</sup> Encapsulating this argument, Toni Weis has claimed with reference to GDR–Namibian solidarity campaigns that socialist solidarity relied upon the construction of simplistic “moral constructs” rather than actual dialogue, requiring very little political commitment from socialist citizens.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv, DY 30/2459, “Toast des Generalsekretärs des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Erich Honecker”, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Kim Christiaens, “‘Communists Are No Beasts’: European Solidarity Campaigns on Behalf of Democracy and Human Rights in Greece and East–West Détente in the 1960s and Early 1970s”, *Contemporary European History*, 26:4 (2017), p. 622.

<sup>3</sup>Toni Weis, “The Politics Machine: On the Concept of ‘Solidarity’ in East German Support for SWAPO”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37:2 (2011), pp. 351–367, 366.

It would make sense, then, that the plethora of literature that has emerged recently on the subject of socialist internationalism has focused not on the experiences of the masses, which, it naturally follows, must have been fundamentally inauthentic, shallow, and short-lived, but instead on the small, mobile groups that made up its vanguard: students, experts, or the military. Yet, what happens if we investigate socialist internationalism not at the level of the vanguard or socialist elites first and foremost, but rather at the level of the everyday? Do we find that once the false façade of mass political engagement is removed, nothing is left? This Special Issue will argue that such an investigation is worthwhile. Indeed, it is precisely at this socio-historical level that the study of socialist internationalism is most rewarding. Behind the mask of mass support and choreographed political engagement lies a complex and unstable story, where the messiness of public political commitment played out in a variety of ways.

Scholars have frequently noted that socialist internationalism displayed a fundamental paradox: couched in emancipatory rhetoric and encapsulating ideas of not just national, but also global liberation, international solidarity cultures nevertheless emerged (on the socialist side) from authoritarian regimes, thus carrying with them the baggage of rigid state domination. Evidence of this paradox can be found in the active roles played by the socialist secret police forces in monitoring, formulating, and controlling such encounters: while East Germans who travelled to Cuba for solidarity-inspired trade union holidays were spied upon by Stasi agents, African or Asian students who came to study in the Eastern bloc were routinely monitored for subversive opinions. The grammar of solidarity and its foundational concepts of equity, horizontalism, and voluntarism were sometimes realized in these encounters. And yet, all too easily, they could also slip into mutual misunderstanding, instrumentalization, and cynicism.

Weighing the scales of this paradox – emancipation on the one hand, authoritarian domination on the other – the existing literature has largely leaned towards the latter. By emphasizing the ways in which socialist–South encounters were inflected with authoritarian desires or aims, scholars have paid less attention to their social, mass-cultural element. Solidarity, when properly practised, invites naturalistic metaphors: most commonly, it is imagined as being “grassroots”, emerging plant-like from the ground up. Socialist internationalism depicted itself in this vein. Those at the top of the state structures that emerged to coordinate it argued that they were incidental to the whole operation, existing merely to coordinate popular movements.<sup>4</sup> We now know that, as a general rule of thumb, this is not true. And yet, this does not make investigation into the everyday level of socialist internationalism fruitless. As this issue will show, it is not always possible to draw a clean line between the marginal, instrumentalized practices these encounters produced and their existence at the level of mass culture and the everyday. The question of how these citizens imagined, supported, reacted to, and reformed

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<sup>4</sup>Ilona Schleicher, “Das Solidaritätskomitee der DDR und Mosambik. Unterstützung des Befreiungskampfes und Entwicklungshilfe”, in Ulrich van der Heyden, Hans-Georg Schleicher, and Ilona Schleicher (eds), *Die DDR und Afrika: Zwischen Klassenkampf und Neuem Denken* (Münster, 1993), pp. 192–208, 84.

international solidarity – often in lieu of on-the-ground, face-to-face connections – remains a vital element of this story. This Special Issue will take up this question in earnest, exploring how socialist citizens explored the paradoxes that internationalism created.

In 2011, David C. Engerman wrote of the “promise” of the as-of-yet understudied and underexplored field of “the second world’s third world”. The historiography of the Soviet Union, Engerman argued, was ripe for a reimagining, and the “internationalization” of the study of the history of the US would serve as a model.<sup>5</sup> In some respects, Engerman was preaching to the converted: a broader shift in Cold War studies was already underway following Odd Arne Westad’s forceful intervention via his 2005 *Global Cold War*, in which he made the claim that the “Third World” ought to be taken from the margins of the Cold War stage and placed front and centre: political and social development in the decolonizing and postcolonial worlds, Westad argued, was the locus of the Cold War story.<sup>6</sup> By the time Engerman was writing, a number of important works exploring Soviet relations with nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America had emerged as PhD theses and would shortly appear as books thereafter. Oscar Sanchez-Sibony’s recalcitrant 2014 *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* marked a critical foray into the exploration of relations between the Soviet Union and the postcolonial world.<sup>7</sup> The following year, Jeremy Friedman’s *Shadow Cold War* told the story of the Sino-Soviet split – already subject to a range of excellent studies – in a new, postcolonial light.<sup>8</sup> A wave of scholarship exploring the Soviet Union’s relations with the nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America would follow.<sup>9</sup>

This new approach would eventually expand beyond a focus on the Soviet Union to explore the entirety of the “second world’s third world”, from Mongolia to Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> It would incorporate the lessons learned from the earlier “cultural turn” in Cold War studies, seeking not just to explore the diplomatic, political, or economic history of what I will call here “socialist–South” encounters, but also to delve into them in their socio-cultural entirety.<sup>11</sup> The 2017 *Cambridge History of Communism* was a marker of how much this wave had changed the broader approach, featuring several articles exploring these connections.<sup>12</sup> This shift has

<sup>5</sup>David C. Engerman, “The Second World’s Third World”, *Kritika*, 12:1 (2011), pp. 183–211, 210.

<sup>6</sup>Odd Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 396.

<sup>7</sup>Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization: The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (New York, 2014).

<sup>8</sup>Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015); see also Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ, 2008).

<sup>9</sup>For another early example, see Tobias Rupperecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin: Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2015).

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Natalia Telepneva and Philip Muehlenbeck (eds), *Warsaw Pact Intervention in the Third World: Aid and Influence in the Cold War* (London, 2018).

<sup>11</sup>On the cultural turn, see Robert Griffith, “Review: The Cultural Turn in Cold War Studies”, *Reviews in American History*, 29:1 (2001), pp. 150–157.

<sup>12</sup>James Mark and Tobias Rupperecht, “Europe’s ‘1989’ in Global Context”, in Juliane Fürst, Mark Selden, and Silvio Pons (eds), *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 3: Endgames? Late Communism in*

continued to have spillover effects, challenging the notion – long held in many circles – that the Global South and the socialist world were figuratively immobile places, either resistant to globalization or passive recipients of it. In contrast, recent studies have pointed to socialist and postcolonial mobilities and the alternative forms of globalization that they engendered.<sup>13</sup> Socialist–South encounters have proven to be fertile ground for a lively, extensive literature that explores feminism and the state during the Cold War.<sup>14</sup> The literature on human rights during the Cold War has similarly found new impetus via the rediscovery of the crucial impact that decolonization had on rights narratives.<sup>15</sup> Central to this effort has been the work of the *Socialism Goes Global* research network, led by James Mark, which brought together historians from several different sub-disciplines and national foci. The scope of the two recent volumes produced by members of the network reveals a historical object no longer obscured by the reeds but now subject to thorough examination.<sup>16</sup>

Engerman’s “second world’s third world” has thus opened several avenues for further enquiry. What have we learnt from this wave of literature, and what remains obscured? This Special Issue will explore new avenues that have emerged thanks to the extensive work of these scholars in the field of socialist–South connections. It will take its cue from a recent intervention by James Mark and Péter Apor. In the final chapter of the 2022 *Socialism Goes Global* volume, Mark and Apor explore what they call the “home front” of socialist internationalism. Socialist–South encounters, they argue,

reshaped political and popular cultures at home. Solidarity with a range of national liberation and socialist movements fighting “western imperialism” – from Cuba to Vietnam to Chile – became commonplace across all countries within the region. For the most part, this has been understood through the prism of dictatorship: expressions of solidarity were politically instrumentalized and essentially inauthentic top-down initiatives that imposed

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*Global Perspective, 1968 to the Present*, The Cambridge History of Communism (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 203–223; Celia Donert, “Feminism, Communism and Global Socialism: Encounters and Entanglements”, in Fürst, Selden, and Pons (eds), *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 3*, pp. 376–398; Andreas Hilger, “Communism, Decolonization and the Third World”, in Norman Naimark, Silvio Pons, and Sophie Quinn-Judge (eds), *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 2: The Socialist Camp and World Power 1941–1960s* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 317–340; Sara Lorenzini, “The Socialist Camp and the Challenge of Economic Modernization in the Third World”, in Naimark, Pons, and Quinn-Judge (eds), *The Cambridge History of Communism: Volume 2*, pp. 341–363.

<sup>13</sup>James Mark, Artemy Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung (eds), *Alternative Globalizations: Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World* (Bloomington, IN, 2020); Kathy Burrell and Kathrin Hörschelmann (eds), *Mobilities in Socialist and Post-Socialist States: Societies on the Move* (London, 2014).

<sup>14</sup>Celia Donert, “Women’s Rights and Global Socialism: Gendering Socialist Internationalism during the Cold War”, *International Review of Social History*, 67:SI30 (2022), pp. 1–22.

<sup>15</sup>Ned Richardson-Little, *The Human Rights Dictatorship: Socialism, Global Solidarity and Revolution in East Germany* (Cambridge, 2020); Sebastian Gehrig, *Legal Entanglements: Law, Rights and the Battle for Legitimacy in Divided Germany, 1945–1989* (New York, 2021).

<sup>16</sup>James Mark and Paul Betts (eds), *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonisation* (Oxford, 2022); Kristin Roth-Ey (ed.), *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War* (London, 2023).

an alien culture on reluctant populations. Here we argue differently: postwar socialist solidarity generated widespread domestic activism that was the outcome of both centralized and grassroots initiatives at the same time. It extended well beyond the state, deep into intellectual and popular cultures, and was capable of bearing unorthodox political meanings that were often a challenge to Communist elites.<sup>17</sup>

The point here is not to rescue these encounters from that charge that they were “top-down”, or instrumentalized by the powers that be in the socialist world, replacing this image with a grassroots solidarity. Rather, it is that at the level of the everyday, the social, that solidarity regimes were at their most interesting, because it was here that they were most subject to change, unstable, and capable of producing conflict.

The question of inauthenticity is worth pondering here, for it provides a helpful explanation as to why the social or mass cultural elements of international solidarity have received less attention. The socialist–South encounters that took place during the Cold War were defined, it is true, not just by emancipatory rhetoric but also by genuine political fervour (on both sides) for decolonization. Here, the term is meant in its fullest political implication, meaning not just political sovereignty in the Hobbesian sense, but also the political, economic, and social flourishing that a postcolonial world offered: a utopian vision of human prosperity in an international system rid of domination.<sup>18</sup> Such emancipatory visions were quickly marred by authoritarianism, however. Transnational encounters were thus often couched in discourses of revolutionary world-building but often served (or were intended to serve) narrow authoritarian ends. This fact has allowed for a broad dismissal of these encounters as somehow marginal, ritualistic, and artificial. It is, nevertheless, precisely at the level of the social, the everyday, that socialist citizens had the most room to subvert, reject, or alter such practices, and thus where historical investigation can be most fruitful.

What did international solidarity mean to the average socialist citizen? So far, the literature on socialist–South connections has illuminated more about the transnational elites that actively took part in these encounters than about the masses that often did not. We now know that many thousands of socialist experts, workers, and teachers travelled to the postcolonial world, with either noble aims of helping to craft a new, alternative, shared socialist and postcolonial modernity, less virtuous intentions of generating hard currency or political support, or often a combination of both at the same time. And we know that many Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans went the other direction, as students, contract workers, refugees, political delegations, fighters seeking medical care, or experts seeking models and inspiration. But we also know that these figures were atypical, often exoticized minority figures, not only in the places that they travelled to, but also at home. Socialist–South

<sup>17</sup>Péter Apor and James Mark, “Home Front”, in Mark and Betts (eds), *Socialism Goes Global*, pp. 318–358, 318.

<sup>18</sup>On this, see Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019).

connections created a sort of socialist, postcolonial cosmopolitanism that was not reproduced at a mass scale. For most people, internationalism was not a lived practice of travel and displacement but something that existed at home, in the workplace, or in the media.<sup>19</sup> Yet, these ventures were invariably funded by donations made by regular citizens in the socialist world, collected in factories and collective farms, or at mass events. Such donations formed a fundamental component of everyday life across the socialist world, yet we continue to know very little about the circumstances in which they occurred.

The projects that these travellers sought to enact often foundered on the shores of the 1970s and 1980s, as state socialism and the postcolonial world were rocked by debt crises, the neo-liberal turn, and the “shock of the global”.<sup>20</sup> These apparent failures often serve as justification to dismiss the significance of these connections more broadly. Today, the fruits of socialist–South entanglement – which range from crumbling East German-built apartment blocks in Zanzibar to discarded Yugoslav plans for the urban development of Conakry, from Romanian-built slaughterhouses in Iraq to the many thousands of now near-worthless diplomas and training certificates awarded to students from the Global South – appear, if they are remembered at all, as quirks of long-forgotten utopian visions of a new world order. Often, the “failures” of the projects that these travellers sought to create are held up as a reason to dismiss the significance of these connections more broadly. The argument goes something like this: these practices were small in scale, ineffective, and largely only served a propagandistic function, which was reproduced at home but generally ignored by a populace excluded largely from the practice in the first place. And yet, as Eleonory Gilburd reminds us in a different context, while so much of Cold War culture – on *both* sides of the Iron Curtain – may have been “underwritten ... by counterpropaganda campaigns, government funds, and psychological warfare schemes”, this does not mean that such cultures were unable to elicit real enthusiasm or active engagement from regular citizens, nor that they were peripheral to the experience of everyday life.<sup>21</sup>

There is another important reason that this on-the-ground, social-historical element of socialist–South connections has so far received comparatively little attention: researching it is difficult. While the travels and travails of experts, students, and the like, often created archival paper trails as well as memoirs and correspondence, it is much harder to trace the outlines of a mass culture and phenomenon, pin down digestible pieces of evidence regarding the everyday experience of socialist internationalism, or wade through the reams of propagandistic official material on the ever-rising international consciousness of the socialist worker. Secret police files carry the opposite issue: an imbalance towards

<sup>19</sup>In the East German case, Slobodian writes, “icons, and contributions rather than personal experience remained the means of engaging with the global South and activists of color”. Quinn Slobodian, “Socialist Chromatism: Race, Racism and the Racial Rainbow in East Germany”, in Quinn Slobodian (ed.), *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World* (New York, 2015), pp. 23–43, 32.

<sup>20</sup>On this, see Niall Ferguson *et al.* (eds), *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 2011).

<sup>21</sup>Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die: The Soviet Lives of Western Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), p. 39.

negativity, opposition, and Stalinist paranoia. To make cultures of internationalism legible today, it is necessary to do the groundwork that parses the socialist state's propagandistic narratives and contemporary dismissal of their "top down" nature, revealing in the process a sphere of interaction between citizen and state that is alive to many different possibilities. In short, socialist internationalism carried within it multivalent meanings and prospects: it could be legitimizing, ritualistic, or perfunctory, perceived as apolitical or deeply personal. It could – and did – carry the seeds of both resistance and legitimation.

Taken together, the articles in this Special Issue seek to redress the balance, exploring the social aspects of these solidarity campaigns and provoking further research. Eric Burton's article is focused on Tanzania but adopts a transnational lens via the exploration of a broader transnational ethos of solidarity exhibited in the ideal of "frontline citizenship". This ideal encouraged ordinary Tanzanians to engage with the numerous anti-colonial liberation struggles that made the country their home-in-exile (alongside many others besides). Burton argues, however, that such a model of citizenship was neither a simple top-down imposition nor a "natural" outgrowth of anti-colonial activism, but rather a dynamic, complex solidarity regime that manifested in a number of spheres, from the media to political rallies and material practices.

One of the prominent ways that socialist internationalism manifested in everyday life in the socialist world was via television. In Kristin Roth-Ey's contribution, Soviet filmmaker Konstantin Simonov's documentary on the Vietnam War, *There's No Such Thing as Someone Else's Sorrow*, shows both the "verticality" of the Soviet solidarity regime and the "interpenetration of top-down solidarity cultures and domesticity, of internationalist politics and private sentiment" (p. 21). *Contra* the image often given of solidarity campaigns in the socialist world as triumphalist propaganda, Roth-Ey instead paints a picture of a film which emphasized an ideal of shared victimization and "solidarity as pain". Letters to Simonov from Soviet citizens seemed to suggest that a common reaction to it was a sense of powerlessness, a far cry from the agency-focused stereotype of socialist propaganda.

Jessica Dalljo's article takes a different approach to the question of agency. Focusing on socialist internationalism in GDR children's magazines, Dalljo discusses an underexplored facet of socialist internationalism: the role that young people were expected to play within it. As Dalljo shows using children's magazines published in the GDR, children were not exempt from the ubiquitous demand to practise solidarity but were curiously subject to calls for monetary and in-kind donations by the magazines. As Dalljo notes, this was partially a project aimed at parents, but it also serves as an example of the attempt to add internationalism to the core of the construction of the socialist personality.

While Dalljo's article highlights the ubiquity of international solidarity in the GDR via children and young people, Maren Hachmeister's does the same thing but in the other direction, exploring international solidarity as a feature of the People's Solidarity (PS) organization in East Germany, an eldercare institution established in 1945. As Hachmeister shows using interviews with PS members as well as archival material, the organization's focus on domestic forms of solidarity never meant fully eschewing its international dimension. Members donated to Greece, Korea, and



Vietnam, with the pre-1945 experience of war and scarcity driving an ethos of “lived solidarity” that carried through to the 1980s.

The immediate post-war period is also the subject of Nikola Tohma and Julia Reinke’s contribution. Exploring solidarity campaigns with Greek refugees in the late 1940s in both Czechoslovakia and the GDR, their article provides an illuminating case study into the emergence of socialist internationalism amid the ruins of post-war Central Europe. In both cases, the extensive efforts made by the state to mobilize citizens in aid of Greece were notable given the parlous state of their post-war economies. The article provides a fascinating comparative example of the intersections of domestic politics and transnational solidarity: aligned under the banner of socialism and internationalism, but with the two sides approaching the campaign from very different starting points.

Jelena Đureinović’s article gives another insight into the ways in which the pre-history of socialism dictated the shape and form of international solidarity, focusing on the role played by former Yugoslav partisans in shaping internationalist projects with Africa. As she shows, Yugoslav partisans classified violent national liberation struggles such as that of Algeria as being part of a shared culture of resistance. What followed from this was an attempt to build a transnational shared culture of memory between Yugoslavia and Algeria. As Đureinović points out, the ubiquity of commemorative culture in Yugoslavia meant that this was far from being a vanguard phenomenon – the veterans’ association that she focuses on, SUBNOR, boasted over a million members.

International solidarity required coordination, and during the Cold War almost every socialist country boasted its own organization which was set up for this purpose. Despite the huge impact these organizations had on everyday life in these states, we still know very little about them. Barbora Buzássyová’s article sheds light on one of the most fascinating examples of this tradition: the Czechoslovak Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity. As Buzássyová’s article shows, while state solidarity committees may have appeared uniform from the outside looking in, each displayed their own idiosyncrasies, dictated by national events. Czechoslovakia was an early adopter of the cause of solidarity with national liberation movements in the early 1960s, but, as Buzássyová demonstrates, international solidarity came to be viewed as a problematic sideshow during the years of political and economic crisis of which the Prague Spring was the peak.

Thom Loyd’s article similarly highlights the *delegitimizing* aspects of socialist internationalism. Focusing on new documents from the Ukrainian KGB, Loyd shows how African students studying in the Soviet Union drew upon a discourse of civil and universal rights to critique the Soviet state. These voices, largely ignored previously, highlight the failures of the Soviet solidarity project, showing how the presence of African students in the Soviet Union and their willingness to engage in “rights talk” introduced friction into the everyday reality of Soviet internationalism.

Maxim Matusevich’s article similarly lingers on the ambivalence thrown up by Soviet internationalist projects. Focusing on the reception of Angela Davis in the Soviet Union, Matusevich shows how the campaign against Davis’s imprisonment in the early 1970s became a central component of everyday life in the Soviet state, producing long-lasting and in some cases unpredictable effects. As Matusevich

shows, Davis proved paradoxically to serve as a reference point for opponents of the Soviet regime who sought commonalities between her struggles against the US state and their own. Ultimately, these dissidents would find that their own visions of freedom differed radically from those of Davis.

By refocusing the lens to the level of the social, we can gain vital insight into what it meant to live under state socialism. In particular, this issue will make four key contributions to our understanding of the social history of state socialism and socialist–South connections. Firstly, it will explore the extent to which socialist internationalism followed a bloc-wide logic, chronology, or path. The extensive study of socialist–South connections has produced broad chronological frames that are worthy of closer inspection in individual national or regional contexts, asking which timelines were shared across borders and which were not. Recent work from scholars such as Tim Harper has shown that links between the Soviet Union and national liberation struggles have an important history that stretch as far back as the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> And yet while it is clear, for example, that rapid decolonization in Africa around the turn of the 1960s had a huge impact on socialist solidarity regimes across the bloc, this edition highlights how national contexts could create very different internationalist registers and timelines. As Reinke and Tohma’s contribution makes clear, in the GDR and Czechoslovakia at least, international solidarity began as early as the Greek Civil War, when both states (or, in the GDR’s case, what was still the Soviet zone of occupation) lay in ruins from World War II. Elsewhere, Kim Christiaens has shown that solidarity campaigns with Greece in the 1970s were a driver of the politics of détente: here, however, in the early Cold War, the issue of Greek solidarity helped to drive a wedge between the two nascent German states.<sup>23</sup> Hachmeister’s article similarly focuses on the 1950s in the GDR, a hitherto largely ignored period in the context of international solidarity. Buzássyová’s article shows that the Prague Spring had a particularly deleterious effect on solidarity efforts in Czechoslovakia, which were largely put on hold at a time when other socialist states’ internationalisms were at their peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Burton’s contribution, focusing on anti-imperialist citizenship in Tanzania, shows that outside of the bloc context, anti-imperialism, articulated through the concept of “frontline citizenship”, displayed a distinctive longevity among the generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s.

Secondly, this focus allows for a zooming in on the actual institutions that socialist solidarity created or co-opted. These institutions have complex histories and played important roles within everyday life in state socialism. Even if internationalism was largely “top-down” – and this is almost certainly an oversimplification – there were many ways in which that river could flow: solidarity produced hundreds of institutions at the national and transnational level and was co-opted or incorporated by many more existing ones. Leagues of friendship, solidarity committees, institutes for foreign students, journals, and magazines all either sprung up or shifted focus to include internationalism in their remit. Solidarity often fell under the pay of trade unions and was an important component of the

<sup>22</sup>Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (London, 2020).

<sup>23</sup>Christiaens, “Communists Are No Beasts”, p. 644.

work done by the Soviet-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions, an institution we still know very little about. This issue contains entries that deal with a number of these institutions, many of which have been ignored up to this point. Buzássyová looks at the Czechoslovak Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity, for example, while Hachmeister explores the East German Volkssolidarität organization, which began as an internationalist institution but shifted focus to domestic concerns including veterans and the elderly. Đureinović's contribution highlights the bloc-wide heterogeneity of these organizations via a focus on the Yugoslav veterans' network SUBNOR, which played a unique role in socialist–South connections by virtue of Yugoslavia's partisan past. Invariably, these articles show that the top-down versus bottom-up dichotomy fails to capture the reality of such institutions, which displayed, to quote Burton in this edition, “a contested discursive terrain connected to mechanisms of micro-mobilization that were gendered and differed across generational axes” (p. 29).

Thirdly, if solidarity was largely intended as propaganda, then it makes sense that it has mostly been conceptualized as serving to raise legitimacy for ailing socialist regimes. Explored at a more granular level, however, this picture becomes more complex. Socialist citizens were not only fed one-dimensional, feel-good stories about the work their governments were doing abroad but were also expected to make significant sacrifices in order to realize these programmes. Socialist citizenship contained within it a strong sense of duty and sacrifice, and solidarity was no exception. As Dalljo's article shows us, East German school children were told that solidarity “ought to hurt”. Roth-Ey's contribution, which focuses on cinematic depictions of solidarity with Vietnam in the Soviet Union, similarly shows that sacrifice was central to the practice of solidarity. More broadly, the legitimizing image often associated with solidarity campaigns is complicated by the fact that solidarity regimes often provided room for citizens to critique their own state for not being radical enough. Lloyd shows us how African students studying in the Soviet Union – destined to become a global socialist elite – instead became early adopters of human rights talk in the state. The idolization of Angela Davis in the GDR has been well documented but, as Matusevich shows with his contribution, Davis emerged in the Soviet Union, *contra* official state narratives, as a symbol of foreign, especially American, aesthetics and cosmopolitan sensibilities.

Finally, the articles here make clear that solidarity had multiple meanings and heterogeneous roots. Burton shows how an anti-imperialist understanding of citizenship in Tanzania bore some similarities with similar notions in East and Central Europe, but that the very different situation on the ground in Tanzania also led to distinct differences. He also shows how the key institution in Tanzanian frontline solidarity, the National Service, boasted an ecumenical list of models, from Ghana to Israel and the Peace Corps. Different paths to socialism also created different emphases in solidarity. Reinke and Tohma, for example, show us that the justification for practising solidarity with Greek Civil War refugees was markedly different in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, while Roth-Ey highlights how the televisual landscape of solidarity in the Soviet Union was influenced by, and in turn transmitted, its own idiosyncratic Soviet influences.

Taken together, these contributions reframe the study of socialist–South connections in a new light. They implore us to take socialist internationalism

seriously as a historical object that can reveal much about the experience of living with and within state socialism. They suggest that more than just legitimizing, one-dimensional propaganda, solidarity was both a lived experience and a political project, and thus an important field through which state and citizen interacted in the socialist world. The contours and frameworks that defined this field shifted over time, and understanding how they did and how this differed across space is vital to understanding the history of state socialism in its entirety.

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