

© 2014

ALENA K. ALAMGIR

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM AT WORK: CHANGES IN THE
CZECHOSLOVAK-VIETNAMESE LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM, 1967–1989

by

ALENA K. ALAMGIR

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School–New Brunswick
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Sociology

Written under the direction of

József Böröcz

And approved by

New Brunswick, New Jersey

May, 2014

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM AT WORK: CHANGES IN THE CZECHOSLOVAK-VIETNAMESE LABOR EXCHANGE PROGRAM, 1967–1989

By ALENA K. ALAMGIR

Dissertation Director:

József Böröcz

I use archival evidence to analyze the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program between 1967 and 1989. Using the program as a lens, I examine the changes in the Czechoslovak state's self-conception *qua* a state-socialist state and provider of care. I find that the status of Vietnamese workers in relation to Czechoslovak state's conception of welfare changed from that of an *object of care* in the early phases of the program to that of a *means* the state used to secure welfare and "social comfort" for its citizens. Crucial to this transformation was a progressive drive toward greater *commodification* of Vietnamese workers' labor. Drawing on Michael Burawoy's argument that the key feature of migrant labor is the separation between the processes of labor's *reproduction* and *maintenance*, each of which takes place in a different nation state, I argue that during the phases when the Czechoslovak state assumed a significant financial and practical responsibility for Vietnamese workers' education and training (i.e., their

reproduction as labor) the degree of their commodification was relatively low and it was further limited by their eligibility for some (though not all) welfare and social services provided to them on the same basis as they were provided to Czechoslovak citizens. When, however, in the last phase of the program, the Czechoslovak state stopped assuming responsibility for Vietnamese workers' education and training and started valuing them primarily for being a "fully mobile labor force" that could be used to plug the holes in Czechoslovak labor market, the degree of Vietnamese workers' commodification increased substantially. Concomitantly, the Czechoslovak state's economic priorities took precedence over the Vietnamese state's economic and developmental priorities. My last major finding, however, is that both Vietnamese workers and Vietnamese government officials pushed back: the former through strikes and insubordination, and the latter through pressure at the negotiating table. I argue that, contrary to received ideas, the ideology of internationalism and socialism constituted a valuable resource for this pushback because (1) it made the Czechoslovak state *politically accountable* to its Vietnamese counterpart, and (2) it provided an effective vernacular in which to articulate the non-negotiability of workers' rights.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Let me start with a confession: No matter what book I happen to read, I always read the acknowledgements section first and with great interest. It is a private pleasure of mine, teetering on the guilty sort. My one excuse for this proclivity is that no matter how scholarly the book, or how formal the acknowledgments, the section still provides a quick glance into the author's world at the time of research and writing, and, in that way, helps frame the work at hand in a way that the formal parts of the text cannot. Hence, I started "writing" these acknowledgments in my head during my almost daily runs through Prague's parks and streets during my two-year-long field research, and well before I wrote the first words of the initial drafts of the chapters that follow.

Before the acknowledgments proper, let us take care of the formal requirements. Substantial portions of two chapters of this dissertation have already appeared in print. Most material presented in Chapter 6 has been published under the title "Race Is Elsewhere: State-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia" in the UK-based journal *Race & Class* 54 (4): 67–85 in 2013. A large portion of material from Chapter 4 came out in the Spring 2014 issue of *Slavic Review*, 73 (1): 133–155 under the title "Recalcitrant Women: Internationalism and the Redefinition of Welfare Limits in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Exchange Program, 1967-1989."

I would like to express heartfelt thanks to my dissertation committee members. My chair, József Böröcz, has been instrumental to this project not only because he caught a number of my embarrassing mistakes before I presented the text to the eyes of others, but first and foremost because he has always had more faith in me than I had in myself, and he never, not even for a second, lost it. Köszönöm, József. I am indebted to Ann Mische for her readiness to be genuinely excited by minutiae far removed from her own areas of research, her ability to reliably identify the most promising parts of my arguments-in-the-making, and her unfailingly creative and critical suggestions on how to develop the semi-baked ideas. Thank you, Ann. My thanks to Catherine Lee for challenging me to think and write in ways that did not always come naturally to me. She also possesses a trait that is not to be taken for granted among academics: an unswerving promptness when it comes to requests for feedback. Thank you, Catherine. Dominique Arel played an important role in making me feel like a bona fide scholar years ago, without being aware of it. That is because “his” convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities held annually at Columbia University was the first scholarly conference that accepted a paper of mine for presentation. Having attended the conference several times since meant that when I finally got to talk to him during the International Summer School in Ostroh, Ukraine, “Soviet Legacies and post-Soviet Practices: Economics, Politics, and Everyday life” in summer 2011, I felt like I was meeting a celebrity. What a relief, then, that this particular celebrity turned out to be that rare species of a political scientist who has deep appreciation for ethnographic research, is a creative scholar, and a film buff. Dominique, for all the direct and

indirect ways in which you supported me through the writing of this dissertation
– merci beaucoup!

Ordinarily, people completing a project like mine, that is, one that requires extensive fieldwork overseas, thank the various institutions that made their research possible through grants. I got no grants, but I've got great friends. My gratitude to Karel Deutschmann, my "BFF" of more than 20 years, is too extensive and complex to even fit into words. However, without him, finding a place to stay in Prague and a job to pay for it would have been vastly more difficult (I shudder when I imagine that alternative). Karle, thank you for being one of the few people I know I can always come to for comfort or fun, no matter what. I met Leon Rosenfeld only after my arrival in Prague, but he, too, played an absolutely crucial role in my ability to support myself throughout my research. Leone, you are one of the kindest and most selfless people I have ever known, thank you!

Also in Prague, I benefited greatly from both scholarly and friendly companionship of Marek Čaněk and Luba Kobová – Marek has also been invaluable because he helped me forge several crucial contacts. Šárka Martínková shared generously with me her own work and her knowledge of the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic. My research progress would have been much slower, or even stunted, without valuable assistance I received from Professor Ivo Vasiljev, Mr. Jaroslav Picka and Tereza Kušniráková.

Since most of my Vietnamese contacts were also my informants, I cannot name them here. Nonetheless, my gratitude to them for their willingness to share the memories of their lives is immense. I need to acknowledge at the very least the immense help I received from Mr. Tran Viet Hung – he was truly the key that opened the first and the most important of doors. The generosity he and his wife, Ms. Hoa, have shown to me leaves me not only deeply grateful but also humbled. Similarly, my trip to Hanoi might have been utterly useless had it not been for the incredibly useful and at the same time caring assistance of Mr. Trung Bach Thanh, Ms. Nguyen Thi Binh, and Ms. Phung Thi Phuong Hien. I can never thank them enough; suffice it to say that, after a stay lasting only 10 short days, I left Hanoi in tears, and I sure hope to return there – cảm ơn!

I would have gotten exactly nowhere with my research had it not been for the immense kindness of a number of archivists who went well beyond the call of duty in making available to me archival materials that were uncatalogued. My greatest thanks go to Dr. Alena Nosková of the Czech National Archive, without her help this project would truly have never gotten off the ground. Though not an archivist, Mgr. Petra Boušková of the Czech Labor Ministry was nothing short of indispensable in my quest for documents. I am also thankful to Mgr. Radek Kučera and Mgr. Světlana Ptáčníková of the Interior Ministry's Security Forces Archive in Brno-Kanice, and to Tomáš Zapletal, who alerted me to the rich possibilities of this archive. Further thanks are due to Mgr. Ladislava Nohovcová of the company archive of V. I. Lenin Works (ZVIL), also known as Škoda Plzeň, and to Mgr. Hana Sojková of the company archive of the Nová Huť

Klementa Gottwalda, NHKG, steel works (now ArcelorMittal Ostrava). To all of you – srdečné díky!

In the United States, I drew on many friendships but Anna da Silva, Eric Kaldor and Jennifer Patrice Sims helped pull me across the finish line by showing me how close that line was despite the fact that it still seemed so very distant to me. When making return trips to New Jersey, King-To Yeung had the door of his house always open for me. More than that, he not only always listened attentively to my, not always entirely coherent, descriptions of where I was in the project, but also always offered novel ways of looking at its various aspects. Thank you, King. More than a decade of my Virtual Coffee Klatch cheering squad always having my back makes it crystal clear that virtual relationships can be very real. My friendship with Jay Charlesworth has similarly straddled the virtual-real boundary but the ties that bind us are no weaker for that. Besides being my virtual running (and marathon training) partner, he has primarily been a friend who always listens. Thank you, Jay, for being exactly who you are. Finally, and heartbreakingly belatedly, thank you to Bill Flanagan. That I didn't manage to write these acknowledgements early enough for you to read them shall forever remain one of the biggest regrets of my life. I still miss you dreadfully.

Lastly (though I always thought that this section should come first), the most fervent thanks belong to my family. I absolutely could not have done this (or much else in my life) without my mom, Jaroslava Králiková Jirsová. She instilled in me not only the love of reading in general but also the sensitivity to *how* things

are said, to subtle nuances in meaning. She was also the one who picked up my slack and took care of my daughter Emma while I was ferreting around archives, interviewing people all around the country, or thousands of kilometers away, and earning money to keep the whole ship afloat. I cannot ever adequately thank her enough for all she has done for me. I am also indebted to the rest of my South Bohemian crew – my uncles Josef (Pepa) and Jiří Jirsa, my aunt Marie Mezníková, and my cousins Lucka and Jirka Jirsa for keeping Emma happy while I was away working. Special thanks to Pepa for teaching her how to ride a bike! I am indebted also to my Bratislava crew. To my father Július Králik, who shared with me the fond memories of his stints, as an electrical engineer, in postcolonial Algeria and Morocco. These recollections constituted my first encounter with the development aid Czechoslovakia was providing to the “Third World,” though I did not realize it at the time and I am not sure if my dad ever thought about them in that way. Nonetheless, his reminiscences remained deeply lodged in my memory, and once I started my research, I realized that the projects he participated in constituted the other side of the coin that I was looking at while examining the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese training and worker exchange program. Special thanks also to his wife, Iveta Králiková Pajpachová, for never being a stepmother to me but rather always a loving friend and a nurturer. Thank you also to my brothers, Dávid and Andrej Králik – I’m happy I have you guys. And to my little sister Renáta Králiková, a fellow academic, who may be the only member of the family who truly understands just how grueling (and at the same time exhilarating) this dissertation journey has been. And finally: thank you to my husband, Faisal Alamgir. Your love and loyalty are unparalleled. As is your absolute trust that I could, and your unshakable

conviction that I *should*, go through with this project, regardless of the compromises that it required as far as our family was concerned. I sure lucked out when I met you 18 years ago.

DEDICATIONS

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to:

My grandmother, Marie Jirsová Plechatá

* Novosedly, 2 February 1928

† Dolní Poříčí, 12 December 2007

My mother, Jaroslava Králiková Jirsová

* Strakonice, 24 July 1952

My sister, Renáta Králiková

* Bratislava, 7 October 1976

My daughter, Emma J. Alamgir

* Hoboken, NJ, 6 January 2003

Thank you for all that each of you has taught me and for your unconditional love.

And to:

Dr. William G. Flanagan, of Coe College, Cedar Rapids, IA.

* CT, 29 September 1942

† IA, 19 November 2011

Bill, from one atheist to another: I hope that you've got some interesting company up there to talk to and to ponder life's intricacies with. I sure miss being able to hear about it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

<i>ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Dedications</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Tables:</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>List of Photographs:</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
Internationalism versus Transnationalism	9
Communist, State-Socialist, or Something Else Altogether?	16
From Paternalist to Beleaguered Internationalism	19
Commodification of Labor and Labor Migration	27
State Involvement in Guest-Worker Schemes	36
Summary and Overview of Chapters	57
<i>Chapter 1: Czechoslovak-Vietnamese relations in the Context of Cold War Geopolitics</i>	<i>60</i>
Soviet Economic Aid to Vietnam	63
Czechoslovakia's Economic Aid to Vietnam	66
Cadres Training	73
<i>Chapter 2: Historical Background</i>	<i>78</i>
Wave I: Paternalist Internationalism: <i>Praktikanti</i> Trainees, 1967–1973	79
Medical Checkups	87

Housing _____	89
Clothing Donation _____	90
Language Training _____	92
Technical Training _____	95
Arrival of the First Batch _____	98
Second Batch _____	100
Third, Fourth and Fifth Batches _____	100
 Wave II: Mutually Advantageous Internationalism: Apprentice Workers, 1973-1979	101
Arrivals _____	106
Vocational Schools _____	108
Housing _____	109
Concerns over Costs: Gradual Shift from Aid to Cooperation _____	112
Tension between concern over costs and internationalist obligations _____	114
Movement Toward Guest-Worker Type of Labor Exchange _____	119
 Wave III: Beleaguered Internationalism: Guest Workers, 1980-1989 _____	122
From Mutual Advantageousness to “Fully Mobile Labor Force” and “Economic Acceptability” _____	122
Czechoslovak Companies’ Needs Come to the Forefront _____	136
Increase in Numbers _____	140
Logistical Challenges _____	141
(Lack of) Skills Problem _____	143
Movement Toward Decentralization _____	144
1987 Amendments to Guest-Worker Treaty _____	147
 <i>Chapter 3: Institutional Structure of the Program</i> _____	162
I. Institutional Anchoring _____	162
II. Panoply of Categories _____	166
III. Vietnamese Organizers, Group Leaders and Interpreters _____	167

Conclusion _____	185
<i>Chapter 4: Vietnamese Female Workers and Czechoslovak Gender and Welfare Policies</i>	
_____	188
Vietnamese Female Workers in the Context of State-Socialist Gender Politics and Policies _____	193
State Socialist Motherhood _____	207
Pregnancy as a disciplinary infringement _____	217
Pregnancy as a labor-rights issue _____	222
Conclusion _____	228
<i>Chapter 5 Socialist Internationalism at Work: Causes and Redress of Vietnamese Workers' Complaints</i>	
_____	235
Exploitation and Resistance _____	236
Causes of Dissatisfaction 1: Changes in Organizational Structure: Apprentice-Worker Form Versus Guest-Worker Form of Labor Exchange _____	241
Causes of Dissatisfaction 2: Socialist Relations of Productions on the Shop Floor ____	251
Causes of Dissatisfaction 3: Wage Policies and Politics _____	254
Czechoslovak Labor Ministry Administrators as Guardians of Practical Internationalism _____	260
Vietnamese Workers' Use of Discipline Breaches and Strikes To Defend Their Rights _____	265
Vietnamese Embassy and Government Officials Push for Guest Workers' Rights ____	271
Role of Socialist and Internationalist Ideology and Vernacular _____	281

Conclusion	288
<i>Chapter 6: Race Is Elsewhere: State-Socialist Ideology and Racialization of Vietnamese Workers in Czechoslovakia</i>	
<i>Workers in Czechoslovakia</i>	294
Scholarship on state socialism and race	297
Race is elsewhere	302
‘Honest work’ and race	305
Gratitude and the State-Socialist <i>Mission Civilisatrice</i>	311
Triangulation and ‘normalcy’: Vietnamese, Cubans, Roma	317
Conclusion	321
<i>Conclusion</i>	324
<i>Appendix</i>	331
Outfits Allocated to the Citizens of the DRV Upon Their Arrival, Consisting of Underwear, Clothing, Footwear, and Small Personal Effects	331
A. Men	331
B. Women	332
C r i t e r i a	334
To be Used To Assess the Medical Fitness of DRV Citizens Necessary for the Completion of Professional Training in Czechoslovak Organizations	334
(a) Required Exams	334
(c) Contraindications	338
(d) Vaccination Requirements	339
(e) State of Health Certificate	339
<i>Bibliography</i>	341

Secondary Sources	341
Primary Sources	355
Czech National Archive, NA	355
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs archival material, MPSV	362
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive, MZV	371
Archive of Security Forces (Interior Ministry Archive), Brno-Kanice and Prague Locations, ABS	372

LIST OF TABLES:

Table 1: Distribution of Vietnamese <i>Praktikanti</i> Trainee Workers Among Czechoslovak Industrial sectors	84
Table 2: The Cost to Czechoslovakia of “Borrowing” Foreign Workers	243
Table 3: Comparison of Apprentice-Workers’ and Guest Workers’ Working and Living Conditions.....	247

LIST OF FIGURES:

Figure 1: Program’s Institutional Structure	182
---	-----

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS:

Photo 1: The façade of the Hoa Viên beer hall in Hanoi (author’s own archive)....	2
Photo 2: The interior of the Hai Phong restaurant in Ústí nad Labem, May 1983. Original caption read: “Huyen-Mo teaches guests to use chopsticks” (ČTK archive).	3
Photo 3: Mr. M. models the trench coat he picked in a Czechoslovak department store as part of the clothing donation in 1968 (author’s own archive).....	92
Photo 4: A Vietnamese workers’ dormitory room, circa 1983 (ABS Kanice archive).	110
Photo 5: A common room in the same dormitory (ABS Kanice archive).	111
Photo 6: Illustration Accompanying the <i>Rudé Právo</i> Article.	314

INTRODUCTION

In the center of Hanoi, only about half a kilometer down the road from the Opera house (built by the French), there is a large beer hall and restaurant. On the gable of the two-storey yellow building, the name of the establishment, Hoa Viêt, is painted in large blue letters. Below, there is a painting of a man wearing a hat, smoking a pipe and drinking beer. At the very bottom, a stunned countryman can read a phrase rendered in perfect Czech: "*Dej Bůh štěstí,*" or "May God grant you good fortune/luck," the traditional greeting of Czech brewers. The edifice houses a microbrewery, in which beer is produced using Czech know-how, hops, malt and yeast. The bilingual menu contains two types of dishes: Vietnamese and Czech-Slovak ones. The taste of the Czech-Slovak ones is uncannily authentic, considering they are prepared some 7,500 miles away from the places in which they originated. But the delicacies, such as the deep-fried breaded cheese (*smažený sýr*), beloved by the inhabitants of the (now) two tiny Central European countries, are served Vietnamese-style: cut up into bite-sized pieces to be enjoyed with chopsticks.



Photo 1: The façade of the Hoa Viên beer hall in Hanoi (author's own archive).

While one may be surprised when he or she comes across a Czech pub in Hanoi, the existence of the establishment is not really *that* odd given that, nowadays, “fusion” rules the culinary world and the accounts of “globalization” are all the rage in sociology. It is certainly far less surprising than was, in May of 1983, the existence of the Hai Phong Vietnamese restaurant in the provincial Czech town of Ústí nad Labem, some 60 miles north of Prague. As the Czechoslovak Press Agency, ČTK, tells it, the restaurant made it possible for the inhabitants of state-

socialist Czechoslovakia to taste, for the first time ever, the ‘nem’ meat rolls, the ‘nom’ salad, and the ‘com’ rice, along with 57 other sorts of “special” dishes.



Photo 2: The interior of the Hai Phong restaurant in Ústí nad Labem, May 1983. Original caption read: “Huyen-Mo teaches guests to use chopsticks” (ČTK archive).

One, a hip example of contemporary transnationalism. The other, an expression of internationalism, long since *démodé*. Nonetheless, there is actually an intimate link between the two. The contemporary transnationalist enterprise would have never seen the light of day had it not been for its internationalist predecessor. The enterprising brewer who owns Hoa Viên follows in the footsteps of Czechoslovak experts who, in 1958, helped build first brewery in

Hanoi,¹ as an act of internationalist help. It turns out as well that Hoa Viên is only the best known of the *four* Czech microbreweries with adjacent restaurants in Hanoi (the other three are called GoldMalt, Gambrinus and PraGold). And all of them were founded by Vietnamese who spent considerable time in Czechoslovakia as trainees and workers² during the labor exchange program that spanned a bit over two decades and was entrenched in the ideology of internationalism.

Besides catering to general public and tourists,³ the restaurants also serve as meeting places for the *Việt Xù*,⁴ or the Vietnamese who used to live in Czechoslovakia (or live in the Czech Republic today). According to unique questionnaire and interview data collected and analyzed by Tereza

¹ Tereza Kušniráková, "Česká stopa ve Vietnamu," *Geografické rozhledy* 21, 1 (2011), pp. 26–27.

² Ibid.

³ Hoa Viên, for instance, is featured on the popular tourist website tripadvisor.com and, as of early March 2014, has 14, mostly highly favorable, user reviews.

⁴ *Việt Xù* is a term devised by Czechoslovak Vietnamese to refer to themselves as members of this specific group. It is derived from the term used generally for Vietnamese expatriates, *Việt Kiều* (Louis-Jacques Dorais, "Defining the Overseas Vietnamese," *Diaspora* 10, 1 (2001), 3–27) by substituting "Xù" for "Kiều." Reportedly, *Xù* is a rendition, based on the rules of Vietnamese phonetic transcription, of the Czech syllable "củ," i.e., the sound [tsu], as in the plural genitive case of the word *Vietnamci*, the Vietnamese, i.e., "Vietnamcủ," since the Vietnamese recognized that the Czechs used this word to refer to them (Jiří Kocourek, "Podmíněnost současné migrace Vietnamců do Česka" in Dušan Drbohlav, ed. *Nelegální ekonomické aktivity migrantů. Česko v evropském kontextu*, (Karolinum, Prague, 2008) pp. 233–245, cited in Tereza Kušniráková, "Vztah vietnamských navrátilců předlistopadové imigrace k československému státu a jeho společnosti," *Český lid* 99, 1 (2012), 45–66, fn. 7, p. 50.) It is intriguing, though possibly without deeper significance, that the Vietnamese chose the genitive rather than the nominative form of the noun.

Kušniráková,⁵ mutual ties that the Vietnamese forged among themselves while in Czechoslovakia remain incredibly strong even more than 30 years later in some cases. She reports that the cohorts of Vietnamese who arrived in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s and '70s meet other *Việt Xù* as often as several times a week. The 1980s cohorts do so at least once a month. In addition, she reports that 75% of her respondents (that is to say people who returned *home*) said that a majority of their friends were other *Việt Xù*, thus, in a sense, mirroring the pattern of social networks often found among *migrants* in foreign contexts. Besides copious ad hoc personal meetings, there are several more formal get-togethers throughout the year. Of those, the meetings that occur on a weekly basis attract a few individuals. At those happening on a monthly basis, about 50 people tend to show up, and some 200 people show up for annual reunions, of which there are several, organized for instance for groups that worked in specific companies.⁶ The *Việt Xù* living in the Czech Republic organize similar meetings as well. I had the opportunity to take part in the "homecoming" / reunion of former Vietnamese apprentice workers and the staff of the vocational school and the Buzuluk Komárov engineering company.⁷ In Prague, the Vietnamese community gets together to celebrate the Chinese New Year. In Hanoi, meetings are organized on the occasion of some important Czech holidays such as the 28 October anniversary of the founding of the first Czechoslovak republic in 1918.⁸ During these meetings, as Kušniráková reports, traditional Czech folk songs as

⁵ Kušniráková, "Vztah vietnamských navrátilců...", op.cit., p. 61.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Field notes, 4 July 2010.

⁸ Ibid., p. 50.

well as 1970s-1980s Czechoslovak pop music songs are sung while Czech dishes and alcohol are consumed. Hence, these people do not only have remarkably strong ties to one another, they also evidently continue to be strongly attached to Czechoslovakia.⁹ Most of my own informants, both those residing in Vietnam and in the Czech Republic, described the Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia to me as their “second home.” Kušníráková cites a particularly passionate respondent who went so far as stating that “should another country attack the Czech Republic, [he] would not hesitate and defend it with a weapon.”¹⁰

What we have here, then, are contemporary transnational practices that are growing out of and are firmly embedded in the internationalist practices of the bygone era. Moreover, these practices seem to be an interesting inversion of the phenomena usually described in the transnationalism literature (which I discuss in the section below). In the Vietnamese setting, we are not talking about migrants, but about returnees, or in some cases (of my informants) people who continue to shuttle between the two countries but with their base being not the country of migration but the country of origin, i.e., their *home*. The businesses

⁹ Many *Việt Xù* seem to have remained rather strongly attached to (the idea of) Czechoslovakia, despite the country’s split in 1993. There is a striking, and poignant, scene in a 2006 documentary by director Martin Ryšavý “He Who Teaches Me Half a Character,” (*Kdo mě naučí půl znaku*, which the authors translate as “Who Will Teach Me the Half of the Character”), in which a group of *Việt Xù* sings the Czech anthem during one of their meetings, and upon completing the Czech part, they proceed, without hesitation, to singing the Slovak part (the anthem, just like the country, was simply cut in half along the linguistic boundary upon the dissolution of the common state), thus engaging in a practice that has disappeared in the two successor states. As of this writing, the film, with English subtitles, is available for streaming for the price of €1 (or for download in either AVI or DVD formats for €2,50 and €4.50 respectively) from <http://dafilms.com/film/7156-kdo-me-nauci-pul-znaku/>

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

they run, in the case of the restaurants, are not tangible and wistful reminders of the life “back home,” as is the case with most ethnic restaurants run by immigrants, but rather, among other things, expressions of nostalgia for their life in a country, about whose existence they had at best only a vague idea before they got there (as both Kušniráková’s and my own ethnographic data indicate), and that they would have most likely never come in personal contact with had it not been for the projects launched under the internationalist umbrella. Not only do these returnees prefer to associate with the compatriots who underwent the same experience, the ties to their “second home” remain very strong as well and clearly continue to build on the networks developed during the state-socialist era. One of my informants,¹¹ who started out as a Czechoslovak university graduate and then participated in the labor exchange program as a group leader and organizer, and thus spent a good two decades in Czechoslovakia, with some spells in Vietnam between his various postings, is a good example. He has continued to pursue joint business ventures with Czech companies building on company-to-company initiatives that he started to organize when the labor exchange program moved toward decentralization in the mid-late 1980s. Similarly, the affections of many *Việt Xù* for their Czech and Slovak friends remain strong. Practically all of my informants would give me the names, including precise spelling, of not only those Czechs and Slovaks who became their life-long friends and with whom they kept in touch over the years, but also the names of those people who they felt showed them particular kindness but with whom they have not communicated in decades. An informant I spoke with

¹¹ Interview, 14 April 2011.

in Hanoi, for instance, said the following about a Czech man who was in charge of her group, which consisted of young women working for an agricultural cooperative in the early 1980s:

In 2008, I went back to find this man. We had learned that his wife was the principal of a school near the house in which we used to live. When I went to this school to ask about him, a stranger in the street told me that he had passed away 15 years prior, and that his wife passed 10 years after him. Then the stranger directed me to the house where the couple used to live at the end of their lives. We went there, but nobody answered the door. I asked the neighbor and learned that when they passed away their daughter married a man from far away and left the house to the relatives. No word could describe my feelings at that point. I was extremely emotional once I set foot near the house. Tears were coming out of my eyes when I heard that he had passed away.¹²

And tears were flowing from her eyes as she was recounting the story to me as well. Kušniráková mentions that five of her respondents asked her to take messages to their friends in the Czech Republic, whose “addresses (including the pertinent public transport connections and the names of the stops) they recited [to her] by heart.”¹³

The last thing I wish to do is to idealize either the labor exchange program, or any of the actors involved in it. This dissertation is not an apotheosis; after all, I devote significant space to the analysis of issues such as the exploitation of Vietnamese workers by Czechoslovak company managers or the racist discourse directed against the Vietnamese, which developed especially in the 1980s. However, this dissertation *is* meant, among other things, also as a corrective, or at least a complement, to the judgments prevalent in journalistic and scholarly

¹² Interview, 14 April 2011.

¹³ Kušniráková, “Vztah vietnamských navrátilců...,” *op.cit.*, fn. 11, p. 54.

accounts dealing with these programs as they were run by several of the former state-socialist countries. These accounts tend to paint the programs with a broad brush and roughly along the following lines:

Working in Eastern Europe is not much of a treat for people. . . accustomed to the privations of Vietnam. In the Polish town of Uniejów 160 Vietnamese women work in a textile factory which. . . resembles a concentration camp. Barbed wire rings the compound, guarded by men with dogs. In a Prague dormitory, considered one of the nicest, three people are crammed into one small room, crawling with cockroaches. Their “kitchen” is a hotplate on the floor of a tiny bathroom.¹⁴

The story that I gleaned from both archival records and oral histories suggests that a far more complex account is warranted and needed. To begin to piece it together, we need to have a new look at internationalism and understand it not merely as an ideology that traded in empty clichés and was purely a weapon in the propagandist arsenal, but rather as a set of principles that shaped and constrained the behavior and decisions of the two states¹⁵ involved in the program.

INTERNATIONALISM VERSUS TRANSNATIONALISM

Although there are important differences between them, both these terms – transnationalism and internationalism – are abstract concepts used to capture

¹⁴ “Redundant Workers, Going Cheap,” *The Economist*, 5 May, 1990, p. 42.

¹⁵ On the Czechoslovak side, the state was primarily embodied by the administrators of the program at Czechoslovakia’s Labor Ministries (of which there were, after the administrative reforms that took effect on 1 January 1969 and turned the country into a federation, three – the federal one and two republic-level ones). On the Vietnamese side, two ministries were involved – the Ministry of Labor and War Invalids and the Vietnamese State Committee for Professional Training (which though not called a ministry had a ministry-like status) – and the staff of the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague.

something about human relationships stretching across national boundaries. While sociologists have embraced the concept of transnationalism with enthusiasm, consensus on what it comprises and which practices, if included, stretch it too thin is still congealing.¹⁶ Nonetheless, most scholarship theorizing transnationalism aims the spotlight on the agency and resourcefulness of individuals whose lives take place in “fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through [their] simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society.”¹⁷ Accordingly, focus is on these migrants’ ability to construct identities that transcend national boundaries (and barriers), their ability to participate in the political and economic life in their places of origin while residing elsewhere,¹⁸ as well as their ability to wrestle rights for themselves, despite their non-citizenship status, from the states in which they dwell by appealing to supranational legal conventions.¹⁹ So, while transnationalism is an abstraction created by social scientists, and as such, it is meant to be a descriptive rather than prescriptive concept, to the extent that embeddedness in multiple locations is

¹⁶ See, e.g., Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt, “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, 2 (1999), 217–237; Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, “Transnationalism in Question,” *American Journal of Sociology* 109, 5 (2004): 1177–1195; Rainer Bauböck, “Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism,” *International Migration Review* 37, 3 (2003), 700–723.

¹⁷ Peggy Levitt and Nadya Jaworsky, “Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007), 129–156, 131.

¹⁸ José Itzigsohn and Silvia Giorguli Saucedo, “Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism,” *International Migration Review* 36 (2002), 766–798, 768.

¹⁹ Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago, University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

seen as a “strategy of survival and betterment,”²⁰ the concept of transnationalism, as it is often used in empirical research, carries within itself at least traces of prescriptive arguments as well. This is evident in the criticisms raised by those scholars who caution that “transnational relations are neither free nor are they necessarily liberatory,” and we should “guard against unrestrained optimism about the possibilities of transnational living,” since “despite their apparent fluidity and ability to create new social spaces. . .like any other type of social action, transnational practices and relationships are embedded in. . .historically and geographically specific sociopolitical and spatial hierarchies and contexts.”²¹ Of interest and relevance to my work is the fact that, as I shall discuss later in this chapter, in the context of labor migration, transnationalism’s “transgressive” features lend themselves also to practices whose goal is similar to the goals whose fulfillment internationalism was supposed to make easier, such as the protection and enforcement of workers’ rights, regardless of the country in which they reside.²²

And what about internationalism? It, too, is an abstract concept but rather than hiding its prescriptive nature, those who used it, put it front and center. As an idea, or perhaps catchword, it was ubiquitous in state-socialist discursive practices. Czechoslovak citizens came into contact with it daily through the

²⁰ Thomas Faist, “Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, 2 (2000), 189-222, 192.

²¹ Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, “The Economics of Transnational Living,” *International Migration Review* 37, 3 (2003), 666-699, 690.

²² See, e.g., Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, “Philippine Migrant Workers’ Transnationalism in the Middle East,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79 (2011), 48-61.

slogan “Proletarians of all countries, unite!,” which was not only the motto found most frequently on large banners hanging off high-rise buildings, but also the sentence printed on the top of the title page of every issue of the main daily newspaper, *Rudé právo*. The phrase comes, of course, from *The Communist Manifesto*,²³ where it provides a dramatic culmination to the argument put forth by Marx and Engels that, since “the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption”²⁴ and in the process “stripped the worker of all national character,”²⁵ the overthrow of Capitalism, too, has to be, inevitably, a global affair, which, therefore, depends on the cooperation of workers worldwide. Curiously, however, the word “internationalism” as such does not actually make an appearance in the *Manifesto*. Rather, internationalism, as an explicit idea and a label, was for the first time formulated in the First International (or The International Workingmen’s Association, IWA, 1864–1876), in which Marx was personally involved.²⁶ There, socialist internationalism was conceived of as a movement to counter colonialism and imperialism.²⁷ However, from very early on, the International’s cohesion suffered due to disagreements over the extent to which the movement “should ally itself to individual national struggles,” as a

²³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Communist Manifesto” in Robert C. Tucker (ed) *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1978).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 482.

²⁶ Although some critics argue that when it came to hot issues of their time, Marx and Engels espoused rather nationalist stances in general and German-centric (and anti-Slav) stances in particular, see Betram D. Wolfe, “Nationalism and Internationalism in Marx and Engels,” *American Slavic and Eastern European Review* 17, 4 (1958), 403–417.

²⁷ Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK, 2001), 115.

consequence of which, “the question of competing priorities of national self-determination and socialism was intensely debated from the mid 1890s onwards,”²⁸ ultimately leading to the dissolution of the Second International with the onset of WWI. In this period, the adjective preceding the main term was “proletarian,” i.e., “proletarian internationalism.” After World War II, the usage switched mostly to “socialist internationalism.”²⁹

These original tensions remained present in the understanding and use of the idea of internationalism in the context of state-socialism. For many political scientists, socialist internationalism was nothing but a cynical “euphemism for the Brezhnev doctrine”³⁰ in the aftermath of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. That is, a rhetorical trick used by the Soviet Union to justify its interventions in the political affairs of Central and Eastern European countries if it judged these affairs to be a threat to the cause of global socialism. In Brezhnev’s own words the “internationalist duty” to intervene arose “when . . . forces hostile to socialism [tried] to turn the development of a given socialist country in the direction of the restoration of the capitalist system” since this was “no longer merely a problem for that country’s people, but a common problem,

²⁸ Ibid., p. 120.

²⁹ See Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 2003), 67, and Jonathan Valdez, *Internationalism and the Ideology of Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, UK, 1993), 25.

³⁰ Karen Dawisha and Jonathan C. Valdez, “The New Internationalism in Eastern Europe,” *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 36, 4 (1987), 119–131, 120. See also Valdez, *Internationalism*, and William M. Reisinger, “The International Regime of Soviet-East European Economic Relations,” *Slavic Review* 49, 4 (1990), 554–567.

the concern of all socialist countries.”³¹ As pragmatic and cynical as the application of the doctrine undoubtedly was, it is also evident that there was an ideological (and logical) thread connecting it with the earlier, more earnest conflicts over the national-international dilemma.

Alongside this use of internationalism, which we could perhaps dub “imperial,” the idea was used also in a more benign (and less politically central) fashion, to organize events such as the famous Peace Race cycling competition,³² which was meant to symbolize that “whereas under Fascism, Germany had invaded and plundered Poland and Czechoslovakia, Socialism promoted peaceful encounters among nations.”³³ This use of the idea of internationalism was not dissimilar from the efforts of some socialist organizations in Western Europe, which tried to cultivate “friendly spirit and comradeship” across national borders.³⁴

This last aspect of internationalism, combined with the original recognition of the importance that internationalism held for anti-colonial struggle, formed the ideological basis for the Vietnamese-Czechoslovak labor exchange program, which is the subject of this dissertation. Alois Indra, the chair of the

³¹ Cited in Ouimet, op. cit., p. 67.

³² Known under the names as *Friedensfahrt*, *Závod míru*, *Wyścig Pokoju* (in German, Czech and Polish respectively) and recognized by the International Cycling Union as the *Course de la Paix*.

³³ Molly Wilkinson Johnson, “The *Friedensfahrt*: International Sports and East German Socialism in the 1950s,” *The International History Review* XXIX, 1 (2007), 57–82.

³⁴ See Christine Collette, “‘Friendly Spirit, Comradeship, and Good-Natured Fun’: Adventures in Socialist Internationalism,” *International Review of History* 48 (2003), 225–244. C/f. Kevin Callahan, “Performing Inter-Nationalism in Stuttgart in 1907: French and German Socialist Nationalism and the Political Culture of the International Socialist Congress,” *International Review of History* 45 (2000), 51–87.

Czechoslovak National Assembly, said, for instance, to the Vietnamese parliamentary delegation visiting Czechoslovakia in 1974:

We have received your youth, workers and technicians who came here to increase their qualifications as genuine brothers. We do not see this as something for which we claim credit but – in the spirit of proletarian internationalism – as a natural obligation we have toward a people who fought on an advanced outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia, and thus have contributed to the defense of the entire community of socialist countries.³⁵

One could read this statement as a “Brezhnev doctrine in reverse” – i.e., the program was, in one sense, presented as a “reward” for globally furthering the socialist cause. More pragmatically, the program was based on the recognition that “material base” had to be developed to both avert the danger of newly politically independent nations becoming ensnared in neo-colonial *economic* relationships with their former colonizers, and to make the *political* progress of socialism easier. Thus, a report from the Czechoslovak Embassy in Hanoi quoted approvingly a Hungarian diplomat who, when discussing the Hungarian aid to Vietnam, stated: “If there are no bricks and so forth with which to build factories and production lines, and if there is a shortage of qualified and experienced cadres, it will be impossible to make sure that progressive foreign technology is used effectively. Cultural, ideological, and political work will become ever more effective if it relies on a growing material base.”³⁶ To this end,

³⁵ NA, “Záznam z přijetí delegace Národního shromáždění Vietnamské demokratické republiky ve Federálním shromáždění ČSSR dne 16. Května 1974,” presented at the 6 June 1974 meeting of the ÚV KSČ; fond 02/1, sv. 123., ar. j. 123, b. 6.

³⁶ MZV, “Záznam z rozhovoru III. tajemníka s. R. Šmída se III. tajemníkem ZÚ MLR s. K. Lainczekem dne 26. 2. 1973.” MZV: 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/117, 1973.

Czechoslovakia agreed to train cadres for the Vietnamese economy in its vocational schools and factories, in addition to supplying Vietnam with economic assistance (discussed in more detail in Chapter 1). Before I discuss the relationship between internationalism and labor exchange in Czechoslovakia, a note on nomenclature is necessary.

COMMUNIST, STATE-SOCIALIST, OR SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER?

Even a cursory look at literature on the societies that used to be described as being “behind the Iron Curtain” clearly shows that there is little consensus among scholars on what nomenclature they should use when talking about them. Andrew Roberts made a forceful argument in favor of calling these regimes *communist*.³⁷ Roberts argued that “using the same terms [i.e., socialist] to describe the failed Soviet experiment and the success of western European socialists gives the impression that a similar logic and comparable commitments underlie both,” which would “inevitably diminish the achievements of democratic socialists in the west.”³⁸ By contrast, Szelenyi & Szelenyi, who use the label of *state socialism* without any qualms or hesitation, posit just the opposite, namely that “although Central and East European societies were not a perfect crystallization of the socialist ideals, they were without a doubt serious

³⁷ Andrew Roberts, “The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology,” *Slavic Review* 63, 2 (2004), 349–366.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 350.

attempts to implement the socialist project.”³⁹ An edited volume on the socio-cultural history of the GDR,⁴⁰ devotes not one but two entire chapters dealing exclusively with the issue of terminology. In the first one, Jürgen Kocka makes a case for referring to the GDR as a “modern dictatorship.”⁴¹ In the second one, the book’s editor, Konrad Jarausch, argues along similar lines as the Szelenyis. Jarausch proposes the term “welfare dictatorship,” which, besides evoking the element of coercion, is also supposed to recall “the ideological goals of socialism, and the vision of an egalitarian social reform” that the GDR hoped to achieve. More than that, in direct contradiction of Roberts, Jarausch sees the GDR “as part of a worldwide movement of emancipation that was motivated by social goals of

³⁹ Ivan Szelenyi and Balazs Szelenyi, “Why Socialism Failed: Toward a Theory of System Breakdown – Causes of disintegration of East European State Socialism,” *Theory and Society* 23, 2 (1994), 211–231, 213.

⁴⁰ When surveying recent literature on state socialism, it is impossible not to notice that (some “outliers” notwithstanding) the literature on Hungarian socialism tends to recognize *continuation* between the state-socialist past, while much of the literature on the GDR privileges a narrative whose key feature is *rupture*. I believe that, to an important extent, the difference has to do with the developments in the two countries *after* the demise of socialism (more than with the form that socialism assumed in each, although there were differences there as well, obviously). Or more precisely, with the kinds of narratives “necessitated” by their post-socialist presents. Namely, the issue is that “[e]ven without socialism Poles and Czechs could still consider themselves Poles and Czechs” (Christoph Kleßmann, “Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship” in Konrad H. Jarausch (ed.) *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, New York, Berghahn Books, 1999, p. 366.), and, obviously, the Hungarians could consider themselves Hungarians. But it could be argued that the GDR lacked political legitimacy without socialism. Put differently, the GDR’s absorption into the FRG required a more thoroughgoing delegitimization of state socialism, and that delegitimization destroyed, a posteriori, whatever legitimacy the GDR *did* actually manage to build while it was still in existence. This then made reunification the default solution: with socialism allegedly purged from the GDR, was there anything to justify a continued existence of a separate German state? In this respect, the GDR is set apart from its erstwhile state-socialist counterparts.

⁴¹ Jürgen Kocka, “The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship” in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 17–26.

solidarity and humanitarianism.”⁴² Thus, Jarausch and the Szelenyis (as well as others, such as Haney⁴³) acknowledge the centrality of welfare to these regimes, in both the original sense of the word, as wellbeing, and in the more technocratic sense, as the system of benefits designed to achieve that goal. I believe that the concern that the terminology might muddle the distinction between Western European socialist movements and the former “real existing socialisms” (as they often referred to themselves) in Central and Eastern Europe is unwarranted. Moreover, the related concern that doing so would potentially “diminish” the achievements of the former comes at the expense of very real diminishing of the achievements of the latter, in part because it makes these achievements invisible and thus unavailable to analysis. As importantly, while it is certainly the prerogative of social scientists to create labels in order to gain a better grasp on the world, i.e., the *etic* (rather than the *emic*) approach, the label “communist” appears to be a symptom of a hangover from the Cold War more than anything else. This is because, as a social order, communism was defined in very specific terms by Marx and Engels and not one of the former “real existing socialist” countries’ governments ever claimed that they achieved it.⁴⁴ And neither did any of the countries ever called themselves communist. As a rule, they went by titles such as “people’s republics” or “socialist republics” and the like. While I find Jarausch’s “welfare dictatorship” useful because it orients our attention to

⁴² Konrad H. Jarausch, “Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship” in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 47–69, 60.

⁴³ Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare Hungary* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ Verdery makes the same argument in Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996).

the crucial place that the preoccupation with welfare occupied in these regimes – which is a very important part of my argument as well – I find it for that very reason also a bit too narrow and restrictive. Thus, for all the shortcomings one might identify in it, I still find the term state socialism (and its derivatives) best suited – least ideologically loaded, factually correct and sufficiently broad – label for these regimes.

FROM PATERNALIST TO BELEAGUERED INTERNATIONALISM

As for internationalism and socialist labor exchanges, the literature, relatively modest as it is, tends to argue that internationalism, which provided the official ideological framing for the programs, was used as a mere “fig leaf.”⁴⁵ That the programs “bore striking resemblance to those of [their] capitalist rivals,”⁴⁶ and that “rather than displaying solidarity with their socialist allies, the [host country’s] authorities sought to exploit the asymmetries of power inherent in these relationships for economic gain.”⁴⁷ Thus, the first question structuring this dissertation is the examination of the nature of this “fig leaf.” That is to say, an examination of internationalism not as an abstract ideology but as a set of priorities that structured Czechoslovak state’s organization and administration of the program, and its policies toward Vietnamese workers between 1967 and

⁴⁵ Konrad H. Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR” in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 3–14.

⁴⁶ Jude Howell, “The End of an Era: The Rise and Fall of GDR Aid.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, 2 (1994), 305–328.

⁴⁷ Jonathan R. Zatlin, “Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971–1989,” *Central European History* 40 (2007), 683–720.

1989. One of my major findings is that the “fig leaf” changed significantly in the course of the program’s duration. That it is, in fact, not clear at all that internationalism *was* only a “fig leaf” during the first half of the program, although evidence does show that, as time went on, the tendency by the Czechoslovak state to put its socialist and internationalist commitments on the backburner increased. In other words, I argue as emphatically as possible that periodization matters. In this, I follow the general gist of work done recently by Lynne Haney and Zsuzsa Gille. Haney argues for a three-tiered periodization of Hungarian welfare regimes (the welfare society of 1948-1968, the maternalist welfare state of 1968-1985, and the liberal welfare state of 1985-1996) based on the manner in which the state encoded architectures of need.⁴⁸ Gille, for her part, is interested in “waste regimes” based on how waste was produced, conceptualized and politicized at different points in time. She, too, constructed a three-tiered periodization of the Hungarian waste regimes – the metallic regime, 1948-1974, the efficiency regime, 1975-1984, and finally, the chemical regime, 1985-present.⁴⁹

I use the nature of policies adopted by the Czechoslovak state toward Vietnamese workers and the degree to which these policies did (or did not) commodify the workers, i.e., the manner in which internationalism was put into

⁴⁸ Haney, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 205-207. One notable aspect of both Gille’s and Haney’s periodizations is that they extend into the period after the collapse of the Hungarian state-socialist regime. I think that this is an incredibly important point as far as the study of the former state-socialist regimes in general is concerned. I will come back to this point in the Conclusion.

practice during each of the three phases, to distinguish between the *paternalist internationalism* of 1967-1973, the *mutually advantageous internationalism* of 1974-1980, and finally, the *beleaguered internationalism* of 1981-1989. The cutoff points correspond to the signing of major treaties on labor exchange. It is necessary to note that once a new form was introduced, the older forms stayed on the books and continued to be used even after the introduction of the new forms. In other words: during the first wave, characterized by paternalist internationalism, the program was structured to accommodate the reception of the so-called *praktikanti* trainee workers (see the section on “Panoply of Categories” in Chapter 3 for details), while during the second wave, the main group arriving to Czechoslovakia were apprentice workers, and, finally, the principal group arriving during the last, post-1980, wave consisted of guest workers. However, a small number of *praktikanti* trainee workers continued to arrive throughout. Similarly, Vietnam continued to send in apprentice workers even throughout the 1980s. But in each of the three periods one group – and hence also one specific organizational form of the program – was dominant and set the tone for the period. As I demonstrate in Chapter 2, although the phase of beleaguered internationalism was not fully ushered in until late 1980 (when the guest-worker treaty was signed), the *principles* that guided its operation started to be formulated already in the mid-1970. Arguably, it is not just a coincidence that the new direction of the program started to be formulated at the exact point in time (mid-1970s) that marked the end of the economic growth of those Soviet bloc countries that belonged to the Warsaw Pact. Further, according to József’s Böröcz’s intriguing observation, the economic decline of the Warsaw Pact countries in the mid-1970s “was strikingly coterminous with some significant

transformations in the world system,” namely, “the global explosion of fossil fuel prices. . .the decisive shift of the world economy toward what David Harvey calls a regime of flexible accumulation” and finally, with “a steep increase in the aggregate volume of global financial transactions marking [Giovanni Arrighi’s] M’ phase of the ‘4th Systemic Cycle of Accumulation.’”⁵⁰ This would then suggest that the changes in the program did not reflect merely the changes in the Czechoslovak state socialism but, in fact, were reactions to changes that were occurring on the global scale at the time.

While the purpose of my periodization is to capture the changes that the labor exchange program underwent over time, its meaning is wider than that. That is because I use the labor exchange program as a lens through which to observe the changes that Czechoslovak state socialism underwent in the last 22 years of its existence, and argue that the changes in the labor exchange program reflected the changes in Czechoslovak state-socialism. More specifically, as I argue especially in Chapter 4, the changes in the program reflected the changes in how the state – here embodied, and embedded, in the work of Labor Ministry clerks administering the program – defined itself *qua* a *socialist* state. In other words, the changes in the way the Czechoslovak administrators of the program ran the labor program reflected the changes in the state’s conception of what it entailed in practice to be a (state) socialist Central European state in the late 1960s and throughout the ‘70s and ‘80s, particularly in regard to its status as the provider of welfare and care. As several scholars have pointed out, especially in relation to

⁵⁰ József Böröcz, *The European Union and Global Social Change: A Critical Geopolitical-Economic Analysis* (Routledge, London, 2010), 143.

Hungary and the GDR, the state-socialist state's ability to provide its citizens with "comfort," in terms of consumer products⁵¹ as well as in terms of delivering welfare and other services (such as housing, healthcare, common crimes law enforcement and others),⁵² was central to these states' legitimacy and operation in the 1980s. In the Czechoslovak case, the state focused its efforts on providing citizens with what it called "social comfort" (*sociální pohodlí*), which "people liked."⁵³ Paulina Bren⁵⁴ argues that the Czechoslovak leadership in the 1970s and 1980s (i.e., during the era of so-called normalization, or *normalizace*⁵⁵) relied, besides providing people with "social comfort," also on promoting "self-actualization" (*sebeaktualizace*) and "self-fulfillment" (*seberealizace*), which referred to a wider (and less tangible) sphere than "social comfort," having to do with access to activities promoting personal growth in a holistic way (such as cultural, sport or recreational activities). According to Bren, this was because Czechoslovak leaders were aware that they could not compete with Western (European) countries on the level of commodities, so they resorted to offering an

⁵¹ See Eszter Bartha, "Welfare Dictatorship, the Working Class and the Change of Regimes in East Germany and Hungary," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, 9 (2011), 1591–1610; also Ina Merkel, "Working People and Consumption Under Really-Existing Socialism: perspectives from the German Democratic Republic," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 55 (1999), 92–111.

⁵² Laszlo Bruszt, "'Without Us but For Us'? Political Orientation in Hungary in the Period of Late Paternalism," *Social Research* 55, 1–2 (1988), 43–76.

⁵³ Otakar Turek, *Podíl ekonomiky na pádu komunismu v Československu* (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha, 1995), 68.

⁵⁴ Paulina Bren, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall. . . Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis)Contents," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, 4 (2008), 831–854.

⁵⁵ "Normalization" was a politically highly sensitive term as it was the word chosen by the leaders who took the helm after the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in order to suggest that the "Prague Spring" was an "abnormal" period, which needed to be "overcome" through the "normalization" of social and political life.

“unmatchable ‘quality of life.’”⁵⁶ Bren discusses these “perquisites” available to Czechoslovak citizens as, in part, a bribe and, in part, as a (cynical) weapon in the regime’s ideological arsenal. While the regime’s touting of the advantages of job security and generous welfare system, as well as its pride over the fact that you did not “have to hand over your whole salary” if you wanted to go “to the theater, the cinema, out to dinner once in a while, or to some clubs,”⁵⁷ undoubtedly constituted part of its propaganda, this propaganda actually jibed with people’s lived experience. Therefore, I contend that Jeffrey Kopstein is exaggerating when he argues that

If the people increasingly understood that their political institutions, such as elections, parliaments, courts, and the law, were mere facades of the real item, they understood with even greater clarity that Communist industry, roads, housing, shopping centers, and supermarkets were not very authentic imitations of what industries, roads, housing, shopping centers, and supermarkets were *supposed to look like*.⁵⁸

Kopstein’s accusation that state-socialist regimes lacked authenticity – also raised, for instance, by Piotr Sztompka, who claimed that the state-socialist project had been an exercise in “fake modernity,”⁵⁹ or Eli Rubin, who suggested

⁵⁶ Bren, op. cit., p. 844.

⁵⁷ Bren, op. cit., 844.

⁵⁸ Jeffrey Kopstein, *Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945-1989* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 196, italics mine.

⁵⁹ Piotr Sztompka, “Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22, 2 (1993), 85–95.

that the GDR regime used plastics “to *simulate* modern standard of living”⁶⁰ – is problematic for several reasons, one of which is that it uses, uncritically and arbitrarily, Western (European) institutional counterparts as the yardstick for authenticity. Nonetheless, many citizens of the former state-socialist countries might have agreed with these assessments on some level, especially at the time. However, the situation was different when it came to the welfare “perquisites” and services. The extent of these services and resources was stunning; for instance, as I note in Chapter 4, by the late 1970s, the Czechoslovak government was spending almost 4% of its annual budget on direct cash benefits to families and mothers, and an *additional* 7% on services and subsidies in kind, such as those going to day-care centers, school cafeterias, children’s goods, or tax and rent deductions.⁶¹ According to Tomas Frejka, this level of welfare spending amounted to “a proportion almost certainly exceeding comparable expenditures in any other developed country.”⁶² And Bruszt’s survey, conducted *during* the last year of Hungarian state socialism, shows clearly just how important the government’s ability to procure services and welfare, was to Hungarian citizens in the late 1980s.⁶³ Thus, while Czechoslovak citizens might not have loved their supermarkets too much, they did appreciate social security and opportunity for personal growth (for instance in the form of almost free music schools or sports clubs) provided to them by their government.

⁶⁰ Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 224, italics mine.

⁶¹ Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State* (New York, 1987).

⁶² Tomas Frejka, “Fertility Trends and Policies: Czechoslovakia in the 1970s,” *Population and Development Review* 6, 1 (Mar. 1980), 65–93, 70.

⁶³ Bruszt, op. cit.

But how do the Vietnamese workers fit in? My argument is that their status in relation to the Czechoslovak state's care changed through the duration of the program. While, during the stage of paternalist internationalism, they were the objects of the Czechoslovak state's meticulous care (albeit of the distinctly paternalist and patronizing style, typical of state socialism), during the last stage of the program, the workers became, to an important extent, the means that were to assist the Czechoslovak state in providing the *citizens*, but not necessarily the foreign workers, with the robust social services, "social comfort," and in improving the situation in consumer goods market. Crucial to this process was the commodification of Vietnamese workers' labor. I further argue, however, that neither the Vietnamese workers nor the Vietnamese government accepted this push for commodification passively. One thread running through several chapters of this dissertation is the active resistance that both the Vietnamese workers and officials mounted against this drive toward commodification. Finally, I argue that this pushback was possible, in part, thanks to the fact that the Czechoslovak state's commitment to the ideas and ideals of socialism and internationalism existed at least on paper. As such these ideas were available to Vietnamese workers and officials as a resource that they could activate and deploy strategically: by invoking these ideas, they were able to arouse in the Czechoslovak state a sense of accountability for the socialist and internationalist commitments it made. This political accountability of Czechoslovakia as the labor-receiving state was of crucial importance – as will become apparent from my theoretical discussion of the relationship between commodification and labor migration in the next section. The core dynamics at this point can be described

as the Czechoslovak state moving in the direction of commodifying Vietnamese workers, and the Vietnamese state putting breaks on this push by, among other things, reminding its Czechoslovak counterpart of the socialist and internationalist commitments it made.

COMMODIFICATION OF LABOR AND LABOR MIGRATION

“Man hat Arbeitskräfte gerufen, und es kommen Menschen,” or: “We asked for workers, but human beings came,” wrote Swiss playwright and novelist Max Frisch in 1965 commenting on Italian labor migrants in Switzerland.⁶⁴ The frequency with which the sentence is quoted does not detract from its power. That is because it is a poignant and poetic condensation of a phenomenon that economic historian Karl Polanyi, building on Marx’s theorizing on the nature of commodities, described analytically some two decades earlier. Namely the fact that while labor is essential to industry and as such must be organized in markets, it is not, in fact, a true commodity, but at best a “fictitious” one (the same goes also for land and money). This is because “the postulate that anything that is bought and sold must have been produced for sale is emphatically untrue in regard to [workers].” Hence, labor is “only another name for human activity which goes with life itself, which in its turn is not produced for sale but for entirely different reasons,” and, equally importantly, the activity that is labor

⁶⁴ Forward by Max Frisch to Alexander J. Seiler, *Siamo Italiani – Die Italiener: Gespräche mit italienischen Arbeitern in der Schweiz* (Zürich, EVZ-Verlag, 1965) based on an eponymous documentary directed by Alexander J. Seiler, June Kovach, and Rob Gnant.

cannot “be detached from the rest of life.”⁶⁵ Polanyi’s analysis is true of *all* labor, but it comes to a particularly sharp relief in the case of migrant labor, as Frisch alluded to it. To understand why it is so, we have to turn to theoretical work on labor migration.

In the capitalist context, immigrant workers stand in a particular relationship to the receiving state, and it is this relationship that is behind the political weakness of migrants, that is, their lack of citizenship rights, labor unions protection, and fear of deportation.⁶⁶ This political weakness, in turn, enforces the worker’s character as cheap labor. As Portes notes, “the very fact of crossing a political border weakens the status of workers vis-à-vis the state.”⁶⁷ Or, as Manuel Castells put it in his seminal piece, “the utility of immigrant labour to capital derives primarily from the fact that it can act towards it as though the labour movement did not exist. . . a twenty-first century capital and a nineteenth century proletariat.”⁶⁸ Michael Burawoy makes a similar point when he argues that it is the migrant workers’ “relation to the state – the denial of legal, political and civil rights – that distinguishes migrant from domestic workers,” and, further, that migrants are unable, “as individuals or as a group to influence the institutions

⁶⁵ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1957), 72.

⁶⁶ Robert L. Bach, “Mexican Immigration and the American State,” *International Migration Review* 12, 4 (1978), 536–558, 537.

⁶⁷ Alejandro Portes, “Migration and Underdevelopment,” *Politics and Society* 8, 1 (1978): 1–48, 32.

⁶⁸ Manuel Castells, “Immigrant Workers and Class Struggles in Advanced Capitalism: the Western European Experience,” *Politics and Society* 5, 1 (1975): 33–66, 52.

that subordinate them to the other fractions of the labor force.”⁶⁹ That is not all, however: returning to Polanyi, we can say that the migrant laborers’ political weakness also intensifies their status as (fictitious) commodities. “If the commodification of labour under capitalism means that workers have nothing to sell but their capacity to work it also implies that they at least enjoy the formal freedom of being able to sell it to whoever offers the most pay.”⁷⁰ This is not actually completely true even as far as domestic workers are concerned for, as Polanyi argued, if workers were to refuse to sell their labor for any other price than the maximum price that the buyers are still able to afford, workers would be on strike (that is to say, engaged in an effort to ascertain what that price was) almost continuously and “society would very soon dissolve for lack of sustenance.”⁷¹ However, for migrant labor, the situation is even worse. Migrant workers face the additional problem of often being tied to specific employers, and their ability to bargain over wages or working conditions is lower still. Hence, as a result of the form that the relationship between the receiving state and migrant labor takes, two things happen: (1) “employers are handed an additional means of labour control,” and (2) “the employer, with the assistance of state, [dictates] *how* migrants [are] to have their labour power commodified.”⁷² Thus, even in the age of globalization, “the state is still a prominent force. . . [in that] its categorization of immigrants has a profound influence on the selling of

⁶⁹ Michael Burawoy, “The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 81, 5 (1976), 1050–1087, 1075, 1061.

⁷⁰ Patrick McGovern, “Inequalities in the (De-)Commodification of Labour: Immigration, the Nation State, and Labour Market Stratification,” *Sociology Compass* 6, 6 (2012): 485–498, 486.

⁷¹ Polanyi, op. cit., pp. 230–231.

⁷² McGovern, op. cit., p. 490, italics mine.

their labour.”⁷³ The acuity of this, largely Marxist, analysis is confirmed, somewhat paradoxically, by the fact the famous neoliberal economist Milton Friedman arrived at precisely the same conclusions, only his moral emphasis lay elsewhere. When, in the late 1970s in a lecture at Stanford, Friedman discussed illegal immigration to the United States, he argued:

as long as [immigration is] illegal, the people who come in do not qualify for welfare, they don't qualify for social security, they don't qualify for the other myriad of benefits that we pour out from our left pocket to our right pocket. So long as they don't qualify, they migrate to jobs. They take jobs that most residents of this country are unwilling to take. They provide employers with the kind of workers that they cannot get. They're hard workers, they're good workers, and they are clearly better off. . . Mexican immigration over the border is a good thing. It's a good thing for the illegal immigrants. It's a good thing for the United States. It's a good thing for the citizens of the country. But, it's only good so long as it's illegal.⁷⁴

The “illegal” status exacerbates the political weakness of migrant labor since, “all other things equal, being unrecorded means being. . .hidden from public scrutiny, and so, being unprotected. . .avoidance of income taxation hardly compensates for the complete loss of legal protection,” and hence, “informality. . .increases the vulnerability of labor.”⁷⁵ However, restrictions placed on workers' rights tend to accompany also other types of labor migration, including guest-worker programs, albeit to different degrees. By the same token, the expansion of rights in the direction of inclusion leads to lower rates of labor migration. We can see this on the example of Sweden, which has experienced far lower levels of

⁷³ Ibid., p. 491.

⁷⁴ <http://freestudents.blogspot.com/2008/02/what-milton-friedman-really-said.html> (last accessed 2 February 2014). DVD with the lecture available from http://www.fr33minds.com/product_info.php?cPath=48&products_id=101

⁷⁵ József Böröcz, “Informality Rules,” *East European Politics and Societies* 14, 2 (2000), 348–380, 355.

labor migration from Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries upon their EU succession than, for instance, the UK.⁷⁶ While in the first five years after the accession, the UK registered 949,000 CEE migrant workers, the Nordic countries *as a whole* issued only 200,000 work permits to the citizens of these countries.⁷⁷ In the case of Sweden, this is directly attributable to the fact that the strictness of Swedish labor laws, that is to say, the laws that insist on rights for *all* workers, means that Swedish employers have little incentive to seek out migrant workers. On the other hand, countries in which the state tolerates dramatically unequal treatment of foreign workers, the employment of “cheaper” (because rights-deprived) migrant workers makes economic sense to employers.⁷⁸ Or, as Castells put it, “immigrant workers do not exist because there are ‘arduous and badly paid’ jobs to be done, but, rather, arduous and badly paid jobs exist because immigrant workers are present or can be sent for to do them,” since, as he explains, “whenever arduous work is relatively well-paid (e.g., miners)

⁷⁶However, while between 1980 and 2007, Sweden hosted only 10,291 foreign migrant workers, it accepted 343,231 refugees during the same time period (Pieter Bevelander, “The Employment Integration of Resettled Refugees, Asylum Claimants, and Family Reunion Migrants in Sweden,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, 1 (2011), 22–43, 27). Also importantly, unlike a vast majority of other (Western) European countries, which passed measures forbidding asylum seekers from seeking employment, Sweden kept refugees’ right to work, while, at the same time, it decreased the government’s economic support they were receiving (Hans E. Andersson and Susanna Nilsson, “Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants’ Increased Social Rights in Sweden,” *International Migration* 49, 4 (2011), 167–188, pp. 174–175, 176). In this sense, the status of refugees in Sweden to some extent approximates that of low-wage labor migrants elsewhere. (I would like to thank József Böröcz for drawing my attention to this point.)

⁷⁷Line Eldring, Ian Fitzgerald and, Jens Arnholtz, “Post-accession migration in construction and trade union responses in Denmark, Norway and the UK,” *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 18, 1 (2012), 21–36, 21.

⁷⁸Martin Ruhs and Philip Martin, “Numbers vs. Rights: Trade-Offs and Guest Worker Programs,” *International Migration Review* 42, 1 (2008): 249–265, 260.

nationals. . .are found doing it.”⁷⁹ Instructive in this regard is also the case of Norway, which seems to depart from the path pursued by the rest of its Scandinavian neighbors. This non-EU member country of only 4.6 million inhabitants received a full half of the 200,000 CEE migrant workers who ended up in Scandinavia.⁸⁰ This has probably a lot to do with the fact that although Norway introduced so-called “transitional rules,” which included wage regulations as well as measures to prevent “social dumping” in the wake of the 2004 EU enlargement, the effectiveness of these rules was undermined, especially in agriculture, because it depended on the migrants’ ability to *demand* the observance of the rules from their employers. However, this turned out to be well nigh impossible given that the migrants, as a rule, lacked the knowledge of their rights and entitlements. This, in turn, was in part due to a language barrier, and in part due to their difficulty to navigate an administrative system, which was very complex and utterly unknown to them. In particular, “the complicated and unclear regulations of the Norwegian tax system lead to uncertainty and confusion among migrants, and they often pointed to the vagueness of the tax regulations as one of their main problems concerning wage estimations.”⁸¹ Thus, only when migrant workers’ rights are not only expanded but also effectively implemented and enforced a significant decrease in these workers’ exploitation takes place. Available evidence suggests that a robust involvement by the state

⁷⁹ Castells, op. cit., p. 54.

⁸⁰ Marko Valenta and Zan Strabac, “State-Assisted Integration, But Not for All: Norwegian Welfare Services and Labour Migration From the New EU Member States,” *International Social Work* 54,5 (2011), 663–680, 665.

⁸¹ Johan Fredrik Rye and Joanna Andrzejewska, “The structural disempowerment of Eastern European migrant farm workers in Norwegian agriculture,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 26 (2010), 41–51, 46.

is required for this to happen (as we will also see below in my discussion of contemporary guest-worker schemes).

Shifting attention from the relationship between migrants and receiving states to the relationship between the two states, i.e., the sending and the receiving one, Michael Burawoy posits that the distinguishing characteristic of the system of migrant labor is the separation between the activities that result in labor's *maintenance* and those necessary for its *renewal*.⁸² That is, labor is renewed (reproduced) in the sending state but maintained in the receiving state, although the two remain "indissolubly interdependent." A corollary to this state of affairs is that the costs of renewal "normally borne by the employing state and economy are to a considerable degree borne by another economy or another state or a combination of the two." Or, as Portes put it, "for the receiving economy as a whole, [migrant] labor saves the cost of rearing the worker and supporting him during his early unproductive years,"⁸³ as well as, we can add, especially in the case of guest-worker schemes, also during her or his *late* unproductive years. In fact, some of the sending countries that have turned to the export of their workers as a substantial, or even principal, revenue sources, such as the Philippines or Bangladesh, have set up, and fund, programs that train their workers based on the needs of the potential recipient countries,⁸⁴ and in that way

⁸² Burawoy, op. cit. p. 1052.

⁸³ Alejandro Portes, "Introduction: Toward a Structural Analysis of Illegal (Undocumented) Immigration," *International Migration Review* 12, 4 (1978), 469–484, 474.

⁸⁴ Nasra M. Shah and Fred Arnold, "Government Policies and Programs Regulating Labor Migration" in Fred Arnold and Nasra M. Shah, eds., *Asian Labor Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1986),

further increase the labor renewal costs they bear. Even more important for my work is Burawoy's argument that, in the case of labor migration, "the employer of migrant labor is neither responsible politically nor accountable financially to the external political and economic system," as "a proportion of the costs of renewal is externalized to an alternate economy and/or state."⁸⁵ As I will argue below, this might constitute the most significant difference between guest-worker type of labor migration in the capitalist and state-socialist contexts.

Those who, in contrast to Friedman, do find labor migrants' marginalized status and exploitation problematic often advocate for changes in policy to improve the migrants' lot. Bach, however, argues that the exploitation of migrant workers cannot be remedied through simple adjustments in policy since the exploitation is largely due to processes "embodied in the state" and these processes "spring from the very nature of the state reproducing capitalist social relations in general."⁸⁶ Thus, Bach argues that migrant worker issues are connected with the very core of a capitalist state's functioning. Hence, he is critical of proposals that see the strengthening of the role of the state – that is, proposals along the lines of perfectly operating guest-worker schemes – as a way to correct and prevent abuses of (currently "illegal") migrant workers. As he sees it, such proposals "reproduce repressive relations [of the existing capitalist economy] to the

65–77; 76. See also, Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁸⁵ Burawoy, op. cit., p. 1053.

⁸⁶ Bach, op. cit., p. 539.

immigration.”⁸⁷ Accordingly, Bach argues that “the extension of control over the abusive conditions of employment basically leaves labor with no gains at all. The extension of minimum wage laws, safety requirements and enforcement of existing laws against unfair labor practices merely offers to labor the gains they presumably won back in the twenties and thirties.”⁸⁸ However, as I will point out below in my discussion of the literature on guest-worker programs, this does not necessarily have to be the case. For example, some of the policy adjustments implemented during the *bracero* program actually led to an amelioration in *domestic* workers’ working conditions (who seem to be Bach’s main concern), however modest in scope these improvements might have been. One reason why Bach is blind to the possible positive role of the state is that, in his theorizing, only one state seems to be present, and that is the receiving state, while the sending state seems to be completely absent. This focus on the labor-receiving states seems to be a constant in migration literature. And in the case of literature on guest-worker schemes, most attention seems to be devoted to the twin issues of migrants’ ease/difficulty to assimilate, or at least become unproblematically incorporated in the mainstream of the destination society, or, alternatively, the host society government’s failure to enforce guest workers’ returns and to control the conditions of entry and the numbers of migrants. This preoccupation is so strong that even some of the scholars who want to draw attention to the importance of the labor-sending states *also* focus on the way in which these states’ actions (i.e., their control and management of their citizens’ outflows) affect the conditions of entry and numbers of workers crossing the

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 552.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 553.

borders of the labor-receiving states.⁸⁹ However, much more important for my argument is Portes's point that in order for the *receiving* state to be able to encourage illegal migration is that the political authorities in the *sending* country are "appeased, but. . .their efforts to give immigrants legal protection and increase their wages. . .[are] neutralized."⁹⁰ This theoretical observation is important because (if we invert the point of view from which it is articulated) it brings us closer to understanding of the ways in which sending states *can* affect the destiny of their workers in the receiving states, which I will discuss in the next section.

STATE INVOLVEMENT IN GUEST-WORKER SCHEMES

According to Robert Rhoades, the etymology of the term "guest worker" – which, paired with the word "program," became a generic term for describing state-sponsored labor exchanges, especially in Western Europe but also elsewhere – goes back to the Nazi party and era, when a term close, but slightly different from the post-WWII one – *Arbeitsgäste*, or work guests – was introduced. By "July 1943, Nazi officials – in an effort to increase the productivity and build a new image of foreign workers in the eyes of the German public – officially proclaimed the migrants 'guest workers.'" Thus, as Rhoades goes on to argue, "the term,

⁸⁹ See, for instance, Aristide Zolberg, "Matters of State: Theorizing Immigration Policy" in Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz and Josh deWind, eds. *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience* (New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 71–93; or Kristel Acacio, "Managing Labor Migration: Philippine State Policy and International Outflows, 1969–2000," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 17, 2 (2008), 103–132.

⁹⁰ Portes, op. cit., "Migration," p. 40.

with its euphemistic connotations, originated with the master propagandists of the Nazi elite for specific purposes and has been continued in the postwar period for much the same ends.”⁹¹

As for the origins of the programs themselves, scholars usually trace them to the Prussian recruitment of Polish workers in late 19th and early 20th century. During this import of labor, concerted efforts were made to “repeatedly impress upon both the Polish farm workers and the local German population that such workers were merely aliens whose presence was tolerated [but] that their permanent settlement in Prussia was out of the question.”⁹² In their modern form, however, guest-worker schemes can be seen as successors to Switzerland’s guest-worker policies in the early post-WWII era. The hallmark of these policies was the conceptualization of guest workers as “a complementary work force providing manpower elasticity in periods of economic expansion [and] a buffer for indigenous labor in periods of recession.”⁹³ As such, “guestworker policies in Western Europe. . .[were] largely a byproduct of postwar economic expansion,”⁹⁴ and a temporary replacement for the millions of working-age men countries such as Germany lost in World War II. Importantly, they were also based “on a

⁹¹ Robert E. Rhoades, “Foreign Labor and German Industrial Capitalism 1871–1978: The Evolution of a Migratory System,” *American Ethnologist* 5, 3 (1978): 553–573, 563.

⁹² Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880-1980: Seasonal Workers, Forced Laborers, Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1990), 19.

⁹³ Philip L. Martin and Mark J. Miller, “Guestworkers: Lessons From Western Europe,” *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 33, 3 (1980), 315–330, 316.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

conscious recruiting effort by receiving nation-states.”⁹⁵ At this point, some of the differences between these policies and those of state-socialist Czechoslovakia start to emerge.⁹⁶ For now, let us note three of them: (1) the difference in the *motives* for introducing labor exchange policies, (2) the difference in the *point in the economic cycle* when they were introduced, and (3) the difference in the *state that initiated them* (i.e., the sending rather than the receiving one). While the driving motor behind the classic guest-worker schemes in the capitalist European countries were the economic preoccupations of the *receiving* countries, such as their interest in filling existing or future labor market vacancies with temporary workers who could be returned to their home countries in the event of economic stagnation,⁹⁷ as historical evidence presented in chapter 2 shows, the impetus for the launch of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange originated squarely in the economic preoccupation of the *sending* country, i.e., Vietnam.⁹⁸ Accordingly, while in the capitalist context the initiative invariably

⁹⁵ Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz, “Contemporary Immigration: Theoretical Perspectives on Its Determinants and Modes of Incorporation,” *International Migration Review* 23, 3 (1989): 606–630, 609.

⁹⁶ I hesitate to set up the comparison as one between Western European capitalist countries and those in the state-socialist camp simply because the literature on labor exchanges in state socialism remains so limited. Hence, the only case on which I have sufficient information, including, crucially, changes over time, is my own.

⁹⁷ Barbara Schmitter Heisler, “Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination,” *International Migration Review* 19, 3 (1985): 469–484, 471.

⁹⁸ After the end of the American war, simultaneous with the labor migration that was part of the trainee and worker programs developed in cooperation with the countries allied with the Soviet Union, was the migration of refugees, who came to be called the “boat people.” First of these people left in April 1975 (i.e., with the fall of Saigon) and majority of them headed to the United States, with the rest choosing Canada and France. The next wave, which peaked between 1978–1979, concerned primarily ethnic Chinese. In addition to the United States, Canada and Australia, three European countries – France, Germany and Great Britain – constituted major destination countries. The last major immigration wave

started in the receiving countries, which approached the potential senders with requests for labor recruitment, in my case, the initiative came clearly from Vietnam and, if anything, caught the Czechoslovak officials off guard. In terms of timing, while the Western European recruitment schemes were a response to post-WWII economic boom, the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese program got off the ground at the end of the 1960s, gained in momentum in the 1970s and peaked – and adopted some characteristics of the capitalist guest-worker programs – in the 1980s. In other words, the program was introduced and peaked at a time when, according to general consensus,⁹⁹ Czechoslovak economy started to lose steam. Finally, the original conception of the program was unambiguously altruistic and animated by Czechoslovakia's commitment to socialist internationalism.

It is worth noting that even in capitalist countries guest-worker-type labor exchanges were sometimes discussed, in press and by politicians, as altruistic enterprises. As Ulrich Herbert points out, in Germany in the early 1960s for instance, the program was viewed as “a bit of development aid for southern

peaked in 1989 and included some 35,000 Vietnamese heading for Hong Kong. Thus, both in the case of labor migrants headed for Eastern and Central Europe and in the case of refugees headed to North America and some Western European countries, Vietnamese migration between 1975 and 1989 was deeply embedded in the logic of Cold War geopolitics (Andrew Hardy, “From a Floating World: Emigration to Europe From Post-War Vietnam,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 11, 4 (2002), 463–484).

⁹⁹ For Czechoslovak economy, see, for instance, Otakar Turek, *Podíl ekonomiky na pádu komunismu v Československu* (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha, 1995), or Jiri Kosta, “Aims and Methods of economic Policy in Czechoslovakia 1970–1978” in Alec Nove, Hans-Hermann Hohmann and Gertraud Seidenstecher (eds) *The East European Economies in 1970s* (London, Butterworths, 1982), 139–179. For the economies of East-Central Europe in general, see, e.g., Szelenyi and Szelenyi, op.cit.; Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).

countries,” and politicians extolled the “exceptionally positive political effects” of guest workers’ presence in the Federal Republic “in the sense of ‘international understanding’ and ‘European integration.’” Labor Minister Blank asserted in 1964 that the employment of foreigners in the FRG made “the merging together of Europe and the rapprochement between persons of highly diverse backgrounds and cultures in a spirit of friendship a reality.”¹⁰⁰ However, *Europe* may have been the operative word since, as Karen Schönwälder has convincingly demonstrated, barriers to the recruitment of non-Europeans were being systematically erected at the same time. The very same Labor Minister Blank also explained in the German parliament that “the employment of nationals from non-European states causes particular difficulties in adapting and settling down because of their utterly different mentality and the frequently extremely different customs and ways of life.”¹⁰¹ Even more damagingly (and amazingly, considering that that we are talking about a time period barely 20 years after the end of WWII), “non-European” was really only a code word for non-white. This became apparent, for instance, after the signing of a recruitment treaty with Portugal (in 1964). In 1965, the Federal Employment Agency reported that Portugal “had presented candidates for employment in Germany who came from the colonies and were of ‘African or Indian skin colour.’ The members of an inter-ministerial working party on foreign employment agreed that it was unacceptable to recruit dark-skinned Portuguese for work in Germany,” and the Portuguese authorities were informed that “German employers were not

¹⁰⁰ Herbert, op. cit., p. 213.

¹⁰¹ Karen Schönwälder, “Why Germany’s Guestworkers Were Largely Europeans: The Selective Principles of Post-War Labour Recruitment Policy,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, 2 (2004): 248–265, 252.

interested in dark-skinned workers. Should the Portuguese be uncooperative, German employers would find workers from other countries.”¹⁰² Along the same lines, while the “German state did not forbid Greek and Italian workers from bringing their families with them, [it] did forbid Turks from doing the same.”¹⁰³ Unsurprisingly, foreign workers have also been discursively racialized in Germany. Some 35% of the surveyed Germans thought that foreign workers were “dumb and vulgar.”¹⁰⁴ German citizens also used to complain that guest workers were “excessively noisy,” and they used the allegation as a rationale for their refusal to share residential areas with them.¹⁰⁵ I analyze the ways in which Vietnamese were racialized in state-socialist Czechoslovakia in Chapter 6, so for now I will only note that while there were important differences, some of the forms in which prejudice against foreign workers was verbalized in the German (capitalist) and Czechoslovak (state socialist) contexts were also rather similar. For instance, a survey found that two-thirds of the German population regarded foreign workers as “terribly loud and boisterous,” about half thought that “they [were] after our women.” Both of these invectives were used often by Czechoslovak citizens as well, although they were somewhat more frequently directed against the Cuban than the Vietnamese workers. Remarkable to me, as a student of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program, is the Germans’ accusation that the guest workers were “beef[ing] up their pay

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 250.

¹⁰³ Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen* (Berghahn Books, New York, 2011), 63.

¹⁰⁴ Carol Schmid, “*Gastarbeiter* in West Germany and Switzerland: an Assessment of Host Society–Immigrant Relations,” *Population Research and Policy Review* 2 (1983): 233–252, 241.

¹⁰⁵ Herbert, op. cit., p. 227.

envelopes by an organized form of ‘reporting sick,’”¹⁰⁶ as this complaint is uncannily similar to the grumblings heard in Czechoslovakia of the 1980s.

Since governments are by definition involved in guest-worker schemes, there is also an important political dimension to these programs, both in state-socialist and non-state-socialist contexts. Both sender and receiver states pursue their own goals and interests through these labor exchanges¹⁰⁷ and the interdependence between (and the intermeshing of) the economic and political realms is more evident in them than in most other economic ventures. A corollary to this fact is that a state’s migration policies have implications for that state’s foreign policy. As such, (labor) migration policies may serve, and even advance, that state’s foreign policy interests.¹⁰⁸ But they may also undermine them: Italo-Swiss relations, for example, “were seriously strained by alleged Swiss neglect of migrant social conditions” and, in 1973, “racial incidents involving Algerian emigrants” lead to a “near rupture of Franco-Algerian relations.”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the relations between Singapore and the Philippines were seriously disturbed, to the point where both countries recalled their respective ambassadors, in the aftermath of the execution by Singapore authorities of Filipina domestic worker Flor Contemplacion sentenced for double

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Heisler, op. cit., p. 470.

¹⁰⁸ Tomas Hammar, “Laws and Policies Regulating Population Movements: A European Perspective” in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 250.

¹⁰⁹ Martin and Miller, op. cit., pp. 318–319, fn. 14., p. 330.

murder.¹¹⁰ As I will show, the foreign-relations aspect played a very important role in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese program. The importance of this aspect was magnified by the fact that – unlike in the capitalist setting, where, as Burawoy argued, there is no economic and political accountability of the employer to the sending state – such accountability existed in the Czechoslovak case. This was because the Czechoslovak state was not only the receiving state but also the Vietnamese workers’ ultimate employer and was politically accountable to its counterpart in both these capacities, i.e., as the workers’ employer and as a partner negotiator in inter-state relations. As my analyses (particularly in Chapters 4 and 5) of the records of the negotiations between the representatives of the two states show, the Czechoslovak state took this accountability seriously.

When we examine various guest-worker programs, a curious fact becomes apparent: in administering these programs, even capitalist states often behave in a manner that is state-socialist-like. This is true of the US state when it ran the *bracero* program, as well as of the German state. Neither of them “merely lay down the legal rules”; they “also fixed the emigration and immigration quotas, the conditions of work, and above all the rates of pay.”¹¹¹ However, I argue that the involvement of the *receiving* state on behalf of migrant workers’ rights depends on the intensity and the manner of involvement by the *sending* state,

¹¹⁰ Brenda S. A. Yeoh, Shirlena Huang and Joaquin Gonzales III, “Migrant Female Domestic Workers: Debating the Economic, Social and Political Impacts in Singapore,” *International Migration Review* 33, 1 (1999), 114–136, pp.128–129,

¹¹¹ Ludwik Landau, “Seasonal Emigration From Poland to Germany and Latvia,” *International Labour Review* 40, 2 (1939), 195–208, 200.

and the extent and manner of sending governments' involvement in guest-worker programs varies. Italian governments, for instance "developed an impressive network of organizations, institutions and agencies which [were] directly or indirectly tied to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."¹¹² These included (in the mid-1980s) networks of consular offices staffed "with a host of social workers, schooling and education consultants, specialists who deal with family, employment and social security related problems." In addition, Italian trade union federations operated charitable societies, which, though not formally part of the state were heavily subsidized by it, and provided services such as representation and advice on problems relating to employment, pensions and benefits earned in other countries.¹¹³ In addition to these Italian initiatives, the agreement between the German and the Italian states signed in 1955 stipulated, among other things, that Italian workers' wages would be in keeping with German union wages, protected contract length and contained assurances of "suitable living conditions."¹¹⁴ In other cases, such as the *bracero* discussed below, the involvement of the state was even more extensive.

When the US-Mexican *bracero* program between the 1940s and 50s is discussed the emphasis usually seems to be on its failures to both prevent illegal migration and to protect Mexican workers' rights. However, we should not lose sight of the unprecedented (certainly in non-state-socialist context) involvement of the

¹¹² Heisler, op. cit., p. 478.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 478, fn. 16.

¹¹⁴ Herbert, op. cit., p. 205–206.

United States government in the program, and the beneficial effects that this involvement produced:

From 1942 to 1947. . . federal officials did everything but employ and pay foreign farmworkers. . . In the name of the war effort, U.S. officials helped recruit and screen foreign workers; they had them examined by doctors; transported them on navy ships and later on chartered planes; housed them in federal labor camps; fed them; and treated them when they were sick or injured. Moreover, in cases in which these protections failed to eliminate abuses, Mexico sent "consuls" and the British West Indies sent colonial officials to serve as "liaisons." Both were authorized to intervene when workers complained of mistreatment and they could deny workers to abusive employers. By 1945, the U.S. government was acting as padrone or crew leader to over 100,000 foreign farmworkers. . . Despite sporadic and sometimes serious mistreatment on American farms, this five-year period was one of the few times in the history of guestworker programs when foreign workers were treated somewhat like guests. Jamaican tea pickers were offered the use of a country club in Wisconsin; they were picked up and taken to church by curious white parishioners in Iowa; a group in New York received "the keys" to New York City.¹¹⁵

However, equally importantly – and directly tied to my theoretical discussion above – US farmers denounced the program as a "'sell-out' to organized labor, and a conspiracy by federal agents 'to fasten upon farmers and farm workers far-reaching bureaucratic controls and restrictions.'"¹¹⁶ By contrast (or, by the same token), those whose sympathies lay with labor hoped that "the Mexican agreement would serve as an entering wedge for the extension of similar guarantees to domestic workers."¹¹⁷ As well, American labor leaders, after their initial opposition motivated by fear that Mexican workers would compete for jobs with their American counterparts, eventually backed the regulations

¹¹⁵ Cindy Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective," *Labor History* 44, 1 (2003):69–94, 82.

¹¹⁶ Otey M. Scruggs, "Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942," *Agricultural History* 34, 3 (July, 1960), 140–149, 140.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

proposal “on condition that effective safeguards be devised to protect both Mexican and American workers against exploitation.”¹¹⁸

What is more, as I argued above, though the measures carried out on the territory of the United States were, obviously, implemented by the US government, the involvement and the pressure wielded by the *Mexican* government were crucial to their being put into place in the first place. American farmers were well aware of the key role that the Mexican government played in the creation and upholding of the rules and regulations designed to protect its workers, and exactly for that reason they “opposed any plan calling for the active participation of the Mexican government.”¹¹⁹ Instead, the farmers wanted the lifting of immigration restrictions and a permission to recruit workers on their own in Mexico “with little interference from *either* government.”¹²⁰ In the end, however, the agreement, which was formalized in August 1942,¹²¹ guaranteed that both the US and the Mexican governments had a strong voice and played important roles in the operation of the program. Numerous rules designed to shield the *braceros* from exploitation were put in place.¹²² The American government acted as the primary employer of Mexican workers; the program was administered, and the Mexican workers were recruited, by the Farm Security Administration [FSA] of the US Department of Agriculture, and not by farmers themselves; adherence to contracts was supervised by the Mexican

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 143.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 143, italics mine.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 147.

¹²² The program’s rules changed quite significantly over time.

government. Rules on wages and the conditions of employment were implemented as the principal guarantees against exploitation. Relevant to my argument is the fact that in several instances the rules stipulated that measures applied to Mexican workers would work “on the same basis as [those applied to] American workers.”¹²³ This, however, more often than not revealed the paucity of labor rights and generally poor working conditions of *American* workers. This was, for example, the case of the rule stipulating that the housing and medical facilities available to Mexican workers be “similar” as those used by their American counterparts. This meant that, paradoxically, in the areas where the Farm Security Administration operated camps and health programs, *braceros* might have potentially enjoyed better living conditions than domestic workers in other areas.¹²⁴ At times, the FSA began extending some of the provisions of the Bracero Program, such as wage and work guarantees to domestic farm workers; but when it did so, it faced accusations that it was engaging in “socialist experiments.”¹²⁵

Even more crucial to my argument is that “American officials knew that unless they agreed to Mexican terms, there would be no labor from Mexico.”¹²⁶ In other words, that the Mexican government assumed a strong negotiating position vis-à-vis its northern neighbor and *actively* worked on behalf of its workers abroad. This is particularly evident in the Mexican government’s decision to “blacklist”

¹²³ Scruggs, “Evolution..,” op. cit., p. 148.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York, Routledge), 22.

¹²⁶ Op.cit., Scruggs, “Evolution..,” 149.

Texas in 1943 and not authorize any *braceros* to work in that state due to “the number of cases of extreme, intolerable racial discrimination.”¹²⁷ This decision immediately prompted the Texas governor to take steps toward eliminating discrimination, which included the creation of a commission that would track and take action against prejudicial and discriminatory acts. Nonetheless, what severely undermined, and ultimately negated, these efforts a few years later was the “availability of illegal entrants.”¹²⁸ Notably, however, the US government contributed to the creation of this “availability.” It did so, for instance in 1949, through its policy of the legalization of Mexican workers already on its territory but in violation of immigration rules; the official slang for this legalization practice was “drying out the wetbacks.”¹²⁹

Thus, an important part of the *bracero* story is the difficulty with the enforcement of the provisions designed to protect migrant workers’ rights. Similar difficulty occurred also in the implementation of the Franco-Italian agreement, from 1947, which granted Italian workers in France numerous protections. These protections in fact “mirrored guidelines found in the ILO’s 1949 convention on migrant workers.”¹³⁰ Yet, their execution foundered on “employer reluctance to

¹²⁷ Cited in Otey M. Scruggs, “Texas and the Bracero Program, 1942–1947,” *Pacific Historical Review* 32 (1963), 251–264, 254.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 263.

¹²⁹ *Op.cit.*, Calavita, 28.

¹³⁰ Mark J. Miller, “Evolution of Policy Modes for Regulating International Labour Migration” in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 300–314, 307.

comply with recruitment and employment stipulation.”¹³¹ Thus, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, there was an “enormous gap. . .between the provisions formally agreed to in the accords and their implementation in practice.”¹³² This remains the case, and a problem, in more recent guest-worker schemes.

Typical of the more recently launched guest-worker schemes are those put in place by several Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Thailand, which send significant worker contingents primarily into the Middle East. In most of these cases, the government-sponsored programs “encourage the emigration of labor as part of broader strategies to acquire foreign exchange, reduce unemployment and develop skills.”¹³³ The national economic plans of the Philippines and Indonesia, for instance, “explicitly incorporate labor migration as a policy tool and set specific targets for emigration and remittances.”¹³⁴ The governments of many of these countries have issued various rules that regulate recruitment and placement (e.g., who has the right to recruit workers, what jobs are out of bounds, etc.), settlement of disputes, repatriation of earnings, and some welfare provisions (e.g., in regard to health or housing).¹³⁵ Some of the rules have evidently been designed with the workers’ welfare in mind (such as minimum standards for

¹³¹ Ibid., 307.

¹³² Ibid., 308.

¹³³ Douglas S. Massey, “International Migration at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: The Role of the State,” *Population and Development Review* 25, 2 (1999): 303–322, 311.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 311.

¹³⁵ For an overview of the policies of different countries see Nasra and Arnold, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

work contracts, or legal aid to workers in distress); some seem to benefit more the employers in the receiving state (such as state-subsidized skill training); still others seem to have been written to benefit the sending states (such as the requirement to remit certain percentage of workers' wages). However, the most notable feature of these regulations is that they are often, to an important extent, unilateral creations of the sending states. Where this is not the case and the protection of workers actually rests on bilateral agreements between the sending and receiving states, there are, nonetheless, important limits in the sending states' ability to stand up for and enforce the rights of their workers. The Philippine state is possibly the most important example of a country that has used bilateralism to devise a comprehensive system of employment protections for its workers abroad, complete with grievance procedures and other institutional mechanisms for the resolution of contractual disputes between Philippine workers and their foreign employers. Nonetheless, as Robyn Rodriguez¹³⁶ documents, when push comes to shove, the Philippine states' capability to follow through on its pledges is often rather limited. For instance, in 2001, a Brunei employer failed to pay a group of Philippine garment workers for a month of overtime and *overnight* work. However, when the workers pressed for redress and negotiations got underway, the representatives of the Philippine state were barred from the meetings on the grounds that the negotiations could only include the Brunei government, the company management and the workers. When, following a diplomatic complaint, the Philippine state succeeded in becoming recognized as a legitimate party in the

¹³⁶ Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, op. cit.

process (as the representative of the workers), it ended up accepting the terms of settlement proposed by the management of the Brunei company. Thus, in the end, rather than intervening on its workers' behalf, the Philippine state actually ended up making an effort to convince workers to accept the management's terms.¹³⁷ Situation tends to be even worse in the cases of domestic (rather than industrial) workers, such as maids. Singapore, for example, "has consistently maintained that the employment of foreign maids. . . cannot come under the Employment Act because the domestic labor is a private contract between maid and employer," and accordingly, it contends that the free market should "determine the wages and other conditions of service for foreign maids."¹³⁸ Hence, often stipulations such as the requirement that that contracts pass minimum standards in the sending country are moot since the contracts "are only implementable at the discretion of the host countries" and hence "it is hardly surprising that enforcement of labour standards is a problem."¹³⁹ Instructive in this regard is the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act passed by the Filipino government after the execution of a migrant worker, Flor Contemplacion, in Singapore, already mentioned above.¹⁴⁰ The act was to "represent a shift in philosophy away from the primacy of economic goals, in

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp. 122–130.

¹³⁸ Yeoh et. al., op.cit., p.118.

¹³⁹ Manolo I. Abella, "Contemporary Labour Migration from Asia: Policies and Perspectives of Sending Countries" in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim, and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 263–278, 269.

¹⁴⁰ See also the discussion of the Contemplacion case in Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export*, op. cit.

favour of protecting the dignity and human rights of Filipinos.”¹⁴¹ However, few changes followed the passing of the act since “a major difficulty is the unwillingness of labour-recruiting countries to cooperate by entering into bilateral agreements, or by adhering to multilateral instruments such as the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.”¹⁴² Indeed, as of 2010, fewer than 50 countries, and as Ruhs argues, none of them major immigration countries, ratified the 1990 UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.¹⁴³ It is evident that the lack of political accountability of the receiving state to the sending state explains both the absence of *effective* bilateral rules on workers’ treatment and the difficulty in enforcing the existing standards and rules.

South Korea, during the era when it was sending its workers to other countries, seems to constitute a case of its own. Some of its practices make it appear similar to the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange. For instance, some of the rules the South Korean government applied to its overseas workers’ stays, especially the highly specific standards for facilities that were to be made available to these workers, resemble, in their form, quite closely the rules applied to Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia. Beyond rules in regard to compensation for on-the-job accidents, “clearly specified rules pertaining to the promotion of safety,

¹⁴¹ Stephen Castles, “Why Migration Policies Fail,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, 2 (2004): 205–227, 213.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹⁴³ Martin Ruhs, “The Human Rights of Migrant Workers: Why Do So Few Countries Care?” *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, 9 (2012), 1277–1293, 1278.

health, and morale,”¹⁴⁴ the South Korean government also regulated in great detail the standards for spaces in which its workers are to be housed. Thus, for example, each worker must have had no less than 2.5 m² (about 27 square feet) to his or her disposal, and there could be no more than 16 workers per room.¹⁴⁵ There were similarly detailed regulations as to the canteen, restroom, bathroom, or sport and recreation facilities. This approach closely resembles the approach of the Czechoslovak state (although, in absolute terms, the standards were rather different), which mandated, for instance, that all foreign workers housed in Czechoslovak hostels had to have at least 6 m² of space (about 65 square feet) per person available to them, in addition to space taken up by closets/wardrobes; that the maximum number of persons per bedroom was three; that there could be at most six beds per suite; that a suite could consist of at most three bedrooms; and that the bedrooms could not be equipped with bunk beds.¹⁴⁶ Another element that the two programs shared was that workers traveled, lived and worked in groups rather than as individual workers. However, there were two significant differences. (1) In the South Korean case, the regulations were formulated by the sending state, whereas in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese case they were formulated and issued by the receiving state. (2) South Korean workers abroad worked for *South Korean*, not local, firms,¹⁴⁷ whereas the

¹⁴⁴ Op.Cit., Shah and Arnold, 72.

¹⁴⁵ Op.Cit., Shah and Arnold, 73, based on Il-Lae Chough, “Overseas Employment Policy of Korea,” 1983.

¹⁴⁶ MPSV, “Metodický pokyn pro pobyt a ubytování zahraničních občanů dočasně zaměstnaných a odborně připravovaných v ČSSR na základě mezinárodních dohod a ujednání,” dated 15 February 1988.

¹⁴⁷ Sooyong Kim, “Labor Migration from Korea to the Middle East: Its Trend and Impact on the Korean Economy” in Fred Arnold and Nasra M. Shah, eds., *Asian*

Vietnamese were employed by Czechoslovak companies. Saskia Sassen¹⁴⁸ argues that by virtue of this arrangement (i.e., the insistence, by the South Korean state, that it supplies its own work force together with the rest of the construction (or other) projects it was delivering for another state) the workers were made into a component of the Korean state's export projects and were thereby transformed into commodities.

In 1991, South Korea introduced its own "Foreign Technical Training Program," which "has evolved into a complex inter-governmental, foreign worker recruitment strategy reminiscent of the popular guestworker policies in Europe."¹⁴⁹ An important feature of the system is the Employment Permit System, which provides foreign workers with the same rights as domestic workers, and within whose framework the foreigners "have access to the National Health Insurance, the Casualty Insurance, the Industrial Accident Compensation Insurance and the National Pension." Further, "employers must enroll in the Wage Guarantee Insurance and the Departure Guarantee Insurance," whereby "the former ensures that employers do not delay or withhold wages from foreign workers, and the latter encourages both employers and foreign workers to honor their contracts by collecting from employers a monthly premium that can be claimed by the employees at the end of their

Labor Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1986), 163–174.

¹⁴⁸ Saskia Sassen-Koob, "Towards a Conceptualization of Immigrant Labor," *Social Problems* 29, 1 (1981): 65–85, 79.

¹⁴⁹ Joon K. Kim, "State, Civil Society and International Norms: Expanding the Political and Labor Rights of Foreigners in South Korea," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 14, 4 (2005): 383–418, 396.

contracts.”¹⁵⁰ While, as Kim argues, the passing of this legislation cannot be attributed solely to the state, but was also the result of the pressure mounted by NGOs and the framework created by international conventions, the role of the state is, obviously, crucial in making sure that the rules and regulations are implemented and enforced (as becomes abundantly clear in cases where the state fails to do so, such as in the case of Norway I discussed earlier in this chapter).

Sending states’ governments sometimes try to act on behalf of their workers even in cases of labor migrations taking place outside of guest-worker, or government-sponsored schemes. But in this case, they must resort to quite different measures in their efforts to ameliorate the workers’ situation. Thus, Mexico, for instance, passed an amendment to its constitution based on which those who acquire another country’s citizenship still keep their Mexican nationality and carry Mexican passport. According to Smith, this is because the Mexican state “wanted to remove an obstacle to U.S. citizenship for Mexican migrants so they would be able to defend themselves as citizens against. . . anti-immigrant politics of the mid-1990s.”¹⁵¹ While the Mexican state’s motives in enacting this legislation are certainly laudable, it is crucial to note that in its decision to pursue this kind of measures, the state basically relinquishes any sort of active involvement, and engages instead in a “laissez-faire” approach based on indirect enabling of *individual* action. This, as we saw earlier in the Norwegian case, makes the ultimate situation in regard to migrants’ rights highly uncertain as the

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 400.

¹⁵¹ Robert C. Smith, “Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process: Transnationalization, the State and the Extra-Territorial Conduct of Mexican Politics,” *International Migration Review* 37, 2 (2003): 297–343, 310.

outcomes depend, at the very least, on the migrants' ability to navigate effectively unknown and complex bureaucratic apparatuses.

So far, I have discussed the stances and initiative of the *sending* government. But the policies of the *receiving* government matter as well. Although the following example concerns a rather different type of transnational economic flow, it is still instructive. Chan and Wang compared the impact of the policies of two different states, China and Vietnam, on the treatment of workers in companies owned and run by Taiwanese entrepreneurs and located in these two countries. In other words, in these cases, the workers are domestic but the capital is foreign. Still, as the authors explain, "if we go by conventional wisdom, Taiwanese businesspeople in Vietnam should have fewer qualms. Vietnam is a poor country that is more heavily reliant on Taiwanese investment than is China, and therefore should be much more vulnerable."¹⁵² In other words, the "receiving" government in this case is under similar pressures as the sending governments in classic guest-worker programs. Yet, in Vietnam both the central and local governments closely monitor infringements on workers' rights and the workers (according to their Taiwanese managers) display "very high" awareness of human rights, as well as "labour and democratic consciousness," and consequently problems such as very long working hours and widespread non-payment of wages are far less common in Ho Chi Minh City.¹⁵³ Thus, the legal

¹⁵² Anita Chan and Hong-zen Wang, "The Impact of the State on Workers' Conditions – Comparing Taiwanese Factories in China and Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs* 77, 4 (Winter 2004/2005): 629–646, 636.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

standards and policies of the state in which the workers are employed also matter significantly.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

My discussion and review of the existing literature on both guest-worker type and non-guest-worker type labor migration in capitalist settings demonstrates several things. (1) The existing literature, especially by the authors who identify themselves as working within the transnationalist framework, does not pay sufficient to the role that the states play in these processes. (2) When it does include an analysis of state action, it tends to privilege and focus on the actions of the labor-receiving states, and within that, often restricting its attention to the issues of either (lack of) migrants' incorporation into the institutions of their new home country, or alternatively, the receiving state's failure to limit immigration or even prevent new entries altogether. (3) This is a problem if we are concerned with the wellbeing of labor migrants. This is because these workers stand in a particular relationship to the state in which they are employed, and where their labor is maintained but not reproduced, as a result of which their position is characterized by weakness and vulnerability vis-à-vis employers. (4) That vulnerability makes them susceptible to commodification to a much greater degree than is the case with citizen workers, who have recourse to the state's legal protection of their rights as workers and humans. The migrant workers, too, have this recourse, but only to the state of which they are citizens and whose power is circumscribed largely by its territorial borders. (5) Accordingly, a

robust and sustained action by the *sending* state is required for the defense of migrant workers' rights. (6) This action, however, can only be effective if it is based on cooperation with the *receiving* state, which is, ultimately, responsible for the enforcement of whatever rules the two states negotiate in the course of their bilateral meetings. (7) What makes it difficult for this arrangement to be put in place in capitalist contexts is the fact that the labor-receiving state does not, as a rule, feel itself to be politically accountable to the labor-sending state.

In **Chapter 1**, I situate the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange and import program in a wider geopolitical and historical context, and the implications of this context for the program. The key elements in this context were the United States' war against Vietnam and the Soviet and US competition for geopolitical dominance in East Asia. **Chapter 2** provides a detailed historical (factual) information on the three phases of the program and the differences among them. Although the main focus is on the description of the various features of the program, and their variants in the three phases, on the conceptual level I focus on tracing the development of the elements that led, in the final phase, to a fundamental change in the nature of the program. In **Chapter 3**, I take a closer look at the institutional anchoring and organization of the program and explain how these features can help explain how resistance and protests were possible in the system that is often described as authoritarian. In **Chapter 4**, I situate Vietnamese female workers in the context of Czechoslovak state's gender politics and policies, which were, inextricably intertwined with the state's wider welfare policies. I then examine what the policies toward Vietnamese workers in general, and female pregnant workers in particular, tell us about the changes in

the nature of the Czechoslovak state as the provider of care. In **Chapter 5**, I submit to examination the claim that state-socialist labor migration programs were characterized but pervasive exploitation. I identify the conditions under which exploitation did and did not occur. Very importantly, I document the vigorous resistance to this exploitation by both the Vietnamese workers and government officials. In **Chapter 6**, I analyze the ways in which Vietnamese workers were racialized, and how Czechoslovak citizens used the racializing discourses to hold Czechoslovak state accountable to its pledge to be the ultimate and effective provider of care, which was closely tied to the very core of its self-legitimation as a socialist state.

CHAPTER 1: CZECHOSLOVAK-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF COLD WAR GEOPOLITICS

As Bradley Simpson points out, “the Cold War in Southeast Asia was not simply a geopolitical competition between the United States, Soviet Union, and China, but also an ideological contest rooted in divergent visions of modernity and social change, in which the direction of decolonization, development, and state building served as a key terrain of conflict.”¹ However, while the Cold War was creating divisions between countries, depending on their alignment with one or the other super-power, it was, by the same token, creating alliances where they had not existed before. This was the case of Vietnam and Czechoslovakia. In contrast to the usual processes through which international labor migration flows come into being, the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor training and exchange program was built essentially from scratch, virtually in the absence of any previous ties. More typical are migratory labor movements such as those of the Algerians to France in the early 1960s² or the immigration from the Indian subcontinent to Great Britain after 1947, which illustrate well the rule that “in general, the emergence of regular labor outflows of stable size and known destination requires the prior penetration by institutions of the stronger nation-state into those of the weaker one.” So that, “political and economic conditions in the latter are then gradually molded to the point where migration to the

¹ Bradley R. Simpson, “Southeast Asia in the Cold War” in Robert J. McMahon, ed., *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2013), 48–66, 49.

² Barbara Schmitter Heisler, “Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination,” *International Migration Review* 19, 3 (1985), 469–484.

hegemonic center emerges as a plausible option for the subordinate population.”³ It is true that the labor flows into Germany – perhaps the paragon of guest-worker programs in Europe, and the program whose features the Czechoslovak program came to resemble most closely (at least in its last phase) – did not exactly conform to this model either, and the flows were based on conscious recruiting efforts. Nonetheless, in this case too, there still had been in place centuries-long cultural and political exchanges between Germany and the countries furnishing it with foreign workforce – Italy (first agreement signed in 1955), Greece, Spain (both 1960), Turkey (1961), Portugal (1964) and Yugoslavia (1968).⁴

By contrast, Czechoslovakia and Vietnam had scarcely any contact with each other prior to the time when they established diplomatic relations, on 2 February 1950. Subsequently, the Czechoslovak Embassy in Hanoi opened on 30 December 1954,⁵ and its counterpart in Prague a year later.⁶ The establishment of full-fledged diplomatic ties took place after the Geneva Conference on Indo-China (which convened between 8 May and 21 June 1954), which eventually led to the signing, by France and the DRV, or the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on 20 July 1954, of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam. The

³ Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz, “Contemporary Immigration: Theoretical Perspectives on its Determinants and Modes of Incorporation,” *International Migration Review* 23, 3 (1989), 606–630.

⁴ Ray C. Rist, *Guestworkers in Germany: The Prospects for Pluralism* (New York, 1978), 61. See also Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980: Seasonal Workers/Forced Laborers/Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor, 1991).

⁵ http://www.mzv.cz/hanoi/cz/vzajemne_vztahy/index_1.html, last accessed on 12 December 2013.

⁶ MZV: “Informace o vztazích mezi ČSSR a VDR, Informační materiál k přijetí delegace NS VDR v ČSSR,” dated 7 May, 1974. MZV: 145/112: 1973-1974.

agreement divided the country into two parts, with the demarcation line running along the 17th parallel, whereby the DRV forces were ordered to regroup north of the line, and the French forces south of it.⁷ The Eisenhower administration “quickly rejected the notion of unifying Vietnam under Communist rule” and “moved instead to create a new state in the southern half of the country, led by the Catholic anti-communist Ngo Dinh Diem.”⁸ This was part of the shift that occurred in the American foreign policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s “away from containing the Soviet Union with direct military force. . .and towards taking the initiative in Asia, African and Latin America via infusions of economic and military aid as part of an increasingly ambitious set of national development and counter-insurgency programmes.”⁹ Simultaneously, “a new communist state with recognizable boundaries had appeared on the international stage.”¹⁰ While during Stalin’s era, the region was “on the periphery of Soviet attention,”¹¹ in the current circumstances, the Soviets felt bound to support the communist struggle in Vietnam since “a succession of American presidents staked their own and the nation’s credibility on preserving an ‘independent,’ non-Communist South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.”¹² Khrushchev became the first Soviet leader to

⁷ R. A. Longmire, *Soviet Relations with South-East Asia: An Historical Survey* (London, Kegan Paul International, 1989), 42.

⁸ Simpson, op. cit. pp. 51-52.

⁹ Mark T. Berger, “Decolonisation, Modernisation, and Nation-Building: Political Development Theory and the Appeal of Communism in Southeast Asia, 1945–1975,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, 3 (2003): 421–448, 438.

¹⁰ Longmire, op. cit., p. 44.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 142.

¹² Simpson, op. cit., p. 52.

show a sustained interest in Southeast Asia, even to the point of traveling there personally twice.¹³

SOVIET ECONOMIC AID TO VIETNAM

In the economic area, Soviet support was formalized by the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement between the two governments signed on 18 May 1955.¹⁴ Another agreement on long-term economic cooperation was signed in Moscow on 17 November 1959,¹⁵ and the next one in August 1961.¹⁶ At this time, the supplies from the USSR included tractors, trucks and chemical fertilizer.¹⁷ Between 1955 and 1964, the USSR supplied North Vietnam with over \$400 million in nonmilitary aid, which amounted to more than 40% of all nonmilitary aid Vietnam received. East European state-socialist countries contributed another \$200 million at this time, as did China, which provided some \$350 million in aid.¹⁸ During the 1960s and early 1970s, the Soviet Union cut back on its economic assistance, but the level of support was restored again after the fall of Saigon in 1975.¹⁹

Of course, the USSR's and socialist block's military assistance to Vietnam was also substantial during those years. A letter from the Central Committee of the

¹³ Longmire, op. cit., pp. 78, 77.

¹⁴ William S. Logan, "Russians on the Red River: The Soviet Impact on Hanoi's Townscape, 1955–90," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, 3 (1995), 443–468.

¹⁵ Longmire, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lawrence H. Theriot and JeNelle Matheson, "Soviet Economic Relations with the Non-European CMEA: Cuba, Vietnam, and Mongolia," *Soviet and Eastern European Foreign Trade* 21, 1/2/3 (1985), 144–190.

¹⁹ Logan, op. cit., p. 443.

CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) to the East European communist parties from 14 February 1966, for example, stated that “in 1965 alone weapons and other war materiel worth about 500 million rubles were placed at the disposal of the DRV. The latter is receiving support in the training of pilots, rocket personnel, tank drivers, artillery men, etc.”²⁰ According to Lien-Hang Nguyen, 1970 was a vital year for socialist aid to Vietnam; as a result of the acceleration of fighting in all of Indochina, the DRV dispatched not one but two separate delegations of high-ranking officials to negotiate aid agreements with the countries of the socialist block. One of these delegations was headed also to Prague, where it signed an agreement with Czechoslovakia on economic and military aid and on the exchange of goods and payments in 1971.²¹

After the end of the war against the United States, Vietnam – now called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, or SRV – tried to enlist various countries, including those outside of the socialist block, such as France, Japan and Sweden, to help it rebuild its economy. However, outside of the socialist camp, only the United States was “in a position to provide assistance on the scale required to repair the SRV’s ruined economy,” but the United States was disinclined to involve itself in this way.²² In fact, it refused to provide \$3 billion of reconstruction assistance that President Nixon had promised to Vietnam in 1973, and, moreover, “Washington’s decision to isolate Hanoi economically as well as diplomatically profoundly colored internal affairs in Vietnam. Vietnam’s 1977

²⁰ Longmire, op. cit., p. 84.

²¹ Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi’s War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 186.

²² Longmire, op. cit., p.121.

attempt to attract Western investment was doomed before it started.”²³ In the context of a country that the French left with only a modest railroad network and an export-oriented plantation economy but virtually no industry, and where the factories that had been built in the north between 1954 and 1964 with the aid from the socialist-block had been either destroyed or heavily damaged by the US bombing campaigns during the war,²⁴ Vietnam turned to the Soviet Union and its allies. At the end of October 1975, Vietnam and the USSR signed a wide-ranging economic agreement, which provided for economic assistance in the various sectors, such as electric power, mining, metallurgy, chemicals, machine building, transport, oil products, cotton and foodstuffs. In addition, the agreement provided for the coordination of national economic plans and for highly qualified specialists to be sent to Vietnam, as well as for the training of Vietnamese national cadres for various branches of the economy on the Soviet territory.²⁵

On 29 June 1978, Vietnam joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA, or COMECON),²⁶ which solidified Vietnam’s alliance with the Soviet Union and the rest of the East European part of the Soviet bloc.²⁷ While the CMEA provided a *general* framework for the Soviet and East European economic aid to Vietnam, both trade and economic aid remained essentially the stuff of

²³ David G. Marr and Christine P. White, “Introduction,” in David G. Marr and Christine P. White, eds, *Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development* (New York, 1988), 3, 6.

²⁴ Marr & White, op. cit. p. 2.

²⁵ Longmire, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

²⁶ Marr & White, op. cit., p. 234.

²⁷ Nguyen, op. cit., p. 301.

individual bilateral treaties,²⁸ and the CMEA “did not play a dominant or multilateral role in aid policy or programming.”²⁹ Yet, the bilateral agreements between the individual countries were not drawn entirely in isolation as the allied European state-socialist countries consulted one another about the specifics of Vietnamese requests and the stances the respective governments assumed to them.³⁰ The Soviet Union sought to develop the infrastructural base of Vietnam’s economy, assisting, for instance, with the construction of two hydroelectric power stations, railway improvements, the construction of plants for the production of tractors, fertilizers, cement and pharmaceuticals.³¹ According to one source, in 1983, enterprises built with Soviet help were responsible for 25% of Vietnam’s electric power, 89% of its coal production and *all* of its output of tin, phosphates and sulphuric acid.³²

CZECHOSLOVAKIA’S ECONOMIC AID TO VIETNAM

Czechoslovakia, too, provided Vietnam with both general-economic and military aid, before as well as after the war against the United States. The two countries signed the first agreement on economic and technical assistance in September

²⁸ This was a more general trait of the CMEA: While multilateral cooperation was a coveted ideal, practically all cooperation remained bilateral.

²⁹ Martin Rudner, “East European Aid to Asian Developing Countries: the Legacy of the Communist Era,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, 1 (1996), 1–28, 7.

³⁰ See, for instance, “Záznam z rozhovoru tituláře ČSSR v Hanoji s. Eibela s titulářem BLR s. Videnovem dne 23. dubna 1970” or “Záznam o přijatí veřvyslaneckého radu MLR v ČSSR s. Miklosa Barityho vedúcim 3 t.o. s. dr. V. Moravcom na MZV dňa 21.1.1970,” both: Foreign Ministry Archive (MZV), 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/117, 1970-1972.

³¹ Derek Martin Da Cunha, “Aspects of Soviet-Vietnamese Economic Relations,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 7, 4 (March 1986), 306–319.

³² Longmire, op. cit., p. 131.

1955 in Hanoi.³³ In 1956, Czechoslovakia started providing Vietnam with various forms of medical aid. Between 1956 and 1959, Czechoslovakia helped Vietnam complete the construction of a hospital – dubbed the Hospital of Vietnamese-Czechoslovak Friendship – in the city of Haiphong.³⁴ (The hospital remains in operation to this day. It was toured by a Czech governmental delegation as recently as March 2012³⁵ and, in 2004, the Czech Republic earmarked Kč26 million for “aid to the hospital.”³⁶) In the summer of 1956, Czechoslovakia took in 100 Vietnamese children, 54 boys and 46 girls, and put up in a children’s home in the north Bohemian town of Chrastava. The idea was for Czechoslovakia to provide them with state-of-the-art education on the elementary and middle school levels. The children were selected based on their parents’ exceptional contributions to the anti-colonial struggle: half of the children had attended special schools in northern Vietnam set up for the offspring of the revolutionaries from southern Vietnam. The Vietnamese side decided to recall the children in 1959, but 15 of them stayed on to pursue technical education, and some went on

³³ Šárka Martínková Šimečková, “Počátky česko-vietnamských vztahů (1950-1959),” available at <http://www.klubhanoi.cz/view.php?cisloclanku=2007041601>, last accessed on 13 December 2013.

³⁴ MZV, “Informace o vztazích mezi ČSSR a VDR” part of “Informační materiál k přijetí delegace NS VDR v ČSSR,” dated 7 May 1974, 3rd territorial department, 1970-74, Vietnam T, 2, 145/112, 1973-1974.

³⁵ http://haiphong.gov.vn/Portal/Detail.aspx?Organization=ubndtp_EN&MenuID=3292&ContentID=26396 – last accessed on 12 December 2013.

³⁶ Czech Foreign Ministry website, http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/encyklopedie_statu/asie/vietnam/ekonomika/obchodni_a_ekonomicka_spoluprace_s_cr.html – last accessed last on 13 December 2013.

to attend Czechoslovak universities.³⁷ In 1957, the two countries exchanged, for the first time, their respective governmental and party delegations.³⁸ Throughout the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia also dispatched some 120 qualified medical personnel and healthcare providers to Vietnam to provide training to local practitioners.³⁹ At the end of September 1966, a Czechoslovak government and Party delegation traveled to Vietnam at the invitation of the Vietnamese Workers' Party. The delegation included not only purely political representatives (members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee, ÚV KSČ) but also the head of the State Commission for Technology. The composition of the delegation therefore reflected Czechoslovak officials' determination to "provide moral and political as well as in-kind [*materiální*] aid to the Vietnamese people engaged in the struggle against American aggression."⁴⁰ One of the issues debated during this visit was the request for the training of 2,100 Vietnamese citizens in Czechoslovakia (whose details I shall discuss later). In the ensuing treaty on economic and technical aid, signed at the end of the visit, Czechoslovakia not only pledged to train 2,100 Vietnamese cadres on its territory, but also committed itself to supplying Vietnam with 39 different types of goods, which ranged from machine tools through compressors and tractors all the way to sewing needles, and condensed milk. In addition,

³⁷ Šárka Martínková Šimečková, "Chrastavské děti," available at: <http://www.klubhanoi.cz/view.php?cislocianku=2006071101>, last accessed on 13 December 2013.

³⁸ Op.cit., Martínková Šimečková, "Počátky česko-vietnamských vztahů."

³⁹ Op.cit., "Informace o vztazích mezi ČSSR a VDR."

⁴⁰ NA, Fond: 02/1, Sv. 8, Ar. j. 8, b. 13, Předsednictvo Ústředního výboru KSČ; Důvodová zpráva, Číslo pořadu 13, K bodu: "Zajištění návštěvy stranické a vládní delegace ve Vietnamské demokratické republice – září 1966," 3 September 1966, henceforth ÚV KSČ 3 Sep 1966.

Czechoslovakia also promised to supply Vietnam with equipment for hydroelectric and other types of power stations, a plant with the capacity of providing general overhaul to up to 300 cars a year, and various supplies necessary for the repair of war-destroyed railroads.⁴¹ In 1970, Czechoslovak diplomats explained the “warm and extraordinary welcome” that the country’s delegation received in Hanoi by arguing that “the ČSSR provides the DRV with invaluable assistance. The reason for that is not just the amount of provided aid – although that too – but also the range of goods that we supply. We often supply things that no one else can supply.”⁴² In July 1969, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong asked the Czechoslovak government for both economic and special (i.e., military) aid for the year 1970 and beyond.⁴³ According to the figures that the Czechoslovak officials acquired upon consulting their European allies, it appears that only the requests presented to the Soviet Union exceeded those Vietnam approached Czechoslovakia with. The overall value of nonmilitary aid that Vietnam asked for amounted to 600 million rubles, of which the USSR was to supply 400 million, Czechoslovakia 69 million, Hungary 57 million, Poland 43 million, and Bulgaria 23 million; the officials lacked information from Romania and from the GDR, the latter of which was likely at least as large a contributor as the ČSSR. This time around, the number

⁴¹ NA, Fond 02/1, sv. 11, ar.j. 12, 68 pages, Předsednictvo Ústředního výboru KSČ K bodu: “Dodatečná informace ke zprávě o pobytu čs. stranické a vládní delegace ve VDR,” presented on 7 October 1966.

⁴² MZV: “Zprávy a informace ZÚ: Politická zpráva č. 3 – O návštěvě parlamentní delegace FS ČSSR ve VDR”; 145/311, 1970-1973.

⁴³ NA, Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 107, ar. j 176. “Žádost Vietnamské demokratické republiky o hospodářskou pomoc od ostatních socialistických zemí; K bodu Žádost Vietnamské demokratické republiky o poskytnutí čs. hospodářské a vojenské pomoci na rok 1970 a další léta,” 8 October 1969.

of different types of goods that Czechoslovakia was to supply Vietnam with increased to over 100, once again spanning the gamut from trucks and tractor engines all the way to paper and musical instruments. In addition, Czechoslovakia was to deliver 13 complete industrial facilities, which included a cement plant, a ceramics plant, a thermal power plant, and a brewery, among others.

Czechoslovak aid also included loans. However, already at the time when the loans were extended, the Czechoslovak government expected that their repayment would be “very problematic,” and that it was “necessary to be prepared to write them off.” Hence, Czechoslovak officials were eager to “make maximum use of Vietnamese exports,” which consisted of coveralls, woolen tricot and carpets, jute, tea, canned fruit and vegetables, and artisanal items, for the same reason (i.e., that “Vietnamese Democratic Republic would not be able to repay its debts for a long time after the war’s end”).⁴⁴

The low likelihood of loans’ repayment was not the only reason why the process of providing aid was rather complicated. Another element that increased the donors’ wariness was the fact that the DRV made extensive requests for economic assistance for several years ahead – requests that ranged from specific consumer and industrial goods and machinery all the way to the constructions of entire factories or power plans – but it did not have a long-term plan for the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

development of its economy in place.⁴⁵ While this was rather understandable given the wartime situation, it also raised questions as to the efficiency and usefulness of providing aid under such circumstances. Moreover, according to Czechoslovak officials, Vietnam developed a pattern whereby it first presented to its donors relatively low requests, but then it often asked for additional supplies throughout the year so the final amounts of aid it eventually received ended up being significantly higher than had been projected. Moreover, the requests allegedly included things that Czechoslovakia (or other socialist donors) could supply only with a great effort, or, at times, simply not at all. All the while, again understandably, Vietnam's exports were rather modest, and usually not realized to full extent.⁴⁶ As they were deliberating on which Vietnamese requests they would grant and which they would turn down, Eastern European allies often discussed among themselves Vietnam's requests. Thus, a Bulgarian embassy staffer in Hanoi communicated to his Czechoslovak counterpart that Bulgarian experts sent to Vietnam in 1970 to assess the situation concluded that "there is significant helplessness in Vietnam in regard to the current state of Vietnamese economy and the planning of future postwar construction. There are too many tasks there [to be accomplished] and too many difficulties that need to be addressed."⁴⁷ With time, however, the Vietnamese, seeing that they were not able to put into operation a lot of the machinery and materials they received lowered their demands, a step that the CMEA representatives welcomed as

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ MZV, 145/117, 1970-1972, 3. teritoriální odd., "Záznam o rozhovoru tituláře ČSSR v Hanoji s. Eibela s titulářem BLR s. Videnovem dne 23. dubna 1970."

“much more realistic.”⁴⁸ Even so, “the effective use of foreign economic aid” remained to be seen as a challenge due to, as the Czechoslovak ambassador in Hanoi put it, Vietnam’s “weak industrial base, inadequate infrastructure, which has been, moreover, lately very strongly affected by American bombing, and a chronic shortage of qualified cadres.”⁴⁹

Czechoslovakia was, of course, also one of Vietnam’s important suppliers when it came to military aid. In 1967, for instance, a Communist Party Central Committee meeting report noted that Czechoslovak military aid was, “in comparison with the aid provided by other socialist countries, unparalleled in its extent.”⁵⁰ It was also, purportedly, very much appreciated; a report stated that “the Vietnamese fighters on the battlefield value [Czechoslovak] submachine guns and explosives very much. Our submachine guns are better than the American M16s, with which the American and South Vietnamese troops are now armed.”⁵¹

⁴⁸ NA, Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 143, ar. j. 221, “Zpráva k návrhu usnesení vlády k žádosti Vietnamské demokratické republiky o poskytnutí hospodářské pomoci v roce 1971 a dalších letech a o pomoc v oblasti speciálních dodávek v roce 1971; K bodu: Stanovisko k žádosti vlády VDR o poskytnutí čs. pomoci v r. 1971 dodávkami zboží civilního a vojenského charakteru,” 29 October 1970.

⁴⁹ MZV, 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/211, 1970-1974, “Informace k otázce efektivnosti čs. ekonomické a vojenské pomoci pro VDR” by Dr. Zdeněk Eibel, Czechoslovak ambassador to Vietnam, dated 7 September 1972.

⁵⁰ NA, Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 42, ar.j. 43 “Důvodová zpráva, K bodu: Návrh ÚV MSDS na koordinaci vojenské pomoci Vietnamu,” 19 August 1967.

⁵¹ NA: “Informace o návštěvě velvyslance DRV v Praze s. Nguzen Huu Ngo u tajemníka ÚV KSČ s. V. Biľaka,” information on visit from 25 October 1970. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, svazek 143, archivní jednotka 220/k informaci 9.

CADRES TRAINING

As a result of the French educational policies and the interruption of training programs due to the American war and the deaths of skilled personnel, Vietnam also experienced a dire shortage of professionals and technicians after 1954.⁵² According to one source, between 1955 and 1990, the Soviet Union educated more than 3,400 Vietnamese research students, 4,800 trainees, 20,700 university [M.A.] students and 2,000 advanced research students.⁵³ We can appreciate the magnitude of this effort when we take into account that, in 1988, 30% of professors at the three largest universities in Hanoi had been trained in the Soviet Union.⁵⁴ Also, by 1980, some 11,000 Vietnamese technicians were trained in the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ As we shall see, while the number of university students trained in Czechoslovakia was more modest, the numbers of Vietnamese trainees, apprentices and technicians in Czechoslovakia was, in absolute terms, similar to the Soviet numbers, which, scaled to the size of the country, meant that Czechoslovak aid to Vietnam in this area was actually significantly more robust than the Soviet one. Czechoslovakia, with a population of roughly one-sixth of that of the USSR at the time, educated at least 10,000 Vietnamese trainees and apprentices in the 1970s and 80s. Similarly, according to another source, there were “slightly [fewer] than 20,000” Vietnamese workers in the USSR in 1984,⁵⁶

⁵² Logan, op. cit., p. 446.

⁵³ Buu Hoan, “Soviet Economic Aid to Vietnam,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 12, 4 (March 1991), 360–376, p. 367.

⁵⁴ Buu Hoan, op.cit., pp. 367-368.

⁵⁵ Longmire, op.cit., p.131.

⁵⁶ Da Cunha, op. cit., p. 316.

while in the much smaller Czechoslovakia, there were 26,236 Vietnamese citizens working at the end of 1983 (statistics for 1984 are unavailable).⁵⁷

Czechoslovakia started to provide education and training to Vietnamese citizens based on an agreement on scientific and technical cooperation signed on 28 September 1956.⁵⁸ In most cases, this cooperation consisted in providing Vietnamese citizens with university education, or else short-term stays for small numbers of professionals, who arrived to acquire very specific skills. For instance, in the summer of 1966, the Czech State Commission for Technology organized a stay for two Vietnamese professionals “specializing in petrography applied to silicon-based materials.”⁵⁹ At first, Czechoslovakia awarded scholarships for complete university education to 30 Vietnamese citizens annually. The number increased to 100 in the 1965-66 school year, and 200 in the following year.⁶⁰ Thereafter, the number settled at about 150 people a year. In 1979, for instance, there were some 600 Vietnamese citizens receiving university education in Czechoslovakia. Thus, while the number was much lower than the

⁵⁷ MPSV: “Zpráva delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci,” 27 April 1983.

⁵⁸ MZV: “Zpráva o průběhu vědeckotechnické spolupráce mezi ČSSR a VDR,” 145/112, 1973-1974.

⁵⁹ NA: Letter from J. Kohout, secretary of the Czech part of the State Commission for Technology (Státní komise pro techniku) to the Embassy of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic, dated 20 May 1966.

⁶⁰ NA: “Dary a ostatní formy pomoci Československé socialistické republiky Vietnamské demokratické republice; K bodu: Návrh ÚV MSDS na koordinaci vojenské pomoci Vietnamu,” 19 August 1967. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, svazek 42, archivní jednotka 43.

Soviet numbers we saw above, Vietnamese university students still comprised the largest contingent of foreign students at Czechoslovak universities.⁶¹

Thus, one distinguishing feature (compared to labor exchanges in non-state-socialist contexts) of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese training and labor exchange program is just how deeply it was embedded in the geopolitical realities of the Cold War. Obviously, it was intimately (though less directly than one might think) tied to the Soviet policies, ambitions and anxieties in Southeast Asia. However, in a sense, it was also tied to the policies, ambitions and anxieties that the *United States* cultivated in regard to the region: both by virtue of its waging war against North Vietnam and by virtue of its refusal to help rebuild the country in the postwar period. No one has illusions about the state in which a country finds itself after a war. However, since the war and its aftermath were the immediate context in which the Czechoslovak program was first formulated and got off the ground – the first mention of it comes from 1966, and the first batch of Vietnamese trainee workers arrived to Czechoslovakia in June 1967⁶² – it may be useful to remind ourselves of Vietnam's devastation in more concrete terms. According to Vietnamese statistics, "in the *south alone* the war produced 20,000 bomb craters, 10 million refugees, 362,00 war invalids, 1 million widows, 880,000 orphans, 250,000 drug addicts, 300,000 prostitutes, and 3 million

⁶¹ NA, fond ÚV KSČ, "Informace o současném stavu československo-vietnamských vztahů a plnění přijatých dokumentů," report drafted by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented at the ÚV KSČ meeting on 28 September 1979.

⁶² NA, "Zpráva o průběhu přípravy vietnamských praktikantů k zaškolování v československých podnicích" report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 29 September 1967.

unemployed; two-thirds of the villages were destroyed and 5 million hectares of forests destroyed.”⁶³ Overall, “American bombing and fighting on both sides killed at least 2 million Vietnamese, while the U.S. spraying of chemical defoliants in the south destroyed more than 30 million acres of farmland and forest.”⁶⁴

The first wave of the Czechoslovak program, unfolding as it did between 1967 and 1973, was affected by the war directly. For instance, the second batch of Vietnamese trainees, traveling in the fall of 1967, arrived with a five-week delay caused by an increase in the intensity of US bombing of transport routes.”⁶⁵ Once the armed hostilities ceased, the program was no less strongly affected by the economic burden produced by the devastation of the war. Thus, while, as I will discuss later, there are certainly parallels between capitalist guest-worker schemes, such as the West German one, and the Czechoslovak program in its later stages, particularly after 1980, its *beginnings* are radically different. Namely, the fact that during the first two phases of the program (i.e., one that started in 1967 and the one that started in 1973) the initiative came unambiguously and forcefully from the Vietnamese side. In fact, as I discuss in the next chapter, Czechoslovak officials were, if anything, wary of undertaking the project. However, they did undertake it, and the examination of archival documents shows unequivocally that the decision was not in any way due to the

⁶³ Marr & White, op. cit., p. 3.

⁶⁴ Simpson, op. cit., p. 54.

⁶⁵ NA, “Zpráva o příjezdu II. turnusu vietnamských praktikantů do ČSSR -- pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” report by the SPK chairman to prime minister, dated 14 December 1967.

considerations of possible economic benefit that the program might possibly have for Czechoslovakia. In fact, since Czechoslovakia footed the entire bill, Czechoslovak officials fully expected to “be in the red” and, given the logistical difficulties (again, detailed later), neither did the program appear to be helpful in alleviating any other of economic concerns that Czechoslovakia might have had at the time (such as labor shortage, which *did* become an important factor later on). The fact that the equation changed dramatically in the 1980s is of cardinal importance, which I will explore in due course. However, the point I wish to make now, and develop in more detail in the following chapters, is that the circumstances in which the program was born, which were, in turn, embedded in both the Cold War exigencies and the practical implementation of the ideology of internationalism, not only strongly animated the program at its outset but continued to exert certain degree of influence even later on when the socialism practiced by the Czechoslovak state changed, and with it the program.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it is a reconstruction, based primarily on archival documents, of the program's operation and structure. In this reconstruction, I do not shy away from the minutiae for two reasons. One, because I believe that it is often the details that allow readers to get "a feel" for a reality that is otherwise foreign to them. Two, this dissertation constitutes the first attempt to write a *comprehensive* history of the program, which constitutes an important part of Czech and Slovak past and which has been, until now, undocumented in a systematic way.¹ Since the Vietnamese comprise the second

¹ Although there are a few texts of shorter nature that contain some basic data and figures relevant to the program, such as references to the major treaties and so forth. See, in particular: Jiří Kocourek, "Kořeny vietnamské migrace do ČR před rokem 1989" in Jan Černík, Ján Ičo, Jiří Kocourek, Petr Komers, Šárka Martínková, Kateřina Nováková, Eva Pechová, Phung Thi Phuong Hien, Ivo Vasiljev, eds., *S vietnamskými dětmi na českých školách* (H&H, Prague, 2006); Jiří Kocourek, *Historie příchodu a působení příslušníků na území ČSR (resp. ČSSR) v letech 1950-1975* (MA thesis, Charles University, Prague, Vietnamese Studies, 2001); Stanislav Brouček, "Aktuální problémy adaptace vietnamského etnika v ČR," available from webpages of the Czech Interior Ministry, <http://www.cizinci.cz/clanek.php?lg=1&id=107> (last accessed on 13 February 2014); Martínková Šimečková, op.cit., "Počátky česko-vietnamských vztahů (1950-1959)," Martínková Šimečková, op. cit. "Chrastavské děti," as well as other work by the same author; Petra Müllerová, "Vietnamese Diaspora in the Czech Republic," *Archív Orientální* 66 (1998), 121-126. As well as a few ethnographic studies published before the collapse of the state-socialist regime: Ivo Vasiljev, "Vietnamští pracující ve vědomí naší společnosti," in *Etnické procesy IV: Etnické procesy v pohraničí českých zemí po roce 1945: Společnost a kultura* (Zpravodaj KSVI. Praha: ÚEF ČSAV, 1986), 153-164; Vlasta Matějová, "Podmínky pobytu vietnamských pracujících" in *Zahraniční pracující: Materiál k problematice etnických skupin na území ČSSR, Sv. 8*, (Zpravodaj KSVI pro ethnografii a folkloristiku č. 9. Praha: ÚEF ČSAV, 1988), 1-10; Antonín Vlček, "Zpráva o dosavadním průběhu šetření mezi vietnamskými pracujícími v závodě Špolana v Neratovicích," in *Zahraniční pracující: Materiál k problematice etnických skupin na území ČSSR, Sv. 8* (Zpravodaj KSVI pro ethnografii a folkloristiku č. 9. Praha: ÚEF ČSAV, 1988), 44-

largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic² and as such their community has been a subject of quite lively interest by both scholars and media, a comprehensive and systematic account of the roots of this community's presence in the Czech and Slovak Republics respectively has been sorely lacking, and this dissertation is, in part, intended an effort to fill that gap.

At the same time, I use this chapter to highlight those features of the program that are pertinent to my theoretical argument. As I will show in this chapter, on the one hand, there was a great degree of continuity between the different phases, the phases built upon each other. On the other hand, however, each of the three phases was also fundamentally different from the rest in the overall logic that animated it. The task I set for myself in this chapter is to show how features adopted in a particular phase were tweaked and appeared in a subsequent phase in a modified form.

WAVE I: PATERNALIST INTERNATIONALISM: *PRAKTIKANTI* TRAINEES, 1967–1973

49; Josef Blabol, *Péče o vietnamské pracovníky v průmyslovém podniku* (MA thesis, Department of Adult Education, Charles University, Prague, 1990).

² Estimates put the number of Vietnamese nationals in the Czech Republic (with a population around 10 million) today at just about 60,000 people, which makes them the largest foreign ethnic minority (although without official minority status) after the Slovaks (just under 80,000), who are, however, an ethnic minority *sui generis* due to the history of the common Czechoslovak state, and the Ukrainians (over 130,000 people). See, e.g., Eva Janská, Zdeněk Čermák and Richard Wright, "New Immigrant Destinations in a New Country of Immigration: Settlement Patterns of Non-natives in the Czech Republic," *Population, Space and Place*, wileyonlinelibrary.com, DOI: 10.1002/psp.1824.

The first indication of Vietnam's interest in having its citizens trained in Czechoslovakia on a larger scale and in non-university types of jobs was communicated to Czechoslovak officials indirectly, through a missive from the Czechoslovak Embassy in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The Foreign Ministry passed the embassy's missive, dated 10 June 1966, on to the State Commission for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation (*Státní komise pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci*, SKHVTs). The message stated that the Vietnamese government intended to approach several state-socialist countries with the request for training several thousand of its citizens. The numbers put forth by the Vietnamese side were: 15,000 people going to the USSR, 7,000 to China, and 8,000 people to "brotherly European countries," of which 2,500 were to go to the GDR. The reaction of the East German officials was cautious. According to the memorandum, they thought that the Vietnamese proposal was "rather complicated not only due to language problems, but especially because an absolute majority of the Vietnamese citizens who were likely to be sent (*přicházejících v úvahu*) [possessed] only lower education." In addition, the GDR Foreign Ministry was "of the opinion that the proposed two-year-long training period [was], especially in certain fields. . . too short for successful instruction, or the acquisition of true professional qualifications, as the case may be."³

³ NA, Letter from the Foreign Ministry to the State Commission for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation, "Zaškolování občanů VDR," dated 10 June 1966.

Not long afterward, Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong communicated in a letter from 28 July 1966 to Czechoslovak Prime Minister Jozef Lenárt the request of the Vietnamese government for the training of 2,100 Vietnamese citizens in Czechoslovakia. The SKHVTs dealt with the request at its meeting on 29 August 1966⁴, and recommended that the request be approved “without delay.” The training (*zaškolování*) was to last between three and five years, and was to concern 1,770 blue-collar, 230 technical workers and 100 engineering cadres.⁵ Technical workers (or technicians) were people who finished seven years of elementary school plus an additional two to three years of secondary technical education; engineers completed five years of college education.⁶ Roughly 15-20% of all workers were women.⁷ According to the information of the Vietnamese officials, only 20-25% of blue-collar workers had had some sort of qualifications before they arrived, the rest were unskilled.⁸ However, a later report actually cast doubt even on this low figure, stating that “as far as the blue-collar trainees are concerned, they can be considered skilled only in very exceptional cases despite the fact that their personal files handed over to [the Czechoslovak officials] by the Vietnamese side, say that they are trained

⁴ NA, “Zpráva o žádosti vlády Vietnamské demokratické republiky na zaškolení 2,100 vietnamských příslušníků v Československé socialistické republice,” 29 August 1966, henceforth, *Zpráva 1*.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ NA, “Zpráva předsedy Státní plánovací komise o opatřeních prováděných k zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů VDR v Československu pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” dated 19 April 1967. Henceforth, *SPK Report*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

workers.”⁹ This meant that it would take them longer to start working independently, and thus for the companies to assume the responsibility for their wages, and the Czechoslovak state, in turn, had to allocate more money than originally thought for their stipends. While the representatives of Czechoslovak enterprises appreciated the trainees’ “effort and willingness to work,” they were also somewhat taken aback by the fact that the trainees “were eager to assemble things and repair medical equipment, for instance, despite the fact that they lack[ed] most basic knowledge of engineering production, physics, electricity, and so forth.”¹⁰ While this could sometimes be a cause for consternation, this unorthodox dexterity of the Vietnamese was also one of the reasons why Czechoslovak employers generally liked to employ them throughout the duration of the program. An informant, who worked with Vietnamese workers in brown-coal mines in the 1980s, recounted a story in which a Vietnamese worker was given a “wreck of a car” and was told that if he could fix it, he could drive it. “The kid [*kluk*], who was originally trained as a tailor, threw himself into it. Then, one day I received a phone call from the plant director, who said that the kid fixed the car so well, he couldn’t even recognize it. He said that even the cars that come back to them after a general overhaul don’t look this.”¹¹ Thus, there was a sort of tension between a lack formal schooling and practical craftsmanship.

⁹ NA “Zpráva o příjezdu II. turnusu vietnamských praktikantů do ČSSR -- pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 14 December 1967. Henceforth, *Zpráva 4*.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Interview, 27 January 2011, Chomutov.

The SKHVTs commission also recommended that the costs of the training be covered by an “irrecoverable loan” (*nenávratný úvěr*), that is, given to Vietnam as a gift. The trainees – referred to, at times, as Vietnamese *workers* (*pracovníci*) – were to arrive in batches of about 100-200 persons, starting 1 January 1967. The SKHVTs further suggested that a two-person team of Czech physicians be sent to Vietnam, where, assisted by local healthcare staff, they were to examine all the candidates, administer inoculations against small pox and cholera, and start necessary treatment if needed.

Further, the commission proposed that the trainees receive “basic language training,” which would take place in reception centers, where the trainees’ physical exams, and their assignment to Czechoslovak companies responsible for their training would be also completed. While in language training, the trainees would receive a monthly stipend of 900 Czechoslovak korunas, Kčs, part of which would be used to pay for their housing and meals. This part of the proposal was, in fact, implemented exactly as it had been envisaged, and this basic organizational structure remained in place for the next 22 years.

The SKHVTs also suggested that once the trainees arrive in factories, they be paid monthly wages of between Kčs700 and Kčs900, with the understanding that their wages would increase after the initial training period. While it was expected that the only form of welfare payments that would be potentially relevant to the Vietnamese was the disability pension (should they get injured on the job), they would enjoy exact same healthcare coverage as Czechoslovak

citizens (I analyze in detail the issues that arose in connection with the securing of Vietnamese citizens' welfare in Czechoslovakia in chapter 4).

Table 1 shows the areas of the Czechoslovak economy in which the Vietnamese citizens were to be trained and employed. The distribution was based on the wishes of the Vietnamese government, whose request was attached to the commission's report as an appendix, and consisted of items such as: "production of compressors and refrigeration devices: 5 engineers, 12 technicians, 60 blue-collar workers."

Companies under the purview of:	Number of trainees:
Heavy Industry Ministry	1,549
Chemical Industry Ministry	170
Consumer Goods Ministry	187
Construction Industry Ministry jointly with Energy Industry Central Administration	99
Food Processing Ministry	39
Central Headquarters of Czechoslovak Film	56
TOTAL:	2,100

Table 1: Distribution of Vietnamese praktikanti trainee workers among the Czechoslovak industrial sectors.

The emphasis on heavy industry, common to state-socialist economic planning, especially in earlier stages, is evident from the table. At the same time, considering that Vietnam was still buffeted by the war, the request for the training of 56 people in filmmaking is quite remarkable, and arguably, unique to state-socialist understanding of economic aid, which, at this stage, was an attempt at a holistic and comprehensive assistance.

The Vietnamese request and the SKHVTS commission proposal were then discussed at the 3 September 1966 meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee (*Ústřední výbor Komunistické strany Československa, ÚV KSČ*) along with several other requests of the Vietnamese government for assistance, both civilian and military, and in connection with an upcoming trip of a Czechoslovak Party and government delegation to Hanoi. The text accompanying the documents discussing the technical aspects of the requests emphasized that the trip was taking place during a time "of increased American aggression in the DRV and South Vietnam," which "increases the DRV's need for further effective political support as well as material assistance."¹² When discussing the training program specifically, the Party documents noted that while the Vietnamese side explained its request by "talking about the tasks of the Vietnamese technical personnel in the rebuilding of a unified Vietnam after the end of the war," Czechoslovak officials made the judgment that, at the current stage, the request was, "without a doubt, also motivated by a concern for the physical preservation of technical intelligence [*intelligence*]." It is not clear whether the last word was meant to refer to *intelligence*, as an aggregate of technical knowledge, or *intelligentsia*, as the bearers of the said knowledge, as Czech uses the same word to refer to both. In either case, the statement suggests that Czechoslovak high Party officials read the request as extremely urgent, understanding the assistance that Czechoslovakia was providing through the training program as an act on which the very survival of Vietnamese technical knowledge depended.

¹² ÚV KSČ, 3 Sep 1966, op.cit.

Accordingly, the ÚV KSČ recommended that the delegation accept the request in its entirety.

The Czechoslovak delegation conducted talks in Hanoi from 24 through 28 September 1966. Although the vast majority of time was devoted to political and military issues connected to the war, the outcome of the meetings was a treaty on economic and technical aid¹³, in which, in Article 9, the two countries definitively agreed upon the creation of the training program in the form that more or less fully accommodated the original Vietnamese request. Czechoslovakia agreed to bear all costs of the program, with the exception of the trainees' travel expenses into the country. At this stage, and in contrast to later phases, the training program was conceived of as only one facet of manifold political, economic, and military aid Czechoslovakia was providing to Vietnam. Later on, the training and workers programs were negotiated on their own, ministry-level delegations traveled back and forth to specifically settle the details of these programs, and the program's fundamentals were enshrined in treaties of their own (rather than subsumed in treaties on other kinds of aid).

The report accompanying the proposal of the government's resolution (*návrh usnesení vlády*) on the material provisioning for the program¹⁴ shortened the

¹³ NA, "Dohoda o hospodářské a technické pomoci vlády Československé socialistické republiky Vietnamské demokratické republiky," signed in Hanoi on 28 September 1966. Available in Předsednictvo Ústředního výboru KSČ; Číslo pořadu 7, K bodu: "Dodatečná informace ke zprávě o pobytu čs. stranické a vládní delegace ve VDR," 7 October 1966; fond: 02/1, Šv. 11, Ar. j.: 12, b. 7.

¹⁴ NA, "Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

expected length of the training to two to three years, although it noted that the period of language training was not included in that estimate. It also stated that the first batch of 800 Vietnamese citizens was to arrive in Czechoslovakia in the second quarter of 1967, with the remaining groups arriving gradually in 1968. The report described the project as an “utterly extraordinary operation.” The implementation of the program was, indeed, predicated upon overcoming a number of serious challenges. I will now review the major ones.

MEDICAL CHECKUPS

Upon arrival, trainees were put up in temporary reception centers, where they underwent quarantine of sorts (they did leave the compounds occasionally but only accompanied by Czechoslovak staff) and “thoroughgoing medical checkups.” These were complicated by the fact that the Czechoslovak pharmaceutical industry did not produce the necessary vaccines and anti-parasitic drugs (as the conditions from which the trainees were expected to suffer did not exist in Czechoslovakia), which meant that these medications had to be imported from abroad, specifically, from capitalist countries; this, in turn, meant purchasing them for “hard currency,” which was always hard to come by and difficult on the state’s budget. Originally, the Czechoslovak side asked that all the candidates undergo comprehensive medical examinations already in Vietnam, and receive a certificate from Vietnamese healthcare providers – in the format supplied by the Czechoslovak side –attesting to their sound health.¹⁵

¹⁵ The calls for this arrangement persisted over the years and appeared even much later, as many Vietnamese continued to arrive afflicted with parasites. In 1982, for example, a secret police report quoted the proposal of a company physician that the workers be screened before their departure from Vietnam

However, the Vietnamese negotiators said that due to war conditions, it was impossible for them to have parasitological and microbiological checkups performed before departures.¹⁶ The Czechoslovak Health Ministry acquiesced to this “minor concession” and agreed to “implement necessary measures.” However, throughout the entire duration of the program, Czechoslovak officials felt that even the basic medical checkups that the Vietnamese side agreed to perform were often performed only perfunctorily.¹⁷ This issue remained one of the sore points for the Czechoslovak officials throughout the duration of the program.

As a result, 98% of the trainees who arrived in the first batch suffered from various parasites, 55 of them suffered from trachoma, and two were afflicted with full-blown tuberculosis. The normal procedure followed by Czechoslovak authorities was to treat all Vietnamese trainees, who needed it. If a Vietnamese citizen became so ill that he or she would not be able to resume work after three months of treatment, “the two contracting parties [would] agree on further steps, and decide whether the worker should return back home.”¹⁸ Women who arrived pregnant, in this batch there were two, were sent back to Vietnam immediately. Nonetheless, overall, Czechoslovak administrators noted with

since, reportedly, 95% of Vietnamese arriving to that particular enterprise suffered from intestinal parasites. (“Výběr pozantků získaných prostředky StB v teritoriu VČK za uplynulý měsíc – pro informaci vedoucího tajemníka KV KSČ,” 15 May 1982; ABS: addition HK, 1988, package 11.) However, to my knowledge, such measure was never implemented.

¹⁶ *SPK Report*, op.cit.

¹⁷ Interviews 4 November 2010, 30 October 2010, and 21 July 2010.

¹⁸ NA, “Ujednání o o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR,” undated. Henceforth, *Ujednani 1*.

satisfaction that “thanks to great care and attention of the [Czechoslovak] healthcare workers, the health condition of Vietnamese trainees [was] good” as “no mass illness had erupted in the language centers.”¹⁹

HOUSING

It was anticipated that the greatest difficulties would arise with securing housing for the trainees. The ideal scenario was for the companies to put up the trainees in the facilities they owned. However, since it was expected that those would not be sufficient, the companies were encouraged to house the trainees in facilities owned by other organizations, and the state pledged to cover the difference in the price of company and outside housing. Should it not be possible to secure sufficient housing facilities in this way, the SPK gave the companies a go-ahead to build new housing facilities, and suggested that the state’s economic plans for the years 1967 and 1968 set aside financial resources needed to create roughly 1,500 beds. If the companies “demonstrably” showed that they could not house the trainees in already existing facilities, they were to be given Kčs10,000 per bed to be used for the construction of such new facilities. Not surprisingly, for the most part, companies demanded the full extent of the subsidy.²⁰

¹⁹ NA, “Zpráva o průběhu přípravy vietnamských praktikantů k zaškolování v československých podnicích” report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 29 September 1967. Henceforth *Zpráva 3*.

²⁰ NA, “Informace o průběhu příprav k zajištění přijetí vietnamských praktikantů v ČSSR,” report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 20 June 1967. Henceforth, *Informace 2*.

Housing remained a problem during later stages as well. In the 1970s, during the apprentice-worker phase, companies were sometimes able to provide training exactly according to the Vietnamese side's specifications, but their inability to put up the trainees meant that the training could not happen.²¹ In 1975, for instance, the Czech Labor Ministry found itself unable to place 235 people due to the impossibility of securing housing for them.²² In 1976, Czechoslovakia excluded almost 20 specialties from training due to problems with securing housing for the trainees.²³

CLOTHING DONATION

Arriving trainees were equipped with underwear, clothes, shoes and personal accessories in the value of Kčs2,000. Within this price range, the trainees could pick their own clothes as to the specific cut and color "so as to avoid excessive uniformity."²⁴ In the end, however, it was reported that the actual expenses amounted to only Kčs1,800 per person as "the Vietnamese trainees are, for the most part, of smaller stature and they were therefore given clothing in smaller sizes, mainly in youth sizes."²⁵ This clothing and personal items donation, which remained a staple throughout all phases of the program, was, to some extent, a

²¹ MPSV, Letters from TESLA Pardubice to the Labor Ministry dated 28 November and 27 December 1975.

²² NA, "Zajištění odborné přípravy občanů VDR v roce 1976," dated 18 January 1976.

²³ NA, "Návrh: Protokol z jednání o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích v letech 1975 a 1976," undated, likely written in early 1976.

²⁴ *Informace 2*, op. cit. Through a stroke of luck, I actually got the opportunity to see a suit and a trench coat that one of the organizers who arrived with the very first group of Vietnamese trainees picked as part of this clothing donation, and found both, but especially the coat, very stylish, even for 2010 (see photo 3).

²⁵ Zpráva 3.

practical necessity given the difference in climates and economic wealth of the two countries, which meant that the Vietnamese program participants were limited in their ability to arrive sufficiently equipped to start their work in Czechoslovakia. However, precisely for those reasons, the act of donation also carried symbolic messages. Bestowing these ordinary items upon the arriving trainees took place within the context of the program that was framed as an effort to modernize Vietnam, to enable it to catch up with Czechoslovakia, which was seen – by both sides²⁶ – as more developed. The clothing and personal items donation, then, located within the socialist modernity paradigm as it was, dramatized the hierarchical relationship between the two countries; a dramatization that would have been impossible without the pragmatic paternalism of the state-socialist bureaucracy compelling it to involve itself in the intimately personal sphere of the Vietnamese workers' lives. Further, to the extent that one's clothing makes one a part of one's culture, the clothing donation also enabled the Czechoslovak state to strip the incoming workers of these cultural markers and replace them with its own. For these reasons, as I argue in

²⁶ In 1973, for instance, the Vietnamese representatives expressed during their talks with the Czechoslovak government officials that they had high hopes regarding the program because of "the high level of [the Czechoslovak] economy and technology" (NA, "Zpráva o jednání federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí s vládou delegací Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v Československé socialistické republice," [Report 4], June 1973). In her ethnographic study, Kušnířáková (Vztah vietnamských navrátilců..., op. cit.) identifies Czechoslovakia's advanced level as one of the three themes appearing most frequently in the recollections of former Vietnamese program participants. Many of them told her, for instance, about how impressed they were with infrastructure, particularly the public transport system (p. 57), the healthcare and educational systems, and the "modern industrial way of life in general" (p. 58).

more detail in chapter 6, both Czechoslovak administrators and general public conceived of the program to some extent as a socialist civilizing mission of sorts.



Photo 3: Mr. M. models the trench coat he picked in a Czechoslovak department store as part of the clothing donation in 1968 (author's own archive).

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Given the immense linguistic distance between Vietnamese on the one hand and Czech and Slovak on the other, language training posed another challenge. And,

as I discuss in Chapter 5, the fashion in which it was tackled in the various phases had wider repercussions. During these initial negotiations for phase one, the Vietnamese side proposed language training lasting six months. However, the Czechoslovak Education Ministry was of the opinion that three months were enough for the acquisition of the basics. The documents suggest that the three-month option was attractive for the Czechoslovak side due to “the difficulties with securing the facilities.”²⁷ While in language training, the trainees received a monthly stipend of Kčs250, with housing and meals provided to them free of charge. The experts at the University of 17th November²⁸ created a “special three-month course,” which seems to have been state-of-the-art at the time, as it relied, among other things, on reel-to-reel tape recorders and slide projectors.²⁹ The trainees received 35 hour-long lessons per week, and were expected to master some 1,000 Czech or Slovak words. Their language teachers also received special training in an intensive course. Nonetheless, a later report admitted that “despite the effort of the teachers and the will of the trainees, results vary. The engineers and technicians are much better at mastering the material compared to

²⁷ NA, “Záznam z porady konané dne 16. února 1967 ve Státní plánovací komisi a připravovaném návrhu usnesení vlády o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR,” dated 17 February 1967. Hecenforth, *Zaznam*.

²⁸ The University of the 17th November was founded by a governmental decree passed on 15 September 1961 in response to the increasing numbers of foreign students studying in Czechoslovakia. According to the decree, its purpose was to „assist the peoples that have liberated themselves from the colonial yoke.” The school’s curriculum included language training and course in preparation for graduate studies in Czechoslovakia, as well as a department of science and technology and a department of social sciences and humanities. The total enrollment in the peak years of its existence was 3,000. The University was closed down in 1972 (Vratislav Pechota, “Czechoslovakia and the Third World” in Michael S. Radu, ed., *Eastern Europe and the Third World* [New York, Praeger, 1981]).

²⁹ *Informace 2*, op. cit.

the trainees with lower educational levels, or members of ethnic minorities, who have only basic knowledge of the Vietnamese language.”³⁰ Language instruction continued in a less intense fashion for another year after the trainees left the reception centers and joined their respective industrial enterprises: 8 hours a week during the first 6 months, and 4 hours a week during the next 6 six months. Since low language proficiency caused difficulties in the course of the actual technical training, some companies decided to expand the number of weekly hours spent on language training.³¹ In practice, in the course of the three-month’s language instruction, the teachers managed to get through only 16 lessons “at the most,” rather than the 24 lessons as had been originally planned. Hence, for the very last batch of the trainees, who arrived in the fall of 1970, the intensive language training was extended to five months. While, even with the extended instruction, “not all trainees could speak Czech or Slovak well. . .they did acquire a more extensive vocabulary of about 1,200 to 1,500 words.”³² This adjustment in the length of intensive language training is notable. It obviously entailed an increase in the amount of money the program was costing the Czechoslovak state, which nonetheless went ahead with the implementation of the change. This is in quite sharp contrast with the third phase of the program implemented in the 1980s, as we will see.

³⁰ *Zprava 3*, op. cit.

³¹ *Zprava 4*. op. cit.

³² MZV, “VDR – přehled styků” letter from Dr Josef Šiktanc, the head of international relations department at the Federal Labor and Social Affairs Ministry, to the Federal Foreign Affairs Ministry’s 3rd territorial department, dated 14 March 1973; 145/112, 1973-74.

TECHNICAL TRAINING

The trainees' stays in enterprises were complicated by the fact that Czechoslovakia was in the process of introducing a "new system of planning and management of the national economy," as a result of which, it was anticipated that the "placement of the Vietnamese citizens in industrial enterprises would be...often very difficult." During the initial phases of their training (*zaškolování*), the trainees received untaxed monthly stipends as follows: blue-collar workers: Kčs850 (eventually, increased to Kčs900³³), technicians Kčs950, and engineers Kčs1,050, which they were to use to cover the cost of housing and meals. The stipends were paid to them by the enterprises employing and training them. During the initial period, the companies received subsidies for these stipends – either in their entirety or in part – from the state budget. Specifically, the state fully subsidized for the period of first six months the stipends of those Vietnamese workers who arrived without any qualifications, and provided a partial subsidy for the period of first three months for the stipends of qualified workers. The stipends for technicians and engineers were fully subsidized for the period of one year. The idea was that after these differentially calibrated initial training periods, the trainees would become integrated into the regular production process and the companies would pay them regular salaries. Upon this transition, the trainees signed regular job contracts with their respective employers, which contained "all rights and obligations equal to those of Czechoslovak citizens." However, provisions were made for situations in which it became apparent that a particular trainee could not be integrated in the regular

³³ *Ujednani 1*, op.cit.

production process (due to not being sufficiently trained). In that case, he or she would be “working in duplicity,” which likely meant that the trainee was shadowing another worker, and the enterprise could negotiate further subsidy from the state budget. This scenario ended up happening more frequently than the Czechoslovak officials had anticipated. Only about 30% of the trainees were able to transition to the status of regular works in the second year of their stays,³⁴ which meant that the remaining 70% continued to receive the stipend rather than make a wage. Moreover, it was expected that the engineers and technicians would not transition to the independent-worker status at all. In addition, the Vietnamese side “often raised demands for further training, or more thoroughgoing training as the case may be,” which created problems especially in the area of housing for the Czechoslovak hosts, particularly if they happened to be small enterprises without their own housing facilities.³⁵ Nonetheless, the most remarkable feature of training during this period was the lengths to which Czechoslovak administrators and companies went in their effort to provide Vietnamese citizens with meaningful training. By all accounts, it seems that the contractual provision that the training would “take into account already-existing qualifications of the Vietnamese citizens,” and that “the degree and extent of the training” would be based on “specific requirements of the Vietnamese side,” and any change in the training would only happen upon consent of both sides³⁶ was

³⁴ MZV, “VDR – přehled styků,” letter from Dr. Josef Šiktanc, the head of international relations department at the Federal Labor and Social Affairs Ministry, to the Federal Foreign Affairs Ministry’s 3rd territorial department, dated 14 March 1973; 145/112, 1973-74.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Ujednani 1*, op. cit.

observed quite meticulously in this phase, again, in a sharp contrast with phase 3.

Vacation time. Vietnamese citizens had the right to the same amount of vacation time as Czechoslovak citizens. Since, however, according to the Czechoslovak laws, the amount of vacation time that a worker had at his or her disposal depended on the number of years they had worked, and since it was not expected that the Vietnamese would be able to produce documentation needed to document the length of their employment, the decision was made to treat all of them as though they had been employed continuously from the age of 18. The issue of vacations, or rather the right to vacation in Vietnam, became more contentious during the 1980s wave.

While all the “material provisioning” aspects of the training program were attended to meticulously, very little, if any, thought was given to the possibility that inter-cultural issues might arise, with the exception of a provision (which remained in effect for the subsequent phases as well) according to which Czechoslovak companies were obligated to provide the trainees with unpaid leave on the days of the two most important Vietnamese holidays: 2 September and Lunar New Year.

ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST BATCH

The first batch of Vietnamese trainees, consisting of 314 men and 162 women, left Hanoi on 16 June 1967³⁷ and arrived in Czechoslovakia on 26 June 1967.³⁸ Upon crossing the Czechoslovak-Soviet (today Slovak-Ukrainian) border, the trainees disembarked the train and were met by the representatives of the SPK, the Czechoslovak Army, and Vietnamese university students on stipends in Czechoslovakia. They then boarded another train that carried them inland into two reception centers: one in the Czech part of the federation (Český Těšín) and the other in the Slovak part (Topolčany).³⁹ According to a report, both the trainees and the Vietnamese ambassador “expressed full satisfaction” with the accommodations, which had been renovated in anticipation of the trainees’ arrival.⁴⁰

The Czechoslovak government tasked the Institute for People’s Nutrition (*Ústav pro výživu lidu*) with creating a menu for the incoming trainees, in which “the food would at first correspond more to the Vietnamese culinary customs, and only later would switch to our food so that trainees do not experience difficulties when they transition to companies and eat in company cafeterias.”⁴¹ A later report noted that money allotted to feeding the trainees was sufficient, the trainees were satisfied with both the quantity and quality of the meals, and “in three months their physical condition improved and their body weight increased

³⁷ *Informace 2, op.cit.*

³⁸ *Zprava 3, op. cit.*

³⁹ *Informace 2, op.cit.*

⁴⁰ *Zprava 3, op. cit.*

⁴¹ *Informace 2, op.cit.*

[on average] by 2 to 4 kilograms.”⁴² Very soon, however, the trainees started to ask that the facilities make it possible for them to prepare their own meals in the evenings and during the weekends. Czechoslovak authorities were not particularly keen on providing this accommodation and wanted the trainees to use company cafeterias for all their meals. For one thing, this request meant the companies had to, in some cases, retrofit the housing facilities with kitchenettes,⁴³ which they did but it obviously involved an “extra” expense. However, for the Czechoslovak authorities the request raised also another concern, specifically that the trainees might “try to unduly save money on food, skimp on nutrition, and as a result be more prone to illness.”⁴⁴ This concern betrays a strong paternalist (and patronizing) current in the Czechoslovak administrators’ conceptualization of Vietnamese trainees. This current, moreover, was at times tinged with gender stereotypes (which I explore in more detail in chapter 4). This stereotyping is evident from remarks on Vietnamese workers’ money management skills: A report claimed that “there were two extremes: Trainees either [saved] money, even skimping on food, or else, in some cases, [wasted] money foolishly on exclusive goods (polyester skirts, nylon blouses, folding umbrellas, and so forth).”⁴⁵ While the text avoided explicit mention of gender, the examples of the goods on which money was spent “foolishly” makes it clear that the referents were, in fact, Vietnamese women. This is confirmed by the fact that further down in the text, a proposal is brought up to involve the

⁴² *Zprava 3*, op. cit.

⁴³ *Zprava 4*, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Czechoslovak Women's Union (*Svaz žen*) in addressing this "problem" and teaching "the trainees how to manage money and spend it in sensible ways."

SECOND BATCH

The second batch of Vietnamese trainees arrived with a five-week delay due to the intensification of American bombing of transport routes on 20 November 1967. The batch consisted of 480 people, of which 101 were women. Once again, almost all suffered from various parasites, some from trachoma, TB, dysentery and typhoid fever. In comparison with the first batch, this batch was younger: While in the first one, only 111 trainees were 18 years old, in the second one there were 261 such trainees. The report on the group's arrival⁴⁶ observed that "these youths [had] no qualifications or experience whatsoever," which meant that it was "necessary to start the training from scratch, and use methods similar to those applied to [Czechoslovak] apprentices," with the understanding that this may mean that "the period of training would have to be extended, and concomitantly, the costs would increase as well." Once again, it is evident that concerns about the quality of training are in the forefront and trump all other concerns.

THIRD, FOURTH AND FIFTH BATCHES

Depending on the source, in the end, between 2,146⁴⁷ and 2,400⁴⁸ Vietnamese citizens arrived in Czechoslovakia for training in the course of the first phase of

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ "VDR – přehled styků" letter from Dr Josef Šiktanc," op. cit.

the program, in five separate batches (two batches, described above, in 1967, two more batches in 1968, and the fifth and final batch in the fall of 1970). The fifth batch is interesting because it heralded the direction in which the program as a whole would evolve. Whereas the first four batches were trained directly in factories, the last batch of 364 trainees became apprentices in Czechoslovak vocational schools before joining the production process in factories.⁴⁹ This was, indeed, the model that was perfected in the next wave of the program. While the archival documents do not spell out explicitly why the change was made in the case of the fifth batch, given the previously discussed difficulties – only 30% of trainees being able to work independently one year after the start of their training – it is quite likely that the decision was made in order to take into account the actual level of their skills, which was low, and for the sake of making the training effective and meaningful. As we shall see, the next phase of the program was built precisely on this structure: trainees became apprentices upon arrival, and only upon the completion of vocational training, did they join factories. Thus, this creative adjustment creates a bridge between the first two phases of the program.

WAVE II: MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS INTERNATIONALISM: APPRENTICE WORKERS, 1973-1979

⁴⁸ MZV, 3rd territorial department, 1970-74, Vietnam T, 2, 145/112, 1973-1974, "Informace o vztazích mezi ČSSR a VDR" part of "Informační materiál k přijetí delegace NS VDR v ČSSR," dated 7 May 1974.

⁴⁹ "VDR – přehled styků" letter from Dr Josef Šiktanc," op. cit.

As the first phase of the program was winding down, in January 1973, a Vietnamese governmental delegation arrived to Prague and presented Czechoslovak officials with a “very urgent” request for the training of 10,000 – 12,000 of its citizens “as soon as possible.” Ideally, the Vietnamese government wanted to start training as many as 4,000 people already by the year’s end. To appreciate the radical nature of this request, let us recall that this would have represented almost *twice* as many people arriving in a *single* year as the number of people who arrived in Czechoslovakia over the course of *several years* during the preceding phase.⁵⁰ Hence, it is not surprising that Czechoslovak officials’ reaction was this request was unrealistic. Their response was that “the training of such a large number of Vietnamese citizens on such a short notice would require extraordinary effort and measures,” and that, in 1973, the country would be able to accept at the most 1,000 Vietnamese citizens.

During subsequent deliberations on the Czechoslovak side, three different scenarios as to the number of trainees were considered.⁵¹ The first was based on no extra investments, and the remaining two worked with increasingly greater investments (primarily in the construction of additional housing facilities) by the Czechoslovak state. Discussing the anticipated costs of the program, Czechoslovak administrators noted that, in terms of cost effectiveness, keeping

⁵⁰ NA, “Zpráva z jednání Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí s vládní delegací Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v Československé socialistické republice”; Henceforth, *Zpráva* 5.

⁵¹ NA, “Zpráva o stavu zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušné mezivládní Dohody” written for the perusal of the deputy prime minister, dated 17 September 1973. Henceforth, *Provision Report*.

the number of trainees at around 6,000 appeared to be most advantageous for the Czechoslovak state. It should be pointed out, however, that even this most advantageous option still meant that, in purely accounting terms, the bureaucrats expected Czechoslovakia to end up “in the red” due to the cost of the extensive vocational school training. In the end, the Czechoslovak proposal anticipated that the overall number of Vietnamese trainees would reach about 5,000 throughout the 1970s.⁵² As we shall see later in this chapter, this concern over the costs of the program was typical of this phase of the program. As was the acceptance that ultimately, in purely accounting terms, the program would mean a money loss.

Hence, after signing a new treaty on economic and technical aid to Vietnam on 26 October 1973, which anticipated the creation of the program, the Czechoslovak government started working on the outlines of the treaty that would regulate this new, apprentice-worker, form of the project. Czechoslovakia pledged to train “up to 5,000” Vietnamese citizens between 1974 and 1976, of which 3,400 would be trained in the Czech part of the federation, and the remaining 1,600 in the Slovak part.⁵³ Some six months later, in April 1974, the

⁵² NA, “Návrh: Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích,” November 1973.

⁵³ NA, “Zpráva o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů VDR v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušných smluvních dokumentů” prepared for the meetings of the Czech, Slovak, and federal governments, respectively, dated November 1973. Henceforth, *Provision Report 2*.

treaty was signed in Hanoi.⁵⁴ On the Czechoslovak side, the Labor Ministry (or more specifically its three branches: federal, Czech and Slovak) became responsible for the running of the program.⁵⁵ What is notable about this is that normally, in Czechoslovakia, vocational schools fell under the purview of the Education Ministry, but, from the very beginning, the affairs of the Vietnamese, though they would spend roughly half of their stays as bona fide apprentices, were handled by the Labor Ministry.

The trainees were between 17 and 25 years old and at least graduates of Vietnamese 7-year elementary schools. Most of them were channeled into fields related to mechanical engineering, construction, energy industry, chemical industry and radio technology. As before, the arriving apprentice-workers received a clothing donation, but now a detailed list of items that each trainee was entitled to was drafted by the Ministry of Internal Trade. Similarly, the medical criteria that the candidates had to meet were systematized and enshrined in a comprehensive list (for the contents of both lists see the Appendix). Also, given the anticipated number of Vietnamese citizens slated to arrive to Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry agreed to lift the visa requirement for all students and trainees.⁵⁶ As before, the Czechoslovak

⁵⁴ NA, "Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích" signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974.

⁵⁵ Appendix III to *Provision Report 2*, op. cit.

⁵⁶ MZV, "Záznam rozhovoru III. tajemníka R. Šmída se s. Nghia, pracovníkem konsulárního odd. MZV VDR dne 26.6.1973," 145/117, 1973.

state shouldered all costs of the program, with the sole exception of the transport from Vietnam to the Czechoslovak border.

The basic organizational features of the program during this phase were taken over from the 1960s wave. Thus, similar to *praktikanti*, the apprentice-workers received stipends of Kčs900 during the period of language training and theoretical education in vocational schools, and once they started to work in factories, they earned wages. In cases when their wages fell below Kčs900, they received enough money to bring their monthly incomes to the Kčs900 level.⁵⁷ The stipend, which the trainees were to use to cover housing and living expenses, was paid to them by the company that ran the vocational school that trained them, but the schools received resources from the central budget to cover the stipends.⁵⁸ At the end of their stays, apprentice-workers were allowed to take back home with them goods that they acquired during their stays duty-free, provided that their value did not exceed 50% of their overall earnings, including stipends. There was a stipulation that these goods “must belong to the personal use category as relevant to the trainee or [his or her] family members living with him/her in the same household, but must not be of business character”; as we shall see, what counted as an item of personal use became rather elastically defined.

The organizational structure of the previous period was not always just replicated but sometimes the experience with the first phase was used to

⁵⁷ Provision Report 2, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Appendix III to *Provision Report 2*, op. cit.

improve it. Thus, instead of the 3-month intensive language training that the *praktikanti* received, apprentice-workers got 6-month of intensive language training. Of these, first three months took place in the reception centers⁵⁹, and the subsequent three months in the vocational schools before the actual instruction started.⁶⁰ The advantage of this extended language training will become particularly apparent in comparison with the contract workers of the third phase.

ARRIVALS

In practice, the arrivals of the trainees unfolded in the following way. The train trip from Hanoi, which took 14 days, ended in Chop, a Ukrainian town on the Soviet-Czechoslovak border. There, the Vietnamese apprentice-workers were met by staff from the Czech and/or Slovak Labor Ministries, the Vietnamese Embassy, a physician, and interpreters.⁶¹ At the train station, the trainees transferred onto a special Czechoslovak train, in which they were distributed among the boxcars depending on their final destination in Czechoslovakia. According to reports, this part of the operation was the most challenging and “always took rather long time, which has been also criticized by railway

⁵⁹ In the 1970s phase, these centers were located in, in the Czech part of the federation: Vizovice, Blansko, Veselíčko, Jimlín, and Ostrava (stopped operation in March 1976), and in the Slovak part of the federation in Sološnica and Lubochňa. (NA, “Zajištění odborné přípravy občanů VDR v roce 1976,” dated 18 January 1976.)

⁶⁰ “Věcné, finanční a organizační zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích,” appendix III to *Provision Report 2*.

⁶¹ NA, “Informace pro s. ministra: Zpráva o příjezdu III. turnusu občanů VDR,” dated 29 April 1975.

employees.”⁶² Once onboard of the Czechoslovak train, the trainees were given packages with sandwich-style dinners and breakfasts, hot tea, mineral water and fruit. Those traveling to more distant reception centers received in addition also *Tatranka* chocolate-cream-filled wafers, and a box of cookies.

Between May 1974 and 1 July 1976, some 3,541⁶³ Vietnamese citizens arrived (in six batches) to Czechoslovakia (of whom 999 went Slovakia).⁶⁴ Of these, 44.1% completed 10 years of education, 31.6% nine years, and 24.3% completed seven or eight years of school, a distribution that the Czech clerks directly responsible for organizing the program found “rather favorable.” By contrast, they were unhappy with the health condition of many of the arriving trainees, or rather, with the insufficient screening of the candidates in Vietnam. Almost all arriving trainees suffered from parasites. Tuberculosis was the second most frequent condition for which the trainees were treated. Others included heart murmurs, the deformations of the spine, eye problems and locomotive organs problems, all of which were potential contraindications to the ability to perform the jobs the trainees had been assigned. In most cases, the trainees were treated before commencing their training (I will discuss significance of this in chapter 4). In rare cases – seven in this period of time – they were sent back to Vietnam. Five

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ NA, “Informace o odborné přípravě občanů VDR,” undated, likely written in early July 1976, drafted by Sekretariát pro výchovu vietnamských pracovníků při Ministertvu práce a sociálních věcí ČSR.

⁶⁴ By the end of the July, the overall number reached 4,132, and another 472 people were expected to arrive in November 1976, and 260 people in April 1977. (“Informace o odborné přípravě občanů VDR,” undated, likely written sometime in the early fall 1976).

others were sent back due to “disciplinary infringements” and nine people returned due to family or “cadres” (i.e., political blemish) reasons.

Two of the six batches (the first and the fifth) received extended (exceeding the standard three months) language training in the reception centers, which was motivated by the effort not to leave the centers empty and the teachers without work when the next batch was delayed. In the reception centers, the program relied on roughly 100 teachers of Czech/Slovak, of whom 40% were retirees. The language instruction continued for another three months on the sites of the vocational schools/companies, where, too, the language instruction was, as a rule, in the hands of retired teachers (of Czech/Slovak). An insufficient number of interpreters – only 27 in the entire federation at the time of the writing of the report – complicated the trainees’ education, as well as the delivery of healthcare in the reception centers. The stopgap measure adopted to deal with this situation was pulling out some of the trainees from vocational schools and making them into “assistant interpreters” in the reception centers for the period of one to two months, although it obviously interfered with their own training.⁶⁵

VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

In the fall of 1976, there were 77 vocational schools involved in the education of the more than 3,500 trainees. The largest number of Vietnamese apprentice-workers (195 at the time) was being trained in the vocational school belonging to

⁶⁵ NA, “Podklady pro ÚV KSČ: Současný stav a problémy v odborné přípravě občanů VSR v čs. organizacích,” dated 29 October 1976.

ČKD Praha, one of the largest engineering companies in the country whose roots go back to the mid-19th century. The same company also continued to employ large number of Vietnamese workers, including guest workers, all the way to 1989. In the fall of 1976, the Vietnamese were being trained in 29 specialties (*učební obor*), plus two specialties requiring lower level of training (*záruční obor*), namely welding and crane operation. The specialties in which they were trained most frequently were: machine fitter, welder, lathe operator, production electrical technician, and forger. The Vocational Schools Research Institute reported that the Vietnamese trainees' academic achievement was high, and that they especially excelled in the practical part of the training, especially in some engineering and electrical engineering specialties, where "the Vietnamese apprentices do better than our own apprentices."⁶⁶

HOUSING

The Labor Ministry monitored the condition of the housing facilities before the arrival of the trainees, sometimes by sending in one of its staff to inspect and vet them in person. The accommodations had to comply with the regulations issued earlier. Reports⁶⁷ from these inspections suggest that the trainees lived two or three (the latter seems to have been more frequent) to a room, which was sometimes equipped with a bathroom (shared with another identical room that

⁶⁶ NA, "Informace o odborné přípravě občanů VDR," undated, likely written in early July 1976, drafted by Sekretariát pro výchovu vietnamských pracovníků při Ministertvu práce a sociálních věcí ČSR.

⁶⁷ MPSV, "Zápis z prověrky připravenosti na přijetí občanů VDR v Pozemních stavbách Brno," 23 February 1976; "Záznam z prověrky připravenosti OU n.p. Sílón Planá n.L. k přijetí občanů VDR z V. turnusu," 17 February 1976.

was part of the suite), other times bathrooms were shared on the floor. Interestingly, a couple of these reports mention “tea kitchenettes” for the exclusive use by the Vietnamese trainees; perhaps this was a way to accommodate the Vietnamese trainees’ cultural needs, as they were imagined by their Czech hosts. The hostels or dormitories would also have, as a rule, a TV room and a laundry room; sometimes also a study room and some sports facilities (such as a soccer field or table tennis table).



Photo 4: A Vietnamese workers' dormitory room, circa 1983 (ABS Kanice archive).



Photo 5: A common room in the same dormitory (ABS Kanice archive).

As always, the devil is in the details. A report on inspections performed by the Czech Education Ministry in November and December 1970 will give us an idea about the logistical challenge that was the organization of vocational training for the gradually arriving Vietnamese citizens. The inspections were performed in 30 vocational schools, which were together training about 42% of all Vietnamese trainees present in the Czech part of the federation at the time. The report⁶⁸ on these inspections identified as one of the most serious problems the fact that the batches of Vietnamese trainees arrived to the vocational schools several times in

⁶⁸ MPSV, "Kontrolní informace o stavu a úrovni odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky ve tříletých učebních oborech a ve dvouleté speciální přípravě na povolání," undated.

the course of the school year, which significantly interfered with instruction in the respective vocational schools, as every new arrival necessitated changes in the schedule of classes and teachers' assignments, which meant hiring, or else, letting go of, adjunct teachers. The report cites the example of one specific school in which the organization of instruction had to be changed no fewer than five times in the course of a single school year, as the number of Vietnamese trainees kept changing. A related problem was the placement in schools of groups consisting of 10 trainees or fewer. As, if even a single person was transferred elsewhere, or could not attend the school for other reasons, meant that class sizes became "sub-threshold," which was considered an inefficient use of (already scarce) resources. The report assessed the accommodations for Vietnamese trainees positively. It also highly praised the trainees' academic achievements: between 22% and 41% of them, depending on school, were honor-roll students. The report noted that "the assessment of their behavior is very difficult as they are [in contrast to Czech/Slovak apprentices] adult people between 19 and 25 years of age." Their relations with Czech apprentices were described as good, particularly in schools where they participated in activities such as "mixed soccer teams." The report also mentioned "weaker physical capacity [*fond*]" of the Vietnamese trainees, and their need to take afternoon naps, particularly when working in the factories, which some vocational schools allowed them to do, and others did not.

CONCERNS OVER COSTS: GRADUAL SHIFT FROM AID TO COOPERATION

The concern over costs surfaced repeatedly in Czechoslovak documents when this phase was being devised and negotiated. In June 1973, a Vietnamese state delegation, led by the labor minister, was making rounds through allied European state-socialist states to discuss the training of its citizen. After visiting Poland, it arrived to Czechoslovakia, ready to continue on to the Soviet Union afterward. A report on the meeting between the Czechoslovak and Vietnamese representatives noted that “part of the overall costs of the training program will be covered by the product created by the Vietnamese workers who stay in the country upon the completion of their vocational school training.”⁶⁹ Similarly, Czechoslovak officials noted that the higher age (compared to the 1960s wave) of the trainees was “advantageous for us in regard to work output.”⁷⁰ And finally they observed that the workers’ labor “can be also of certain benefit to our economy, particularly in the case of some engineering companies that struggle with labor shortages.”⁷¹ While this last quote is about labor shortage rather than direct financial costs, the key word there is “advantageous,” which reflects a shift in the conceptualization of the program from one of internationalist aid to that of mutual advantageousness. This climate explains why an official working at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Hanoi included the following information in a memo on his meeting with a counterpart from the Bulgarian Embassy. Discussing the extent and shape of Bulgarian-Vietnamese economic relations, the Bulgarian

⁶⁹ NA, “Zpráva o jednání federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí s vládní delegací Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých podnicích a návrh opatření vládních orgánů ČSSR -- pro schůzi předsednictva vlády Československé socialistické republiky,” dated 9 July 1973. Henceforth, *Talks 1*. The report was discussed also at the highest level, i.e., in the meeting of the Party’s central committee, ÚV KSČ, on 20 June 1973

⁷⁰ *Talks 1*, op. cit., appendix II.

⁷¹ *Talks 1*, op. cit., appendix II.

diplomat was quoted as saying: “it is necessary to state that, with this [most recent] agreement, the People’s Republic of Bulgaria has launched a new stage of cooperation [with Vietnam]. Instead of economic and scientific and technical *aid*, the PRB pushed through an agreement on economic and scientific and technical *cooperation*.”⁷² Along the same lines, the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry proposed that the new treaty should contain a provision enabling the Czechoslovak side to “ask the Vietnamese side to, in the future, send its citizens to be trained also in those Czechoslovak industrial areas that suffer from labor shortage.”⁷³

TENSION BETWEEN CONCERN OVER COSTS AND INTERNATIONALIST OBLIGATIONS

Perhaps the most distinct feature of this phase was the fact that the concern over the costs of the program, which seemed virtually absent during the first phase, kept surfacing. Besides the costs being a factor in making the decision on the number of trainees that would be accepted, they also cropped up, for instance, during the discussions of the curricula that the trainees would follow.

Vietnamese state representatives “stressed that the DRV needed to have highly qualified cadres trained in Czechoslovakia, and the form and length of the training should be structured accordingly.”⁷⁴ Yet, on the Czechoslovak side, a report⁷⁵ noted the divergence of opinion between the (federal) Labor Ministry and the republic-level (that is, Czech and Slovak) Education Ministries. The

⁷² MZV, “Záznam z rozhovoru s. Kodaty s radou velvyslanectvi BLR,” 13 March 1974; 145/117: 1974.

⁷³ *Provision report*, op. cit.

⁷⁴ *Zprava 5*, op. cit.

⁷⁵ *Provision Report*, op. cit.

Education Ministries insisted that the length of trainees' vocational school training be the same as that of their Czech and Slovak counterparts, even if the content of their curricula might have needed to be somewhat adjusted, or reduced, due to linguistic difficulties. Similarly, the Education Ministries rejected the proposition that the Vietnamese citizens who were to be trained in "less demanding fields" only receive special (short) training courses (*zaškolovací programy*). Instead, the Education Ministries demanded that in cases where the Vietnamese government asked for training in areas that did not exist as majors in Czechoslovak vocational school, the Vietnamese trainees be trained in related majors. The Labor Ministry, in turn, argued that this insistence "significantly affects overall costs. . .since shortening the instruction by just six months would lower educational expenses by about Kčs10,000, and, by the same token, the net revenue produced by the Vietnamese citizens in the course of their productive labor would increase by roughly the same amount." Significantly for the argument I pursue in this dissertation, it was the Education Ministries that won this dispute.

The Vietnamese government's request that certain trainees return home immediately upon graduation presents a similar (though in its ultimate outcome more ambiguous) instance of the concern of costs being trumped by extra-economic (i.e., political, arguments, specifically the sense of internationalist obligation). These early returns went against the interests of the Czechoslovak side, which counted on the labor of vocational schools' graduates as a means to recover a part of the financial resources it put into the program. The idea was that "notwithstanding the lower productivity, which must be expected, it can be

anticipated that roughly two-thirds of the resources spent on professional education and training would return to the Czechoslovak economy in the form of net product that the Vietnamese citizens create in the process of productive labor."⁷⁶ However, the Vietnamese government requested that roughly 30-40% the vocational schools graduates, mostly those earning certificates in construction industry-related jobs, leave Czechoslovakia immediately upon graduation, so that they could immediately join the effort to rebuild war-torn Vietnam. As reluctant as the Czechoslovak officials were about allowing such a large number of trainees to leave immediately upon graduation, they, nonetheless, decided that it was "impossible not to meet this demand" as the Vietnamese government justified it by "the pressing needs for the rebuilding [of Vietnam] and the development of DRV's economy."⁷⁷ In the spring of 1973, Vietnamese ambassador told the Czechoslovak labor minister that the Vietnamese side anticipated that the apprentice-trainees would remain working in Czechoslovak factories for the period of one to three years upon graduation from vocational schools, with the exception of construction machinery drivers, who were urgently needed in the DRV.⁷⁸ Thus, if the apprentice-workers wave was characterized on the Czechoslovak side by an intense focus on costs (both tracking and containing them), the program was also – as we saw also in the case or curriculum – still conceived of as an essentially internationalist project, in

⁷⁶ NA, "Zpráva o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů VDR v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušných smluvních dokumentů"; report presented at the 27 February 1974 meeting of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by Labor Minister Michal Štancel'. Henceforth, *Revised Provision*.

⁷⁷ *Provision Report*.

⁷⁸ NA, "Záznam o přijetí velvyslance VDR, Duong Duc Ha, ministrem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR, s. M. Štanclem, dne 10. dubna 1973," dated 10 April 1973.

which the Vietnamese state's needs ultimately trumped the concerns over the costs accrued by the Czechoslovak economy. Although in this particular case, the point was revised later on – in spring 1974, a report noted that “according to the latest assurance of the Vietnamese side, all Vietnamese citizens would stay in Czechoslovakia for [full] six years.”⁷⁹

The concern about (containing) the costs of the program was accompanied by changes in the institutional financing of the program. Whereas during the 1960s *praktikanti* phase, the funds for the training were a special earmarked item in the Labor Ministry budget, in the 1970s phase, subsidies were channeled to the companies responsible for the training, which then managed the monies on their own. A smaller part of the costs was reimbursed according to actually incurred expenses, and for the rest, the companies received flat subsidies (based on norms set in advance). Although at this point the change in the system of financing was relatively minor, it was, nonetheless, a step in the direction of decentralization of the program's management, which proceeded much further in the 1980s during the guest-worker phase.

There was one other element that made appearance during the phase and that complements the concern over costs: Vietnam admitted that besides the need to train new skilled workers, its motivation for sending its citizens to Czechoslovakia lied also in its difficulty to secure jobs for them at home. According to the documents of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central

⁷⁹ *Revised Provision*, op. cit.

Committee, the Vietnamese side informed the Czechoslovak officials that “the annual increase in the number of working population is roughly 300,000 to 400,000 people. The DRV cannot secure full employment without the cooperation of other countries. That is why the Vietnamese side is interested in [Czechoslovakia] accepting 10,000 to 12,000 Vietnamese citizens for vocational training and on-the-job training.”⁸⁰ The significance of this change in Vietnamese government’s motivation is that it gained in importance over time, especially during the last phase of the program in the 1980s. Hence, while the 1970s wave was conceptually very distinct from the 1980s wave, the seeds of the logic on which the 1980s wave would be based, namely the financial and labor shortage concerns of the Czechoslovak state and Vietnam’s need to “place” as many workers abroad as possible – were slowly planted throughout this period already.

As the Vietnamese citizens started to graduate from vocational schools and transition into working in factories, the need arose for setting, or specifying, the conditions of their stays as *workers* (rather than vocational school apprentices). This was done through the agreement (*ujednání*) between the two countries’ Labor Ministries, which was signed on 14 July 1978.⁸¹ The agreement on the

⁸⁰ NA, “Politické zdůvodnění návštěvy a návrh na řešení ekonomických otázek v roce 1974 a v další perspektivě,” report presented at the 28 September 1973 meeting of the ÚV KSČ. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989. Sv. 94, Ar.j. 91, b. 4.

⁸¹ NA, “Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky a ministerstvem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v etapě výrobní práce a dalšího odborného růstu,” signed on 14 July 1978.

extension of the apprentice-worker program stipulated, among other things, that overtime work required the approval of the Vietnamese Embassy; that the Vietnamese citizens would be taxed as though they had two dependents, regardless of the actual number of dependents, that they could make one trip to Vietnam in the course of the period of productive work, which could last for up to three months (this took into account the time spend traveling by train, 2 x 14 days; later on, when workers traveled by air, their vacation time was reduced to 2 months)⁸² and the Czechoslovak companies were obligated to let them work extra hours in order to accrue the right for this leave and cover the transportation costs of the return trip.

The agreement also introduced payments to the Vietnamese government that were to cover the social security a healthcare taxes that the Vietnamese trainee-workers' would have paid had they worked at home. The payments had the form of a lump sum (*paušální úhrada*) of Kčs2,000 per worker per year spent working in Czechoslovakia. I discuss these fees in detail and analyze their significance in Chapters 4 and 5.

MOVEMENT TOWARD GUEST-WORKER TYPE OF LABOR EXCHANGE

Finally, in August and September 1979, a delegation of the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry traveled to Hanoi and met with the representatives of the Vietnamese State Committee for Professional Training, during which the Vietnamese officials asked for the training of over 1,000 Vietnamese citizens in the apprenticeship-

⁸² MPSV, "Stanovisko odboru 32 k návrhu na sjednání dohody s vládou VSR o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v čs. organizacích," November 1979.

worker model, and over 300 in trainee (*praktikanti* and *stážisté*) model in 1980.⁸³ The Czechoslovak government judged this new agreement to be going above and beyond the terms of the treaty from 8 April 1974, and stipulated that the number of received trainees do not exceed 3,500 people.⁸⁴ Further, it proposed that the Vietnamese side be asked to consider the proposal of a “new form of professional training, one that is connected with work,” which the Czechoslovak officials have been kicking around for four years by then (as we shall see in the next section). In connection with that, and in line with the arguments made on this issue previously, it also urged that in “selecting the lines of work in which Vietnamese citizens will be trained, long-term plans in the area of future cooperation between the two countries be considered.”⁸⁵ This last statement transformed the concern over costs into a language of transitioning from aid to cooperation. The draft of the proposed treaty⁸⁶ that was to extend the *apprentice-worker* program already also included the “professional training connected with work in production” as one of three types (in addition to the apprentice-worker and the trainee-worker forms) of the training to be provided under the auspices of this treaty. Accordingly, the proposed name of the treaty was also modified to reflect this proposed change: in contrast to the previous treaty, which only talked

⁸³ MPSV, “Zápis o průběhu a výsledcích jednání mezi delegací expertů federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky a delegací expertů Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky, dated 10 September 1979.

⁸⁴ MPSV, “Zpráva ke sjednání Dohody s Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v československých organizacích,” November 1979, henceforth *Zpráva ke sjednání dohody*.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ MPSV, “NÁVRH: Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích,” November 1979.

about professional preparation (*odborná příprava*), this newest treaty was to also add “and further increasing of qualifications” (*další zvyšování kvalifikace*), which became a euphemism for labor performed by guest workers.

With its resolution from 19 December 1979,⁸⁷ the Czechoslovak government approved the signing of a treaty that extended the apprentice-worker agreement, and two days later the contractual documents were signed in Prague.⁸⁸ The treaty was to be in effect for 10 years from the time of its signing, and it did not invalidate the original apprenticeship-worker treaty signed in April 1974.⁸⁹

The government resolution contained a provision that had not appeared in any of the previous agreements. In point 3, the resolution stated that the government agreed “with the professional training of 3,500 Vietnamese citizens between the years 1980 and 1983 expecting that [*s tím, že*] the incurred expenses would be defrayed [*uhrazeny*] through the work of the citizens of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.” So, while this treaty seemingly merely built on the previous treaty on the apprenticeship-worker training program, with this stipulation, it actually moved closer to the for-profit model (for now the stipulation implied that the

⁸⁷ MPSV, “Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 19. prosince 1979, č. 337 o sjednání dohody s Vietnamem o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích.”

⁸⁸ MPSV, “Zápis o jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky s delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky,” dated 21 December 1979.

⁸⁹ MPSV, “Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích,” signed on 21 December 1979.

form was neutral in terms of costs-benefits balance) that was slowly taking shape in the minds of the Czechoslovak policymakers over the past several years. I analyze the repercussions of this modification in detail in chapter 5. For now, let me just propose that the significance of this development is that it contained within it the seeds of many of the elements that were later incorporated into the treaty on the guest-worker form of the program. In other words, what is notable is the fact that while, as we shall see, there were decisive and sharp differences between the conditions under which the guest workers worked in Czechoslovakia and those under which the apprentice-workers did. Yet, a close reading of the archival documents also makes it clear that the last years of the apprentice-worker program and the work on the contractual documents through which the program would be extended into the 1980s also served to Czechoslovak administrators as a “sand box” in which they could figure out some of the principles on which they would base the third and final phase of the program.

WAVE III: BELEAGUERED INTERNATIONALISM: GUEST WORKERS, 1980-1989

FROM MUTUAL ADVANTAGEOUSNESS TO “FULLY MOBILE LABOR FORCE” AND “ECONOMIC ACCEPTABILITY”

Although the treaty introducing the third phase of the program was not signed until November 1980, it had been in the making for several years before that. In the mid-1970s, the possibility of building upon ties created through aid and eventually transforming them into a cooperation that would be advantageous to Czechoslovakia seemed to have been always present in the thinking of

Czechoslovak officials. A report written by the economic department of the Communist Party's Central Committee noted: "Czechoslovak assistance to Vietnam has been highly valued by the Vietnamese comrades so far, and it also creates preconditions for an expansion of cooperation with the SRV in the future, one that would be based on the two sides jointly taking advantage of the possibilities that Vietnam has at its disposal in this respect (mineral and maritime resources, location, labor force, and the like)."⁹⁰ Using the same reasoning, the report warned that "categorically refusing to take part in the construction of a factory that the Vietnamese side requested [but the Czechoslovak side thought that it did not have the capacity to do] even after 1980 would amount to insufficient appreciation of the importance of international assistance to our friends and it could lead to the narrowing of the possibilities of a future – and for us advantageous – cooperation with the SRV."

As early as 1975, in a meeting of the Czechoslovak part of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Commission for Economic and Technical Cooperation, a proposal was formulated for steps that would modify the program's unambiguous focus on aid and transformed it into something that would serve the interests, or needs, of the Czechoslovak state as well. The report⁹¹ from this meeting, which

⁹⁰ NA, "Stanovisko ekonomického oddělení ÚV KSČ k návrhu stanoviska zástupce ČSSR v Radě vzájemné hospodářské pomoci k návrhu usnesení 78. zasedání výkonného výboru RVHP k otázce koordinace pomoci zainteresovaných členských států RVHP Vietnamské socialistické republiky na mnohostranném základě," dated 6 October 1976; catalogued with documents from 1 October 1976 ÚV KSČ meeting.

⁹¹ MPSV, "Informace o možnostech zaměstnávání vietnamských občanů v ČSSR a návrh dalšího postupu," received by the Presidium of the Government (*Úřad předsednictva vlády*) on 7 April 1976.

was sent by the Czech labor minister to the deputy prime minister, introduced the matter in the following way:

The employment of Vietnamese citizens, as it is now being considered, could contribute toward the solution of the existing unemployment in the southern part of Vietnam⁹², and at the same time, it could be a means of training skilled cadres in blue-collar professions for the Vietnamese national economy. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak national economy could gain labor force for the preferred engineering companies and the construction industry, which are of key importance to the economy's further development.

The draft proposed to start with offering some 1,500 to 2,000 jobs to the Vietnamese side, with the possibility of expanding the program to include between 8,000 and 10,000 Vietnamese workers. In contrast to the previous and existing forms of training, the guiding principle here would be “economic acceptability” (*ekonomická přijatelnost*). The term does not exactly suggest profitability, but rather an *avoidance of losses*. To ensure this economic acceptability, the draft proposed that the length of the stays be set at 5 years, all of which – except for the first six *weeks* – the workers would spend working “while simultaneously acquiring production experience,” which would be supplemented through the use of the companies’ educational facilities. In regard to the latter, the draft explained that practical skills and experience were a priority, and as a result, theoretical and language education would take place

⁹² The references to unemployment in Southern Vietnam are likely based on information received during talks with a South Vietnamese delegation that visited the ČSSR in September 1974 (NA, “Poskytnutí bezplatné materiální pomoci Jihovietnamské republice na r. 1975,” ÚV KSČ meeting on 3 September 1974, fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, sv. 128, ar.j. 129, b. 13.), as well as an “official friendly visit” by a DRV Party and government delegation a year later (NA, “Oficiální přátelská návštěva stranické a vládní delegace Vietnamské demokratické republiky v čele s I. tajemníkem ÚP VSP v československu ve dnech 19.-27. října 1975, fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, sv. 170, ar.j. 173, b. 5a.)

only outside – that is to say, as far as the workers were concerned, *in addition to* – working hours; noting that the work week in Vietnam anyway lasted six, rather than five, days. The draft still suggested that, even with the educational aspect modified in this way, the workers would obtain a “certificate of acquired specialized qualifications, which basically [*v podstatě*] corresponds to the apprenticeship certificate,” i.e., the certificate that the graduates of vocational schools received after 2.5–3.5 years of theoretical and practical education *and* a comprehensive final exam.

The proposal then returned to the question of financial costs and benefits, presenting the benefits not as profits, but rather as a necessary *buffer against losses*:

In the approximate economic calculations, the listed surpluses of the created national product above and beyond the outlaid expenditures serve as a reserve necessary for the covering of unanticipated expenses related to a greater risk of an early return given the length of the stays, treatment of certain diseases, and a lower than expected average productivity. Further, the surplus of 5-7 % of the overall created national product serves as guarantee that this employment will not lead to a slowdown of the Czechoslovak national economy's development.⁹³

The ambiguity in how the proposed modification of the program should be conceptualized is apparent. Although one of the principal motivations for the modification was the benefit that this modification could bring to the Czechoslovak economy, that benefit was not conceptualized explicitly as financial gain, but rather as an organizational step that could help remedy labor

⁹³ MPSV, “Informace o možnostech zaměstnávání vietnamských občanů v ČSSR a návrh dalšího postupu,” received by the Presidium of the Government (*Úřad předsednictva vlády*) on 7 April 1976.

shortages in particular sectors of the Czechoslovak economy. In a sense, the measure mirrors the remedy required by the Vietnamese economy (overabundance of labor force on one hand and shortage on the other). While financial surplus was expected, it was presented strictly as a cache to be used to cover “unanticipated” expenses. Of course, the expenses could have been unanticipated only in the sense of their *specifics* being unknown, since their *existence* was not only anticipated, but in fact served as a key means through which the legitimacy of the program as a *training* project – asserted through the issuance of a final qualifications certificate – was maintained.

One more aspect of the draft deserves attention: The fact that it referred to the Vietnamese workers who would arrive under such terms as a “fully mobile” (*plně mobilní*) labor force. This “mobility” is what made it possible for the Czechoslovak planners to deploy the workers in “crucial industrial and construction jobs that suffer from shortages and on which the efficient development of the Czechoslovak economy depends.” In other words, what made the Vietnamese workers so suitable was the degree of control over their placement that the state lacked in regard to its own citizens.

Based on their communication with the Vietnamese ambassador, the officials at the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry expected to be approached by the Vietnamese side with a request for the “training” of 5,000 people following the system

described in the commission's draft already in the fall of 1976.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, the Vietnamese side did not respond in 1976, and the Czechoslovak side decided to bring up the issue again during the second meeting of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Committee for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation on 26-29 April 1977 in Hanoi.⁹⁵ At the meeting, it was agreed that the Labor Ministries of the two countries would discuss the issue in the third quarter of 1977.⁹⁶

The ideas were discussed again in November 1979 during a meeting of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Committee for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation in Hanoi, where the possibility of 15,000 to 18,000 (that is more than 3 times the number of apprentice-workers in the 1970s!) Vietnamese workers arriving to work primarily in the Czechoslovak textile and footwear industries was brought up.⁹⁷

Also, as I noted in the previous section, although the treaty on the extension of the apprentice-worker form of the program and the accompanying agreement did not actually discuss any specifics of the category of future "guest workers,"

⁹⁴ NA, "Informace o odborné přípravě občanů VDR," undated, likely written sometime in the early fall 1976.

⁹⁵ NA, "Zpráva o přípravě II. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," presented at 4 April 1977 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

⁹⁶ NA, "Protokol II. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," presented at 27 May 1977 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

⁹⁷ NA, "Zpráva o výsledcích IV. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," report from meeting that took place 21-26 November 1979, prepared for 4 January 1980 meeting of ÚV KSČ.

they were written in such a way so as to possibly cover this, as yet nonexistent, category of workers as well, should the need arise. This was confirmed by the developments some three months after the signing of the apprentice-worker extension agreement, when the contours of the new program started to take clearer shape during talks with a Vietnamese governmental delegation.

According to the materials prepared for the Czech labor minister before the negotiations,⁹⁸ it was expected that Vietnam would send as many as 8,000 of its workers to Czechoslovakia that very same year (1980), with the overall expectation of sending about 20,000 people over the next five years. Their stays would be four years long, and Czechoslovakia would annually pay Vietnam Kčs2,000 per person as compensation for each worker's welfare contributions, and a lump sum of Kčs1,000 as compensation for the costs of recruitment. The document noted as well that the Vietnamese side also presented a request for an additional annual payment of Kčs2,026 per worker to cover the worker's child allowance benefits. Finally, the text noted that Vietnamese workers would be able to transfer certain percentage of their net wages exceeding Kčs900 "on the one hand for the construction of SRV's industry, and on the other hand, as their personal contribution to their families."

At the same time as the "guest-worker" form of the program was slowly acquiring its shape, Czechoslovakia sent a highest-level delegation – led by the secretary general of the Communist Party Central Committee and the president

⁹⁸ MPSV, "Podklady pro s. ministra Dr. Hamerníka k přijetí vietnamské vládní delegace vedené nám. ministra práce VSR s. Phan Van Huu," undated but likely drafted at the end of March or the beginning of April 1980.

of the country, Gustav Husák – to Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, with Vietnam being seen as the focal point of the trip.⁹⁹ Following the visit, the economic section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party emphasized (by physically underlining pertinent passages) two main goals in Czechoslovak-Vietnamese economic relations. (1) It urged to increase the effort in the search for “mutually advantageous” ways of investing in Vietnam’s raw materials base, and (2) Continued Czechoslovak assistance to Vietnam through the sharing of professional experience and “the education of cadres, as well as blue-collar vocations.”¹⁰⁰ A related document noted that “the respective economic structures of the ČSSR and SRV, different natural conditions and resources as well as different potential of the labor force in the two countries provide all conditions [*dávají plné předpoklady*] for the development of such mutually advantageous economic cooperation, for which preconditions have been already set through the current scientific and technical cooperation.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ NA, “Zpráva o oficiální přátelské návštěvě čs. stranické a státní delegace, vedené generálním tajemníkem ÚV KSČ a prezidentem ČSSR s. G. Husákem, ve Vietnamské socialistické republice, Kambodžské lidové republice a Laoské lidově demokratické republice ve dnech 12.-17. 2. 1980,” material presented 21 February 1980 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

¹⁰⁰ NA, “Stanovisko ekonomického oddělení ÚV KSČ k návrhu na uzavření koordinace národohospodářských plánů mezi ČSSR a VSR na období 1981 – 1985,” dated 11 June 1980.

¹⁰¹ NA, “Zpráva k návrhu usnesení předsednictva vlády ČSSR na uzavření koordinace národohospodářských plánů mezi ČSSR a VSR na období 1981 – 1985.”

In its resolution¹⁰² from 15 May 1980, the Czechoslovak government authorized the labor minister to open negotiations not just with Vietnam, but also with Cuba, Mongolia and Algeria about the temporary employment “connected with professional training” of their citizens. In the resolution, the government also authorized the minister to meet the countries’ demands as to the compensation required for supplying this labor force to Czechoslovakia, as it was specified in an appendix to the resolution. The appendix¹⁰³ accompanying the resolution clearly indicated that the turn toward the focus on profitability had undeniably occurred by this point. The text opened by stating that the “Czechoslovak national economy anticipates a long-term employment and professional training of foreign citizens in accordance with the principles and goals of the Czechoslovak foreign policy.” It then made it a point to differentiate between “two forms of cooperation.” In the first one, “economic efficiency” (*ekonomická efektivnost*) was “not the only criterion on which this cooperation is assessed,” yet, it pointed out that even training had to be “connected with productive work.” The other form of cooperation was described as “professional training on the job [*odborná příprava při práci*] based on the principle of mutual advantages in which the efficiency aspect is taken into consideration.” It continued by positing that “this form of cooperation is conditioned on the rule that the costs of employing foreign work force do not exceed the national product that these workers

¹⁰² NA, “Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. května 1980, č. 172 o zásadách pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů spojené s odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích po roce 1980.”

¹⁰³ MPSV, “Zásady a podmínky pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v čs. organizacích spojené s odbornou přípravou po roce 1980,” appendix to “Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. května 1980, č. 172 o zásadách pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů spojené s odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích po roce 1980.”

produce. Which is why emphasis is placed on productive work, which is supplemented, to a smaller extent, with professional training.” As is apparent, the language of the text still fought shy of talking about profit in an explicit way, just as we saw before, and instead focused on the avoidance of loss rather than on the generation of profit. In the part devoted to general principles (i.e., those applying to all the concerned countries), this emphasis on loss-avoidance was reiterated. In addition, it was stipulated that all “requests for the transfer of part of the national product created by foreign workers to their countries of origin are to be rejected.” While foreign workers were to be entitled to practically all healthcare and even welfare benefits *while* (but not after departure, say, pensions) in Czechoslovakia, the appendix – in contradiction to the more general principle – forbade the payment of child allowance benefits to these workers even if the children were born in Czechoslovakia (unless a specific treaty existed to that effect). Finally, the appendix also set down the rule of not allowing workers’ family members to stay in the country. As far as Vietnam is concerned, the appendix recommended accepting the demands for the: Kčs1,000 lump sum as recruitment compensation; a flat annual fee (regardless of the number of children the worker might have in Vietnam) Kčs2,160 to cover child allowance benefit (presumably paid out by the Vietnamese state back in Vietnam), and an increase in the compensation of the welfare and healthcare contributions (that the worker would, again, presumably paid had she or he been working in Vietnam) to Kčs4,000 annually per person. The document also set the age of the workers to be between 18 and 40 years.

In July 1980, the officials from the Czechoslovak Federal Labor Ministry met with the representatives of the Vietnamese State Committee. Besides discussing the apprentice and trainee exchanges, they also agreed on some 800 people arriving to Czechoslovakia in 1981 based on yet-to-be-written treaty to work in the textile, rubber, chemical, and fashion jewelry industries.¹⁰⁴ These would be the first “guest-workers.” It is notable that in contrast to the apprenticeship track, in which a majority people worked in heavy industry, and were mostly men, now arrangements were being made for industries that traditionally employed primarily women. This new form of labor exchange, indeed, meant a much larger number of female workers arriving to ČSSR compared to before. It was expected that these workers would arrive for stays lasting 4.5 years, of which the first six months were to be taken up by language education.

At the beginning of October 1980, the federal labor minister presented¹⁰⁵ to the government a draft of the proposed treaty on the temporary employment of Vietnamese citizens in Czechoslovakia. The treaty was signed on 27 November¹⁰⁶ of the same year in virtually unchanged form. The only change between the

¹⁰⁴ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti odborné přípravy a dalšího zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v československých organizacích v roce 1981 a návrzích na rok 1982,” dated 21 July 1980.

¹⁰⁵ MPSV, “Návrh na sjednání dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” presented at the meeting of the ČSSR government on 1 October 1980.

¹⁰⁶ MPSV, “Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” signed on 27 November 1980.

draft and the final text was that the original text did not anticipate that the workers would be able to travel home in the course of their four-year stays at all, while the final text allowed married workers with children to take a vacation in Vietnam after two years of work with the Czechoslovak side covering the travel costs. The treaty stipulated that the workers be between 18 and 40 years of age, and that they be not only physically capable of performing assigned jobs but also already skilled for the performance of said jobs. Just as before, upon arrival, the workers received a one-time clothing donation in the value of Kčs2,400, as well as an advance of wages in the amount of Kčs900, which they would have to pay back within the first year. Their tax rate corresponded to the tax rate of people with two dependents (regardless of the actual number of dependents they might have had in Vietnam). As before, they were given unpaid vacation on two most important SRV state holidays (2 September and the Lunar New Year), and unlike before, they were paid holidays (rather than unpaid leave days). During the first three months, manual workers (which was virtually all workers who arrived under the aegis of this program¹⁰⁷) were to receive a flat sum of Kčs1,000 in gross pay, which came to Kčs902 take-home wage. After this initial period, they were paid according to Czechoslovak wage regulations. Should their actual wages fall

¹⁰⁷ The treaty also specified conditions for “technical workers and engineers,” probably in the mold of *praktikanti* instituted by previous agreements; however, it does not seem that there were many, if any, people covered by this treaty that worked in this track. The documents accompanying the Treaty specified that the number of these technical and engineering staff would not exceed 5% of overall number, and they were to work manually throughout the first year of their stays. (MPSV, “Pokyny pro věcné, organizační a finanční zabezpečení dočasného zaměstnávání zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” imprint of Federal Labor Ministry and Federal Finance Ministry from June 1981.)

below this sum, the companies for which they worked were obligated to pay the difference between their actual wage and this minimum wage. The treaty also stipulated that the workers would be able to transfer certain part of their wages exceeding the Kčs900 minimum to Vietnam. The transfer was to be of two sorts: one, “savings for workers’ families,” and, two, “sums the workers donate for the development of the SRV’s national economy.” Based on my conversations with former Vietnamese workers, it seems that only the latter form was, in fact, implemented, and usually contrary to the workers’ expressed wishes, and as such became one of the most sore points for the workers and a cause behind several protests and even strikes (see Chapter 5). The Czechoslovak side covered the costs of travel from Hanoi to Czechoslovakia, as well as the trip back, by now by air. In the cases of early departures, the two sides would have to agree on the manner in which the travel would be paid for on a case-by-case basis. The workers had access to the same healthcare as Czechoslovak citizens, including preventative care, with the exception of spa treatments. Other benefits were limited to the one-time benefit at the occasion of the birth of a child if the child was born in Czechoslovakia.

In the case of job-related injuries and illnesses, the workers were to be treated, while in the country, as Czechoslovak citizens. If a worker had to leave the country due to a job-related injury, the Czechoslovak state paid them one-time lump sum compensation. In addition to the Kčs2,400, the Czechoslovak state also agreed to pay the Vietnamese state a lump sum of Kčs1,000 per worker as recruitment fee, and a monthly sum of Kčs180 per worker, which the Vietnamese state was to use for securing care for workers’ children (this was based on the

assumption of an average of three children per worker, and Kčs60 per child¹⁰⁸).

Added together, this meant that the Czechoslovak state was liable for roughly Kčs400/month for each Vietnamese worker (which was almost half of the Kčs902 minimum wage that was set for them, and about 15% of 1980 average wage).

What is more, through the article 22, this treaty applied these financial arrangements also *retroactively* to the 8 April 1974 and 21 December 1979 treaties, which regulated the apprentice-worker form of the program.

Specifically, it instituted the transfer of a part of the wages, and the Czechoslovak state's liability for Kčs2,400 (but not for the Kčs1,000 recruitment fee or the Kčs180/month family benefit) also in the case of apprentice-workers. This stipulation helped make the boundary between the apprentice-worker form and the guest worker form of the program more permeable and less sharp. While earlier such subtle "blending" (noted at the end of the previous section) served the purpose of preparing the conditions for a new form of program, now its purpose was different. Namely, to create the semblance of continuity between the two otherwise distinct phases, specifically, to define the pure-worker form as a continuation of the training-focused apprentice-worker phase.

To movement toward erasure of boundaries continued. In 1981, the Vietnamese side requested (and the Czechoslovak side granted the request) that the Vietnamese citizens, who had arrived as part of the apprentice-worker treaty, had graduated from vocational schools and were currently employed by

¹⁰⁸ MPSV, "Zpráva ke sjednání Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích."

Czechoslovak enterprises could, once their six-year stay was up, continue working in the ČSSR by becoming subjects of (regulated by) the “guest-worker” treaty from November 1980.¹⁰⁹ Besides this being another indication of the enormous interest the Vietnamese government had in having as large number of its citizens employed in Czechoslovakia (abroad) for as long as possible, this modification also meant that the originally conceptually quite distinct programs started to overlap, and even merge.

CZECHOSLOVAK COMPANIES’ NEEDS COME TO THE FOREFRONT

During the negotiations leading up to the signing of the treaty, the two sides agreed that 8,000 Vietnamese citizens would arrive to ČSSR in 1981 as part of this new program.¹¹⁰ They also agreed that in subsequent years, the Czechoslovak side would inform the Vietnamese side of its requests by the end of June, and the Vietnamese side would have until the end of August to react to these requests. This was a striking departure from the previous practice, when it was the *Vietnamese* side that put forth its requirements as to both the number and fields of specializations, and the Czechoslovak side tried to accommodate it. A table¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1982,” outcome of talks conducted between 4 and 15 September 1981 in Prague.

¹¹⁰ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981,” signed in Prague on 27 November 1980.

¹¹¹ MPSV, “Vietnamští pracovníci podle oborů a profesí, kategorií pracovníků a přijetí v roce 1980 a 1981 v ČSSR,” addendum no. 2 to “Prováděcí protokol o

accompanying Czechoslovak requirements for 1981 introduced another innovation – it specified in some cases whether male or female workers were requested by a given company.

Thus, in accordance with the changes in the logic of the program, the Czech and Slovak Labor Ministries started in 1981 soliciting and collecting proposals from industrial branch ministries, or even general headquarters of major enterprises, containing the numbers of the Vietnamese citizens they would be able to train, or rather, employ, and the jobs in which this training/employment would take place.¹¹² Only in very rare cases did the branch ministries or companies' management use the language of training at all.¹¹³ In a vast majority of cases, they talked specifically about "requests"¹¹⁴ for certain number of workers. Very often, the ministers or general directors of large concerns asked the Labor Ministry clerks for support in the matter of procuring work force for their enterprises,¹¹⁵ or even expounded on the great difficulties caused by the labor shortage and the ways in which the presence of Vietnamese workers could

spolupráci mezi Českou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981."

¹¹² MPSV, Letter from MPSV to the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition, dated 13 February 1981.

¹¹³ E.g., MPSV, letter from Industry Ministry of the Czech Socialist Republic to the Labor Ministry of the Czechoslovakia from 26 March 1981.

¹¹⁴ E.g., MPSV, letter from Federal Ministry of Electrical Engineering to MPSV, 17 July 1981; letter from Středočeská Fruta, fruit canning company, to MPSV 4 August 1981; letter from the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition to MPSV from 24 August 1981; letter from Paper and Cellulose Industry Headquarters to MPSV dated 11 June 1981, and many others.

¹¹⁵ E.g., MPSV, letter from Spofa healthcare products maker to MPSV from 14 July 1981.

alleviate it. Sometimes these letters read almost as desperate cries for help appealing to the Labor Ministry's clerks' "understanding of the dire situation in regard to labor force," in, for instance, meat-processing industry,¹¹⁶ or warned that labor shortage might prevent the company from completing a specific contract, which could lead to "significant losses for our national economy," as the company made parts used by other "large investment units," as well as produced for export to capitalist countries.¹¹⁷

In other cases, the letters read almost like recruitment leaflets – touting the possibility of wage increases and the quality of the company's housing and cafeteria facilities, and even the cultural facilities of the nearby towns¹¹⁸ – and did not spend any space on detailing the training plan for the supposed on-the-job training course. Although in some cases, mostly when the workers would be working on specialized machinery, the ministries' or companies' letters combined the "request language" with the "training language." For instance, a letter¹¹⁹ would start out by saying that the enterprise, in this case a sugar company, "requests 10 women and 10 men from the SRV," but later on would go on to note also that the workers would acquire skills in the operation of specific types of machinery, and – once again adopting the style somewhat reminiscent

¹¹⁶ MPSV, Letter from General Headquarters of the Meat-Processing Industry to MPSV from 11 February 1981.

¹¹⁷ MPSV, Letter from the director of MEZ Frenštát heavy-current electrical engineering company to MPSV from 22 July 1981.

¹¹⁸ E.g., MPSV, Letter from Semptra, fruit and forest tree nursery company, to MPSV from 21 May 1981; Letter from Crystalex to MPSV from 1 September 1982.

¹¹⁹ MPSV, Letter from the Research and Development Base of Sugar Industry (Výzkumná a vývojová základna cukrovarnického průmyslu) to MPSV dated 18 August 1981.

of a recruitment leaflet – noting that since the organization houses the entire “research-development-production cycle, the workers from the SRV will have the opportunity to become acquainted with new, modern machinery, which is now being tested in the experimental branch of the company.”

At yet other occasions, Czechoslovak companies tried to anticipate the needs of the Vietnamese government officials in their effort to win the allocation of Vietnamese workers for their production lines. This is evident, for example, from a letter by the director of major shoe company, who, after sending an original request for 45 male workers and 70 female workers, sent a follow-up letter to the Labor Ministry, anticipating further negotiations with the Vietnamese side. In the letter, the company director explained in detail all operations involved in all the jobs that the Vietnamese workers would be potentially performing, and then proceeded to offer to change the placement of the workers to the branches producing rubber footwear arguing that this production is “traditional in Vietnam given the abundance of the raw material.”¹²⁰ The director must have been either prescient or well informed: only a year later, the Czechoslovak government approved a “Program for Long-Term Cooperation With Vietnam,” which anticipated the involvement of “Czechoslovak experts in the launching of rubber footwear production” in Vietnam.¹²¹

¹²⁰ MPSV, Letter from Svit Gottwaldov to MPSV dated 2 September 1986.

¹²¹ MPSV, “Program dlouhodobé hospodářské a vědeckotechnické spolupráce mezi československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou na období do roku 2000,” presented to the presidium of the

INCREASE IN NUMBERS

The two labor ministers met again in March 1981 to discuss the details of the newly introduced program. At this meeting, it was decided that the number of people sent that year would include an additional 560 workers, bringing the total number for 1981 to 8,631 people.¹²² During follow-up talks between the two countries' labor ministries representatives in September 1981, the two sides agreed to increase the number of Vietnamese workers in ČSSR further still – to 11,360 people in 1981.¹²³ To understand what a dramatic jump this represented, we must keep in mind that this was twice as many people arriving in a *single* year than the *total* number of people who arrived during the previous 13 years. The two sides also agreed that in the following year – 1982 – another 11,389 (of which 3,523 were to be women) Vietnamese workers would arrive to Czechoslovakia.¹²⁴

Czechoslovak Communist Party's Central Committee at its 2 November 1987 meeting.

¹²² MPSV, "Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 9.-13. března 1981," dated 13 March 1981.

¹²³ MPSV, "Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Thien Thi ve dnech 4. až 15. září 1981."

¹²⁴ MPSV, "Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1982," outcome of talks conducted between 4 and 15 September 1981 in Prague.

As Vietnamese workers became more visible due to their rapidly increasing numbers, xenophobic rumors started to spread among the local population. According to one such rumor, “the workers from Vietnam and Cuba spread in Czechoslovakia unknown flu viruses, and so forth. Currently, the subject of most discussion is the swimming pool in [Prague] Podoli, where, they say, it is dangerous to swim because the Vietnamese fouled it up [*zanesli*] with parasites, which attack innards.”¹²⁵ I discuss the racialization of Vietnamese (and Cuban) workers in Chapter 6.

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

To appreciate the logistical challenge that such an increase posed to the Czechoslovak authorities, let us consider such a very basic issue as the transport of the workers from Vietnam to Czechoslovakia. By this time, the workers were transported by air. As the numbers of transported workers increased, new, “supplementary,” flights were required. However, some of the countries whose airspace had to be traversed refused to grant Czechoslovak authorities permits to fly over their territories – Burma denied the request altogether, Thailand agreed to only a limited number of flyovers, and Saudi Arabia said it would permit the flyovers provided that the planes would not land anywhere on its territory, which was a “condition that was virtually impossible to fulfill due to the technical capabilities of the IL-62 aircraft.”¹²⁶ The solution consisted in part in contracting the East German airline, Interflug, and the Soviet airline, Aeroflot, to

¹²⁵ ABS, “Informace o státobezpečnostní situaci na úseku kontrarozvědne ochrany čs. Ekonomiky za měsíc květen 1982” -- weekly information for the interior minister, 9 June 1982; Souhrnné informace 1982-87, XI. S. SNB, carton 61.

¹²⁶ MPSV, Letter from the Czechoslovak deputy transport minister to the Czechoslovak deputy labor minister, dated 3 November 1981.

help boost the capacity of the newly established Prague-Hanoi flight. A small number of people were also transported by sea (though this form of transport never gained much traction). Even that solution, however, was not without problems as the fuel needed for the Czechoslovak flights exceeded the – recently lowered – fuel quota, and thus, required that the airline used fuel from other international routes for its Hanoi route. These factors meant that the Czechoslovak authorities were very anxious to make sure that as many flights as possible were filled to capacity. Sudden changes in plans that the Vietnamese side had made several times in the past directly undermined this goal, and were of great concern to the Czechoslovak side, which brought the issue up with the Vietnamese partners repeatedly.¹²⁷ Still, “despite the maximum effort by the staff at both the Labor Ministry and Czechoslovak Airlines,” it proved to be impossible to transport all the workers who were supposed to travel in 1981, and “their transport extended through March 1982.”¹²⁸ By 1985, only the Czechoslovak airline, ČSA, was used to transport the workers, but the admonitions by the Czech ministry staff to their Vietnamese counterparts to stick to the agreed upon numbers and schedules in the interest of economic efficiency continued.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ E.g., MPSV, “Zápis z jednání mezi zástupci ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSR a zástupci ministerstva práce VSR o upřesnění profesního složení a plánu přepravy vietnamských pracovníků v roce 1982,” 12 January 1982.

¹²⁸ NA, “Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků ve II. pololetí 1981,” dated 31 March 1982.

¹²⁹ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání mezi zástupcem ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí České socialistické republiky a zástupci Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky o upřesnění počtu přijatých vietnamských učňů a praktikantů v roce 1985 a způsobu přepravy vietnamských učňů, praktikantů a občanů se středoškolským vzděláním z VSR do ČSSR v roce 1986.”

(LACK OF) SKILLS PROBLEM

Although documents talked about the temporary employment of *qualified* Vietnamese workers (and the word “qualified” appeared in the titles and headings of all documents), during a March 1981 meeting, the Vietnamese side requested for 40% to 50% people it would send to Czechoslovakia to be allowed to be unskilled.¹³⁰ Accordingly, the implementation protocol for the year 1982 explicitly stated that of the total number of 11,389 people only 4,098 would be qualified, while the remaining 7,291 – a full 64% – would be without qualifications.¹³¹ Another important outcome of the March 1981 meeting was the decision of the Vietnamese government that the Vietnamese workers would contribute 15% of their basic wages (*základní plat*) toward “the costs of their recruitment and preparation for trip to Czechoslovakia and into the fund of the defense and construction of the homeland.” This payment came to be known as “transfer” and was highly unpopular among Vietnamese workers, as it lowered their wages, and thus became one of the important motors behind a number of strikes and other protests (see Chapter 5 for analysis and details).

¹³⁰ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 9.-13. března 1981,” dated 13 March 1981.

¹³¹ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1982,” outcome of talks conducted between 4 and 15 September 1981 in Prague.

MOVEMENT TOWARD DECENTRALIZATION

In July 1986, a Czechoslovak delegation traveled to Hanoi where it discussed the guest worker form of the program with the representatives of the Vietnamese Labor Ministry.¹³² The records from the talks make it clear that a new form of cooperation was ushered in, one occurring through direct contacts. The Vietnamese side noted that the Vietnamese State Committee for Technology, which belonged under the purview of the Vietnamese Defense Ministry, had already held talks with the Czechoslovak Ministry of General Engineering, and the Vietnamese Ministry of Metallurgy and Engineering did the same with the Czechoslovak Ministry of Metallurgy and Heavy Industry. Amazingly, it seems that the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry delegation knew nothing about these developments, as the record says that the “Czechoslovak side will verify these facts.” Of importance is the fact these inter-ministerial talks signified a new direction in the management of the program, one toward decentralization. A document for the perusal of the federal deputy labor minister drafted by Czech Labor Ministry clerks suggested that the announcement of the direct ministry-to-ministry cooperation was indeed news to the Labor Ministry staff. In this memo,¹³³ the clerks said that they got in touch with the ministries in question – Federal Ministry of Metallurgy and Heavy Industry (FMHTS), Federal Ministry of General Engineering (FMVS), and the Federal Transport Ministry (FMD) – and enquired about the state of the negotiations. They learned that the cooperation

¹³² MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegace federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce VSR,” dated 1 July 1986.

¹³³ MPSV, “Informace pro s. nám. Ing. Kyselého, Czechoslovakia., Věc: Spolupráce československých a vietnamských resortů v oblasti zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v ČSSR,” 1 August 1986.

until that point involved only “short-term stays concerning very few people,” and no further specific agreements had been signed yet. However, the representatives of the FMHTS were getting ready to make a trip to Hanoi. The Labor Ministry administrators concluded from this that this form of cooperation could only become more widely implemented in the following year, 1987. Indeed, in early 1987, the federal deputy labor minister informed¹³⁴ its republic-level counterpart that the Ministries of General Engineering of the two countries had held direct negotiations, as a result of which, an additional 547 Vietnamese citizens would be arriving to Czechoslovakia to “increase their qualifications in the companies under the purview of this ministry” in that year. Later that year, in October 1987, the Czechoslovak government issued a resolution in which it approved the “Plan of Long-Term Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation With Vietnam Until 2000.”¹³⁵ The Program anticipated the continuation of the vocational and on-the-job training through temporary employment of Vietnamese citizens in Czechoslovakia. When discussing the forms and methods of cooperation, the report posited that “both sides shall make an effort to develop and perfect the forms of mutual cooperation, including the creation of. . . joint companies working on the *khozrashchot* [self financing] principles while respecting the principle of advantageousness for both sides through the introduction of direct cooperative scientific-technical and production links.”

¹³⁴ MPSV, Letter from federal deputy labor minister, Milan Kyselý, to Czech deputy labor minister, Václav Karas, dated 5 February 1987.

¹³⁵ NA, “Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 29 října 1987 č. 296 o programu dlouhodobé hospodářské a vědeckotechnické spolupráce s VSR do roku 2000.”

The negotiations¹³⁶ between the Czechoslovak Federal Ministry of General Engineering and the representatives of the Hanoi Industrial Administration and the Vietnamese Central Technical Administration, in January 1987, led to an agreement on the sending of six groups of 35 to 50 workers, each with its own interpreter and leader, and with the required professional qualifications of all workers specified (e.g., 9 lathe operators, 7 milling machine operators, etc.). Although the ministries were now bypassing the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry, they otherwise replicated the institutional structure of the program, agreeing, for instance, that once the number of workers reached 240, a person would be named organizer, and that the two parties would meet once a year, alternating the venue between Prague and Hanoi, to discuss the implementation of the program, just as the two countries' Labor Ministries did.

During the July 1986 meeting mentioned above, the two delegations also agreed on the extension of contracts for 3,600 to 4,000 Vietnamese workers already present in Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak side agreed to pay a lump sum of Kčs1,700 per each worker whose contract would be extended.¹³⁷ However, from now on, support was to be given to cooperation between individual ministries and companies of the two countries. The Vietnamese side said that at the moment it was primarily interested in sending its qualified workers to work on

¹³⁶ MPSV, "Zápis z jednání mezi představiteli HTS VSR a FMVS ČSSR," dated 19 January 1987.

¹³⁷ MPSV, "Protokol o predĺžení pracovného záväzku o dva roky u vybraných vietnamských pracovníkov, ktorým končí pracovný záväzok v československých výrobných organizáciách v roku 1986," dated 1 July 1986.

contracts negotiated directly with the Federal Ministries of Metallurgy and Heavy Industry, General Engineering, Transport and the Health Ministry. It again reiterated the demand that all groups be at least 50-people strong. The Czechoslovak side then said that it could receive roughly 1,500 Vietnamese workers every year until 1990, but that the number could increase through direct cooperation agreements on the level of ministries, up to the air transport capacity. This – 1,500 – was also the number that appeared in the *Implementation Protocol* signed at the meeting.¹³⁸

1987 AMENDMENTS TO GUEST-WORKER TREATY

In May 1987, both sides agreed on amending the 1980 guest-worker treaty in important ways.¹³⁹ Among other things, they agreed on increasing the length of contracts from 4 to 5 years, as well as on extending the right to vacation in Vietnam to all, not just married, workers after two years of work in Czechoslovakia. However, Czechoslovak officials refused to increase the flat annual fee paid to Vietnam. The delegations agreed that Vietnam would send “at least 5,000 qualified workers” to Czechoslovakia in 1988, and – in a significant departure from previous practice, but in keeping with the

¹³⁸ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1987,” signed on 1 July 1986.

¹³⁹ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” dated 12 May 1987.

decentralizing tendency – of those, at least 3,300 persons would arrive based on direct cooperation between specialized ministries and even companies. In relation to this, the Vietnamese side wanted the record to reflect that it was able to send an even higher number of its workers to Czechoslovakia.

Zaučenci. The Vietnamese side proposed to include the category of “trainees” (*zaučenci*) within the scope of the treaty.¹⁴⁰ The category referred to Vietnamese citizens with complete secondary education who would arrive for work in Czechoslovak companies (see also Chapter 3). The Vietnamese delegation wanted them to stay for four years and receive qualifications certificates upon the completion of their stays. It also asked that they receive 6 months of language training. The Czechoslovak side “in principle” agreed with this, but argued that this necessitated amendments to the existing 1979 Treaty, for which the approval of the Czechoslovak Government was necessary. As for the request for 6-month-long language training in reception centers, the Czechoslovak side conceded that this would be beneficial in view of insufficient language preparation so far, but concluded that the capacities of the reception centers did not allow for this. In exchange, it proposed extending language training in companies to 10 hours per week, of which 2 would occur during working hours. The preparatory document also noted that should the proposal be, in the end, implemented, then the 6-month language training should not be part of the 4-

¹⁴⁰ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu VSR a federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů VSR v československých organizacích,” record of meeting that took place between 7 and 21 October 1985 in Prague.

year overall stay (i.e., to keep them actually working for 4 full years). Later on, the Vietnamese side asked that the extent of general education for *zaučenci* be lowered and the extent of language and specialized subjects be increased.¹⁴¹ Through these modifications, the rules for *zaučenci* would become almost identical to the rules for contract workers. It is possible to interpret the efforts of the Vietnamese side as trying to come up with some institutional innovation that, within the current structure, would build upon the beneficial features of the apprenticeship program but be, in fact a guest workers program. During the meeting on 23 through 29 September 1986, the Czechoslovak side expressed “provisional agreement” with the introduction of the *zaučenci*-form of the program.¹⁴² Indeed, in late May 1987, the Federal Labor Ministry issued an *Amendment*¹⁴³ to the *Rules and Regulations (Pokyny)* for the stays of Vietnamese workers in which it addressed the newly introduced category of *zaučenci*. The amendment said that *zaučenci* were to be covered by the conditions of the November 1980 treaty, that is, the treaty regulating pure guest workers. So, although their numbers were negotiated and statistically tracked as part of the educational/vocational school track, and on the Vietnamese side the responsible

¹⁴¹ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” dated 12 May 1987.

¹⁴² MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu VSR a Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích,” record of meeting that took place 23-29 September 1986 in Prague.

¹⁴³ MPSV, “Dodatek k Pokynům pro věcné, organizační a finanční zabezpečení dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích z roku 1981, vydaných Federálním ministerstvem financí pod čj. F 214/519/81-6800-818.”

organ was the Education Ministry, *in practice*, there was little difference between *zaučenci* and the guest workers.

In December 1987, the delegation of the Czechoslovak Federal Labor Ministry, led by the deputy labor ministry, met with the delegation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, War Invalides and Social Affairs, also led by the deputy minister. The opening of the record of the meeting suggests that both sides spoke more positively and enthusiastically in assessing the program than has been the custom. The record states, among other things, that “the positive aspects of the cooperation significantly prevail over some negative phenomena.”¹⁴⁴ It continued: “This cooperation is of benefit to both sides because it contributes to the expansion and deepening of overall economic cooperation between the ČSSR and the SRV, as well as to an increase in the knowledge about the other and strengthening of friendship between the peoples of our allied countries.” The numbers of workers on which the two sides agreed confirms this enthusiasm – in contrast to the previous several lean years, they anticipated the arrival of full 7,100 Vietnamese citizens to Czechoslovakia in the course of 1988, and moreover, explicitly noted that further upward revisions of this figure would be possible pending later agreements. In addition, the *Implementation Protocol*¹⁴⁵ signed at the meeting specified that the total of 2,945

¹⁴⁴ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” record from the meeting that took place between 7 and 14 December 1987 in Prague.

¹⁴⁵ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky

persons would arrive based on direct cooperation between, respectively: the Czechoslovak Federal Ministry of Metallurgy and Heavy Engineering and the Vietnamese Ministry of Engineering and Metallurgy; the Czechoslovak Federal Ministry of General Engineering and the Vietnamese Ministry of Transport and the Central Technical Authority of the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defense, and finally, between the Czechoslovak company ČKD Praha and the Vietnamese Railway Authority. The *Protocol* anticipated possible further direct exchanges between the two countries' ministries and industrial enterprises.

In early 1988, the Federal Labor Ministry prepared an extensive, almost 18 pages long, report¹⁴⁶ on the current state of the temporary employment and training of foreign workers in Czechoslovakia to be discussed at a meeting of the government. The report said that, from the economic point of view, "the cooperation pursues the goal of advantageousness for both sides and efficiency for the Czechoslovak economy (with the exception of the cooperation that takes place on the principle of international help)." Hence, the goal of transition from pure aid to mutual advantageousness, which was for the first time formulated in the mid-1970s, has been apparently finally accomplished. The report suggested that, in general, foreign workers' productivity was lower than the productivity of Czechoslovak workers, as it stated that "in some fields, it is becoming apparent that the productivity of [foreign] workers in the third and fourth years of their

spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1988," signed 14 December 1987 in Prague.

¹⁴⁶ MPSV, "Zpráva o současném stavu odborné přípravy a dočasného zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v československých organizacích a o výhledu této spolupráce do roku 1990."

employment reaches the productivity of Czechoslovak workers.” However, the report also stated that calculations showed that the work of Vietnamese workers produced, on average, the surplus of Kčs13,803 per year (difference between the volume of GDP produced by the worker and the costs of the reproduction of his or her labor force). It also specified that the Labor Ministry, in cooperation with the Finance Ministry, had decided that to be mutually advantageous, the amount by which product produced by foreign workers exceeds the costs of their training and employment must be at least 5%. In the case of the Vietnamese, who composed the most numerous group, that number was far greater – 19.3%. It is not surprising then that Czechoslovak companies preferred the Vietnamese over other foreign workers.

One of the crucial points made by the report was that it was “necessary” for the Czechoslovak companies to cover all costs of the employment of foreign workers in the future. The goal was “to create an effective economic pressure on the rational management of foreign labor force.” It was expected that, starting in 1989, all companies would cover the costs of recruitment, travel to Czechoslovakia and for vacation, as well as the costs of the workers’ language training. The report expected the cost to the companies to increase by Kčs9,000 to 10,000 per worker per year. However, the costs of welfare and healthcare would continue to be paid from the Czechoslovak state budget since “these workers participate in the creation of the state budget through the taxes they pay.” This, it was hoped, would lead to the situation when “only the companies that create sufficient resources will be able to employ foreign workers.” Thus, *technical* decentralization, which consisted in Vietnamese and Czechoslovak

industrial branch ministries and even individual companies contracting for workers directly with each other, was followed by an *economic* decentralization in the organization of the program, whereby a majority of the costs connected with the recruitment and employment of Vietnamese workers was (to be) shifted to the companies.

The report then went on to discuss the changes to the treaties that the different states proposed. It noted that Vietnam presented its demands already in 1983 but that the Czechoslovak side “kept postponing the discussion of these demands until 1987, referring to the fact that it was necessary to achieve mutual economic advantageousness of the cooperation first.” The report also noted that although the various socialist countries employing Vietnamese workers had agreed on creating the same conditions for them, unless they collectively decided otherwise, the USSR, GDR and Bulgaria actually had met Vietnamese requests on their own, which the Czechoslovak officials interpreted as a gesture that would ensure Vietnamese willingness to send more workers (it noted that the USSR wanted to import an additional 100,000 Vietnamese workers, and the GDR up to 70,000). From a list contained in the report it follows that all of these countries agreed to provide Vietnamese workers with separation benefits, which Czechoslovakia kept refusing to do. They all also paid a fee for welfare benefits to the Vietnamese government, like Czechoslovakia, and the USSR, like Czechoslovakia, also paid Vietnam a recruitment fee. The report then summarized the demands the Vietnamese side had directed at the Czechoslovak side. Then, “with regard to the possibilities of future cooperation with the SRV in the area of temporary employment,” the report recommended to

accommodate the requests in the following way: (1) allow all workers, regardless of marital status, to vacation in Vietnam after 2 years of work, with the return trip paid by the Czechoslovak side; (2) to increase the fees paid to Vietnam to Kčs6,000/year per worker. The report also mentioned a preliminary agreement achieved by the two sides in May 1987 in Hanoi on extending the contracts from 4 years to 5 years, which, it noted “would proportionately lower the annual costs of each worker’s employment.” Nonetheless, it then stated that “it is not possible to accommodate the Vietnamese side’s request to award its workers a separation allowance in the amount of Kčs300 per month because Czechoslovak regulations do not make it possible to grant this benefit to foreign citizens.” Even though, as the report writer admitted, the Kčs6,000 that the Czechoslovak state would pay from then on to the Vietnamese state would be still lower than what the other socialist countries were paying to Vietnam, and, as a result, it was expected that the Vietnamese side would continue to push for the separation allowance. In closing, the report cautioned that “unless the issue of the changing of the conditions of Vietnamese workers’ employment was settled soon, the sending of these workers to Czechoslovak organizations could be suspended later this year [1988].” This indicates that the negotiating positions of the two states were relatively even. Also, to be noted is the fact that that the European state-socialist states were undercutting each other’s negotiating positions.

Finally, the report noted that the Vietnamese state “puts practically no limits on the numbers of its citizens who could work in Czechoslovakia,” and the two sides agreed that 15,000 of Vietnamese workers would arrive in 1988, with the expectation that “in future years new Vietnamese workers would replace the

departing Cuban and Polish workers.” However, the report pointed out that the increased numbers of Vietnamese workers would mean “higher demand on the internal market (particularly in regard to goods in short supply, such as bikes and Czechoslovakia-made mopeds,” and, at the same time, they would “affect the overall balance of payments.” Specifically, the concern was about the payments made to the Vietnamese state, which would reach between the years 1986 and 1990 about Kčs605.9 million, that the Vietnamese government wanted to use to buy consumer goods in Czechoslovakia, which, however, was deemed “not acceptable.”

The lines between the different categories of workers continued to be blurred further, so that conditions of stays of most of the Vietnamese citizens in Czechoslovakia converged with those regulating the pure guest workers. At the end of 1988, the Czechoslovak side proposed that the length of the *praktikanti*'s stays be extended from the current 3 years to 5 years “and thus harmonized with the lengths of stay of Vietnamese workers arriving under the aegis of the Vietnamese Labor Ministry.”¹⁴⁷ In a somewhat similar way, the Vietnamese side proposed that those *zaučenci* and *praktikanti* who “for whatever reason are not able to pursue the specialized training curriculum originally assigned to them be considered as though they were sent Czechoslovakia under the aegis of the treaty on temporary employment of qualified Vietnamese workers...from 27 November 1980...provided that both they and the companies employing them

¹⁴⁷ MPSV, “Informace pro jednání s delegací ministerstva vysokého a středního odborného školství VSR dne 5.12.1988.”

agree.”¹⁴⁸ The Czechoslovak side said that this was not possible since the contracting party in the case of this treaty was a different Vietnamese body, namely the Vietnamese Labor Ministry, and not the Education Ministry. Nonetheless, a few months later, when the delegations of the two states discussed, and eventually signed, modifications to the existing temporary employment treaty, *vyučenci*, although formally sent by the Vietnamese Education Ministry, became fully subject to the conditions anchored in the workers’ treaty.¹⁴⁹

On 30th December 1988, the Czechoslovak Federal Labor Ministry, the Finance Ministry and the State Planning Commission jointly issued regulations that came into effect on 1 January 1989 and that finalized the shift of financial responsibility for most of the expenses connected with foreign workers’ employment onto companies.¹⁵⁰ Henceforth, the companies were responsible for the costs of foreign workers’ language training and transport, both to and from the country at the beginning and end of the contract, as well as for vacation (if treaties

¹⁴⁸ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva vysokého a středního odborného školství VSR o spolupráci při provádění mezivládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích,” record from a meeting that took place between 5 and 15 December 1988 in Prague.

¹⁴⁹ MPSV, “Protokol o změně Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980,” signed in Hanoi on 6 April 1989.

¹⁵⁰ MPSV, “Pokyny ke způsobu provádění úhrad nákladů spojených se zaměstnáváním zahraničních pracovníků v československých organizacích,” dated 30 December 1988, signed by ing. Štefan Šťastný, deputy labor minister, ing. Július Jombík, first deputy finance minister, ing. Václav Větelář, first deputy chair of the Czechoslovak Planning Commission.

stipulated that the Czechoslovak side bore the costs), as well as for the recruitment fees paid to the sending state. The central government would continue to be responsible only for the fees that covered workers' social and welfare benefits at home. In an addendum, the regulations provided the companies with information on average annual costs per foreign worker currently borne by the Czechoslovak state, which, as we shall see in Chapter 5 varied widely.

In August 1989, there were 43,400 foreign workers employed by Czechoslovak enterprises, of which the Vietnamese formed the largest group – 29,600 people.¹⁵¹ There were also 7,300 Cubans, 5,100 Poles, 800 Mongolians, 400 Hungarians (in Slovak borderlands), and 200 Angolans. Concurrently, there were 4,100 foreign apprentices in Czechoslovak vocational schools, of whom 3,000 were Vietnamese, 420 Mongolians, 560 Koreans, and 120 Angolans. The highest number – 44,500 – of foreign workers was employed in the Czechoslovak economy in 1983. By the end of 1987, their number went down to 36,800, but in 1988 their number went back up to 43,300 “because the government decided on a one-time increase in the number of Vietnamese workers by 5,000 persons to be employed in industrial companies producing consumer goods in order to improve the situation in supplying the citizens with consumer goods.” Thus, in retrospect, the Vietnamese workers were part of the Czechoslovak state's last-ditch effort to improve the situation on the consumer goods market, which, as

¹⁵¹ MPSV, “Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989,” dated 25 August 1989.

several scholars have pointed out, played an important role in the maintenance of regime legitimacy in Hungary and the GDR in the late 1980s.

In April 1989, a protocol was signed that formally introduced many of the changes that the Vietnamese side had been pushing for for years.¹⁵² Namely, all Vietnamese workers became eligible for a vacation in Vietnam, regardless of their family or marital status, with the return trip paid by the companies for which they worked. The workers also became eligible for the benefit on the occasion of the birth of a child, if the said child was born on the Czechoslovak territory. The fees paid to the Vietnamese state were increased to Kčs6,000/year/worker. Additionally – in yet another step toward the merging of the categories – the transfer duty was imposed also on apprentice-workers, and the Czechoslovak state started paying Vietnam the Kčs6,000 fee for them as well. The Czechoslovak demand that the contracts be extended (from the original 4) to 5 years was also approved. An accompanying information memo¹⁵³ clarified that the changes applied not only to the temporary workers, but also to *zaučenci*. Also, that the extension of contracts to 5 years applied not only to workers arriving in 1989, but, retroactively, also to those who had arrived in 1987 and 1988. The memo further speculated that since the Vietnamese side wanted to extend the period of validity of the treaty only until 31 December 1990, “it is

¹⁵² MPSV, “Protokol o změně Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980,” signed in Hanoi on 6 April 1989.

¹⁵³ MPSV, “Informace k Protokolu o změně Dohody mezi vládou ČSSR a vládou VSR o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v čs. organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980.”

necessary to expect that, from 1991 on, the employment of Vietnamese workers would happen under new (likely financially more demanding) conditions.” (This eventually did not happen as the state-socialist regime, and with it the program, collapsed following the events of November 1989.) According to the memo, during the talks, the Vietnamese delegation expressed a wish that Czechoslovak companies organize workshops in which Vietnamese workers would be informed of their basic rights and responsibilities based on Czechoslovak legal regulations in order to preempt their violation. It also said that it saw a need for Czechoslovak companies to pay greater attention to workers’ leisure time and to organize “appropriate activities” for them. The Czechoslovak delegation heartily agreed with this since it opined that “the negative phenomena in Vietnamese workers’ work as well as behavior in public manifest themselves particularly in those companies that do not pay sufficient attention to the political-educational work and to the use of leisure time.” And added that the urgency of the issue also followed from the fact that “in many cases these are young people who are for the first time in their lives separated from their families for extended periods of time,” and hence they saw it as “necessary to create an environment for them in the hostels in which they feel content so that they would not feel the need to spend free time in questionable ways.” Finally, the memo noted that both sides emphasized the importance of the approval by the two countries’ Labor Ministries of deals concocted in direct exchange negotiations.

However, on the eve of the regime's collapse, the general expectation was that the numbers of foreign workers would be gradually reduced.¹⁵⁴ One reason for this expectation was demographic, i.e., that in the early 1990s the baby-boom generation of the early 1970s would enter the labor force. But another reason was economic – Czechoslovak officials anticipated that companies would need fewer workers, and in fact would be letting workers go, as they transitioned to self-financing. The officials went as far as verbalizing the concern that the presence of foreign workers could lead to an “escalation of social conflict.” Additionally, they argued that “increasing the numbers of foreign workers and an easy access to them works as a disincentive to carrying out an active and meaningful policy of technological modernization. Interestingly, the officials also believed that “the employment of more qualified foreign workers leads, on the part of the companies, to their decreasing interest in providing internationalist assistance to allied countries through technical education of worker youth in vocational schools although it is precisely this form of cooperation that should gain priority in the upcoming years.” The reason for this concern was the fact that it was anticipated – clearly because it was *already* happening – that companies would “employ foreign workers in ever greater extent in unskilled, simple and auxiliary positions in which Czechoslovak citizens are not interested, which will, by default, lead to breaching the basic meaning of this cooperation, which rests in technical training of foreign workers and increasing their qualification.” Thus, the relationship between aid and

¹⁵⁴ MPSV, “Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989,” dated 25 August 1989.

mutually advantageous cooperation thus reached a full circle. At first, aid was the only category of relations between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam. Then, the idea of mutually advantageous cooperation emerged from the aid relationship, while the focus still remained on aid. In the next stage, cooperation overshadowed, and almost devoured aid. And now, finally, there was an effort to constitute each as distinct categories.

CHAPTER 3: INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM

This chapter has two main goals. In part, it is a description of the institutional actors and structure of the program. But this description is used to analyze and conceptualize theoretically the effects that this particular institutional organization and structuring had on the ability of the program's administrators to make workers comply, and, by the same token, on the workers' ability *not* to comply, to express dissatisfaction and to obtain redress. While this chapter presents a set of arguments that can stand on their own, it also constitutes indispensable background to all the remaining chapters.

I. INSTITUTIONAL ANCHORING

During the first phase, the organ that was originally supposed to be responsible for the implementation and administration of the program was the State Commission for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation (*Státní komise pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci*, SKHVTs). The commission approved the original Vietnamese request,¹ as well as put together a proposal containing the basic rules of the program's logistical and organizational implementation (e.g., the financing of the program, the amount of stipend the trainees would receive, the creation of reception centers, and so forth; for details, see chapter 2). However, due to organizational changes (in the country's administration), the commission was abolished in 1967 by the act 1/1967 of the

¹ NA, "Zpráva o žádosti vlády Vietnamské demokratické republiky na zaškolení 2,100 vietnamských příslušníků v Československé socialistické republice," dated 29 August 1966.

legal code.² Subsequently, the administration of the program transitioned to the Czechoslovak State Planning Commission (*Státní plánovací komise*, SPK³). This decision made sense as the SPK had already been coordinating the employment of Bulgarian and Polish workers in Czechoslovakia.⁴ After the transition, the SPK drafted a proposal of the program's overall material provisioning (*zabezpečení*).

On 16 February 1967, the SPK representatives met with the representatives of ministries involved in the program's administration. During the discussion, the SPK deputy chairman noted that "based on the experience with foreign workers, it is possible that a number of problems may arise in the course of the program, which will have to be resolved without delay." This led him to ask "all those present [at the meeting] to propose a name of a staffer who would become responsible for the smooth fulfillment of the tasks at the respective ministries."⁵ During the discussion, it was also proposed that, within the SPK, a special department be created that would be henceforth responsible for the smooth

² The text of the legal act is available at <http://www.zakonyprolidi.cz/cs/1967-1>; last accessed on 16 December 2013.

³ The SPK was headed by the deputy prime minister, and its members – nominated and recalled by the president of the republic – were economic ministers and other important figures of the economic life. The SPK had a large apparatus of clerks at its disposal in order to produce, as its name suggests, economic plans for the country.

⁴ NA, "Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

⁵ NA, "Záznam z porady konané dne 16. února 1967 ve Státní plánovací komisi a připravovaném návrhu usnesení vlády o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," dated 17 February 1967.

running of the program.⁶ This, indeed, happened and the newly created department became called the Secretariat for the management and coordination of the education and training of the citizens of the DRV (*Sekretariát pro řízení a koordinaci výuky a praxe občanů DRV*).⁷ At first, the Secretariat was to employ only three people,⁸ but later the number was increased to four clerks.⁹ The SPK's partner on the Vietnamese side was the State Planning Committee of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic.¹⁰

The organizational structure of the 1967 wave was elaborated in a report that accompanied the proposal of the government's resolution (*návrh usnesení vlády*) on the program's material provisioning.¹¹ One of the features that the document introduced – and that remained a staple throughout the program's entire duration, until 1989 – was the creation of several reception centers (*střediska*, later often called *jazyková střediska*, or language centers) to which the trainees would be distributed upon their arrival to Czechoslovakia. In these centers, two important things took place: (1) the freshly arrived trainees, and later workers,

⁶ NA, "Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

⁷ NA, "Usnesení Vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. března 1967, č. 74 o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

⁸ NA, "Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," sent to the Government Presidium on 16 January 1967.

⁹ NA, "Informace k návrhu usnesení vlády. Věc: Zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," dated 14 March 1967, drafted by the Department for national economy (*národohospodářský odbor*) of the government presidium (*předsednictvo vlády*).

¹⁰ NA, "Ujednání o o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

¹¹ NA, "Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

underwent medical checkups, and (2) they received intense initial, three-month language training there. During the second wave, the apprentices-in-the-making continued with language training for three more months in the vocational schools or companies that were to educate and employ them. This system, which was limited to the middle wave and did not exist either at the very beginning or in the 1980s with guest workers, provided the best language preparation for the Vietnamese trainees and workers by far.

After three months spent in the reception centers, the Vietnamese trainees were distributed to enterprises, where they were to “increase – or acquire, as the case may be – their qualifications.”¹² Here it is important to note another feature that remained characteristic of the program throughout its duration: the trainees, and later workers, practically never joined Czechoslovak companies (or, during the second phase, vocational schools) as individuals but always in groups. This was something that the Czechoslovak and the Vietnamese sides both found desirable. The Czechoslovak administrators primarily for organizational and financial reasons since the accommodation of Vietnamese trainees/workers in Czechoslovak companies and schools required making adjustments and the securing of special resources (such as interpreters, language teachers, and so forth), which was, understandably, seen as wasteful if it were to be done for only a few individuals (although that happened at times as well). The Czechoslovak documents do not cite specific reasons why the Vietnamese side found the larger

¹² NA, “Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR” sent to the Government Presidium on 16 January 1967.

groups desirable but it seems that, in part, this was connected with the Vietnamese officials' concern about their ability to maintain control over the trainees/workers, and, in part, it was based on the reasoning that the adjustment to the drastically different cultural environment was easier in a group, particularly since many of those arriving, especially in the first two waves, were quite young and away from home and their families, not to mention the country, for the first time.

II. PANOPLY OF CATEGORIES

By the early 1980s, there were five different categories under which Vietnamese citizens were arriving to Czechoslovakia. (1) As aspiring apprentices, who, upon graduation, worked for the companies that sponsored the vocational schools in which they earned their diplomas. I call this group apprentice workers (*učni, vyučenci*). (2) Then there were *stážisté*; the English word closest in meaning is "interns." Interns were workers with relatively high levels of specialized or technical training, including college education, acquired prior to their arrival to Czechoslovakia. (3) Similar to "interns" were what I call in English "trainees," *praktikanti*, in that they too, as a rule, had already been part of the industrial production process in Vietnam before arriving to Czechoslovakia. (4) To make things even more complicated, there were also *zaučenci*. These trainees were supposed to acquire skills directly on the job and the training they received was supposed to be an alternative to the training provided by vocational schools. The idea was that this form would be used some simpler types of skills that required *some* level of training but not as much as the skills taught in vocational schools. Hence, we can probably use the label of "quasi-apprentice workers" to

refer to them. (5) Finally, starting in 1981, there started arriving guest (or contract) workers, referred to as *pracující* (literally, “working persons”). To each of these statuses or categories, somewhat different conditions of stay were attached, which contributed to guest workers’ dissatisfaction, as I will discuss in Chapter 5.

III. VIETNAMESE ORGANIZERS, GROUP LEADERS AND INTERPRETERS

Since the trainees and workers arrived in groups, the institutional post of so-called “organizers,” or “organizer-interpreters,” who were to head the groups and assist the trainees, was created. At first, the organizers were recruited primarily from among Vietnamese graduates of Czechoslovak universities. There were to be 10 such organizers for the 2,100 people who arrived during the first wave.¹³ The organizers were tasked with “overseeing the education and training (*výchova*¹⁴) of the Vietnamese citizens, their attitudes and work morale, teaching them (*vychovávat je*) solidarity and [ability to] resolve possible disputes in a friendly manner, informing them of the developments in the Vietnamese Democratic Republic, and help them deal with troubles and difficulties.”¹⁵ The contractual document also explicitly ordered Czechoslovak industrial enterprises “to create the necessary conditions enabling for the organizers to fulfill their

¹³ NA, “Ujednání o o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR.”

¹⁴ Czech word *výchova* does not have a precise equivalent in English. It refers both to training in an educational sense – it is a part of expressions such as physical education (*tělesná výchova*), the arts (*výtvarná výchova*) or music (*hudební výchova*) as they are taught in (elementary) school, but it is also used in the meaning of “raising” or “bringing up,” usually a child, by a parent or teacher. In the latter case, the word’s overtones are primarily moral. A related word is *převýchova*, or re-education, which conjures up the ideas of juvenile detention centers, dog (re)training, or the political camps of the Stalinist sort.

¹⁵ NA, “Ujednání o o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR.”

mission.”¹⁶ Further, Czechoslovak enterprises were responsible for paying the organizers’ monthly salaries, which amounted to Kčs1,400 during the 1967 wave, and reimburse them for the expenses they incurred in the course of their travels (each organizer was responsible for workers in several different companies located in the same region). During personal talks between the two parties about the specific details of the program’s implementation, the Czechoslovak delegation “clarified” the role of the organizers so as to “emphasize that the organizers are not authorized to meddle with the way the enterprises manage the training.” Reportedly, the Vietnamese side’s representatives fully agreed with this notion, as they reacted by saying that the “lack of clarity about the role of the organizers has already engendered difficulties and complaints in other friendly countries already employing Vietnamese trainees.”¹⁷

During the second wave (which got underway in 1974), the definition of organizers’ duties changed somewhat. While the organizers were still supposed to oversee the education and training of Vietnamese citizens, keep an eye on their attitudes and work morale, and keep them abreast of the developments in the Vietnamese Democratic Republic, gone was the emphasis on the cultivation of solidarity, the resolution of disputes in a friendly manner, and the assistance in unspecified troubles and difficulties. These were replaced with the duty to “help secure good relations with the management of Czechoslovak organizations, Czechoslovak social organizations and between the collectives of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ “Zpráva předsedy Státní plánovací komise o opatřeních prováděných k zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů VDR v Československu pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” dated 19 April 1967.

the working people (*pracujících*) and the groups of Vietnamese citizens,” and to “cooperate with the relevant Czechoslovak authorities in seeking the resolution of problems that occur.”¹⁸ The organizers were still to be paid by the companies, and the amount of their salaries remained the same, but there was a shift toward greater emphasis on the organizers’ ability to act as go-betweens between Czechoslovak management and workers on the one hand and Vietnamese apprentice workers on the other. If during the 1967 wave the focal point and the perspective on which the wording of the regulations was based was the assistance needed *by the Vietnamese trainees/workers*, in the 1974 wave, the perspective shifted to the needs of the *Czechoslovak* management and workers.

In the third and final wave, which consisted of guest workers and was ushered in by the treaty signed in November 1980, the role of the organizers was described in a manner identical to the previous period, except for one important addition. The organizers were henceforth also expected to “take part in the management of the work process” (*podílet se na řízení pracovního procesu*).¹⁹ The importance of this addition (which I will explain below) was compounded, a year later, by another important change affecting the position and role of organizers and group leaders: namely the change in their remuneration system. The original impetus for this

¹⁸ MPSV, “Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstvem práce VDR o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích,” signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974 by Czechoslovak Labor Minister Štancel and Vietnamese Labor Minister Khieu.

¹⁹ NA, “Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” signed in Prague on 27 November 1980.

change was the Vietnamese side's request for increasing the salaries of organizers, group leaders and interpreters. However, instead of instituting a simple salary increase – and in an effort to appease managers in Czechoslovak enterprises, who were reluctant to pay the higher salaries – the adopted measure not only changed the *amount* of money that the Vietnamese auxiliary workers received, but, exceedingly importantly, also in the *system* used to calculate their salaries. Thus, the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry issued a regulation (*výnos*) that went into effect on 1 November 1981²⁰ and that ended the practice of group leaders, interpreters and organizers receiving firmly set salaries. Instead, from this point on, the companies were to pay them salaries located on a rather wide range: between Kčs1,700 and Kčs2,200 for interpreters, between Kčs1,900 and Kčs2,450 for group leaders leading groups with more than 100 people, and between Kčs2,450 and Kčs2,700 to organizers.²¹ In deciding on the exact sum, the companies were to consider “the number of entrusted workers, the person's individual capabilities and qualities, the expected amount of overtime work, achieved work results, the extent to which qualification requirements were met, or other circumstances, as the case may be.” In other words, the salaries were supposed to work also as performance bonuses. As a result of this change, from this point on, the salaries of group leaders, interpreters and organizers depended

²⁰ MPSV, “Výnos federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ze dne 10. října 1981.”

²¹ The salaries were revised upward again in 1989, when they reached Kčs2,150–Kčs2,800, Kčs2,350–Kčs3,050, and Kčs2,600–Kčs3,400 for interpreters, group leaders, and organizers respectively. (MPSV, “Výnos federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ze dne 31.7.1989 č.j. 221-8747-5123.06 05 89, kterým se mění a doplňuje výnos ze dne 16. října 1981 č.j. 316-1099/81-7300 o odměňování a poskytování cestovních náhrad vietnamským občanům dočasně zaměstnaným v Československé socialistické republice” signed by Ing. Miloslav Boďa, minister of labor and social affairs of the ČSSR.)

to a significant extent on the discretion of company managements. Thus, while, even before this change, these – let's call them auxiliary workers – had to be concerned about fulfilling their job assignments according to the company's liking, now that incentive became much stronger. Structurally, this change also supported the goal articulated by the treaty that the auxiliary workers "take part in the management of the working process." In other words, while the organizers and group leaders had to report, and account for their groups, to the Vietnamese Embassy, the Czechoslovak companies also wanted to use them as part of the efforts to maintain *their* control over the Vietnamese workers they employed.

This struggle over auxiliary workers' allegiance is also apparent from the preference that the Czechoslovak companies had for employing in these positions those Vietnamese who had been previously educated by Czechoslovak vocational schools, rather than those who arrived fresh from Vietnam, even if the latter happened to hold university degrees. As archival evidence shows, the fact that the former had been groomed by Czechoslovak companies (even if not necessarily those for which they now worked in the leadership/organization position) was seen as desirable. In early 1984, a Czech Labor Ministry report stated:²²

Those organizers, group leaders and interpreters who were recruited from the ranks of Czechoslovak vocational school graduates have been performing their work in companies best and most conscientiously. Their knowledge of the Czech language and of the conditions in companies is very good, as is their ability to work with people and manage groups.

²² NA, "Odborné školení vietnamských pracovníků v MZVŽ [Ministerstvo zemědělství a výživy] (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistice)."

However, the [Vietnamese Embassy's] Department for Workers' Care has been gradually replacing organizers and some group leaders who are vocational-school graduates with people who have university degrees but who lack the ability to connect with people. They do not even attempt to manage the activity of Vietnamese workers, and they consider dealing with the minutiae (the monitoring of attendance, wages, sickness rates, compliance with hostel rules, etc.) beneath them. The first order of business for them is securing for themselves as high salaries as possible. Their command of Czech is low, and in many cases nonexistent.

Going beyond this complaint, the report also noted that the Embassy's Department for Workers' Care often used organizers for its own purposes, and groused that the organizers "often work for the [Embassy's] department even though they are stationed in companies." This, according to the Czech labor ministry clerks, went against the spirit of the job description, since, as far as they were concerned, "the main and *only* job of organizers and group leaders is to manage the activity in the company to which they have been assigned, and for which they are responsible."

Hence, we can clearly see that there was a disagreement between the Czech and the Vietnamese administrators of the program as to the role that the organizers and group leaders should play. The disagreement was, to a significant extent, a result of tension in the organizational setup. On the one hand, according to how their roles were defined in the contractual documents signed by the two states' representatives, the organizers were to act as go-betweens facilitating the flow of communication throughout the institutional structure. But, in part due to the remuneration system, as far as the Czechoslovak officials and managers were concerned, the organizers' and group leaders' primary responsibility was to the *Czechoslovak companies*, and indirectly also to the Czech Labor Ministry, rather

than to the Vietnamese Embassy, which, it bears remembering, was a stand-in for the Vietnamese state.

The following case illustrates the way in which companies, here a railway carriage factory, used group leaders to discipline Vietnamese workers (in this case female²³) on its behalf. The case further shows just how closely the Czechoslovak administrators tied the concern with discipline – a moral matter – to productivity issues – an economic matter. The company reported to the Labor Ministry in the summer of 1982 that it had been receiving complaints from people living on the street on which the Vietnamese female workers' hostel was located about the workers violating the quiet hours on a daily basis by “shouting, singing, playing the tape recorder, and letting strange men visit them.”²⁴ It was also reported that the women refused to “listen to the [male] group leader, comrade Binh.” While the neighbors complained about the noise, the company was concerned that the lifestyle about which the neighbors complained led to “the tiredness of the Vietnamese women, their sleeping during instruction, lack of concentration during instruction and the possibility that they may neglect workplace safety.” Hence, for the company, the concern about (the lack of) discipline was intertwined with the concern about the detrimental effect the behavior purportedly had on the capacity of the workers to produce efficiently. The company's deputy director expressed this explicitly when he wrote that “the VČL management wishes to point out that the effort and the financial and

²³ Although the workers' gender plays a role in this case, I am not going to attend to this aspect here.

²⁴ NA, Letter from Vagónka Česká Lípa to MPSV, 19 July 1982.

material resources that have been expanded up to now [by the company on the training and employment of the Vietnamese workers] do not correspond to the achieved results, primarily because of the lack of discipline and the women's low interest in work and instruction." Relevant to the discussion at hand are the measures that the company (represented by the deputy director for cadres work) ordered to put in place, "effective immediately," in order to remedy the situation. These included, among other things, a compulsory individual study of the Czech language every evening from 7:00 to 9:00 pm daily, except for Saturday, supervised by the male interpreter. In addition – and in the line with the overall policy – Mr. Binh received an extra financial bonus for performing this task. As well, the Vietnamese women were forbidden from leaving the town (Česká Lípa) unless they had been granted a permit by Comrade Binh. This example shows clearly how Czechoslovak companies used Vietnamese auxiliary workers to extract the sort of behavior and work ethic they wanted from Vietnamese workers.

Yet, as far as the companies were concerned, the organizers and group leaders were not a reliable instrument of control at their disposal. For one thing, these auxiliary but indispensable workers were often dissatisfied with the salaries the companies paid to them. For instance, the management of a mining company reported that the company could not complete the second phase of the preparatory period of a group of Vietnamese workers since "three Vietnamese interpreters refused to do the job even when offered the highest possible remuneration of Kčs2,200, and, despite the order issued by the Labor Ministry,

they left for their home companies without permission."²⁵ There are other reports of interpreters expressing dissatisfaction with their salaries."²⁶

Another source of friction was the disagreement between companies and interpreters on the scope of interpreters' jobs. While the interpreters saw themselves precisely as that: *linguistic mediators*, the companies expected the translation services to be only one of several roles performed by the interpreters, as we saw also in the example of the railway carriage factory. A company, for instance, asked that an interpreter allocated to it be replaced because he refused to administer medication overnight to a newly arrived group of female workers, failed to arrange for the group to receive their company ID cards on time, and neglected other similar tasks.²⁷

Sometimes companies felt that group leaders, interpreters or organizers were actually hostile to them. A well-known bicycles manufacturer wrote to the Labor Ministry to request "an immediate removal" of the interpreter assigned to the company.²⁸ The company's deputy director justified the request by arguing that the man "fulfills his task irresponsibly and slowly – he is never in rush and behaves as though there was always plenty of time to get everything done. He has no interest whatsoever in the problems that exist in the company."

²⁵ MPSV, "Porušení pracovní kázně vietnamských tlumočnicků," 2 July 1982.

²⁶ See for example, MPSV, letter from Sukno wool processing company to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1982.

²⁷ MPSV, letter from Oseva seed company to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1982.

²⁸ MPSV, letter from Jan Hošek, the deputy director for cadres and personnel work at ESKA, n.p., Cheb, to Comrade Souček, Foreign Workers' Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 27 February 1986, *italics mine*.

Moreover, the management felt that “whenever problems with SRV workers are being dealt with, he speaks against the company, *as a matter of principle*,” and thus, he “acts as a disruptive element, and with his behavior he [negatively] influences other SRV workers as well.” Perhaps the most damning, as far as the company was concerned, was the fact that the interpreter “holds talks in the name of the company with [the Labor Ministry] as well as with other institutions.” Specifically, when the company refused to sell him “already a sixth bicycle, he left without permission on 17 February 1986 and went to the Federal Labor Ministry, where he, for the reasons stated above, presented false information on the company’s relationship with the workers from the SRV.”

While the Czechoslovak company managers and ministerial officials wanted to use the auxiliary workers to maintain control over Vietnamese workers, they lacked sufficient control over the process of their selection. While the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries (and through them, indirectly, the managers of Czechoslovak enterprises) could make proposals or provide feedback, the nominations for the positions of group leaders, organizers and interpreters were made by the Vietnamese side. The only avenue left open for the Czechoslovak side, therefore, was to appeal to the Vietnamese governmental administrators during official (and, one can imagine, unofficial) talks. Thus, during a November 1982 meeting of the two countries’ deputy labor ministers, the Czechoslovak representative officially appealed to his counterpart, asking him to “increase the

care that goes into selecting the workers, group leaders and organizers,”²⁹ thus echoing the complaints the Czech ministry received from the companies. The same request, even more explicitly phrased, was put also into the implementation protocol for the apprentice-worker track for 1983: “In the interest of preventing an increase in disciplinary breaches in the future, the Vietnamese side agrees to devote more care to the selection of its citizens before sending them to ČSSR, both in terms of their medical fitness as well as in terms of their moral and political qualities, and it will also increase the quality of its selection of group leaders and organizers.”³⁰ However, it does not seem that the Vietnamese officials heeded this call since more or less identical exhortations appear in practically all reports from meetings between the two sides all the way until 1989. A report from the April 1983 meeting charges the Vietnamese side with “the selection of workers not being up to standards” and the failure to “secure sufficient number of quality interpreters, group leaders and organizers.”³¹ A year later, the implementation protocol merely stated that the Vietnamese side pledged to “continue to pay closer attention [*zvýšenou pozornost*]

²⁹ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání mezi náměstkem ministra práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Milanem Kyselým a náměstkem ministra práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Nguyen Van Diepem ve dnech 4.-8. listopadu 1982 v Hanoji.”

³⁰ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti odborné přípravy a dalšího zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích v roce 1983,” signed in Hanoi on 8 November 1982.

³¹ MPSV, “Zpráva delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích opatření na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci” dated 27 April 1983.

to the selection of its citizens. . .in terms of their moral and political qualities.”³²

But, in the talks taking place the following year, 1985, the Czechoslovak side once again “asked that [the Vietnamese counterpart] be more rigorous [*důslednější*] in applying the [agreed upon] criteria in the process of selecting group leaders.”³³

The 1986 implementation protocol once again stated that the Vietnamese side was to “pay closer attention to the selection of its citizens. . .in terms of their moral and political qualities”³⁴ (without mentioning the “continued” nature of this task). The implementation protocol signed at the close of 1987 repeated the stock phrasing about “closer attention,” but then continued:

In the interest of improving managerial work in the groups of Vietnamese workers, the Vietnamese side will pay closer attention to the selection and preparation in terms of the cadres aspect of organizers and group leaders of Vietnamese workers. In connection with this, it will be necessary for the Czechoslovak organizations to intensify [*prohloubily*] the overall [*všestrannou*] care they devote to Vietnamese workers and pay closer attention to the rational use of their leisure time [*účelnému využívání jejich volného času*]. Both sides also agreed that it is necessary to improve the current level of cooperation between the Czechoslovak social organizations active in companies and Vietnamese workers’ youth organizations.³⁵

³² MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1984,” signed in Prague on 15 March 1984.

³³ MPSV, “Zápis o jednání delegací expertů Ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných vietnamských pracovníků spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v čs. organizacích,” the meeting took place from 28 March 1985 through 3 April 1985.

³⁴ MPSV, “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1987,” signed on 1 July 1986.

³⁵ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” record from a meeting that took place between 7 and 14 December 1987 in Prague.

While most of the quoted paragraph repeated the ideas that had appeared in previous protocols only using somewhat different language, the mention of the Czechoslovak companies' need to make sure that Vietnamese workers use their leisure time "effectively" was novel, although *some* mentions of Czechoslovak companies' duties toward Vietnamese workers had always accompanied the pleas directed at the Vietnamese officials in regard to the selection of their workers. In 1983, this took the form of an acknowledgment that some Czechoslovak companies "had not been sufficiently prepared for the reception of Vietnamese workers," and that "some specific requests made by Vietnamese workers on the management of Czechoslovak companies had not been addressed in a timely manner or in accordance with the terms of the intergovernmental treaty."³⁶ Until the program's very end, statements indicating that Czechoslovak organizations were not always upholding their end of the bargain were a usual companion to the statements about Vietnamese side not paying enough attention to the selection of their workers. In the 1989 implementation protocol, the Czechoslovak side pledged to "pay attention to the creation of conditions for working, training, housing, feeding and the enjoyment of cultural activities (*kulturní vyžití*) of Vietnamese workers."³⁷

³⁶ MPSV, "Zpráva delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích opatření na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci" dated 27 April 1983.

³⁷ MPSV, "Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky

These two statements – (1) the Czechoslovak side castigating the Vietnamese partner for the careless selection of both group leaders and rank-and-file workers, and (2) the Vietnamese side alleging that its Czechoslovak partners were not keeping their side of the bargain when it came to creating the agreed-upon living and working conditions for Vietnamese workers – kept making their appearance during all intergovernmental (inter-ministerial) talks throughout the 1980s. They were, also, apparently always discussed jointly and appeared side by side in the implementation protocols. These facts suggest several things. First, the phrasing of the statements indicates that they served as bargaining chips of the sort: “unless you do this, we won’t do that” during the two-partite negotiations. Second, the statements’ repeat and almost ritualistic appearance in documents from practically all bilateral talks indicates that that neither of the issues was ultimately resolved to the other side’s satisfaction. This, in turn, suggests that just as the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry had only limited control over Czechoslovak companies’ behavior (or over their treatment of Vietnamese workers), the degree of control that the Vietnamese state in general and the embassy in particular wielded over Vietnamese workers, interpreters, group leaders and organizers in Czechoslovakia was similarly imperfect. At the same time, just as the Czech and Czechoslovak Labor Ministries were receptive, and even sensitive, to the complaints about Vietnamese workers reported to them by the companies, the Vietnamese state was similarly receptive to the complaints the Vietnamese workers made against Czechoslovak companies. This last point

spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1989,” signed on 6 April 1989 in Hanoi.

is particularly significant because, as I show in the next section, this state of affairs – of porous control on the one hand and receptivity to complaints on the other – made it possible for the workers to (1) express their discontent and protest their working conditions and (2) obtain at least certain degree of rectification (albeit depending on circumstances and issues at hand). However, one more factor is crucial to the understanding of the dual issue of the difficulty in enforcing workplace discipline (as far as the Czechoslovak industrial managers were concerned), and the successes by the Vietnamese workers in pushing through modifications to their working conditions. This factor was the perseverance of the ideas and *ideals* of internationalism and socialism. The endurance of these notions, however tenuous, even in face of the changes that the program underwent with the signing of the November 1980 guest-worker treaty was crucial to the Vietnamese government's ability to intervene effectively on the workers' behalf. I analyze this factor in other chapters, especially in Chapter 5. For now, let us stay with the structural and organizational matters. If we were to represent the program's institutional structure schematically, it would look something like this:

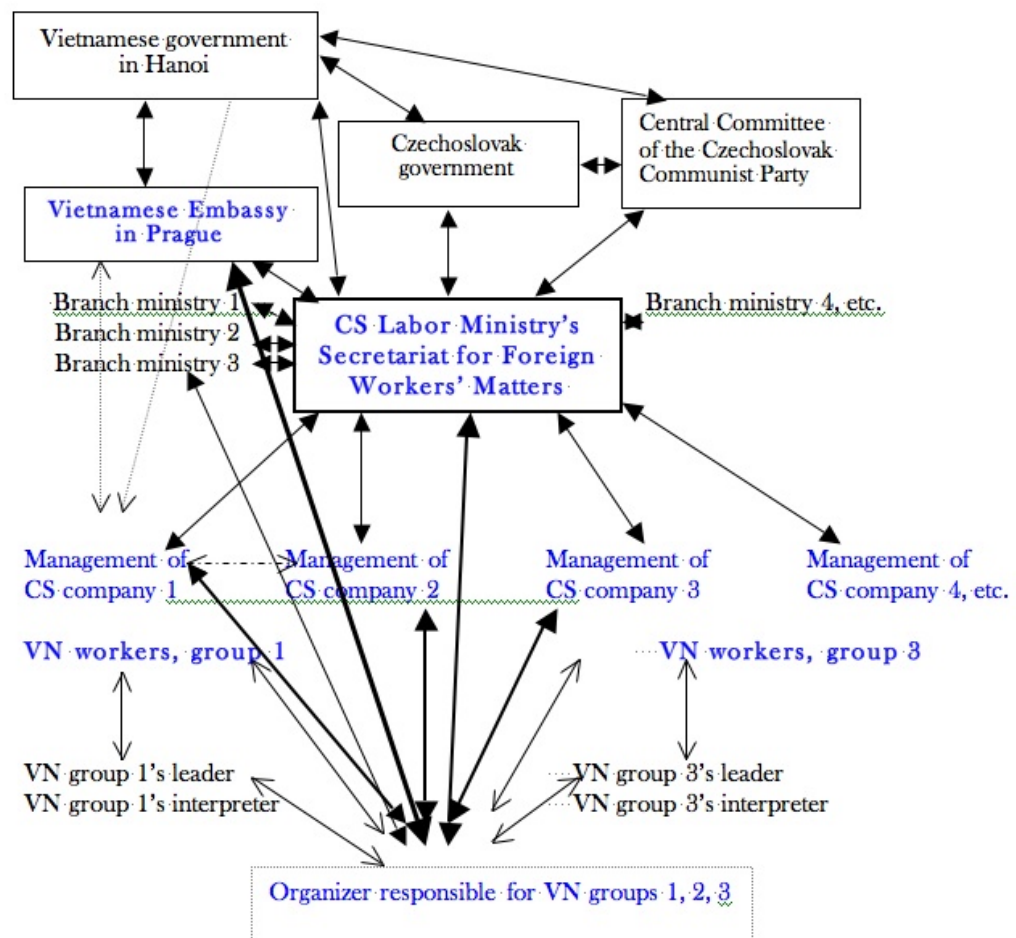


Figure 1: Program's institutional structure.

This figure as well as the discussion above make it possible for us to identify some of the key features of this institutional organization. The first one is *redundancy in communication channels*. This feature refers to the situation in which Czechoslovak companies, or more precisely their management, communicated their concerns in regard to Vietnamese workers *to any or all* of the following institutional actors: the specialized department at the Czech Labor Ministry, their respective branch ministries, or, at times, even directly to the Vietnamese Embassy. Similarly, Vietnamese workers – sometimes individually but more

frequently via their group leaders and/or organizers – voiced their concerns in regard to their work in the Czechoslovak companies to either the Vietnamese Embassy, and/or the relevant department at the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry, and in rare cases, even to the Vietnamese government officials in Hanoi.

Redundancy in communication channels was coupled with another crucial institutional feature: *split authority*, to which I have alluded previously in my examination of the position of Vietnamese group leaders and organizers. Split authority refers to the fact that while in labor-related matters Vietnamese workers belonged primarily under the jurisdiction of the companies for which they worked, the final say on all other matters, and to some extent even on labor-related matters, belonged to the Vietnamese Embassy. This meant, for instance, that no matter how much a company, or the Czech (Slovak) Labor Ministry, wanted to fire a worker (or extend her contract) it could not do so until and unless the Embassy issued an approval. Related to split authority, was *split allegiance*, which concerned Vietnamese group leaders and organizers. As we saw earlier, their role was originally (in the first inter-governmental contractual documents) conceived of as that of go-betweens helping to ensure the smoothness of the process of Vietnamese workers' incorporation in Czechoslovak companies. However, a 1984 document³⁸ defined the roles of the auxiliary workers in a way that practically necessitated split allegiance. The document stated that group leaders and organizers were expected to "monitor

³⁸ MPSV, "Rámcové podmínky pro působnost organizátorů a vedoucích skupin vietnamských občanů dočasně zaměstnaných a odborně připravovaných v československých organizacích," dated 27 June 1984, *italics mine*.

whether *both* the company and workers fulfill mutual obligations they had toward each other, as defined by work contracts.” In other words, the group leaders and organizers were supposed to discipline *both* the workers and the companies. Reflecting both the splits, they were also supposed to immediately report any “extraordinary events” to *both* the company management and the relevant department at the embassy (i.e., either the Department for Workers’ Care, which was in charge of guest workers, or the Academic Department, which was in charge of apprentice-workers). Further, they had the right to bring up their objections and suggestions with the management of the Czechoslovak companies, or the trade unions. They also had the right to take part in all management meetings concerning Vietnamese workers’ issues, meetings aiming to resolve workplace disputes, deal with on-the-job injuries, and the questions of workers remuneration. Whether group leaders and organizers were able to fulfill all these functions probably varied, depending on situation. However, the rules that defined their role ensured that neither the Vietnamese Embassy, nor the managements of Czechoslovak companies or the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries were able to use them as agents acting reliably on their respective behalves. On the contrary, these auxiliary workers – and through them often also rank-and-file Vietnamese workers – were positioned rather well to articulate complaints, voice dissatisfaction and present these to whichever institutional actor might have been receptive to them at the time, or in regard to a particular issue.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I described and analyzed some of the key features of the program's organizational and institutional structure. The main importance of these features, as far as the argument presented in this dissertation is concerned, is that they help explain how resistance and protests were possible in the system that is usually described as dictatorial, even by scholars who do not subscribe to the application of totalitarian theories to state socialist regimes (e.g., Jarausch's concept of *welfare dictatorship* discussed earlier).

Thus, from the point of view of my argument, of central importance was the role played by people I call "auxiliary workers" – Vietnamese organizers, interpreters, and group leaders. Originally, the focal point of their work was defined in the inter-state documents as the assistance to the incoming trainees with adjustment to the new living and working environment, importantly by facilitating their communication with the Czechoslovak citizens and companies. However, in the 1970s, the emphasis started to shift toward their being of assistance primarily to the Czechoslovak enterprises. And in the 1980s, they were explicitly tasked with taking part in the management processes, i.e., to compel Vietnamese workers to behave according to the Czechoslovak companies' requirements and expectations. This conceptual redefinition of auxiliary workers' roles was also accompanied by the changes in the system of their remuneration: the Czechoslovak companies gained a significant leeway in determining the salaries these workers earned.

However, despite these changes, Czechoslovak companies and Labor ministries found that Vietnamese auxiliary workers were not a reliable means that they could use to exercise control over Vietnamese workers. This was because the Vietnamese state, via the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, retained jurisdiction over various important decisions concerning Vietnamese workers, especially on the issue of the termination of their contracts or inter-companies transfers. Additionally, Vietnamese organizers, interpreters and group pleaders were often unhappy with their job assignments and the salaries the companies paid to them, and were known, at times, to act on their own hook.

As a result, all throughout the 1980s, Czechoslovak administrators of the program complained about Vietnamese side not performing the selection of both the auxiliary and rank-and-file workers “properly.” The Vietnamese administrators of the program, in return, complained about the Czechoslovak companies not being sufficiently responsive and not observing the requirements as to the living and working conditions of Vietnamese workers stipulated by the treaties. This ongoing dispute, which lasted throughout the entire decade, indicates two important things: (1) the limited amount of control that the Vietnamese side exercised over the behavior of its workers, *as well as* the limited amount of control that the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries could exercise over both industrial enterprises and other ministries. And (2) that both the Vietnamese and the Czechoslovak administrators were also simultaneously sensitive and receptive to the complaints of their respective constituencies. I argue that this *porous control* combined with the *receptivity to complaints* constitute the first part of the explanation for why it was possible for the Vietnamese

workers not only express their dissatisfaction but also to obtain redress, at least partial or in some circumstances.

The second part of the explanation lies in the features engendered by the institutional structuring, i.e., the way the different institutional actors involved in the administration of the program were linked to one another, the scope of and the possible overlap between their respective jurisdictions and powers. These features included (what I termed) *redundancy in communication channels*, *split authority*, and *split allegiance*. Together, these features ensured that no single institutional actor could completely control the rank-and-file workers and neither was any of the high-ranking institutional actors able to use the auxiliary workers as agents acting reliably on their respective behalves. On the contrary, the institutional structure brought about a situation in which the auxiliary workers enjoyed quite wide space in which to pursue their own interests (including the economic ones, not only within the confines of the companies for which they worked but also in the “gray” and black markets), and the rank-and-file workers were able to express their dissatisfaction and protest against their living and working conditions, and even obtain redress by appealing to whichever institutional actor that might have been receptive to them depending on the issue or overall contingencies of the situation.

CHAPTER 4: VIETNAMESE FEMALE WORKERS AND CZECHOSLOVAK GENDER AND WELFARE POLICIES

A young woman of 22, Ms H arrived in Czechoslovakia in August 1981 to work in a canning and distillery factory.¹ Just as the rules of the Vietnamese-Czechoslovak labor exchange program required, shortly upon arrival, Ms H went for a comprehensive medical checkup. Since, as she put it, “the goodbyes had been beautiful,” she alerted the interpreter who accompanied the group to the doctor’s office that she had missed her period, wanting him to ask the doctor “to focus more thoroughly on that area.” She knew that pregnancy meant an immediate return, so her plan was to obtain an abortion. However, no pregnancy was diagnosed, and so she started her work at a conveyor belt, straightening up improperly placed bottles. Yet, some two months later, it turned out that she, indeed, had been pregnant, and moreover, that the pregnancy was high risk, and she was hospitalized. Three months later, the director of the canning company came to the hospital and “dragged her, wearing only a hospital dressing gown” to a gynecologist who was willing to write an expert opinion claiming that Ms H was fit to fly back to Vietnam. The director secured a plane ticket for Ms H, who was devastated. She feared that returning as a single mother would mean that her mother and perhaps even her sister would lose their jobs, which would have meant that, since her father was an invalid due to an injury from the American war, the family would be destined for the life of penury, not to mention the subject of public moral disapproval.

¹ Interview, 8 June 2010, Prague.

However, almost as in a page-turner, several extraordinary people, Vietnamese and Czech, came to Ms H's rescue. A complicated rigmarole ensued. At the end of it, she stayed in Czechoslovakia, gave birth to a daughter, and, with the help of her benefactors, secured housing and a job as a seamstress for a posh Prague dressmaker.

While the resolution of Ms H's story was unique, the initial circumstances were not. Hundreds of Vietnamese female workers who arrived in Czechoslovakia between 1981 and 1989 found themselves pregnant, and most of them fought to stay and finish their contracts. In this chapter I examine the issue of Vietnamese workers' pregnancies and show how that issue became an arena of contention between the Czechoslovak and Vietnamese governments. The representatives of the two states conceptualized workers' pregnancies in starkly different ways. Whereas the Vietnamese state treated the pregnancies as an issue of *labor rights*, the Czechoslovak state vacillated between approaching them as a *health issue* and a *disciplinary infringement*. I argue that the struggle over the definition of pregnancies, and thus, exceedingly importantly, over the appropriate treatment of (pregnant) Vietnamese workers, was part and parcel of the changes that the program underwent in the 1980s, which turned it from a program largely animated by internationalist concerns into one that became conceived, in important ways, as a quasi- market exchange between the two countries.

While some scholarship sees former state-socialist regimes as primarily defined by coercion and the inefficiencies of their command economies,² other authors have noted the centrality of welfare to these regimes, in both the original sense of the word, as wellbeing, and in the more technocratic sense, as the system of benefits designed to achieve that goal. Bruszt, writing just before the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime, argued that “from the sixties onward the state has acknowledged ‘taking care’ of society as a duty, and it has made a ‘commitment’ to continually improving the standard of living.”³ Konrad Jarausch coined the appellation “welfare dictatorship”⁴ in order to capture both the coercive nature and the “ideological goals of socialism, and the vision of an egalitarian society” in the GDR.⁵ In her historical ethnography of the changes in the Hungarian welfare system, Haney has argued that, through their welfare policies, “states ascribe meaning to a variety of social roles; they define ‘appropriate’ behavior of workers, parents, spouses, and family members. . . [and] engage in a

² See, e.g., Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989* (Chapel Hill, 1997); Nigel Swain, *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism* (London, 1992); Jonathan R. Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (New York, 2007).

³ Laszlo Bruszt, “‘Without Us but For Us’? Political Orientation in Hungary in the Period of Late Paternalism,” *Social Research* 55, 1–2 (Spring/Summer 1988), 43–76, 51.

⁴ Konrad H. Jarausch, “Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship” in Konrad H. Jarausch *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, 1999). C/f Eszter Bartha’s use of the same label (“Welfare Dictatorship, the Working Class and the Change of Regimes in East Germany and Hungary,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, 9 (November 2011), 1591–1610).

⁵ Jarausch, 60. This approach contrasts sharply with that of Andrew Roberts, who has argued for precisely the opposite, i.e., for nomenclature that would indicate a *lack* of connection between the former state-socialist regimes and the wider socialist movement. See Andrew Roberts, “The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology,” *Slavic Review* 63, 2 (2004), 349–366.

considerable amount of boundary work, interpreting the terms of inclusion and setting the borders surrounding social institutions.”⁶

I use the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program, specifically the policies enacted in regard to pregnant workers, as a prism for examining the changes in the Czechoslovak’s state commitment to be the provider of care. I trace how the terms of inclusion changed when the state’s commitment as care provider was confronted with another of its commitments – to socialist internationalism. I argue that the story of pregnant Vietnamese workers constituted a part of the process through which this late state-socialist state was redefining the limits of care it saw itself obligated to provide. Therefore, the Czechoslovak state – embodied, in this case, in the work of Labor Ministry clerks, who administered the program and negotiated on the state’s behalf with Vietnamese state representatives – not only defined the appropriate roles for female Vietnamese workers but also redefined its own social role.

This redefinition of the caretaking role was, in part, a result of economic reforms motivated by Gorbachev’s *perestroika*. However, in Czechoslovakia, the economic “restructuring” proceeded more timidly and belatedly than in other countries,⁷ and, as a result, labor shortages, which continued to be ubiquitous

⁶ Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley, 2002), 240.

⁷ Martin Myant, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1948–1988: The Battle for Economic Reform* (Cambridge, UK, 1989); Michal Pullmann, *Konec experimentu: přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Prague, 2011); David Stark and László Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge, UK, 1998).

well into the late 1980s, were perhaps the most important driving force behind the program in its last phase. When it came to policies toward pregnant Vietnamese workers, the concerns about labor shortages met head on with the Czechoslovak state's gender and welfare policies. In this, the program reflected a more general tension that, I argue, constituted a pressing challenge and a core feature of the regime. It was the tension between, on the one hand, *the pressure to increase (maintain) productivity*, which was hindered by endemic labor shortages, and, on the other hand, *the pressure to increase fertility*, which was motivated by the fact that, Czechoslovakia, just like other countries in the region, faced some of the lowest birthrates in the world.⁸

The Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program was directly and visibly implicated in the concern over productivity, and indirectly and less visibly in the concern over fertility. The program helped plug holes in the labor market while making easier the implementation of policies that sought to provide incentives to Czechoslovak women to bear more children. However, the success of the strategy was predicated upon the Czechoslovak state defining and treating Vietnamese women in dramatically different ways than citizen-women. Citizen-women were exhorted to be heroic workers and proud mothers.⁹ Vietnamese women were expected to be just the former.

⁸ Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences From Eastern Europe* (Boston, 1974), 141.

⁹ Martha Lampland, "Biographies of Liberation: Testimonials to Labor in Socialist Hungary" in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism* (New York, 1989), 312.

Yet, this unequal treatment of Vietnamese female workers was, in a paradoxical way, connected with the gender policies that the Czechoslovak state was pursuing vis-à-vis citizen-women. As in other state-socialist states, women were “buffeted back and forth between policies encouraging their participation in the wage-labor workforce, and the roller coaster of pronatalist policies.”¹⁰ In Czechoslovakia, the outcome of this wrestling with the “woman question” was the replacement of one ideal of socialist woman with “a variety of approved models, which [varied] according to a woman’s age and stage in the life cycle.”¹¹ In other words, although the expectation that women would be model workers, active citizens, and good mothers remained, they were no longer expected to fulfill all these roles simultaneously. This schema of women’s role in a socialist society then made the requirement that Vietnamese workers do not become pregnant while working in Czechoslovakia appear reasonable since Vietnamese workers’ stays were defined as strictly short-term and temporary affairs,¹² only a stage in the life cycle.

VIETNAMESE FEMALE WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF STATE-SOCIALIST GENDER POLITICS AND POLICIES

¹⁰ Lampland, 314.

¹¹ Sharon L. Wolchik, “Elite Strategy Toward Women in Czechoslovakia: Liberation or Mobilization,” *Studies in Comparative Communism* XIV, 2-3 (Summer/Autumn 1981), 123–142, 140.

¹² Something that the state-socialist state was able to enforce with much more ease than its non-state-socialist counterparts in the management of their guest worker programs. (C/f, e.g., Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980* (Ann Arbor, 1991); Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge, UK, 2007).

Marx and Engels approached the Woman Question, for the most part, indirectly and incompletely, subsuming it under the theorizing about the family.¹³

Moreover, there was a tension between two, quite contradictory, ideas about the relationship between capitalism and family life in their theorizing. On the one hand, they depicted family as “a negative *institution*, a product of class society” whose destruction was, therefore, desirable. On the other hand, they saw family as a *victim* of capitalism, its form being the result of “a negative *effect* of the operation of the laws of capital.”¹⁴ From this latter perspective, the family was in need of liberation by becoming embedded in new forms of human associations, ones from which private property, which distorts human relationships by imbuing them with economic calculations, was absent. Given the iconic image of a female tractor driver as the symbol of the early post-war European socialism, it may come as something of a surprise that Engels actually advocated restricting women’s participation in the labor force on the account of women’s “special physiological functions” and even “deemed it necessary to qualify the feminist demand for equal pay in order to protect the ‘health of future generations.’”¹⁵ Nonetheless, both men saw the drawing of women ever more fully into the industrial system as a major path to their emancipation since “the employment of women in the industrial labor force provided the economic independence that alone could serve as the basis for full sexual equality.”¹⁶ Given these

¹³ Joan B. Landes, “Marxism and the ‘Woman Question’” in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (eds), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transitions to Socialism* (New York 1989).

¹⁴ Landes, op. cit., p. 19, italics in the original.

¹⁵ Landes, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁶ Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change* (Berkeley, 1978).

ambivalences, Marx's and Engels's commitment to sexual equality "remained abstract, and their writings contributed little in a concrete and direct way to a program for the actual liberation of women."¹⁷ What was more, to the extent that men were the beneficiaries of women's oppression, the emphasis on the Woman Question could potentially "undermine the Party's efforts to organize along class lines"¹⁸ and the issue thus remained "subordinate to the fate of the working-class movement."¹⁹

Thus, the fact that in the 20th-century state-socialist regimes, the seemingly genderless communist ideal actually assumed "distinctly masculine features," which meant that "women could never completely satisfy the requirements,"²⁰ was not so much a departure from the original teachings, but rather their logical continuation. As was the fact that the Communist Party "operated in practice with unexamined stereotypes of women as irrational,"²¹ and the fact that the state-socialist discourse was marked by "residual patriarchal discourse," in which women were portrayed by even highly-positioned leaders as *helpmates* playing support, but not leading, roles, in the implementation of "an agenda they

¹⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹⁹ Landes, *op.cit.*, 26.

²⁰ Éva Fodor, "Smiling Women and Fighting Men: The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary," *Gender & Society* 16, 2 (April, 2002), 240–263.

²¹ Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 2 (April, 2005), 289–316. Although Fodor argues that, in Hungary, policy makers did *not* construct women as irrational, but rather found their shortcomings in the fact that they were 'incapable of total devotion to the Communist Party,' which made them into 'essentially unreliable and inferior political subjects,' Éva Fodor, "The State Socialist Emancipation Project: Gender Inequality in Workplace Authority in Hungary and Austria," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, 3, (2004), 783–813.

did not set.”²² Joanna Goven’s²³ analysis of the worker-hero brings all these points together in a particularly astute way. Worker-hero was “the apotheosis of fully valued – that is male – labor. His labor [was] truly ‘productive.’ Women’s (extra-household) labor – in agriculture, in light industry, in services – [remained] ‘non productive’ because it [was] ‘reproductive.’”²⁴ Thus, the iconic female tractor-driver, she argues, was “about as heroic as female labor [could] get.” And even then, Goven continues, tractor-drivers were actually an exception that confirmed the rule: “tractors, insofar as they are impressive and powerful machines, are male, yet they are used to produce food, the ultimate consumer good. Thus it is not surprising that tractor-driving was heroic (only) for women.” And, in the final confirmation of her argument, the 1960s Hungarian regulations categorized the job as too hazardous for women, and thus finally did away with “the closest thing to a female worker-hero.”²⁵ Although Czechoslovak women could continue driving tractors, reportedly, in 1972, TV cameras captured a high Party official who, upon meeting a husband-wife combine-operator teams, asked the husbands: “And do you let them drive?”²⁶ More importantly, “male authorities in agriculture [tended] to define all tasks connected with higher paid mechanized work as ‘perilous’. . .thus excluding

²² Libora Oates-Indruchová, “The Beauty and the Loser: Cultural Representations of Gender in Late State Socialism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, 2 (2012), 357–383.

²³ Joanna Goven, *The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society, and the Anti-Politics of Anti-Feminism, 1948-1990*. (Ph.D. dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1993).

²⁴ See also Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton, 2007).

²⁵ Romania, too, eventually outlawed tractor driving for women – see Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State* (New York, 1987).

²⁶ Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences From Eastern Europe* (Boston, 1974).

women, while unskilled backbreaking manual work, often more tiring, more arduous and always worse paid, was deemed suitable."²⁷ More generally, the notion of the economy being divided into "male work" and "female work" "was mapped onto the dichotomization of the economy into high-priority 'productive' sectors and low-priority 'reproductive sectors.'"²⁸ This valorization was, of course, not just discursive but came with significant differences in earnings. To make matters worse, companies had a strong incentive to cultivate their "key workers," that is, those that possessed specific skills, as well as firm-specific experience and helped companies to fulfill their plans.²⁹ The problem was not only that women were unlikely to be key workers, but also that the average-wage regulation encouraged firms to hire large numbers of workers at as low a wage as possible in order to be able to pay as high a wage as possible to key workers without exceeding the mandated average wage for the firm, and "it was the mass of unskilled and semi-skilled female labor that often performed this counterbalancing role."³⁰ Tying this with my discussion of Czechoslovak wage policies in Chapter 5 suggests that Czechoslovak companies used *Vietnamese workers in general* in more or less the same way Hungarian companies used *Hungarian women*. Hence, on one level, Vietnamese workers as a whole, both men and women, were subject to similar discriminatory practices as citizen-women were.

²⁷ Heitlinger, op.cit., 57.

²⁸ Goven, op.cit., 217.

²⁹ On state-socialist companies going out of their way to accommodate valuable workers in the Hungarian context see Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory regimes under capitalism and socialism* (London, 1985), and Mark Pittaway, "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture, and the State in Early Socialist Hungary," *The Journal of Modern History* 74, 4 (2002): 737–769.

³⁰ Goven, op.cit. 254.

The same holds true also on the discursive level: that is, some of the discursive strategies directed at citizen-women were also used in regard to Vietnamese workers in general. For instance, in Hungary, “women’s ‘opportunity’ to work was transmuted into an obligation to work: having received rights and opportunities from a generous state, women were required to prove themselves grateful and worthy by being model workers.”³¹ If one replaced “women” with “Vietnamese workers,” the statement would be describing one of the major currents of the attitudes shared by both the Czechoslovak state and public to foreign workers in the 1980s. I analyze this dynamics in detail in Chapter 6. According to Fodor³², the Hungarian state-socialist officials’ constructions of women’s inferiority were characterized by the assumption that that their inferiority was not based in biology, but rather socially constructed and thus changeable.³³ The documents that Fodor studied talked explicitly about women’s “cultural backwardness,” and hence posited that it was the task of the Women’s Council to “teach women how to live their lives.” Similarly, during the process that led to the legalization of abortion in Czechoslovakia in the late 1950s, the arguments presented in favor of keeping some restrictions on the right

³¹ Ibid., 43. Though it should be pointed out that that the same was true of men as well.

³² Fodor, “Smiling women and fighting men,” op.cit.

³³ This seems to be a *generalized* way in which state-socialist regimes dealt with assumed or posited inferiority – Sokolova and Donert, respectively, characterize the regime’s treatment of the Roma in Czechoslovakia in exactly the same terms: Vera Sokolova, *A Matter of Speaking: Racism, Gender and Social Deviance in the Politics of the “Gypsy Question” in Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945-1989*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2002) and Celia Donert, “‘The struggle for the Soul of the Gypsy’: Marginality and Mass Mobilization in Stalinist Czechoslovakia,” *Social History* 33, 2 (2008): 123–144.

to obtain legal abortions were grounded in the assertions that portrayed women as “irresponsible creatures” that might (unwittingly) put their own health at risk.³⁴ Statements by Czechoslovak bureaucrats in regard to Vietnamese workers in general, both men and women, often relied on similar assertions. Labor Ministry reports not infrequently argued that the behaviors that Czechoslovak companies found objectionable and in the need of modification (such as workers’ refusal to eat in company cafeterias³⁵, their use of unapproved electrical devices in the rooms, or their staying up “too late”) required interventions because the workers were unable to see that they were ultimately causing harm to themselves.

Thus, to some extent, the ways in which foreign workers in general were discriminated against and discursively interiorized were similar to the ways citizen-women were treated. Nonetheless, when Vietnamese women (rather than men) were targets of these practices, the patronizing was both more frequent and more thoroughgoing. One of the clearest examples of such patronizing and paternalistic condescension is a lament, in 1967, about the tendency of trainee-workers’ – whose gender is not explicitly identified, but the content of the statement makes it quite clear that women were the primary referent – to “waste money foolishly on exclusive goods (polyester skirts, nylon blouses, folding umbrellas, and so forth).” From which it followed, as far as the

³⁴ Radka Dudová, “Interrupce v socialistickém Československu z foucaultovské perspektivy,” *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 10, 1 (2009), 25–36.

³⁵ The workers, especially shortly after arrival, did not find the food appetizing. The companies seemed to consider this refusal a moral affront and the belittling of their efforts to comply with the requirements of the treaty.

officials were concerned, that it was incumbent upon them “to teach the trainees how to manage money and spend it in sensible ways.”³⁶

The ideology of innate gender differences was also embedded in the rules³⁷ that the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry drafted in regard to the facilities that were to be made available to the Vietnamese (and other foreign) workers. While the hostels housing men were required to have one laundry room per 40 persons, the hostels housing women needed to have twice as many – one per 20 persons. Similarly, women’s hostels, but not men’s hostels, had to have one sewing machine per 30 persons. This last requirement reveals the arbitrariness of the assumptions in a particularly stark way since both Vietnamese women and men were involved on a fairly widespread basis in the tailoring of custom-made garments, particularly jeans, which they sold to their Czechoslovak co-workers (and co-worker’ acquaintances, thus operating in the grey zone of quasi-entrepreneurship). And if anecdotal accounts are to be relied upon, the proportion of men engaged in this activity was at least as great as that of women, if not greater.

However, it is the methods that were used to discipline foreign workers that reveal most clearly the fact that the degree of autonomy accorded to Vietnamese

³⁶ NA, “Zpráva o příjezdu II. turnusu vietnamských praktikantů do ČSSR – pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” report by the State Planning Commission chairman (and deputy prime minister) to the prime minister, dated 14 December 1967.

³⁷ MPSV, “Metodický pokyn pro pobyt a ubytování zahraničních občanů dočasně zaměstnaných a odborně připravovaných v ČSSR na základě mezivládních dohod a ujednání,” dated 15 February 1988.

male workers was greater than that accorded to female Vietnamese workers. In the summer of 1982, the Czech Labor Ministry was informed by two different companies, one employing Vietnamese women and the other Vietnamese (and Cuban) men. The complaints concerned the same type of disciplinary infringements on hostels rules, primarily “excessive” noise in the evening hours, which led the Czech residents living in the vicinity of the hostels (in two different towns) to complain. The measures deployed in the case of the women’s group were ones of rigid regimentation. While at the hostel, the women were ordered to study the Czech language every day, except Saturday, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, then, “get ready for bed” between 9:00 and 10:00 pm, and, after 10:00 pm, to retire to their rooms, from which they were not supposed to come out until 5:00 am. The compliance was to be monitored by a male Vietnamese group leader, who was, moreover, given a financial bonus for this extra work he had to perform.³⁸ By contrast, the measures adopted in the case of the male group were strikingly different. Not only were they less patronizing, they were also more pragmatically oriented. The group leader was tasked with discussing the complaints (about the men “playing tape recorders during evening and night hours, singing, bellowing while visiting one another, [and] banging on window ledges”³⁹) with the group, and caution the men that if the behavior continued, the whole group would be moved to another (likely less desirable) hostel. It was further decided (in response to other complaints by the company, not directly

³⁸ NA, Letter from Vagónka Česká Lípa to the Czech Labour Ministry (MPSV) dated 19 July 1982.

³⁹ NA, “Záznam ze dne 24.8.1982 z jednání navazující na stížnosti stěžovatelů vedených jako jejich zástupcem s. Otčenáškem Václavem u ZKLK, kontrolně u s. Džupiny Andreje, poslance federálního národního shromáždění.”

related to the disturbance-of-peace charge) that workers' rooms would be checked and if unapproved electrical appliances were found, they would be confiscated, and finally, that if the workers failed to maintain the "appropriate level of cleanliness" in the shared areas of the hostel, they would have to clean these areas themselves (rather than have hostel staff clean them as was the current practice). Clearly, while the women were treated almost as children – a curfew and a rigid regimentation of their "free" time was imposed on them – the men were instead invited to a *discussion* on the alleged inappropriateness of their loud behavior in the evening hours, thus implying that they could be *reasoned* with, and given some carrot-and-sticks incentives to "clean up their act," literally and figuratively. Thus, the men were afforded a far greater degree of autonomy. Hence, the Czechoslovak administrators of the program, along with the managers of the socialist enterprises (which formally belonged to the state but their interests often did not dovetail with those of the state⁴⁰), gendered foreign workers in ways that in many respects replicated the schemas applied to citizen-women. This gendering was also apparent in the channeling of female Vietnamese workers into "women's" fields, such as textile, food processing, or fashion-jewelry industries. In fact, throughout the 1980s, Czechoslovak companies often specified whether they were requesting male or female workers in the written solicitations they submitted to the Czech⁴¹ Labor Ministry.⁴² The

⁴⁰ A reality perhaps best epitomized by 'plan bargaining' as described by János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, 1993).

⁴¹ As a federation, Czechoslovakia had both a Federal Labour Ministry, and two republic-level – Czech and Slovak respectively – Labor Ministries. The republic-level ministries dealt with the vast majority of the routine agenda and the logistics of the program's implementation, and had the most intimate connection to the program. However, federal-level clerks were responsible for the drafting

sectors into which the female workers were channeled were characterized, as I already discussed above, by lower wages. Of 15 strikes enumerated in a 1982 Labor Ministry report⁴³, four occurred in textile factories, one in a dairy, one in an agricultural cooperative, and one in a plant-cultivation company; all of these companies employed primarily Vietnamese female, rather than male, workers.

As I already noted, one of the principal projects of state socialism was to emancipate women by integrating them into paid workforce, and thus liberate them from the “confinement to the home and imprisonment by domestic labor,” which the Marxist tradition saw as a source of women’s “backwardness.”⁴⁴ (Although, somewhat ironically, this meant that women, by virtue of entering the labor market, had to become commodified before they could push for decommodification.)⁴⁵ In many respects, this project actually turned out to be a resounding success, certainly when evaluated by the criteria set by the regimes

of the final versions of the treaties and other contract documents, and also were usually part of the delegations leading negotiations on the official level, sometimes accompanied by the head of the department, or other experienced clerks, from the republic-level ministry. But even republic-level (usually Czech) bureaucrats would participate in less formal talks with, for instance, the Vietnamese Embassy staff.

⁴² MPSV, “Vietnamští pracovníci podle oborů a profesí, kategorií pracovníků a přijetí v roce 1980 a 1981 v ČSSR,” addendum no. 2 to “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981.”

⁴³ NA, “Přehled o stávkách a další závažné protispolečenské činnosti vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” authored by Department (*odbor*) 32 Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.”

⁴⁴ Reid, *op.cit.*, 291; Harsch, *op.cit.*, 3.

⁴⁵ Gøsta Esping-Andersen, “Multi-Dimensional Decommodification: A Reply to Graham Room,” *Policy & Politics* 28, 3, (2000), 353–359.

themselves.⁴⁶ In the case of Czechoslovakia, women's proportion of the total labor force increased from 37.8% in 1948 to 48% in 1975.⁴⁷ This was one of the highest proportions in Eastern Europe – only the USSR and the GDR⁴⁸ reported higher figures, with women forming 51% and 50% of the labor force respectively. By contrast, women comprised 38% of the United States labor force and only 19% of Greek labor force in the early 1970s.⁴⁹ However, the effort did not merely increase the number of women in the workforce but also, as Fodor⁵⁰ argues, when compared to similar non-state-socialist countries such as Austria, in their greater participation in various forms of workplace authority. Some researchers have also found that the gender gap in wages was narrower in, for instance, the German Democratic Republic than in the Federal Republic of Germany.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Some authors assess the success in somewhat more reserved terms although, by and large, they still acknowledge an increase in gender equality as a result of state-socialist policies. See, e.g., Barbara Einhorn, "Gender Issues in Transition: The East Central European Experience," *The European Journal of Development* 6, 2, (1994), 119–140, or Katherine Verdery, "From Parent-State to Family Patriarchs: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies*, 8, 2 (Spring 1994), 225–255. Ansorg & Hürtgen go as far as describing women's emancipation in the GDR as a "myth," Lenore Ansorg and Renate Hürtgen, "The Myth of Female Emancipation: Contradictions in Women's Lives" in Konrad H. Jarausch (ed), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York 1999). Oates-Indruchová, op.cit., 378, on the other hand, makes an intriguing point when she argues that while the state-socialist emancipation project may have been imperfect, it did "broaden the range of discursive positions for women," but failed to do the same for *men*.

⁴⁷ Sharon Wolchik, "The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948–1978," *Slavic Review* 38, 4 (Dec 1979), 583–602.

⁴⁸ Ansorg and Hürtgen reported that in 1988–89 as many as 91% of all East German women were part of the GDR workforce, Ansorg and Hürtgen, op.cit.

⁴⁹ Wolchik, op.cit., 586.

⁵⁰ Fodor, op.cit., "The State Socialist Emancipation Project."

⁵¹ Heike Trappe and Rachel A. Rosenfeld, "A Comparison of Job-Shifting Patterns in the Former East Germany and the Former West Germany," *European Sociological Review* 14, 4 (Dec 1998), 343–368.

At the same time, the state pushed women into the workforce by depressing wages in general,⁵² relying on the model that some have summarized as: one male earner + one female earner & unpaid housekeeper = one family income.⁵³ In fact, some scholars emphasize that the main reason for that push was not so much the ideology of women's liberation but rather the scarcity of labor, particularly in the early years after the end of the World War Two.⁵⁴ In other words, the assertion is that women's emancipation was to an important extent a *by-product*, even if not an unintended one, of the pursuit of other goals. As such, this argument is hard to dispute, however, it should be recognized *as well* that, notwithstanding the economic expediency of women's employment to the states, women's workforce participation produced lasting effects in the feminist direction. Eszter Tóth's as well as Lynne Haney's⁵⁵ intriguing ethnographic data show decisively the enduring legacy of this change for women's self-conceptualizations and attitudes toward work outside of household. One of Tóth's interviewees "told a story of how her husband vainly attempted to persuade her that, as he had moved up the hierarchy of the factory, she could give up work and they could live as an ideal bourgeois family, in which the woman brought up the children and ran the household. According to her

⁵² Lynne Haney, "From Proud Worker to Good Mother: Women, the State, and Regime Change in Hungary," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* XIV, 3, (1994), 113–150.

⁵³ Susan Zimmermann, "Gender Regime and Gender Struggle in Hungarian State Socialism," *Aspasia* 4 (2010), 1–24.

⁵⁴ E.g., Mihaela Miroiu, "Communism Was a State Patriarchy, Not State Feminism," *Aspasia* 1 (2007), 197–201; Alena Heitlinger, "Pro-Natalist Population Policies in Czechoslovakia," *Population Studies* 30, 1, (1979), 123–135; Wolchik, *op.cit.*, 599.

⁵⁵ Eszter Zsófia Tóth, "Shifting Identities in the Life Histories of Working-Class Women in Socialist Hungary," *International Labour and Working-Class History* 68 (Fall 2005), 75–92; Haney, *op.cit.*

account, Mrs. T. would simply not hear of staying at home.”⁵⁶ The same was true for Haney’s interlocutors, even as many of them explicitly rejected feminist aspirations (as they understood them). An International Labor Organization survey⁵⁷ carried out in 1990, i.e., just after the disintegration of European state-socialist regimes, confirms this ethnographic evidence: Only 28% of married or cohabitating Czechoslovak women said that they would like to give up their jobs and stay at home, while 40% said that they “would definitely refuse to become housewives even if their husbands’ / partners’ salaries increased considerably.”⁵⁸

In one sense, then, Vietnamese female workers in Czechoslovakia participated in this project in an even more decisive way than the citizen-women. The program did away with their “confinement to the home” in a radical way, in both the literal and the metaphorical sense. The accommodation in the hostels implied and reflected the life of single workingwomen, fully focused on their jobs. On the other hand, however, we have to keep in mind the caveats, such as the stringent disciplining measures I discussed above, as well as the fact that while advancement to higher positions was difficult for citizen-women, it was practically impossible for Vietnamese workers. Although the treaties never spelled it out explicitly, Czechoslovak administrators and company managers took it as self-evident that Vietnamese workers, male or female, were not to be promoted, not even to blue-collar positions of greater responsibility, such as

⁵⁶ Tóth, *op.cit.*, 87.

⁵⁷ Liba Paukert, “The Economic Status of Women in the Transition to a Market System: the Case of Czechoslovakia,” *International Labor Review* 130, 5-6, (1991), 613–633.

⁵⁸ Although, perhaps tellingly, 46% of the women’s *male partners* said that they would “definitely like” their spouses to stay home (Paukert, *op.cit.*, 621).

those of foremen. In this regard, then, the situation of Vietnamese female workers both embodied the idea of female employment in an ideal-typical way (woman fully engaged in extra-household labor), and simultaneously, it put on display, in an almost illustrative way, the limits of its practical implementation (impossibility of advancement). However, the trajectories of citizen-women and Vietnamese female workers departed most starkly from each other when it came to motherhood.

STATE SOCIALIST MOTHERHOOD

State-socialist regimes (as most other regimes) highly valorized motherhood, which they saw as crucial to women's role in society. This valorization stemmed from the importance that the state accorded to the family as the "cradle of socialization," whose purpose it was to produce good socialist citizens, and, of course, quite literally, future workers.⁵⁹ Indeed, the ideological valorization of motherhood was an accompaniment to another goal – the perceived imperative to reverse the trend of falling fertility rates, a feature of all European societies, capitalist and state socialist alike. While some countries, notably Romania,⁶⁰ dealt with the issue by restricting access to birth control and legal abortion,

⁵⁹ Donna Harsch, "Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950-1972," *The American Historical Review* 102, 1 (Feb 1997), 53–84; Barbara Einhorn, "Gender Issues in Transition: The East Central European Experience," *The European Journal of Development* 6, 2, (1994), 119–140.

⁶⁰ Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, 1998).

others relied more on incentives-based approaches, and in the late 1960s started to introduce various family-oriented benefits.⁶¹

Czechoslovak leadership, too, implemented a series of policies whose goal it was to convince women to have (more) children. These policies included the extension of maternity leave at almost full pay to 26 weeks,⁶² which later became supplemented by maternity grants designed to provide an optional maternity leave.⁶³ Furthermore, by 1976, women could, once the paid maternity leave elapsed, opt to stay on additional unpaid maternity leaves (i.e., with their jobs were guaranteed to them upon return) for up to 3 years.⁶⁴ In 1971, the lump-sum given to parents upon the birth of a child was doubled to Kčs2,000, which represented roughly 2 to 4 weeks of family income.⁶⁵ In 1973, monthly childcare allowances were increased: a family received Kčs90 if it had one child, Kčs430 monthly for two children, Kčs880 for three children, and Kčs1,280 for four or more children. These amounts constituted “a significant contribution to the family income,”⁶⁶ as in 1978 the average monthly wage in the socialist sector was

⁶¹ Éva Fodor, “The State Socialist Emancipation Project: Gender Inequality in Workplace Authority in Hungary and Austria,” *Signs* 29, 3, (2004), 783–813. Although, as Joanna Goven (*The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society, and the Anti-Politics of Anti-Feminism, 1948-1990* (PhD dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1993) points out, there was a “considerable gap between what the state claimed to provide and what was actually available.”

⁶² Or to 35 weeks for single mothers or multiple births.

⁶³ Tomas Frejka, “Fertility Trends and Policies: Czechoslovakia in the 1970s,” *Population and Development Review* 6, 1 (Mar. 1980), 65–93.

⁶⁴ Alena Heitlinger, “Pro-Natalist Population Policies in Czechoslovakia,” *Population Studies* 30, 1, (1979), 123–135.

⁶⁵ Frejka, 70.

⁶⁶ Heitlinger, 133.

Kčs2,759.⁶⁷ In addition, in 1973, low-interest loans were made available to newlyweds under the age of 30. In addition to advantageous interest rates (1% if used to purchase a home, and 2.5% if used to purchase furnishings), when the couple's first child reached first birthday, Kčs2,000 was written off, and Kčs4,000 at the first birthday of each subsequent child.⁶⁸ Thus, by the late 1970s, the Czechoslovak government was spending almost 4% of its annual budget on direct cash benefits to families and mothers, and an *additional* 7% on services and subsidies in kind, such as those going to day-care centers, school cafeterias, children's goods, or tax and rent deductions.⁶⁹ Women were also able to retire between three and seven years earlier than men, depending on the number of children they had mothered.⁷⁰ According to Frejka, this level of welfare spending amounted to "a proportion almost certainly exceeding comparable expenditures in any other developed country."⁷¹ While some of these policies removed women from the labor force pool, other policies were clearly intended to encourage women to work. Together, they were supposed to make it possible for women to be both workers and mothers, even if, as noted above, they were not necessarily expected to devote themselves to both simultaneously. Moreover, because the maternity-leave benefits amounted to "remuneration for

⁶⁷ Statistická ročenka Československé socialistické republiky 1980 (Prague, 1980), 23, 362, henceforth Statistická ročenka 1980.

⁶⁸ Frejka, 70; Heitlinger, 133.

⁶⁹ Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State* (New York, 1987).

⁷⁰ Elaine Fultz and Silke Steinhilber, "Social Security Reform and Gender Equality: Recent Experience in Central Europe," *International Labour Review* 143, 3 (2004), 249-273, 265.

⁷¹ Frejka, 70.

women's *work* as mothers,"⁷² the state turned mothering into a kind of paid labor. Czechoslovak women were, therefore, valued and rewarded for both their productive and reproductive labor.

For foreign workers, however, the relationship between production and reproduction was configured very differently. The protocols (*Ujednání*) did not contain any explicit mention of the workers' possible pregnancies or motherhoods (parenthoods). However, pregnancy appeared in an addendum titled "Criteria for the assessment of VDR citizens' medical fitness [*způsobilost*] for the participation in professional training in Czechoslovak organizations,"⁷³ where it was listed in section (c) Contraindications, which enumerated the conditions preventing candidates from being considered for the program.⁷⁴ This was the case in all contract documents signed from the early 1970s on.⁷⁵ However, the treaties differed in how they addressed the issue of workers' potential parenthoods.

⁷² Haney, *Inventing the Needy*, 132, italics mine.

⁷³ NA, "Kritéria pro posuzování zdravotní způsobilosti občanů VDR k absolvování odborné přípravy v československých organizacích" – addendum to "Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích" signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974.

⁷⁴ Other contraindications included: tuberculosis, venereal diseases, serious forms of neurosis, serious post-traumatic conditions, deformities, serious asthenic conditions, serious heart disease, liver disease, tumors, serious visual impairment (more than six diopters), hearing defects, leprosy, the presence of Shigellosis bacteria, and some other bacterial infections.

⁷⁵ The 1967 wave documents did not contain the detailed medical list, but *praktikanti* candidates who arrived pregnant were sent home. (NA, "Zpráva předsedy Státní plánovací komise o opatřeních prováděných k zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů VDR v Československu pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády," dated 19 April 1967; henceforth *Komise*.)

The 1967 *Principles of Material Provisioning*⁷⁶ stipulated that Vietnamese citizens would receive childcare benefits for children born in Czechoslovakia or those that acquired permanent residence there (a highly unlikely scenario). The amount of these benefits was not specified, which suggests that it would have corresponded to the benefits awarded to Czechoslovak families (however, let us note that the document predated the launch of the massive pronatalist measures). It also explicitly stated that no childcare benefits would be paid for children residing in Vietnam. The 1974 treaty handled the issue in an identical manner. Thus, this arrangement allowed Vietnamese workers to partake in one kind of the generous Czechoslovak family welfare benefits, at least in principle. And quite possibly only in principle. This is because while the proportion of women between 1967 and 1973 was about one-quarter of the overall number,⁷⁷ this translated into only some 300 women total. In the 1970s wave, the proportion of women was very low. Exact statistics are unavailable, but personnel files from a major engineering company (Škoda Plzeň) show that out of 131 Vietnamese that it had educated in its vocational schools in the late 1970s, and subsequently employed in its factories, only five, i.e., less than 4%, were

⁷⁶ NA, "Zásady materiálního zabezpečení občanů VDR vyslaných do ČSSR na odborné školení a praxi," an addendum to the Czechoslovak Government's resolution no. 74 from 15 March 1967.

⁷⁷ As part of the first batch, 162 women and 314 men arrived; in the second batch, 101 women and 379 men arrived; the original documents set the proportion of women at between 15% and 20% of the overall number. ("Zpráva o průběhu přípravy vietnamských praktikantů k zaškolování v československých podnicích" report by the SPK chairman dated 29 September 1967; "Zpráva o příjezdu II. turnusu vietnamských praktikantů do ČSSR – pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády," report by the SPK chairman to prime minister, dated 14 December 1967; *Komise*.

women. A Czech Labor Ministry statistic for the year 1980 suggests that the general proportion may have been somewhat higher, possibly around 8%, but this figure still translated into only 290 women in that year.⁷⁸ Hence, for all practical purposes, the only workers to whom the childcare stipulation would have applied in the late 1960s and 1970s were Vietnamese *men* who fathered children with Czech or Slovak women. In such situations, however, the point was moot as the children's citizen-mothers were automatically eligible for the benefits. The stipulation disappeared completely from the treaty through which the apprentice-worker form of the program was extended in December 1979,⁷⁹ which omitted the mention of benefits for children altogether.

The contract-worker form of the program, ushered in by the November 1980 treaty, finally brought in much greater numbers of women. Although their proportion still hovered around 25%, since the overall numbers of arriving workers were increasing, so were the absolute numbers of women, and hence potential mothers. In 1981 women comprised about 25%, or 1,926 persons, of all Vietnamese workers; in 1982, their proportion increased to 27% (4,739), then fell slightly to 26% in 1983, which, however, corresponded to 5,876 women in absolute numbers, and, at the end of 1989, the proportion of 25% translated into

⁷⁸ MPSV, "Přehled zaměstnanosti zahraničních dělníků podle krajů a resortů ke dni 30.6.1981"

⁷⁹ MPSV, "Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," signed in Prague on 21 December 1979.

the presence of 8,342⁸⁰ Vietnamese women working in Czechoslovakia. In contrast to the previous 12 years, for which no information on pregnancies of Vietnamese trainee / apprentice-workers is available (except for a few short mentions of pregnant candidates being returned to Vietnam immediately upon arrival), Vietnamese workers' pregnancies and motherhoods became a salient issue between 1980 and 1989 and the policies toward pregnant Vietnamese workers became highly relevant at this point.

The instructions⁸¹ accompanying the 1980 treaty stipulated that the workers would be eligible only for the lump-sum birth benefit, provided that the child was born in Czechoslovakia. This benefit was related to healthcare benefits regulations, the most important of which was paid sick leave. Here it is crucial to highlight the fact that the Czechoslovak state disbursed this particular benefit to the Vietnamese workers according to the same, if not actually slightly more advantageous, rules as it did to the Czechoslovak citizens. Czechoslovak citizens received between 50% and 70% of their net wages during the first three days of sick leave, and between 60% and 90% thereafter, the proportion being dependent on the length of lifetime employment.⁸² In the case of Vietnamese workers, their

⁸⁰ The figures are compiled from Czechoslovak Federal Labor Ministry's tabular summaries of the numbers of foreign manual workers for the relevant years, generally called "Přehled zaměstnanosti zahraničních dělníků podle krajů a resortů ke dni..."

⁸¹ Later published jointly by the Ministries of Labor and Finances in the form of a booklet to be disseminated to companies employing Vietnamese workers (MPSV, "Pokyny pro věcné, organizační a finanční zabezpečení odborné přípravy a další zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," dated June 1980; in booklet form dated 22 May 1981, henceforth *Pokyny* 1980).

⁸² *Statistická ročenka* 1980, 609.

biological age was used as a proxy for the length of their working lives, as verifying their work history in Vietnam would have been difficult. Thus, Vietnamese workers between the ages of 18 and 23, received 70% of their net wages when sick, those between 23 and 28 received 80%, and those 28 and older 90% from the fourth day of their sick leave on; the percentages were 60%, 65%, and 70% respectively for the first three days.⁸³

Other major types of welfare benefits (*sociální zabezpečení*) that the Czechoslovak state provided to its citizens included pensions (old-age, disability, and survivors' benefits), the family and children benefits discussed above, and benefits "to overcome adverse life circumstances."⁸⁴ As for the Vietnamese workers, the treaty documents explained that the Czechoslovak state considered all Vietnamese welfare claims, except healthcare and sick-leave wage compensation, settled on account of the fees that the Czechoslovak state paid to Vietnam. These fees had three components.⁸⁵ The first was a flat annual fee of Kčs2,400 per worker, which was to settle all present and future welfare claims such as pensions, accidents insurance (upon return), healthcare for the workers' relatives in Vietnam, and the workers' own healthcare upon return, as well as "all other benefits that the Vietnamese state might provide to its citizens." The second was the lump sum of Kčs1,000 per worker billed as a recruitment fee, and finally, a monthly sum of Kčs180 per worker earmarked for the care of workers' children to be delivered by the *Vietnamese state*. In other words, the

⁸³ *Pokyny* 1980, op. cit.

⁸⁴ *Statistická ročenka* 1980, op. cit., 609–610.

⁸⁵ *Zpráva*, op. cit.

Czechoslovak state paid this fee in lieu of the monthly childcare benefits it disbursed to citizen-parents. The regulations further explained that the figure was based on the assumption of an average of three children per worker. Thus the benefit came to Kčs60 per child.

Several differences between the domestic childcare benefit and this “surrogate” benefit are readily apparent. For one thing, while the benefit that the Czechoslovak state paid to its citizens was disbursed to individuals, it paid the “surrogate benefit” to the partner state. As a result, it is not clear whether the individual workers and their families ever received these putative benefits or not. Also, while the benefit for citizens was calibrated to the number of children, the “surrogate benefit” was a flat per-worker fee regardless of the actual number of children a specific worker might have had. Setting up the benefit in this way certainly made bureaucratic sense, as flat payments are easier to administer. However, the method also expressed the peripherality of the Vietnamese workers when it came Czechoslovak state’s concern for their welfare *not directly connected with their productive labor in the country*. Finally, there is the glaring gap in the absolute amounts: Kčs880 that Czechoslovak parents of three received versus Kčs180 allocated to Vietnamese families. One might object that the standard of living in the two countries was very different too. But the banishment of this sort of calculus that prized, and priced, different lives differently was one of the cherished goals and tenets of state-socialist ideology in general and internationalism in particular. This suggests that while internally the Czechoslovak state did its best to implement socialist principles in regard to citizens’ welfare, in international relations it applied logic not dissimilar from

that guiding the relationships between capitalist states. The introduction of these fees effectively monetized Vietnamese workers and captured perhaps better than any other indicator the fundamental change in the logic of the program. It could be argued that the 1980-treaty arrangement in regard to children was more generous than the previous provisions, which had excluded workers' children residing in Vietnam from all benefits as a matter of principle. That is true, yet, by setting up the "surrogate family benefits" the way it did, the Czechoslovak state also simultaneously, consciously or not, implied that it regarded – and indeed *treated* – these children, and families, as being of lesser value. Moreover, an appendix to a government resolution on the employment of foreign workers stipulated that "the requests for the transfer of any part of the national product created by foreign workers to their countries of origin [were] to be rejected."⁸⁶ Claiming the right to appropriate the surplus produced by the Vietnamese workers amounted to textbook capitalist exploitation, and hence to the Czechoslovak state's unabashed rejection of internationalist and socialist principles. The sharing of the product created by Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia being off the table, and the framework of the program being de facto reconfigured as a market exchange⁸⁷ meant that the only avenue open to the Vietnamese government was to try and push for the amelioration of specific

⁸⁶ MPSV, "Zásady a podmínky pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v čs. organizacích spojené s odbornou přípravou po roce 1980," appendix to "Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. května 1980, č. 172 o zásadách pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů spojené s odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích po roce 1980."

⁸⁷ Even if, on paper, references to "increasing qualifications" continued to be a staple.

labor conditions as its workers encountered them. The right of pregnant Vietnamese women to stay and finish their contracts was one them.

PREGNANCY AS A DISCIPLINARY INFRINGEMENT

If things worked according to the Czechoslovak state's wishes, pregnancy would have been identified during pre-departure medical checkups and no pregnant Vietnamese women would ever arrive, or become pregnant while in Czechoslovakia. When Vietnamese workers did turn up pregnant, the general policy was to return them home as soon as possible. Since the Czechoslovak side was responsible for travel costs, the administrators saw such premature returns as financial losses for the Czechoslovak state. Consequently, at the end of 1982, the Czechoslovak side pushed through a rule according to which Vietnam became liable for the costs of such "extraordinary departures,"⁸⁸ and henceforth deducted the money from the fees it paid to Vietnam.⁸⁹ Thus, in 1986, for example, 3.2% were deducted on account of premature departures from the overall amount Czechoslovakia paid to Vietnam.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ MPSV, "Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti odborné přípravy a dalšího zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích v roce 1983," signed on 8 November 1982.

⁸⁹ MPSV, "Povolení k placení nákladů přepravy na cizích úsecích trati za vietnamské občany, přijaté k odborné přípravě nebo do dočasného zaměstnání v ČSSR – dodatek č. 1 ke všeobecnému devizovému povolení č. 6019," 14 April 1983.

⁹⁰ MPSV, "Dodatek k: Informace pro jednání delegace FMPSV v Hanoji s delegací ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR," undated, likely drafted sometime in 1989.

The bulk of early departures consisted of people forced to return due to disciplinary reasons and pregnant women. Czechoslovak administrators discussed pregnancies and disciplinary infringements almost always simultaneously. In their documents, the administrators sometimes explicitly categorized pregnancy as a *subgroup* of disciplinary infringements. A report, for example, noted that in 1984 there had been 274 cases of early departures due to disciplinary violations, which were further specified to *include* 119 pregnancies.⁹¹ Similarly, two earlier memoranda – “Departures of Vietnamese citizens due to medical reasons”⁹² and “Securing of departures of Vietnamese citizens to the SRV⁹³ due to medical reasons”⁹⁴ – that were ostensibly meant to discuss *medical* issues, shifted between the discussion of medical cases and bona fide disciplinary infringements (such as absenteeism), treating them as belonging in the same category. This is significant as this bureaucratic practice of lumping together in the official accounting pregnancies and disciplinary infringements led to the line between discipline and pregnancy becoming blurred.

On pragmatic grounds, this practice can be explained (away) by the fact that, as far as the Czechoslovak administrators of the program were concerned, logistically, the issue at hand was identical: the need to get the workers out of the country as soon as possible. However, the conflation also shows that, on the

⁹¹ MPSV, “Úhrada nákladů za předčasné odjezdy vietnamských občanů v roce 1984,” 11 March 1985.

⁹² NA, “Odjezdy vietnamských občanů ze zdravotních důvodů do VSR,” 15 September 1984.

⁹³ Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

⁹⁴ NA, “Zabezpečení odjezdů vietnamských občanů do VSR ze zdravotních důvodů,” 13 September 1984, henceforth *Zabezpečení*.

conceptual level, the administrators also did not see the two as sharply distinct. Various Labor Ministry documents show the ease with which health issues were treated also as disciplinary issues. For instance: “Physicians explain the occurrence of tuberculosis [among Vietnamese workers] by bad regimen [životospráva] (too little sleep, spending nights sewing clothing and insufficient nutrition in our climatic conditions, as well as the lower resistance of their bodies to TB).”⁹⁵ Here, Vietnamese workers’ poor health was presented as a result of the failings of their *personal discipline*, if not quite a disciplinary breach in the usual sense. Syphilis cases exemplify most clearly the way in which medical issues were simultaneously conceptualized also as disciplinary issues. If workers were diagnosed with syphilis, they were first treated and then made to return to Vietnam. Given that by the 1980s the treatment of syphilis (in early stages) was a fairly trivial affair, as well as the fact that early returns meant financial losses for both sides, the insistence on the workers’ departures makes sense only if viewed as a disciplinary measure, namely a punishment for a moral transgression. Crucial to my argument is the fact that the workers received medical treatment before they were sent home. The practice illustrates the firmness of the Czechoslovak state’s commitment to act as the provider of care in the case of general healthcare, even in the cases of “moral transgressions.”

In regard to Vietnamese workers’ pregnancies, the Labor Ministry clerks articulated the disciplinary aspect most explicitly in their consternation over the fact that many women decided to leave their hostels and stay with friends in

⁹⁵ MPSV, “K jednání s delegací vietnamského ministerstva práce,” 5 March 1984.

order to avoid returning to Vietnam. In describing these cases, Labor Ministry's reports shifted between framing pregnancies as disciplinary breaches and as medical issues. For instance, a textile factory reported in early 1984 that a worker in the stage of "advanced pregnancy" left her employment and was staying at another company's hostel. The clerk noted in regard to the case: "Her employment has been terminated, no company will take care of her!" In the final paragraphs of the report, the clerk remarked, employing emotional style rarely found in bureaucratic texts:

In general, we can say that the cases when pregnant women and workers sent home for disciplinary reasons do not show up at the airport have been proliferating. It is necessary to address with all responsibility the issue of Vietnamese women afflicted [*postižených*] in this way because they hide in hostels, their residence permits are revoked, they are sustained by their friends and they **l a c k** basic pregnancy care!!⁹⁶

The text first frames the issue as one of disciplinary transgression, but then switches to framing it as a medical emergency. An integral part of the latter is an element of paternalist condescension. The women are presented as both transgressors (running away, hiding, overstaying their legal statuses) and as naïve victims (they are "afflicted"), who end up endangering their health, and therefore must be protected. The significance of framing pregnant Vietnamese workers in this way becomes clear from a follow-up report, which also recounts stories to convey the urgency of the issue.⁹⁷ In one story, "a woman hiding in the hostel of the VŽSKG Ostrava [ironworks company] went into labor at 2:00 a.m. and, had it not been for a speedy intervention by Czechoslovak citizens, the

⁹⁶ NA, "Problémy se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistice)," 13 February 1984, emphasis in the original, henceforth, *Problémy*.

⁹⁷ NA, "Odjezdy vietnamských dělníků v roce 1983."

delivery could have ended badly.” In another story, a Labor Ministry clerk, upon being notified about yet another heavily pregnant woman, set out and traveled to the hostel – some 250 miles away from Prague – and drove “the Vietnamese citizen. . .to hospital just before she went into labor.” Both these stories portray Czechoslovak citizens⁹⁸ quite unambiguously as the Vietnamese women’s rescuers willing to undertake almost heroic measures to save the recalcitrant women.

However, as the rest of the report makes clear, the Labor Ministry administrators only partly faulted the women themselves: The main target of their disapproval was the Vietnamese Embassy, which “had been informed about the woman’s case. . .but did nothing for her.” It is hard not to notice that the tenor of these stories is reminiscent of stories from settings such as colonial India, in which “white men [were] saving brown women from brown men,”⁹⁹ colonial officials “were sanguine about their own role in ‘uplifting’ the position of Indian women,” and “the colonial state was. . .identified with the civilizing role of the ‘manly’ protector of Indian women.”¹⁰⁰ If, as Sinha suggests, “‘manhood’ in colonial society was based on a particular relationship to property,” then perhaps in the context of this migrant labor program “manhood” was derived in part from the ability to ensure “proper care” as defined by the ideas and priorities of this Central European state-socialist state, once again driving home the immense

⁹⁸ In Czech, grammatical gender makes it clear that the citizens were male.

⁹⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago, 1988), 296.

¹⁰⁰ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995), 44.

importance that the commitment to provide care had for the self-definition of the Czechoslovak state. At the same time, the purpose of this narrative strategy was also something else: to deflect the demands of the Vietnamese state. As I review these demands in the following section, the reasons for the Embassy's (lack of) action become clearer.

PREGNANCY AS A LABOR-RIGHTS ISSUE

Czechoslovak and Vietnamese representatives used to hold regular meetings to assess the program and discuss whatever issues arose in the preceding period. In April 1983, during a meeting led by the two countries' deputy labor ministers, the Vietnamese side for the first time presented the request that pregnant workers be allowed to continue working in Czechoslovakia and do so under the same conditions as Czechoslovak women.¹⁰¹ However, this was only one of about a dozen demands the Vietnamese side presented, a majority of which concerned various improvements in Vietnamese workers' working conditions. The demands ran the gamut from the request that a minimum wage be established, through the request that workers employed in agriculture be transferred to industrial companies,¹⁰² to a request for an expansion of the right

¹⁰¹ NA, "Zpráva z jednání delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," 27 April 1983.

¹⁰² The reason for this demand was twofold. One, the fact that these jobs included a fair amount of work outdoors, which the Vietnamese workers found very difficult most months of the year due to the drastic difference between the climates of the two countries. Two, the opportunity to gain the sorts of skills that the Vietnamese government wanted its workers to acquire was almost nonexistent in the agricultural sector.

to vacation in Vietnam. After the meeting, the representatives of the Czechoslovak branch ministries in charge of the companies that employed Vietnamese workers met to discuss the Vietnamese demands.¹⁰³ These officials deemed the demand in regard to pregnant women “unacceptable both on economic grounds, and because it would interfere with the substance of the interstate treaty on the employment of these female workers. . . as well as negate the reason for their stay in Czechoslovakia.” Thus, disregarding the fact that the very point of the negotiations was to *amend* the terms of the treaty, the Czechoslovak representatives all but explicitly articulated that the Vietnamese women – in a sharp contrast to Czechoslovak women – were to be restricted entirely to the sphere of production. In other words, that they were to be limited to productive labor and excluded from reproductive labor. The argument, in effect, called for a segmentation of the workforce along racial lines.

In its formal response to the requests, the Czechoslovak side refrained from mentioning the “economic grounds” brought up in the internal discussion, and stated that the request was “not in compliance with the inter-governmental treaty and hence [could not] be implemented.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ NA, “Zápis z porady na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí k projednání výsledků jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR v dubnu 1983,” dated 19 May 1983.

¹⁰⁴ NA, letter from Deputy Labor Minister Ing. Milan Kyselý to SRV Deputy Labor Minister Nguyen Van Diep, dated 24 October 1983.

Undeterred, the Vietnamese government brought up the demand (as well as other outstanding demands) again in March 1984.¹⁰⁵ This time, while the Czechoslovak response was still in principle negative, it was less categorical: The Czechoslovak officials said that while it would be “very difficult to accommodate [these women] because Czechoslovak companies did not have the conditions to do so,” they, nonetheless, conceded that, should an individual company be able to provide such accommodations, it was possible for a Vietnamese woman to stay, deliver, and finish her contract.¹⁰⁶ The Vietnamese representatives continued to bring up the issue and the Czechoslovak side’s responses continued to shift subtly toward a somewhat more accommodating stance. An August 1986 document reiterated that the cases of pregnant Vietnamese women “must be dealt with on an individual basis and by taking into account the capacities of Czechoslovak companies to provide appropriate housing for Vietnamese female workers with children, or to allocate Vietnamese families apartments, as the case may be.” But, in contrast to previous unambiguous rejections, it also for the first time explicitly stated that “in principle, the Czechoslovak side agrees with Vietnamese female workers giving birth in the ČSSR.”¹⁰⁷ There is some evidence to suggest that the situation may have shifted even further in favor of

¹⁰⁵ MPSV, “Otázky k jednání – K jednání s delegací vietnamského ministerstva práce,” 5 March 1984.

¹⁰⁶ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání delegací ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 a o návrzích opatření na zlepšení další spolupráce na úseku dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” 15 March 1984.

¹⁰⁷ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a oddělením péče o pracující velvyslanectvím VSR v Praze o problémech vzniklých v průběhu realizace mezivládní Dohody o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980,” dated 29 August 1986.

Vietnamese women: In 1987, a company contacted the Labor Ministry asking how to proceed in the case of a pregnant Vietnamese worker who was deemed medically incapable of traveling back to Vietnam. In its response, the Czech Labor Ministry noted, among other things, that “the Vietnamese workers have the right to receive the same welfare care as Czechoslovak citizens.”¹⁰⁸

The movement in the direction of greater lenience notwithstanding, it is notable that the program’s administrators put the responsibility for the care of prospective Vietnamese mothers entirely on the companies’ shoulders despite the fact that the government was the ultimate sponsor of the program. This was in line with the gradual decentralization of the program, which started in the mid-1980s, and as a part of which, a large part of the financial obligations related to the employment of Vietnamese workers was moved onto the companies employing them. Starting in 1989, the enterprises were to cover the costs of Vietnamese workers’ recruitment, language training, and travel to and from Czechoslovakia. The costs of the workers’ welfare and healthcare were to be still covered by the Czechoslovak state since “these workers participate in the creation of the state budget through the taxes they pay.”¹⁰⁹ These measures were supposed to ensure that “only the companies that create sufficient resources will be able to employ foreign workers.” Since 1989 was designated as the transition year, and in November of that year the regime collapsed, the new system was

¹⁰⁸ MPSV, letter from JUDr. Miloš Brunclík, the head of the Foreign Workers’ Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, to Sklounion, dated 29 March 1987.

¹⁰⁹ NA, “Zpráva o současném stavu odborné přípravy a dočasného zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v československých organizacích a o výhledu této spolupráce do roku 1990,” henceforth *Výhled*.

never fully implemented.¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is evident that it was an attempt to insert more market-based principles into the system *without* forsaking the state's commitment to secure certain level of welfare and healthcare for the foreign workers. Nonetheless, the area of motherhood was still largely excepted from this commitment. The document that outlined the planned changes also emphasized the need to achieve a "significant decrease in the number of deliveries by Vietnamese citizens," and pointed out again – in contrast to the statements communicated directly to the Vietnamese representatives – that Czechoslovak authorities would "strictly insist on speedy departures of pregnant women."

The Vietnamese government, for its part, insisted on discussing pregnancy within the framework of labor rights for its workers, on a par with other issues it saw as important to improving their working conditions in Czechoslovakia. Accordingly, Vietnamese representatives pushed for this right during official negotiations. Being at first bluntly rebuffed by Czechoslovak officials, and later offered a "Solomonic solution," the Vietnamese Embassy seems to have adopted the tactic of non-responsiveness and "sluggishness." It would either fail to react when asked by the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry to initiate administrative proceedings necessary for the deportation of workers or, when it did respond, it used a process that the Czechoslovak officials found unbearably protracted.

¹¹⁰ On changes in the Czechoslovak economy, see Martin Myant, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1948-1988: the Battle for Economic Reform* (Cambridge, UK, 1989); also Judy Batt, *Economic Reform and Political Change in Eastern Europe: A Comparison of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Experiences* (New York, 1988).

Commenting on the cases of pregnant Vietnamese workers who failed to show up at the airport, the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry wrote: "The [Vietnamese] group leaders do not report these cases. And even when they do, the [Vietnamese Embassy's] Department for Workers' Care does not follow through in the appropriate way."¹¹¹ Talking about the difficulty to secure deportations in general, another report noted with some exasperation:

Motions [for deportation] are oftentimes supported even by the leaders of the Vietnamese groups. However, the Embassy, following the order given by the new ambassador, significantly expanded the departure administration, which protracts the proceedings in deportation cases, and as a result, the deportations lose their pedagogical effects, or else they actually end up dragging out the conflict situation in the factory.¹¹²

A later report explained that the Embassy would not simplify its procedures since many Vietnamese citizens who had been forced to return to Vietnam on medical grounds lodged complaints with the country's highest officials objecting to the "incorrect and irresponsible procedures used by the employees of the Vietnamese Embassy in Czechoslovakia. . .feeling that they had been wronged by being forced to return to the SRV."¹¹³ Hence, the Embassy's "sluggishness" was, in part, a response to political pressures from the home country, which stemmed precisely from the fact that many Vietnamese workers perceived the orders to return home on *medical* grounds as being, actually, cases of unfair *disciplinary* measures. The "sluggishness" was simultaneously also a means of exerting pressure on the Czechoslovak officials, and thus an attempt to force them to yield to the demands that they had originally rejected at the negotiating

¹¹¹ *Problémy*, op. cit.

¹¹² NA, "Informace o některých incidentech vietnamských pracujících v ČSSR" (sometime in 1982).

¹¹³ *Zabezpečení*, op.cit.

table. This pressure was effective to the extent that it contributed to the relaxing of the initial uncompromising insistence on immediate departures for all pregnant Vietnamese workers. However, it was not enough to fundamentally change the Czechoslovak state's treatment of pregnant Vietnamese workers, as, by 1989, the state was in the process of redrawing the limits of its commitment as the ultimate provider of care.

CONCLUSION

The issue of welfare policies was of outmost importance to the former state-socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe. While the regimes' economic performance could, and was, questioned by their citizens, the states were able to make a credible case for their welfare policies. The shaming of the most prominent enemy, the United States, through the images of the unemployed and homeless was, undoubtedly, part of the Czechoslovak state's propaganda. But it was propaganda at its best: Its claims may have been overwrought, but, when everything was said and done, they corresponded to people's lived experience. The ability of these states to secure a certain level of living standards for a vast majority of their citizens – to which their extensive welfare and healthcare systems were instrumental – was undeniable. The welfare policies, then, were the one basis on which these states could rest their legitimacy securely. This is, emphatically, not to suggest that those policies were without shortcomings; they certainly were not. Nonetheless, in this regard, these states did largely deliver on their socialist commitments.

However, socialist commitments were not the only commitments these states had made. They had also committed to practicing socialist internationalism. In this chapter, I juxtaposed the socialist commitments of one of these states, Czechoslovakia, to its internationalist commitments, and showed how the two were paradoxically connected. It might be tempting to interpret the material presented here through a dichotomous lens and suggest that while the Czechoslovak state took care of “its” workers, it left out the Vietnamese. That, however, would be imprecise and incorrect. Throughout their stays, Vietnamese citizens, regardless of whether they arrived in 1968 or in 1988, enjoyed, while in the country, almost all benefits available to Czechoslovak citizens. This is particularly apparent in the area of healthcare, which included not only acute treatment but also preventative medicine. However, the Czechoslovak state’s commitment to the equality of the “workers of the world” broke down when it came to pregnancy and motherhood. The Czechoslovak state operated in regard to Vietnamese female workers with many of the gender stereotypes it applied also to citizen-women, and moreover did so with a quasi-colonial tinge, which grew out of its conceptualization of the program as a socialist civilizing mission of sorts.¹¹⁴ As a result, in its practical steps, it treated the workers’ pregnancies in part as a medical issue and in part as a disciplinary infringement, and insisted on speedy departures of pregnant Vietnamese women. Unquestionably, an important reason for this policy was economic – in 1987, for instance, the

¹¹⁴ See Alena Alamgir, “Race Is Elsewhere: State-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia.” *Race & Class* 54, 4 (2013): 67–85.

Czechoslovak state paid Kčs263,000 for 61 deliveries by Vietnamese women, and the costs of the temporary placement of 25 of these children in infant homes came to another Kčs1.2 million.¹¹⁵ Yet, the financial burden does not fully explain this reluctance since the Czechoslovak state was consistently generous when it came to Vietnamese workers' healthcare *in general*. In other words, it is not that the Czechoslovak state would have entirely excluded Vietnamese workers from its welfare provisions – as a matter of fact, when it came to their health while in the country, it was as generous as it could possibly have been. The point is that it drew line precisely there, at the benefits relevant to the workers' participation in the production process. Or, to put it differently, that it privileged certain types of benefits, namely those directly relevant to productive labor, over other kinds of benefits, especially those relevant to reproduction.

To understand why that was so, we need to remember that the economic concerns of the Czechoslovak state were about both the raw “bottom line” and, due to the exigencies of a state-socialist economy, about labor shortage. The generous maternity leave policies inevitably led to the removal of some women from the productive sphere. Indeed, in Hungary, the removal of women from the workforce was actually a conscious and intended effect of the extended maternity leaves “at a time when the introduction of economic reforms was expected to result in a decreased demand for labor.”¹¹⁶ The effect was the same in Czechoslovakia, but, in the absence of reforms (until the late 1980s) that would

¹¹⁵ *Výhled*, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ Goven, op. cit., 14. Haney, op. cit., makes a similar point on page 94 of her *Inventing the Needy*.

have led to (concerns over) labor surplus, this meant that the long maternity leaves only exacerbated the already dire labor shortage. While the Vietnamese workers, or even all foreign workers – at the end of 1988, there were 28,955 Vietnamese workers, 8,031 Cubans,¹¹⁷ and 4,950 Poles¹¹⁸ – could not have replaced all citizen-women on maternity leaves (there were 132,667 live births in the country in that same year¹¹⁹), foreign workers were certainly instrumental to mitigating labor shortages. If we use the above figures as a basis for a crude estimate, foreign workers “replaced” about one-third of new mothers going on maternity leaves. They also, through the taxes they paid, contributed to the generous benefits these women, and Czechoslovak families, received from the Czechoslovak state. Indeed, one of the first documents in which the possibility of the pure contract-worker model of the program was fully articulated, in 1976, did not present the potential financial gains from Vietnamese workers’ labor as the rationale for the proposal. Instead it put forth the opportunity for the Czechoslovak economy to “gain labor force for preferred engineering companies [*preferovaných strojírenských závodů*] and construction companies” as the primary rationale.¹²⁰ Certainly, the phrasing was in part attributable to the political

¹¹⁷ The Cuban program, which never included the apprenticeship model, was similar to the 1980s stage of the Vietnamese program but far more modest in scope. In the Czech part of the federation, the numbers were comparable only in the early 1980s: 1980: 3,529 Vietnamese workers, 4,304 Cubans; 1981: 7,477 Vietnamese, 3,987 Cubans; 1982: 21,314 Vietnamese, 4,241 Cubans; 1983: 22,446 Vietnamese, 3,737 Cubans; 1988: 24,073 Vietnamese, 9,429 Cubans.

¹¹⁸ MPSV, “Přehled o zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů – rok 1988 (bez učňů).”

¹¹⁹ Czech Statistical Office, *Czech Demographic Handbook 2007* online, accessible at [http://www.czso.cz/csu/2008edicniplan.nsf/engt/24003E05E3/\\$File/4032080106a.pdf](http://www.czso.cz/csu/2008edicniplan.nsf/engt/24003E05E3/$File/4032080106a.pdf).

¹²⁰ NA, “Informace o možnostech zaměstnávání vietnamských občanů v ČSSR a návrh dalšího postupu,” received by the Presidium of the Government (*Úřad předsednictva vlády*) on 7 April 1976.

unacceptability of the concept of “profit” (instead, the report talked about “economic acceptability,” *ekonomická přijatelnost*), nonetheless, the fact that the employment of Vietnamese workers would help address labor shortage was at least as important, if not more important, a consideration as the financial-gains motive. Conceived this way, then, it makes sense that the Czechoslovak state was ready to provide foreign workers with healthcare benefits, but it privileged those directly relevant to their capacity as producing entities. This means that although the import of Vietnamese workers was supposed to ease the fundamental tension at the core of the Czechoslovak economic-political system between the imperatives of production and those of fertility concerns, ultimately the program ended up reflecting and replicating that same tension.

This approach was also part and parcel of the redefinition that the project underwent in the 1980s, which transformed it essentially into a market exchange between the two governments. It is perhaps indicative that in my archival research I have not come across *any* balance or budget sheets related to the 1960s *praktikanti* wave (only estimates of overall costs); this is not to say that there weren’t any, there surely were, but it does suggest that the question of profit/loss was rather marginal at this time and probably handled by lowly technocrats rather than the program’s main administrators. By contrast, among the documents from 1970s wave, carefully elaborated balance and budget sheets abounded and efforts at economizing were evident. But ultimately, the sense of internationalist duty trumped the actuary conclusions and projects were given green light regardless of their expected economic disadvantageousness. In the 1980s, however, “economic acceptability” along with the feverish effort to plug

the holes in the labor market became the cardinal rule. As part of this shift, the Czechoslovak state started to price individual Vietnamese workers. The pricing included a process whereby various welfare benefits that the state provided to Czechoslovak citizens were translated into a pecuniary figure to be paid to the Vietnamese state per each “borrowed” worker. Ironically, by pricing the welfare of Vietnamese and Czechoslovak citizens differently, this figure dramatized the very economic disparity between the two countries that the program, as it had been originally conceived, was supposed to help erase.

The Vietnamese state, by having consented to becoming a contracting party in an essentially market-like relationship – indeed, according to a former Vietnamese official,¹²¹ the Vietnamese side did not see the market-like nature of the relationship as a problem, but rather the fact that its terms were not as advantageous as it would have liked – the only resort it had left was direct and indirect pressure to obtain at least some concessions from the Czechoslovak state and thus ameliorate the situation of its workers. This effort was only moderately successful in regard to the issue of pregnancies, but in other areas, notably, e.g., the transfer of Vietnamese workers out of agricultural companies, the gains were far greater. The Vietnamese state, then, stood up for its workers’ labor rights, and in that sense, it followed much more closely the precepts of socialist ideology than its Czechoslovak counterpart. Ironically, however, it did so within

¹²¹ Interview, 15 April 2011, Hanoi.

an institutional and discursive framework reminiscent of the allegedly
 “overthrown” capitalist system.¹²²

¹²² After the demise of state socialism, government resolution 274/1990 invalidated the 1980 treaty and its amendments. The two governments agreed that the companies would do their best to keep Vietnamese workers employed until the completion of their contracts, and if that was impossible, find them other jobs or, if workers had less than five months left on their contracts, they would receive a 5-month severance. (MPSV: “Zpráva o výsledku jednání delegace federálního ministertva práce a sociálních věcí ve Vietnamu,” presented by Labor Ministr Petr Miller at the meeting of the government on 23 October 1990.) Many of the laid off Vietnamese workers promptly started their own small businesses, mainly trading in cheap clothing and electronics – something many of them had done on the side, somewhat clandestinely, already during socialism (thus becoming the unsung harbingers of Czech and Slovak capitalism), and something many Czech Vietnamese continue to be involved in, in somewhat different form, today. For research on Vietnamese community living in the Czech Republic today, see, e.g., Ondřej Hofírek and Michal Nekorjak, “Od pásu ke stánku – a zpět? Proměny ekonomických aktivit Vietnamců v České republice,” in *Vybrané aspekty života cizinců v české republice* (Prague, Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí, v.v.i., 2010), 77–94; Stanislav Brouček, *Aktuální problémy adaptace vietnamského etnika v ČR* (2003), accessible from Labor Ministry’s webpage: <http://www.cizinci.cz/clanek.php?lg=1&id=107>; Šárka Martínková, *Vietnamská menšina v Praze* (Prague, MA thesis, 2003); Veronika Kahlerová, *Vietnamská menšina v Plzni* (Pilsen, MA thesis).

CHAPTER 5 SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM AT WORK: CAUSES AND REDRESS OF VIETNAMESE WORKERS' COMPLAINTS

There is a story that floats around in the Vietnamese community living in the Czech Republic today.¹ It is about a group of Vietnamese women who came to Czechoslovakia in the early 1980s as contract workers. The women had all served together in the same Special Forces unit operating out of Saigon in the war against the United States before their arrival to Czechoslovakia. These were, so the story goes, heroic and tough women, who used to be engaged in life and death combat in Vietnam, and jobs in Czechoslovakia were to be a reward for the bravery they showed in the war. They came to work in forests, near the town of Kadaň, but they made very little money, maybe 800 or 900 Czechoslovak crowns, this was not enough for them even to make ends meet, so, they went on strike. First, regular police were sent in to contain the strike, but the women, putting to use their Special Forces combat skills, particularly karate, fought the police and ultimately defeated them. Then the Interior Ministry sent a special unit to intervene against the women. The special unit besieged the hostel in which the women stayed; the women's male friends came to help them. The women used everything they could find – silverware, plates – as weapons, which they threw at the special unit forces from the windows, while the police used teargas against them. When the women finally had no food left, and nothing else to throw at the police, the Czech police vanquished them, and the entire group was sent back to Vietnam immediately.

¹ Field notes, 10 December 2010, Prague.

The story turns out to contain an important kernel of truth, suspended in a mythical web. The Czech Interior Ministry's archives indeed contain an entire file devoted to the police action used to suppress a strike organized by some 100 female Vietnamese contract workers and perhaps two dozen of their male counterparts working in a plant cultivation company in the town of Kadaň in the spring of 1983. I was lucky enough to also be able to speak with a woman who personally took part in the strike.² While she dispelled the notion that the group was composed of Special Forces veterans,³ she confirmed the dissatisfaction over the wages that the workers were paid as the main reason behind the strike. In fact, as far as she was concerned, the strike was about the wages and nothing else, and nothing but a redress of the wage situation could persuade the women to back down.

This strike might have been the most serious one, given that almost 30 years later it still survives in the collective memory of Czech Vietnamese, but it was certainly not the only one to occur in the 1980s. Archival evidence shows that a number of other strikes, and other forms of expressions of Vietnamese workers' dissatisfaction, took place at around the same time.

EXPLOITATION AND RESISTANCE

² Interview, 5 February 2011.

³ Police documents do mention authorities' concern that some individual members of the group, all male and only a few, were former combatants and thus could mount violent resistance during the raid, but the concern turned out to be unwarranted.

The only other state-socialist labor migration program covered by existing literature in any detail is that operated by the GDR state, and the literature generally characterizes it as exploitative. Zatlin, for instance, writes that “Marxist-Leninist practice revealed itself to be every bit as rapacious as its capitalist competitors,” and that “rather than displaying solidarity with their socialist allies, the East German authorities sought to exploit the asymmetries of power inherent in these relationships for economic gain.”⁴ We find similar assessments elsewhere: “The SED⁵ argued that, in contrast to Western neo-imperialism, its economic links with poorer countries were founded on equality, mutual advantage, respect for sovereignty, and territorial integrity. In practice, however, they bore striking resemblance to those of its capitalist rivals.”⁶ Thus, at least in the case of the GDR labor exchange program, it is argued that (1) socialist internationalism, which provided the ideological framing for the programs, was a mere “fig leaf,”⁷ (2) the program is described as though it did not change over time and existed in only one single form, and finally (3) that there was no resistance mounted to this exploitation by either the foreign workers themselves or their governments.⁸ Whether or not these charges apply

⁴ Jonathan R. Zatlin, “Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971-1989,” *Central European History* 40 (2007) 683-720, 705.

⁵ The Socialist Unity Party of Germany, GDR’s Communist Party.

⁶ Jude Howell, “The End of an Era: The Rise and Fall of GDR Aid,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, 2 (1994), 305-328, 306.

⁷ Konrad H. Jarausch, “Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR” in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999).

⁸ Besides the works quoted earlier, see also: Felicitas Hillmann, “Riders on the Storm: Vietnamese in Germany’s Two Migration Systems,” in Ernst Spaan, Felicitas Hillmann and Ton van Naerssen, eds., *Asian Migrants and European Labour Markets: Patterns and Processes of Immigrant Labour Market Insertion in Europe* (London, Routledge, 2005); Jochen Oppenheimer, “Mozambican Worker

to the GDR, this was certainly not the case in Czechoslovakia. If the guest-worker form of the program, introduced by the treaty from November 1980, ushered in exploitation, it also ushered in resistance to it, and a period of conflict between Vietnamese workers and the Czechoslovak enterprises employing them unknown until then. Cases of “anti-social activities” – of which strikes in 16 different enterprises in 1982⁹ were the most serious – suddenly multiplied. The strikes, which most often took the form of work stoppages and lasted anywhere from a day to several weeks, were a particularly startling form of protest as far as the managers of the Czechoslovak companies were concerned, since (in contrast to Poland, for example) the country had not seen any major striking activity since workers’ riots in the wake of the 1953 currency reform, which had suddenly and drastically affected workers’ standards of living.¹⁰ Even during the tumultuous

Migration to the Former German Democratic Republic: Serving Socialism and Struggling Under Democracy,” *Portuguese Studies Review* 12, 1 (2004), 163–187; Pipu Bui, *Envisioning Vietnamese Migrants in Germany: Ethnic Stigma, Immigrant Origin Narratives and Partial Masking* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, Rutgers University, 2003); Jorge Pérez-López and Sergio Díaz-Briquets, “Labor Migration and Offshore Assembly in the Socialist World: The Cuban Experience,” *Population and Development Review* 16, 2 (1990), 273–299; Patrick R. Ireland, “Socialism, Unification Policy and the Rise of Racism in Eastern Germany,” *IMR* 31, 3 (1997), 541–568; Bartłomiej Kamiński and Robert W. Janes, “Economic Rationale for Eastern Europe’s Third World Policy,” *Problems of Communism* 37 (1988), 15–27; Michael Radu “East vs. South: The Neglected Side of the International System” in Michael Radu, ed., *Eastern Europe and the Third World* (New York: Praeger, 1981); Martin Rudner, “East European Aid to Asian Developing Countries: The Legacy of the Communist Era,” *Modern Asian Studies* 30, 1 (1996), 1–

⁹ NA, “Přehled o stávkách a další závažné protispolečenské činnosti vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích” authored by Department (*odbor*) 32 Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

¹⁰ See, Johann Smula, “The Party and the Proletariat: Škoda 1948–53,” *Cold War History* 6, 2, (2006), 153–175; Kevin McDermott, “Popular Resistance in Communist Czechoslovakia: The Plzeň Uprising, June 1953,” *Contemporary European History* 19, 4 (2010), 287–307; Robert K. Evanson, “Regime and Working Class in Czechoslovakia 1948–1968,” *Soviet Studies* 37, 2 (1985), 248–268; Martin

period of 1968 Czechoslovak workers did not, as a rule, back their demands with threats of industrial action, and instead “showed considerable restraint”¹¹ although a few strikes, such as one at the Dukla Mine in Ostrava, did occur.¹² As for the late state-socialist era, a Czech economist argues that

there was never any need to resort to strikes; the management always accommodated [the trade unions] when it came to small demands. And as far as wage demands were concerned, it was clear that [the trade unions] could not achieve much in that regard, and that it was, in any case, unnecessary for them to get involved; they could rely on the management to perform their role.¹³

Vietnamese workers, however, did not follow this pattern. As I discuss below, in part, this was due to their status as newcomers to the production halls and to the conditions of their stays, as delineated by the treaty. However, as the quote above suggests, it might have had something to do also with the fact that they were not members of Czechoslovak trade unions.¹⁴

Myant, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1948-1988* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹¹ Alex Pravda, “Some Aspects of the Czechoslovak Economic Reform and the Working Class in 1968,” *Soviet Studies* 25, 1 (1973), 102–124.

¹² Jiri Valenta, “Czechoslovakia: a ‘Proletariat Embourgeoisé’” in Jan F. Triska and Charles Gati, eds., *Blue-Collar Workers in Eastern Europe* (London, UK, George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 216.

¹³ Otakar Turek, *Podíl ekonomiky na pádu komunismu v Československu* (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha, 1995), 68.

¹⁴ Although this issue is somewhat unclear. The contractual documents signed on the inter-state level (i.e., the treaties) did not address the issue of Vietnamese workers’ becoming members of Czechoslovak trade unions, or any other Czechoslovak political or social organizations for that matter. The Czechoslovak side originally (in the course of preparation of contractual documents for the apprentice worker wave) anticipated that they *would be* joining (see, MPSV,

Thus, in this chapter I argue that, in Czechoslovakia, the situation was far more complex than the quoted literature describes. First, as I have already shown in the historical overview chapter and in Chapter 4, the Czechoslovak program changed significantly over time and passed through three distinct phases. While the last one, launched by the treaty signed in November 1980, can be described as exploitative in some respects (although I would still be hesitant to assert that it was exploitative *in toto*), the same simply cannot be said about the first two phases (1967 through 1979, and, for the most part, even thereafter in the case of the apprentice-worker form of the program). Secondly, and this is one of the major contributions of this chapter, I will show that both Vietnamese workers and Vietnamese government officials resisted exploitation when it occurred by actively protesting when they felt that their rights were being short-shrifted, and pushed for redress. To make the situation more complex, archival evidence suggests that the position of the Czechoslovak administrators of the program was ambivalent in this regard: While they sometimes sided with Czechoslovak

“Návrh: Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstvem práce VDR o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích,” November 1973). However, the stipulation never made it into the final draft of the treaty “at the express wish of the Vietnamese side.” Instead, the workers were to be organized in the Vietnamese Communist Party or youth organization, and only their group leaders or other representatives were to maintain contact with Czechoslovak organizations. (NÁ, “Zpráva o výsledcích jednání československé delegace ve Vietnamské demokratické republice o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích,” undated). Yet, an article in a company (car manufacturer) newspaper from fall 1989 explicitly states that Vietnamese workers employed by it *were* members of the local trade union branch “with all the rights and duties.” (“Anonymy lží zbavené” [Removing lies from anonymous letters], *Ventil, the company newspaper of the employees of AZNP in Mladá Boleslav* 43, 36 (22 September 1989), p. 3. I would like to thank Mr. Tomáš Vilímek for sharing the copy of the newspaper with me.

companies and against Vietnamese workers, at other times, their stance was reversed. And thirdly, I will argue that one chief reason why these efforts were successful at least some of the time and at least in a qualified (and sometimes complete) way is that the Czechoslovak government, which was the ultimate employer of Vietnamese workers in the socialized economy, was – unlike its counterparts in capitalist settings – *politically accountable* to its Vietnamese counterpart,¹⁵ and further that that accountability rested in part on the two governments' proclaimed shared commitment to socialism in general, and socialist internationalism in particular.

**CAUSES OF DISSATISFACTION 1: CHANGES IN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:
APPRENTICE-WORKER FORM VERSUS GUEST-WORKER FORM OF LABOR EXCHANGE**

I have discussed the changes introduced by the 27 November 1980 treaty in detail in the historical overview chapter. Let us now briefly review those principal changes introduced by this new form of the program that contributed to the dissatisfaction of Vietnamese guest workers. The process that preceded the signing of the treaty (detailed in chapter 2) made it clear that there was a definite shift in how the program was conceptualized. This shift was exemplified by the newly introduced emphasis on “economic efficiency” (*ekonomická efektivnost*), which was to form one of rationales for this newest iteration of the program, and the anticipation that one of the major advantages of employing Vietnamese guest workers would be their nature as a “fully mobile”

¹⁵ See Michael Burawoy, “The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 81, 5 (1976), 1050–1087, p. 1053, and my discussion in the introductory chapter of this dissertation.

(*plně mobilní*) workforce. Besides these new conceptualizations, there were also new organizational rules put in place as part of the guest-worker model. One of them was the introduction of fees that the Czechoslovak government paid to its Vietnamese counterpart. There was a one-time fee in the amount of Kčs1,000¹⁶ for each imported worker billed as compensation for the expenses accrued by the Vietnamese government in the course of workers' recruitment; then there was an annual fee of Kčs 2,400 per worker described as the fee to cover healthcare and social welfare benefits for the worker and their family back in Vietnam (I discuss this fee in detail in Chapter 4). An amendment to the treaty agreed upon by the two sides at the very end of the decade (i.e., just before the collapse of the regime, and thus also of the program) erased the distinction between the two fees and henceforth the Czechoslovak government was liable for Kčs500 per month per worker instead.¹⁷ Thus, this change more than doubled the direct amount of money the Vietnamese government received per worker: from Kčs10,600 to Kčs24,000 for a four-year period (the normal length of Vietnamese guest workers' contracts). In this context, it should be noted that by the late 1980s Czechoslovakia had similar arrangements with other countries "lending" their workers to it. The cost of "borrowing" workers from different countries,

¹⁶ NA, "Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích, 27 November 1980.

¹⁷ NA, "Protokol o změně Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980," signed in Hanoi on 6 April 1989.

however, varied wildly.¹⁸ Most striking is the large difference between the costs associated with the employment of fellow European state-socialist Polish workers and the cost of employment of workers from the poorer non-European socialist countries. And among those, the fact that the Vietnamese workers were significantly cheaper to import than the second largest contingent of non-European socialist workers, the Cubans. In fact, the only workers that were cheaper for the Czechoslovak state to import than the Vietnamese were the Mongolians, whose number, however, was negligible.

Vietnam:	Kčs4,875
Cuba:	Kčs6,953
Poland:	Kčs12,200
Angola:	Kčs7,500 (244 workers in 1988; 200 workers in 1989 ¹⁹)
Mongolia:	Kčs700 (125 apprentices in 1988, ²⁰ 800 workers in August 1989 ²¹)

Table 2: The Cost to Czechoslovakia of "Borrowing" Foreign Workers.

Thus, the Vietnamese workers cost Czechoslovakia 60% less than the Poles!

According to an explanatory follow-up memo, the sums that companies would

¹⁸ MPSV, Addendum to "Pokyny ke způsobu provádění úhrad nákladů spojených se zaměstnáváním zahraničních pracovníků v československých organizacích," dated 30 December 1988, signed by ing. Štefan Šťastný, deputy labor minister, ing. Július Jombík, first deputy finance minister, ing. Václav Věrtelář, first deputy chair of the Czechoslovak Planning Commission."

¹⁹ MPSV, "Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989," dated 25 August 1989.

²⁰ MPSV, "Přehled o čerpání finančních prostředků vyčleněných v roce 1988 ze státního rozpočtu na odbornou přípravu zahraničních občanů v čs. organizacích na území ČSR."

²¹ MPSV, "Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989," dated 25 August 1989.

have to pay to cover the recruitment costs were Kčs1,000 for each Vietnamese worker, either Kčs250 or Kčs810 for each Cuban worker (depending on whether or not the worker traveled home for vacation in a given year), but each Polish worker, including youth coming to “help out” Czechoslovak companies during summer months, cost the enterprises full Kčs7,000 per person.²²

The newly introduced concepts “economic efficiency” and “fully mobile labor force,” along with the introduction of the annual fees, indicate a clear shift in the direction of commodification of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia. Despite this shift, however, the language of the treaty still relied on the vocabulary of “training.” The new treaty was defined as an agreement on “the temporary employment of *skilled* workers from the Vietnamese Socialist Republic *connected with further technical training* in Czechoslovak organizations” (*o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích*). The first problem arose because many of the workers who arrived were not actually skilled. The Vietnamese government representatives asked in as early as 1981 that 40-50% of the workers slated to be sent to Czechoslovakia in 1982 be allowed to be unskilled.²³ This, obviously, meant that these workers could not *increase* their qualifications, only *acquire* them. This would have been possible, indeed very

²² MPSV, “Výklad ke způsobu provádění úhrad nákladů spojených se zaměstnáváním zahraničních pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” issued on 12 June 1989.

²³ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 9.-13. března 1981,” dated 13 March 1981.

likely, under the apprentice-worker system, but if not quite impossible then certainly much harder under the new system, which dispensed with formal vocational training, even if the Czechoslovak companies were supposed to devise and implement (individualized) training plans for the incoming workers to be used on the job. Another novel feature was the introduction, in March of 1981, of so-called *transfer*.²⁴ This was a system of compulsory remittances, put in place at the request of the Vietnamese officials, whereby 15% of workers' wages were withheld by the companies for which they worked and sent to an account owned by the Vietnamese state. The transfer payments were described in the documents as being applied toward "the costs of [workers'] recruitment and preparation for trip to Czechoslovakia and deposited into the fund of the defense and construction of the homeland." The transfer obligation did not apply to apprentice-workers who could keep their wages in their entirety.

There were other important changes that occurred with the introduction of the pure guest worker model. In the apprentice-worker model, the fields in which the Vietnamese citizens were trained were chosen by the Vietnamese government according to its needs, and only modified if the Czechoslovak side was not able to accommodate the requests due to logistical difficulties. By contrast, in the pure guest worker model, the needs of the Czechoslovak industrial enterprises gained prominence. This is evident from the fact that throughout the 1980s, Czechoslovak companies made yearly requests for whatever number of Vietnamese workers they needed (or anticipated needing) –

²⁴ Ibid.

and at times even specified whether they were interested in men or women – via the appropriate ministry under whose control they belonged (e.g., heavy industry, agriculture, metallurgy, construction, and so forth).²⁵ The respective ministries then forwarded the request to the Labor Ministry, which then brought the matter up with the representatives of the Vietnamese government during official talks.

A juxtaposition of the conditions under which Vietnamese apprentice workers and guest workers, respectively, worked and lived in Czechoslovakia shows quite clearly why the guest workers often felt short-changed:

	Apprentice-Workers	Guest Workers
Length of stay & skills level	3-3.5 yrs vocational school training + 2-3-year	About 50% of workers unskilled; 4-year contracts

²⁵ See, e.g., MPSV, “Vietnamští pracovníci podle oborů a profesí, kategorií pracovníků a přijetí v roce 1980 a 1981 v ČSSR,” addendum no. 2 to “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasněho zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981.”

	employment by CS companies	with CS companies
Language proficiency	9-month language training; high Czech/Slovak proficiency	3-month language training, low Czech/Slovak proficiency
Wages/Transfer	Kept all their wages	Subject to compulsory transfer
Relative power of CS, Viet governments in choice of fields of study/work	Vietnamese state's interests and needs are primary	The needs of CS companies and state are primary
Altruism/profit motive on CS side	CS <i>expected</i> net financial loss at the time when program was devised	CS net financial gain – expected and achieved

Table 3: Comparison of Apprentice-Workers' and Guest Workers' Working and Living Conditions.

A few comments on the information contained in the table are necessary. First, while apprentice workers received 9 months of language training, guest workers were expected to make do with a mere 3 (during their initial stay in the reception centers), which was simply insufficient even for basic proficiency given the immense difference between the languages. The companies were supposed to offer the workers further language courses once they commenced their work assignments, but the companies often reported to the Labor Ministry that they decided to cancel these courses due to the Vietnamese workers' lack of interest in them,²⁶ which, in the words of a former Czech Labor Ministry administrator,²⁷ was understandable given that the workers had to attend these classes after their

²⁶ NA, "K jednání s delegací vietnamského ministerstva práce," document produced by Czech Labor Ministry, dated 5 March 1984.

²⁷ Interview, op. cit., 30 October 2010.

shifts in the factories, and, as the former clerk said, “Who would feel like doing *that?*”

Second, since the Czechoslovak state shouldered the entire financial burden of the operation, Czechoslovak officials expected to recoup only part of the expenses that the Czechoslovak state spent on Vietnamese citizens’ training. The calculations at the time when the rules for the apprentice worker form of the program were being devised (i.e., in the early 1970s) suggested that only about two-thirds of the expenses would be recovered through Vietnamese workers’ labor in Czechoslovak enterprises upon their graduation from vocational schools.²⁸ However, indirect evidence suggests that, contrary to these initial expectations, Czechoslovakia eventually ended up with a slight surplus. The first clue comes from the government resolution passed on 19 December 1979 authorizing the signing of the treaty through which the apprentice worker (along with *praktikanti* and *stážisté* workers) form of the labor exchange was extended on 21 December 1979. Point 3 of the resolution stated that the expenses incurred by the training of an additional 3,500 Vietnamese citizens between the years 1980 and 1983 would be “covered by the revenues from the work of the citizens of the Vietnamese Socialist Republic.”²⁹ The second and more direct clue comes from a table titled “Estimates [*orientační propočet*] of the economic effectiveness of

²⁸ NA, “Zpráva o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů VDR v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušných smluvních dokumentů, pg. 5., November 1973.

²⁹ MPSV, “Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 19. prosince 1979, č. 337 o sjednání dohody s Vietnamem o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích.”

Vietnamese citizens' technical training in vocational schools [*učební poměr*]." The table, along with tables containing the same set of estimates for *praktikanti* and *stážisté* workers, respectively, accompanied the proposal of the treaty to be approved by the Czechoslovak government in November of the same year. It seems reasonable to assume that the estimates, being made five years after the launch of the apprentice worker form of the labor exchange, were based on the *actual* figures on Vietnamese apprentice workers' productivity (as well as actual costs) during and after their vocational training. If this is so, which logics suggests should be the case, the Czechoslovak state ended up with a national income (*národní důchod*) surplus of roughly Kčs51,100 per apprentice worker (or Kčs129.8 million per 2,540 apprentice workers, as the table notes) for the entire period.³⁰ To be sure, this is a very modest surplus – in 1978, Czechoslovakia's national income reached some Kčs438 billion.³¹ However, what matters far more than the amount of the surplus is the fact that this form of labor exchange, which was devised to meet *Vietnam's* developmental goals (not Czechoslovak economic goals) and was shaped by the requirements of Vietnam, i.e., the sending state, actually turned out *not* to be a financially losing proposition. What is equally intriguing is the comparison of the costs and surpluses with the *praktikanti*

³⁰ All apprentice workers spent 2.5 years working upon graduation. This meant that apprentice workers attending vocational schools with 3.5-year curricula stayed 6 years altogether; those attending schools with 2-year curricula stayed for 4.5 years total. (MPSV, "Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky a Státním výborem pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," signed on 21 December 1979.)

³¹ *Statistická ročenka Československé socialistické republiky, 1980* [Statistical Yearbook of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic for Year 1980] (SNTL, Nakladatelství technické literatury, Prague, 1980), p. 132.

workers. The *praktikanti* form of labor exchange was also explicitly geared toward training but it did not include any formal training in vocational or other schools, only hands-on, individualized training in factories. As a result, the training costs in this model were far lower than in the apprentice workers model: just under Kčs40,000 for *praktikanti* (for the entire time of their stay, up to 3 years, as a rule) versus Kčs163,400 for apprentice workers (roughly same amount of time spent in vocational school). Yet, despite the significantly lower amount of money spent on training, the surplus that resulted from the work of each *praktikant* was mere Kčs13,650. While the relative size of the surplus in each of the two cases was similar – each exceeded the costs by roughly one-fourth – the difference in absolute numbers is substantial. Looked at this way, vocational school training clearly amounted to a much better investment.³² Of course, it was supposed to be an investment, but an investment in the Vietnamese state's development. The evidence I have just presented suggests that it may have turned out to be a "best-of-both-worlds" kind of investment also as far as Czechoslovakia was concerned. And this is only in financial terms; but as the contemporary documents authored by the Czech Labor Ministry clearly and repeatedly show, the apprentice workers were much better liked by the

³² The *stážisté* form of the work-training program, used for workers with higher specialized technical training, including college-level, did not bring any profit whatsoever. The numbers of *praktikanti* and *stážisté* was always much lower than the number of apprentice workers. For instance, the two sides agreed that in 1980, the Vietnamese side would send 1,700 apprentice workers, but only 316 *praktikanti* and *stážisté* trainee-workers (MPSV, "Zápis o jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky s delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky," dated 21 December 1979.)

companies and much less dissatisfied with their working conditions (precisely for reasons discussed in this chapter).

CAUSES OF DISSATISFACTION 2: SOCIALIST RELATIONS OF PRODUCTIONS ON THE SHOP FLOOR

In what arguably remains, almost 30 years later, the most astute analysis of the socialist relations of production, Burawoy³³ identified the hierarchization of the factory workshop along with the “dictatorship of the norm” embedded in neck-breaking piece rates as key features of socialist industrial work. Walder,³⁴ studying China of the early 1980s, too, described the shop floor as the “foreman’s empire,” which suggests that these were more general characteristics of socialist relations of production, not just traits specific to the Hungarian factories studied by Burawoy. As others have pointed out, “collectivist centralization at the national level was combined with *individualized* production targets for each worker,”³⁵ as well as with “vocational competitions. . . , the activist movement. . . , the widespread use of bonuses and premiums, and. . . the scramble for materials and other goods.”³⁶ Together, these measures created and amplified differences among workers. In other words, the socialist structuring of the relations of production was conducive to a situation in which an incoming group of workers

³³ Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Production Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism* (London, 1985).

³⁴ Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry* (Berkeley, 1986).

³⁵ Mark Pittaway, “The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture, and the State in Early Socialist Hungary, *The Journal of Modern History* 74, 4 (2002), 737–769, 744, *italics mine*.

³⁶ Andrew Port, “When Workers Rumbled: The Wismut Upheaval of August 1951 in East Germany,” *Social History* 22, 2 (May, 1997): 145–173, 159.

was seen in rival terms by the more established workers. A part of that hostility was due to the fact that “better jobs” (e.g., those that made making the piece rate easier) went to those on good terms with the foreman, and so, inevitably, newcomers usually received the short end of the stick. This is exactly what happened when women, as a new group of industrial workers, appeared in Hungarian factories. Their introduction to certain industrial jobs was “fiercely resisted by male skilled workers and foremen,” who complained about their being “inept, undisciplined and corrupt.”³⁷ We can find exactly the same kinds of complaints against Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovak factories as well. Hence, to the extent that the Vietnamese workers were discriminated in terms of wages and job assignments, this was not so much because they were treated *differently* than Czechoslovak workers, but precisely because they became incorporated into the existing relations of production and became part of the enterprise-level wage (fund) allocations (which I discuss below).

What further fuelled Vietnamese workers’ dissatisfaction with wages and job assignments is that to these divisions, common to all socialist work places, were added divisions produced by the structuring of the labor exchange program itself. Specifically, the fact that a whole panoply of categories, or statuses, was created, as we saw in Chapter 3. To briefly recapitulate: By the early 1980s, there were five different categories under which Vietnamese citizens worked and lived in Czechoslovakia: apprentice workers (*učni, vyučenci*); *stážisté* or “interns,” *praktikanti* or trainees, *zaučenci* or quasi-apprentice workers, and finally guest

³⁷ Pittaway, op. cit., p. 753.

workers, referred to as *pracující* (literally, “working persons”). To each of these statuses/categories, somewhat different conditions of stay were attached. The most crucial differences, as we have already seen, existed between apprentice workers and guest workers groups, which constituted the two most numerous groups. Importantly, the people belonging to these two groups often ended up working literally side by side in the same workshops and factories. The fact that the conditions of their work, including remuneration, differed, often dramatically, tended to fuel dissatisfaction of the guest workers: “In the same company, the vocational schools graduates, with monthly incomes of between Kčs2,500 and Kčs3,500, do not transfer money, while guest workers, with incomes between Kčs1,000 and Kčs2,000, are obligated to transfer. Their dissatisfaction with both low wages and the obligation to transfer money then sometimes leads to strikes.”³⁸ Not only were the rules of their stays different, each group also fell under the purview of a different Vietnamese ministry: the apprentice-workers were managed by the Vietnamese State Committee for Professional Training³⁹ (i.e., a body regulating educational institutions), while the contract workers fell under the purview of the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor and War Invalids. Correspondingly, each of these ministries was represented in Czechoslovakia by its own department at the Vietnamese Embassy. The apprentice-workers were managed by the Embassy’s Students’ Department, which also managed Vietnamese students attending Czechoslovak universities, while the guest workers fell under the purview of the Embassy’s Department of

³⁸ NA, “Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” fall 1982.

³⁹ Which, although not called a ministry, had a formal status comparable to that of a ministry.

Workers' Care. The two departments did not even share the same building in Prague, and, according to an informant, the relationship between these administrative departments appeared to the Czech administrators of the program marked by certain rivalry or at least, lack of cooperation.⁴⁰

CAUSES OF DISSATISFACTION 3: WAGE POLICIES AND POLITICS

According to a Czech Labor Ministry report,⁴¹ out of the 16 strikes that the Vietnamese workers organized in late summer and early fall of 1982 in various Czechoslovak enterprises, in 11 cases the immediate cause of the strike was dissatisfaction with wages.⁴² One problem was that wages differed quite dramatically depending the economic sector in which the Vietnamese workers were placed. Thus, in 1981, for instance, Vietnamese workers working for companies belonging under the purview of the Transport Ministry and the Ministry for Heavy Industry and Metallurgy earned relatively high wages of Kčs18.32/hour and Kčs17.01/hour, respectively. By contrast, those allocated to companies belonging under the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition, made wages that were almost 50% lower – Kčs11.39/hour and Kčs11.34/hour, respectively.⁴³ These figures were sector-wide averages, and so, the actual wages were sometimes even lower than that;

⁴⁰ Interview, 4 November, 2010.

⁴¹ The text was likely written for the minister's perusal although the addressee is not explicitly specified in the document.

⁴² In almost all of the remaining cases, the reason listed was the opposition to transfer.

⁴³ MPSV, "Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků v I. pololetí r. 1981," dated 20 October 1981.

the Agriculture Ministry reported that, at one particular farm, the average wage of Vietnamese workers was mere Kčs9.86/hour.⁴⁴ These sector-dependent wage differentials also come a long way toward explaining why so many of the strikes were organized and carried out by female workers, whose proportion hovered only around 20% of total Vietnamese labor force in Czechoslovakia.

Another source of difference in wages, and hence dissatisfaction, laid in the workers' credentials, or lack thereof. While the credentials and skills that the apprentice workers gained through training in Czechoslovak vocational schools might or might not have been useful to them upon their return to Vietnam,⁴⁵ they played an important role during the time they spent working in Czechoslovak factories as wages were calculated to reflect such credentials, or their absence. A company manager reporting to the Labor Ministry on the steps that the company took to contain a strike organized by a group of Vietnamese guest workers put it thusly:

The members of the delegation from Pražský stavební podnik [a construction firm] explained to the Vietnamese comrades the basic principles of socialist work remuneration, in particular the principle according to which the amount of the reward depends on the amount and quality of performed work, while the achieved [formal] level of qualifications and the length of experience are also taken into account.⁴⁶

In other words, in a situation when the Vietnamese contract workers were not credentialed by Czechoslovak (or, indeed, any other) vocational schools, their

⁴⁴ MPSV, "Odborné školení vietnamských pracovníků v MZVŽ [Ministerstvo zemědělství a výživy] (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistice).

⁴⁵ This remains an unresearched question; to date, there are no studies on the topic to my knowledge.

⁴⁶ NA, Letter from the director of Pražský stavební podnik to the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, dated 30 September 1982.

wages tended to be in the lower fringes of the wage brackets associated with particular jobs. Thus, not only were the vocational school graduates far more productive in comparison with *praktikanti* trainees, as I discussed above, they were also much happier in their jobs than guest workers. Hence, the decision to cover the costs of their education and training, made originally on an altruistic basis, was turning out to be a rather wise investment by the Czechoslovak state, or at least, certainly came with far fewer problems than any of the other forms of labor exchange.

Additionally, the companies had an incentive to take advantage of the possibility to employ Vietnamese workers due to the way in which the wage system was set up, specifically the fact that central planners assigned to enterprises a certain amount of money to be disbursed as wages⁴⁷ so that the companies had a fixed amount of money at their disposal to use for wages (the wage fund), which they then divided among its employees.⁴⁸ Under these conditions, having formal credentials from Czechoslovak schools was important as it guaranteed placement in certain (which is to say, *higher*) wage brackets. A lack of these credentials gave managers greater leeway in making decisions about foreign workers' wages. A former program administrator at the Czech Labor Ministry⁴⁹ told me that the companies received certain amount of money to disburse as wages specifically to foreign contract workers, and by putting the workers in lower wage brackets, the

⁴⁷ The amount was a fixed proportion of planned sales targets. Bonuses came from a separate bonus fund. See Alex Pravda, "Systems of Wage Regulation in the Soviet Block," *Soviet Studies* 28, 1 (1976) 91–109, 104.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴⁹ Interview, 3 November 2011.

companies could pocket the difference, which they would then use to boost the wages of Czechoslovak workers, presumably those the companies cherished due to their special skills or productivity.⁵⁰ This information was indirectly corroborated by the administrator's former colleague, who said that sometimes "the foreman would task a Vietnamese worker with producing a piece [on a lathe] that, say, only a worker in the 6th qualification class was supposed [to be qualified enough] to make; but the Vietnamese worker would only be assigned to the 4th qualification class, and so the workers complained."⁵¹ A third former administrator⁵² mentioned a similar situation in regard to per hour (rather than piece-rate) earnings given to Vietnamese workers. Although all the former administrators qualified this information by pointing out that it was an infrequent practice and that most companies treated Vietnamese workers fairly, an official report actually confirms these accounts. It stated that some companies asked for Vietnamese workers primarily so that they could fulfill their employees quotas, and in that way achieve significant increases in their wage funds. They expected that, given the lower average wages of the Vietnamese, the incomes of the Czechoslovak workers would increase. Related to this is the fact that, contradicting their own [initial] requirements as to the

⁵⁰ On state-socialist companies going out of their way to accommodate valuable workers in the Hungarian context see Burawoy, op. cit., *Politics of Production*, and Mark Pittaway, "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture, and the State in Early Socialist Hungary," *The Journal of Modern History* 74, 4 (2002), 737–769.

⁵¹ Interview, 21 July 2010.

⁵² Interview, 30 October 2010.

workers' qualifications, they [sometimes⁵³] assign the Vietnamese to inferior positions and poorly paid jobs."⁵⁴

The problem was compounded by the fact that, as I noted earlier, possibly some 50% of Vietnamese guest workers arrived unskilled and without any experience with industrial labor.⁵⁵ This meant that the Czechoslovak companies, indeed, sometimes dealt with workers who found adapting to their jobs difficult, as can be seen, for example, from this report written by the deputy director of a pharmaceutical company for the Czech Labor Ministry:

Starting work in their jobs has been difficult for the Vietnamese workers [45 women, 19 men], and a number of various problems arose. A majority of the workers have never been employed before, they find respecting working hours difficult, and fall behind in their work [compared with Czech workers]. The Vietnamese also often fail to observe regulations in regard to hygiene, which must be observed in the production of pharmaceuticals. . . Based on their performance so far, it can be expected that they will fail to achieve the results, and hence also the remuneration, of others [Czech workers] which will be reflected in their piecework wages.⁵⁶

Another company reported that the average productivity of Vietnamese workers it was employing reached about 75% of Czechoslovak workers' productivity.⁵⁷

⁵³ The word "sometimes" is penciled in by hand into the text typed on a typewriter.

⁵⁴ MPSV, "Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích," end of 1982.

⁵⁵ NA, "Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 3 - 13. března 1981."

⁵⁶ NA, Report written by Antonie Veselá, deputy director for cadres (human resources) and staff work for Léčiva company, dated 30 July 1982.

⁵⁷ NA, the company in question was Pozemní stavby Karlovy Vary, information from "Problémy se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistikám), dated February 1984.

One of my Vietnamese informants described the same issue in the plant cultivation company, which I described in the beginning of this chapter, although from her point of view the problem was “not so much that the work would be difficult [to learn] but that nobody showed [them] how to go about doing it.”⁵⁸

The result was that although in the *formal* sense, the stipulation contained in the intergovernmental treaties that stated that the Vietnamese workers would be paid according to the same pay scales as the Czechoslovak workers was observed – indeed, no special scales were devised, and in some companies and industrial sectors Vietnamese workers were making wages that were both comparable to that of their local counterparts and relatively high.⁵⁹ In *practice*, however, their earnings were at times lower than those of their Czechoslovak counterparts, and in any case, lower than what the Vietnamese workers had expected to earn before their arrival, and what they considered fair. In these cases, there was a formal equality lacking *substantive* fairness, as far as some Vietnamese workers were concerned. When wages were “rigged” by the supervisory staff and management of the Czechoslovak companies, it was not only the Vietnamese workers who were shortchanged, so was the commitment to socialist internationalism within the framework of which the program was supposed to take place. However, as importantly, there was also resistance to these tendencies. The pushback came from three sources: (1) the Czechoslovak

⁵⁸ Interview 5 February 2011, op. cit.

⁵⁹ This is evident both from Czech Labor Ministry statistics and personal experience shared with me by some of my Vietnamese informants, such as during interview on 14 November 2010.

Labor Ministries, which sometimes, though not always, as we shall see, battled their ministerial counterparts on behalf of the workers, (2) the Vietnamese workers themselves, who battled their employers through subterfuge, complaints, as well as full-blown strikes, despite the serious repercussions this could (and at times, but not always, did) entail for them, and finally, (3) the Vietnamese governmental officials, chiefly those at the embassy in Prague but in rare cases also those in Hanoi.

CZECHOSLOVAK LABOR MINISTRY ADMINISTRATORS AS GUARDIANS OF PRACTICAL INTERNATIONALISM

As I noted in the previous section, the administrators of the program at the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries played an ambivalent role. While sometimes they sided with the companies, at other times they sided with Vietnamese workers against Czechoslovak employers. This did not start only in the 1980s. We find similar dynamics already in the mid-1970s, in the course of the early phases of the apprentice-worker form of the program. Although we should note that at the time it was not wages that were at stake but rather the industrial sectors in which Vietnamese citizens would be trained and later employed. But conceptually the core of the conflict was the same: in reporting to their higher-ups, Labor Ministry administrators uncovered and pointed out that Czechoslovak employers were putting their interests above those of the Vietnamese apprentice workers, and thus also the Vietnamese state, and by extension, skirting their internationalist commitments, and hence also the internationalist commitments of the Czechoslovak state, which was the

program's ultimate underwriter. Thus, in early 1976, a Labor Ministry document reported that

the new professional composition [*profesní skladba*, i.e., types of jobs in which the workers were to be trained] proposed by the Czechoslovak side suits better the [Czechoslovak] companies managed by branch ministries, which are interested in filling positions in those areas that our youth does not show sufficient interest in, but that composition may not always correspond to the needs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. We believe that an effort is apparent on the part of the branch ministries to make their life easier by increasing the numbers [of future workers] in those areas where they need to do so.⁶⁰

Of interest to us is the fact that the report expressed dissatisfaction on the part of the Labor Ministry administrators with Czechoslovak industrial companies and their respective branch ministries (the reporting entities for the companies under their purview). This was not an isolated occurrence; the Labor Ministry clerks assumed this role of the guardians of Czechoslovak state's internationalist commitments in regard to other issues as well. A notable instance of this sort of engagement on the part of the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries was their opposition to steps taken by the (republic-level and federal) Trade Ministries aimed at restricting the volumes and the kinds of goods that Vietnamese workers were able to take home with them at the end of their contracts. The issue was of great importance to Vietnamese workers since, in the situation of currency non-

⁶⁰ NA, "Zajištění odborné přípravy občanů VDR v roce 1976," dated 18 January 1976.

convertibility, these goods were effectively remittances-in-kind. In January 1984, the Czechoslovak deputy labor minister met with the Vietnamese ambassador in Prague in order to agree on the agenda that would be discussed during the upcoming trip by the Vietnamese labor minister to Czechoslovakia.⁶¹ During the meeting, the issue of Vietnamese workers' "excessive export of goods in short supply" was discussed. It transpired that, after a previous imposition of limits on the number and types of goods Vietnamese workers could take home with them, the Czech and Slovak republic-level Trade Ministries wanted to impose further restrictions. The Czechoslovak Labor Ministry, however, found this unacceptable and recommended that the Central Customs Administration (ÚCS) discuss the question directly with the Vietnamese Embassy. In other words, the Labor Ministry was reluctant to present this issue to the Vietnamese minister as a part of the official agenda of the Czechoslovak state. Nonetheless, the efforts of the Labor Ministries came to naught, as:

the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade, in cooperation with the republic-level Trade Ministries, communicated on 15 May [1984] their shared stand, which is that after considering all aspects of this issue, they insist on the current practice. Given the current, but also future, situation in the supply of the Czechoslovak market with consumer goods in short supply, the Trade Ministries recommend that the export limits be kept and that Vietnamese citizens working in ČSSR continue to be allowed to export only 1 bicycle, 1 moped or Czechoslovakia-made motorbike and 1 sewing machine in the course of their entire stays.⁶²

However, this did not put an end to the issue. Some three years later, the issue – and the conflict between the Czechoslovak Labor and Trade Ministries –

⁶¹ MPSV, "Stanovisko k jednotlivým otázkám projednávaným mezi s. nám. Ing. Kyselým, Csc. a velvyslancem VSR v Praze 4.1.1984 v Praze," 11 January 1984.

⁶² NA, "Zpráva o plnění úkolů z VI. zasedání Čs.-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci a závěrů z porady čs. části výboru ze dne 21. prosince 1983," dated 29 May 1984.

reappeared in connection with those guest workers whose original four-year contracts were extended by another two years. The Czechoslovak and Vietnamese labor ministers agreed that the “goods-export clock” would be reset with the extension, in other words, that the new contract wiped the slate clean and the workers were entitled to purchase and export goods as though they just arrived in the country, i.e., in the value of up 50% of their net earnings from the beginning of the *new* contract.⁶³ However, despite this agreement between the two countries’ labor ministers, the workers ran into trouble with the Czechoslovak Central Customs Authority, which had, apparently, not been aware of the agreement and whose agents were preventing Vietnamese workers from exporting the “additional” scarce commodities.⁶⁴ The Labor Ministry learned about the conflict from a letter in which a company’s management warned the ministry that should the Customs Authority get its way, “it will arouse significant irritation on the part of Vietnamese workers. . . who had received different information about these issues from their embassy in Prague, and have already purchased these goods.” The Czech Labor Ministry passed the problem on to the Federal Labor Ministry, and in doing so, clearly took the workers’ side, stating that it “could not identify with [the Customs Authority’s] interpretation of the *Protocol*.”⁶⁵ In January 1988, the Central Customs Authority reiterated its stance that the restrictions applied to the entire stay and extensions

⁶³ MPSV, “Protokol o predĺžení pracovného záväzku o dva roky u vybraných vietnamských pracovníkov, ktorým končí pracovný záväzok v československých výrobných organizáciách v roku 1986,” dated 1 July 1986.

⁶⁴ MPSV, Letter from Motorpal, Jihlava to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 7 September 1987.

⁶⁵ MPSV, Letter from Josef Šretr, the head of the Labor Force Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, to Štefan Karabín, the head of the Labor Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, dated 16 September 1987.

did not restart the clock.⁶⁶ However, even in mid-March 1988, the issue was still not resolved. The Czech republic-level deputy labor minister asked his federal-level counterpart to bring up the matter “as soon as possible” with the Federal Foreign Trade Ministry, under whose purview the Central Customs Authority fell, pointing out that as a result of the uncertainty there has been “a deterioration in work morale, and conflict situations arise during customs clearance.”⁶⁷ While this last statement frames the situation as being harmful to the interests of the Czechoslovak companies, in another document, after mentioning the same concerns, a Czechoslovak Labor Ministry representative also pointed out that: “We must also not fail to notice that the Vietnamese side sees the [export] limits as discrimination of its citizens. Hence, it has been recommended to the Federal Foreign Trade Ministry to take into account to a greater extent than up till now Vietnamese workers’ *justified interests* when revising the custom relief regulations.”⁶⁸ The issue most likely remained unresolved, as the last-cited memo was dated 25 August 1989 – only about two and a half months remained till the collapse of the regime, and with it, of the program. Nonetheless, the protracted nature of dealing with the issue also reveals the persistency of the program administrators at the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries when it came to the defense of what they viewed as Vietnamese workers’ “justified interests,” as the memo put it. While they did not use the

⁶⁶ MPSV, Letter from Ústřední Celní Správa to Štefan Karabín, the head of the Labor Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, dated 4 January 1988.

⁶⁷ MPSV, Letter from Václav Karas, deputy labor minister of ČSR, to Ing. Milan Kyselý, deputy labor minister ČSSR, dated 16 March 1988.

⁶⁸ MPSV, “Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989,” dated 25 August 1989.

vocabulary of internationalism in pursuing the issue, they certainly acted as the guardians of its *spirit*. Hence, I would describe this as “practical internationalism.”

VIETNAMESE WORKERS' USE OF DISCIPLINE BREACHES AND STRIKES TO DEFEND THEIR RIGHTS

An undated (but likely written in the fall of 1982) Labor Ministry report states that, according to information obtained from the companies, “Vietnamese workers express their dissatisfaction with strikes.”⁶⁹ According to another report, most strikes – 56.5% – took place in agriculture, construction industry and forestry, although only 30% of Vietnamese workers worked in these sectors.⁷⁰ Given how rare strikes were in state-socialist Czechoslovakia, as I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the incidence of strikes conducted by Vietnamese workers is nothing short of stunning. Below is a list, compiled by Labor Ministry clerks, of strikes organized by Vietnamese workers in 1982.⁷¹ It is possible that the list is not exhaustive as the dates, when they are listed, make it clear that almost all of the strikes took place either in September, or in August and May 1982. It seems odd (though perhaps possible) that nine months out of the year would be strike-free and then a rash of strikes occurred in late summer. In any case, the timing of the strikes suggests these were among the very first strikes

⁶⁹ NA, “Informace o některých incidentech vietnamských pracujících v ČSSR,” undated.

⁷⁰ NA, “Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” September 1982.

⁷¹ NA, “Přehled o stávkách a další závažné protispolečenské činnosti vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích.”

organized by Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia. That is, the treaty was signed in late November 1980, hence the first batches of guest workers started arriving throughout 1981. It likely took the workers a few months to orient themselves in the new environment as well as to make judgment about the appropriateness of their working and living conditions, or lack thereof. Thus it makes sense that all these strikes were the first instances of industrial actions organized by Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia. Here is the Labor Ministry's list:

1. České loděnice [Czech shipyards] Praha – 21 and 22 September: strike caused by low wages. Unwarranted demands for higher wages – participation.
2. ZVVZ [air-conditioning systems] Milevsko – 13 – 15 September: strike by 14 workers; reason: low wages and transfer.
3. Perla [cotton processing] Česká Třebová – two-day strike by 20 Vietnamese women in protest against a popular interpreter being removed from his post.
4. Preciosa [crystal glass factory] Jablonné v Podještědí – 10 – 13 September: strike by 40 Vietnamese; reason: low wages, transfer.
5. Hedva [textile factory] Moravská Třebová, Rýmařov plant – 16 September: 12 Vietnamese women were on strike; reason: low wages.
6. Tepna [textile factory] Hronov – 11 August: 80 Vietnamese women were on strike; reason: transfer.
7. Jitka [textile factory] Jindřichův Hradec – one-day strike, 127 women; reason: transfer.
8. Pražský stavební podnik [miscellaneous contractor jobs] – 28 – 29 September 48 out of 49 total Vietnamese workers called a strike due to low wages. They are demanding Kčs12.- hourly wage for all. Only five workers came back to work after the appeal by the company's leadership.
9. Keramické závody [ceramics factory] Znojmo; Teplice plant – 20 Vietnamese on strike in May; reason: low wages.
10. Průmyslové stavby [industrial construction] Brno – 16 September 13 Vietnamese on strike.
11. SEMPRA [vegetable, plant cultivation] Olomouc – 13 workers on strike lasting one week in August; reason: low wages. After coming back to work, workers demanded that they be paid wages for the time they spent striking.
12. District Agricultural Union Tábor – on strike for three days in May because they found the work too hard. The Vietnamese Embassy assessed the job's difficulty as adequate.

13. Severočeské mlékárny [Northern Bohemian dairies] Velký Valtinov – all 20 Vietnamese on strike for three hours; refused to accept wages since they were too low.
14. Pražská stavební obnova [building reconstruction] – 13 and 14 September 20 Vietnamese on strike; reason: low wages
15. Státní statek [agricultural cooperative] Praha – 13 and 14 September 12 men on strike due to wage discrepancies.

And the following item on a separate list, not categorized as a strike:

6. Středočeské státní lesy [Central Bohemian forest management], závod [plant] Lužná – disorderly conduct, brawls, refusal to accept wages, which the Vietnamese workers found too low.

Additional strikes are mentioned in other Labor Minister documents. Also in the fall of 1982, 48 workers – an entire group except for one person – went on strike in another Prague construction firm (Pražský stavební podnik).⁷² The strike was preceded by the refusal of most workers from one of the Vietnamese groups working in the company, to show up for final exams concluding the three-month training period. And “the entire group of 50 workers announced [to the management of the company] that they did not intend to take part in any further training, either language [acquisition] or professional.” From company’s point of view, this meant that it was not able to assign the workers to appropriate wage categories (which reflected qualifications), as I discussed above. During the strike itself, the Vietnamese workers explained that they refused to work in protests against their wages, which they considered too low, and demanded that they all be paid Kčs12 per hour.

⁷² NA, Letter from, the director of Pražský stavební podnik, to the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, dated 23 September 1982.

Male groups were not the only ones to strike, so did women, especially in the textile industry (as we already saw from the list above and in the previous chapter). In mid-August 1982, some of the women from a group working in a spinning mill (Jitka Otín) refused to work in protest against transfer. The women also complained that the machines on which they worked were in worse technical shape than the machines used by their Czechoslovak⁷³ coworkers, and evidently, also about their wages, although that issue transpired only indirectly when the source informing the secret police of the situation is quoted as saying that “the lower wages earned by the Vietnamese workers are caused by the fact that they are not fully trained yet.”⁷⁴ Vietnamese women in another branch (another town) of the same textile factory (Jitka Jindřichův Hradec) went on strike in protest against transfer at around the same time,⁷⁵ as did 30 women workers in yet another spinning mill (Přádelny česané příze Nejdek)⁷⁶ about a month later. In this instance, the report notes that “the case was dealt with by the Vietnamese Embassy staff and four main organizers have been sent home.” The strike that I described in the opening of this chapter was also carried out by female workers, although it did not take place in the textile industry but in a

⁷³ I use the adjective “Czechoslovak” throughout although most people – unless they came from mixed families – were either Czech or Slovak, or else the members of ethnic/linguistic minorities (Hungarian, German, Polish). Nonetheless, they were all *also* the citizens of Czechoslovakia, and I use the adjective Czechoslovak in that spirit since naming both, the Czechs and the Slovaks, is stylistically awkward and cumbersome (and fails to include the minorities), and for the purposes of this text the distinction is unnecessary.

⁷⁴ ABS, “Nenastoupení pracovníků VSR na odpolední směnu,” 18 August 1982. OB “Dělníci” 332 ČB.

⁷⁵ ABS, “VSR státní příslušníci,” OB 332 “Dělníci” 332 ČB; around 14 October 1982 (strike took place on 13 August 1982).

⁷⁶ ABS Kanice, “Pobyt a činnost občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v Západočeském kraji – zaslání podkladů,” 20 October 1982; č. př. 1756/1988, balík č. 6.

plant cultivation company, in March 1983. In the same month, the police administration of the South Bohemian region (the strike took place in Northern Bohemia) stated that “lately, there has been an increase in criminal activity” by foreign workers, “primarily the workers from the SRV, among whom there are various protest demands, one-sided criticism of their social and working conditions, efforts to avoid showing up for work, worsening of work morale all the way to threatening with strikes, and even actual striking operations.”⁷⁷

Hence, evidence abounds that strikes organized by Vietnamese workers were not just isolated events, at least not in 1982 and 1983, but rather constituted a robust push by the workers for higher wages and improvements in their working and living conditions. Nonetheless, Czechoslovak Labor Ministry administrators often tried to minimize the meaning of protests and strikes as *labor-rights* activities. They did this by framing them as garden-variety disciplinary breaches. Thus, for instance, a report⁷⁸ would first note that various activities – such as “holding 3-hour-long meeting during working hours [and] refusing to accept wages,” or, in another company, “noticeable decrease in work morale” – were done “in protest.” But then it would proceed to diffuse the political aspect of these activities by stating that “experience shows that the decrease in work morale and tiredness [which are assigned as direct causes of protest actions] are due to unsuitable evening and night life.” This sort of framing transformed a potentially politically combustible issue of justifiable anger into a

⁷⁷ ABS, “Pokyny k zajištění operativního rozpracování problematiky ‘Zahraniční dělníci’ v rámci Jihočeského kraje,” 17 March 1983, OB 412 ČB, “Cizinci.”

⁷⁸ NA, “Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” end of 1982.

mundane discipline problem. Sometimes, however, the political and labor-rights orientation of these activities was undeniable, even to Labor Ministry administrators. One of the clearest examples comes from a report that states that “the organizers of [a] strike told the management of the company that they were following the example of the Vietnamese in the town Litvínov, who went on strike already three times and always succeeded to push through their demands in this way.”⁷⁹

Just as in the case of Vietnamese workers who became pregnant (which I discuss in Chapter 4), in the case of strikes and disciplinary breaches the Czech Labor Ministry often directed its criticism at the Vietnamese Embassy officials. A report stated, for instance: “The indecisive stance of the Vietnamese Embassy contributes to the wave of strikes. The embassy conducts protracted investigations, and holds back [*váhá*] when it comes to punishing the strikes’ organizers and sending them back to the SRV.”⁸⁰ The Czechoslovak administrators opined that, since the “culprits seriously threaten the good reputation of the SRV, the cases should be resolved swiftly, without unnecessary formalities.” The report also includes an example of such hesitation on the part of the embassy. It recounts the events following a weeklong strike of 11 workers that took place in the middle of August in a plant cultivation company. At first, the representatives of the embassy and the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry representatives agreed to send five “most active organizers of the strike” back to

⁷⁹ NA, “Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” end of 1982.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Vietnam. In the end, however, only two persons were sent back. From the Czechoslovak ministry's point of view, "this approach by the embassy makes the organizers of strikes think that they may be able to escape punishment altogether. During their weekend trips to other places in the ČSSR, they boast of the successes they achieved by going on strike, and in that way they contribute to the strikes spreading further." While the Vietnamese Embassy officials were certainly concerned with Vietnamese workers' disciplinary breaches, and *did* arrange for deportation in cases that they judged to be expressions of gratuitous unruliness, there is copious archival evidence showing that they were also sensitive to workers' complaints about wages and working conditions, as I show in the next section.

VIETNAMESE EMBASSY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PUSH FOR GUEST WORKERS' RIGHTS

Vietnamese and Czechoslovak officials used to meet regularly to discuss issues that arose in the course of the program's implementation.⁸¹ A meeting in April 1983⁸² marked the first time when Vietnamese officials raised a slew of demands geared toward modifying certain terms of the treaty. A number of these

⁸¹ As a rule, at least one official meeting between the labor ministers, or deputy labor ministers, of the two countries took place each year, normally in the spring. In addition, there were usually several other, less formal, meetings, which included the Czechoslovak Labor Ministry officials and either their counterparts from Hanoi or the officials from the Vietnamese embassy in Prague (or both).

⁸² MPSV, "Záznam z jednání delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky, které se konalo ve dnech 18.-27. dubna 1983 v Praze, o některých otázkách vyplývajících z realizace mezivládní Dohody o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR, spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27.11.1980," 27 April 1983.

demands clearly seem to be reactions to workers' protests. For instance, the officials announced during their meeting that the Vietnamese state decided to exempt workers earning less than Kčs1,200 from the transfer obligation, and lowered the obligation from 15% to 10% of net monthly wages for everyone else. This was a unilateral step since the transfer was an obligation imposed by the Vietnamese government. The task was tougher when it came to issues that required the cooperation of the Czechoslovak side. One of these issues was the demand for instituting a minimum wage for Vietnamese workers in the amount of Kčs1,200, after taxes and deductions.⁸³ A former Vietnamese Embassy official described the demand for minimum wage as the "most contentious" of the issues discussed at the time and framed it as a matter of workers' rights.⁸⁴ However, the response of the Czechoslovak side, conveyed in a letter written by the Czechoslovak deputy labor minister to his Vietnamese counterpart, was that if Vietnamese workers observe work discipline, their monthly incomes exceed this sum [of 1,200 Kčs] no matter which Czechoslovak enterprise they happen to be working for. Accommodating this request would, in our opinion, have an adverse effect on the strengthening of work discipline and on the intensity with which Vietnamese workers apply themselves to their jobs.⁸⁵

The Czechoslovak officials stuck to this response, more or less, throughout the duration of the program. About a year later, when the Vietnamese officials raised the issue again, the response was almost identical: "If Vietnamese workers

⁸³ MPSV, "Zápis z porady na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí k projednání výsledků jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR v dubnu 1983," dated 19 May 1983.

⁸⁴ Interview, 14 April 2011.

⁸⁵ MPSV, Letter by Deputy Labor Minister Milan Kyselý to Deputy Labor Minister Nguyen Van Diep, dated 24 October 1983.

observe work discipline, they achieve wages even higher than that.”⁸⁶ To bolster their argument, Czechoslovak officials showed the Vietnamese delegation tables listing Vietnamese workers’ average earnings as well as those listing the average earnings of Czechoslovak workers doing the same jobs. The tables reportedly showed that “there is not any marked difference between the two.” Nonetheless, similar to the approach adopted on the issue of pregnant Vietnamese women, the Czechoslovak side promised to “look into the cases in which the wages of Vietnamese workers are low, and, in justified cases, see to it that the situation be rectified.” In this way, the officials did not admit that a *systematic* problem existed, but allowed for, and promised redress, on an *ad hoc* basis. Most often, the issue was resolved by moving workers to different companies, specifically those that paid more. The former Vietnamese official quoted above described the practice as a mutually agreed upon, though unwritten, solution to the problem, and archival evidence confirms this characterization. The denouement of the strike described in the opening of the chapter rested precisely on this solution: Upon the completion of their contracts in the plant cultivation company, the women were given permission to sign new contracts with a poultry-processing company in the south of the country, which paid what they considered acceptable wages.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ MPSV, “Zápis z jednání delegací ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezinárodní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 a o návrzích opatření na zlepšení další spolupráce na úseku dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” 15 March 1984.

⁸⁷ Interview, 5 February 2011, op. cit. See also what is very likely a reference to the transfer of the women to the poultry-processing factory in MPSV, “Informace pro soudruha ministra Ing. Vladislava Třešku, CSc ve věci zahraničních

Another issue to which Vietnamese officials tenaciously pursued a solution, and which they were eventually able to get completely resolved, was the issue of allocation of Vietnamese workers to agricultural and construction enterprises. When the guest-worker form of the program was launched, there was quite significant disconnect between the Czechoslovak and the Vietnamese side on this issue. While, in 1981, the Czechoslovak Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition requested the greatest number of Vietnamese workers, primarily for work in cooperatives, the “Vietnamese side consistently [rejected] these jobs.”⁸⁸ One reason was, as the statistics mentioned earlier in this chapter show, that jobs in the agricultural sectors paid very low wages. But another reason was the drastic difference in the climate of the two countries due to which, as some enterprises reported to the Czech Labor Ministry, Vietnamese workers often refused to work outside in “winter conditions,” even when “equipped with special protective garments,” as they were concerned that doing so would affect their health negatively.⁸⁹ Vietnamese officials raised the issue formally for the first time during the April 1983 meeting, already mentioned above. The Czech response was to offer a compromise. In the official letter, the deputy labor minister first noted that the workers could not be transferred to other industries “since they [were] already included in the work plan for the years 1983 and 1984 and their departures would threaten the meeting of the goals planned by the companies

pracovníků, v resortu MZVŽ ČSR (jak pro zemědělské podniky, tak pro potravinářský průmysl),” dated 24 February 1986.

⁸⁸ MPSV, “Záznam: Zaměstnání a odborná příprava občanů VSR v r. 1982,” drafted by Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1981.

⁸⁹ MPSV, “Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků ve II. pololetí 1981,” dated 31 March 1982.

employing them.” But then he also said that the workers would not be asked to work outdoors in winter.⁹⁰ This may sound like a reasonable compromise except that, as practically all my Vietnamese informants told me, September in Czechoslovakia already felt like “winter” to them, and by the same token, this “winter” lasted well into calendar spring, or even early summer. This did not leave much time for outdoor work. Accordingly, the Vietnamese ambassador raised the issue again in his meeting with the Czechoslovak federal deputy labor minister some six months later, in January 1984, saying that the proposed solution was unsatisfactory. The Czechoslovak response, however, remained largely negative, based on the argument that, by allowing the transfer into industry, Czechoslovak “industrial factories would gain, for all practical purposes, unqualified labor force, while the [Vietnamese] workers had already gained some qualifications in the [agricultural and construction] sectors.” While the Czechoslovak side did not exclude the possibility entirely, it did insist – again, very much following the pattern it adopted in regard to the pregnancy and minimum wage issues – that such transfers “should take place only in exceptional cases and only to a limited extent.”⁹¹ Evidence suggests that the Czechoslovak deputy labor minister’s stance was derived from the stand assumed by the agricultural and construction companies, or their appropriate ministries. This is because minutes from a meeting, in March 1984, of the representatives of all branch ministries controlling the work of companies employing Vietnamese workers say that these representatives opposed “mass

⁹⁰ MPSV, Letter from deputy labor minister Ing Milan Kyselý to SRV Deputy Labor Minister Nguyen Van Diep, dated 24 October 1983.

⁹¹ MPSV, “Stanovisko k jednotlivým otázkám projednávaným mezi s. nám. Ing. Kyselým, Csc. a velvyslancem VSR v Praze 4.1.1984 v Praze,” 11 January 1984.

transfer” of Vietnamese workers from agriculture, forestry and construction into industrial enterprises, although allowed for individual transfers. In general, however, the position of these representatives of various industries was that the Vietnamese workers assigned to these sectors had to fulfill the entire 4-year contracts, and only then could they be assigned to industrial companies for additional two years.⁹² In October of the same year, Czechoslovak labor minister pledged to his Vietnamese counterpart that, following the piecemeal approach, 315 Vietnamese workers would be transferred out of agricultural, forestry and construction companies into industry.⁹³ Almost 130 of these workers ended up in a company manufacturing television sets. There, if a report on the inspection of working conditions is to be believed, the workers improved their situation considerably. They were placed in the 4th, 5th and 6th wage classes, and thus made on average, depending on production line, between Kčs2,057 to Kčs3,630, with the lowest individual wage being Kčs1,909 and the highest one as much as Kčs5,817⁹⁴ (to put these figures in context, recall that the minimum monthly wage the Vietnamese officials had asked for was Kčs1,200). They also, of course, worked indoors now, and, according to the inspection report, the Vietnamese laborers worked in “production sections not characterized by excessive noise levels or toxicity,” and “their working environment [was] clean, spacious, well lit, and air-conditioned.” Since only a limited number of companies was chosen

⁹² MPSV, “Zápis z porady k výsledkům jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR ve dnech 1.-15. března 1984, konané na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí dne 12. dubna 1984,” dated 13 April 1984.

⁹³ MPSV, Letter from Czechoslovak Labor Minister Miloslav Boďa to Vietnamese Labor Minister Dao Thien Thi, dated 12 October 1984.

⁹⁴ MPSV, “Záznam z prověrky zaměstnání zahr. prac. v k. p. TESLA Rožnov,” dated 18 November 1985.

for an inspection of this sort, we may speculate that the choice of this particular enterprise was not coincidental but rather it was made with the expectation that the favorable inspection assessment could be used in talks with the Vietnamese side both in response to the issue of wages, and working conditions, as well as that of the undesirability of outdoor work.

Vietnamese representatives expressed “positive appreciation”⁹⁵ for the transfer of 315 workers from agriculture, forestry and construction into industrial companies, and at the same time asked that other workers be similarly transferred in the course 1985. The Czech Labor Ministry put forth an effort to comply but it was a difficult terrain to navigate as it meant going head-to-head with the companies. For example, after it arranged for the transfer of a group of 24 workers from a construction company to a glass factory, it received a rather upset response from the Construction Industry Ministry, in which the head of the labor force department blamed the glassworks company and claimed that the actions of the company “violate norms of normal behavior by any definition.”⁹⁶ From correspondence it ensues that after being first notified about the impending transfer, the Construction Industry Ministry protested, and got the Labor Ministry to rescind its decision. However, the Vietnamese Embassy would not

⁹⁵ MPSV, “Zápis o jednání delegací expertů Ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných vietnamských pracovníků spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v čs. organizacích,” the meeting took place from 28 March 1985 through 3 April 1985.

⁹⁶ MPSV, Letter from Ing. Vladimír Rudolf, the director of the Department of Labor Force Reproduction at the Construction Industry Ministry, to J. Šretr, the head of the Labor Force Department at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 21 March 1986; Letter from Pavel Měchura, deputy construction industry minister, dated 8 April 1986.

accept the rescission, and insisted on the transfer of the group out of the construction firm.⁹⁷ To pacify the Construction Industry Ministry, the Labor Ministry scrambled to transfer some 100 workers into some of the companies under its purview. Also, the Labor Ministry asked the embassy to wait with transfers until the end of the original four-year contracts in future. The Labor Ministry's effort on behalf of the Vietnamese Embassy and workers was also very distressing to the agricultural companies, cooperative farms, and food-processing factories. A report noted that starch plants, fat-processing factories, bakeries, canning factories and distilleries saw themselves as unable to proceed with regular production without foreign workers.⁹⁸ However, another Labor Ministry clerk drafted a report in part reacting to the earlier one, in which he argued that the agricultural and food-processing companies had mostly themselves to blame for running into trouble, as they needed to be ready for the fact that foreign workers' contracts would eventually run out and were supposed to take that expectation into account in their planning.⁹⁹ Nonetheless, this report, too, described the negotiations, either already completed or in progress, aiming at securing labor force for these companies.

⁹⁷ MPSV, Letter from Václav Karas, the deputy labor minister of the Czech Socialist Republic, to Pavel Měchura, deputy construction industry minister, dated 18 April 1986.

⁹⁷ MPSV, "Informace pro soudruha ministra Ing. Vladislava Třešku, CSc ve věci zahraničních pracovníků, v resortu MZVŽ ČSR (jak pro zemědělské podniky, tak pro potravinářský průmysl)," dated 24 February 1986.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ MPSV, "Informace pro soudruha ministra Dr. Hamerníka ve věci zahraničních pracovníků, v resortu ministerstva zemědělství a výživy ČSR," dated 27 March 1986.

In other words, the Czechoslovak administrators at the republic-level and federal-level Labor Ministries often found themselves between a rock and a hard place. They were subject to two contradictory pressures, one coming from Czechoslovak industrial enterprises and the other from Vietnamese officials. They appear to have tried their best to appease both.

In the summer of 1986, Vietnamese officials presented Czechoslovak Labor Ministry delegation during its trip to Hanoi with the request that all the remaining workers in the agricultural, forestry and construction sectors be transferred out.¹⁰⁰ While I do not have direct evidence that this happened, it appears that it likely, indeed, did. This is because, after this point in time, the demand is not mentioned in any documents describing negotiations from future meetings, while the demands that remained outstanding (or new ones as they emerged) *are* listed, as well as responses to them, or outcomes of the negotiations. Thus, it seems that in regard to this particular issue, the Vietnamese government scored a convincing victory.

It is important to note that, in the mid-1980s, when the incidence of frictions over guest workers' working and living conditions peaked and the negotiations between the representatives of the two governments did not seem productive, the Vietnamese government actually decided to temporarily suspend the program. It stopped short of withdrawing the workers already in the country, but it refrained from sending new ones. On 8 May 1984, Vietnamese Deputy

¹⁰⁰ MPSV, "Záznam z jednání delegace federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce VSR," dated 1 July 1986.

Prime Minister Tran Quynh informed the Czech ambassador in Hanoi, Handl, that “the government of the SRV has decided to suspend sending any more workers within the scope of the program of temporary employment connected with further increasing of qualifications, effective 1 June 1984.”¹⁰¹ He explained the decision by saying that “as a result of too many people being sent in a short period of time, numerous negative phenomena have appeared, which affect the development of Czechoslovak-Vietnamese relations negatively.” He also reportedly said that the Vietnamese Government “considered this issue in a responsible manner, and it is aware that this decision may cause the Czechoslovak side certain problems, but it is necessary to put the implementation of this cooperation in a desirable order.” The Czech report notes in conclusion that “reportedly, a similar measure has been taken also in regard to the USSR, Bulgaria and the GDR.” During subsequent talks between the representatives of the Vietnamese Embassy and the Czechoslovak Federal Labor Ministry, “the representatives of the Vietnamese side said that the measure would apply only to 1984, and that they expected the cooperation to resume in future years.”¹⁰² They also explicitly confirmed that the measure applied exclusively to the Vietnamese citizens that were to arrive under the aegis the 1980 guest-workers treaty, not apprentice workers or *praktikanti*. The hiatus lasted longer than the original report predicted; nonetheless, Vietnam did

¹⁰¹ NA, “Informace o zastavení vysílání dalších pracovníků z VSR do ČSSR,” 12 May 1984.

¹⁰² NA, “Zpráva o plnění úkolů z VI. zasedání Čs.-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci a závěrů z porady čs. části výboru ze dne 21. prosince 1983,” dated 29 May 1984.

resume sending guest workers to Czechoslovakia two years later.¹⁰³ However, the Vietnamese side emphasized that the focus was to be primarily on sending workers to jobs that made it possible for them to “contribute effectively to the socialist development of their homeland” upon return, even if the negotiators also said that they intended to continue to take into account the job structure of the Czechoslovak economy as well.

ROLE OF SOCIALIST AND INTERNATIONALIST IDEOLOGY AND VERNACULAR

The last point I wish to make in this chapter is that the ideologies of socialism and internationalism (or the discursive space created by them) constituted an important resource used by both the Vietnamese workers and Vietnamese officials while pushing for the resolution of contentious issues. At one occasion, embassy officials informed the Czech Labor Ministry that they had made trips to two work sites from which workers had repeatedly asked for transfer elsewhere. The embassy officials reported that “a majority of workers there only engage in arduous, unskilled work. Their main job is to liquidate and clean up an old power plant and a chemical workshop (Most), or else arduous and unskilled labor with low wages (Vlašim¹⁰⁴). In addition, the housing conditions are not good or comfortable either.” To bolster their case, the embassy officials added that “the workers. . .are for the most part former soldiers, *who fought for peace and socialism on the front lines*. They came to the ČSSR with the greatest goal to

¹⁰³ MPSV, “Protokol o predĺžení pracovního závazku o dva roky u vybraných vietnamských pracovníkov, ktorým končí pracovný záväzok v československých výrobných organizáciách v roku 1986,” dated 1 July 1986.

¹⁰⁴ Both Most and Vlašim are the names of towns.

acquire skills for their future during their four-year stay. That is why we ask you, comrade department head, to transfer these workers [to other companies].”¹⁰⁵ Judging by the hand-written comments on the margins of the letter, this appeal had a good chance of succeeding. A Labor Ministry clerk wrote: “Please, discuss with comrade Pospíchalová, and make transfer possible – the reasons are skill-related. . .they are doing unskilled work and risky one at that; we have to accommodate the Vietnamese side!” Or again during talks in the summer of 1986, Vietnamese governmental negotiators emphasized that the focus was to be primarily on sending workers to jobs that made it possible for them to “contribute effectively to the socialist development of their homeland” upon their return.¹⁰⁶

Workers themselves also sometimes relied on appeals to socialist ideals, either directly or indirectly, when protesting their work assignments or working conditions. An example of the former were the “opinions” among workers, as a Labor Ministry report on “Vietnamese workers’ incidents” called them, that “[the workers] came to Czechoslovakia to save (*zachraňovat*) socialism and hence they will not perform some auxiliary jobs (workplace cleanup and similar – ČKD [company].”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ MPSV, Letter from Dr. Nguyen Phuc Loc, CSc., the head of the Department for Workers’ Care at the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, to Ing. Karel Kozelka, the head of the Foreign Workers Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 12 November 1984, *italics mine*.

¹⁰⁶ MPSV, “Záznam z jednání delegace federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce VSR,” dated 1 July 1986.

¹⁰⁷ NA, “Informace o některých incidentech vietnamských pracujících v ČSSR,” undated but, based on content, likely written in the fall of 1982.

In the following example, a Vietnamese workers' group leader never actually used the word "socialism" but the gist of the argument he used in his appeal in an effort to convince a company to reverse its decision on transferring the group to one of its other branches reads like an illustration of socialist democratic principles:

The company decided on 15 July 1982 to transfer 15 Vietnamese workers from the Strakonice plant to the Orličan Chocěň plant. However, I did not handle this decision according to the treaty. I failed to inform people that they had been selected [for transfer], I failed to talk with them and explain [the decision] to them. This is my mistake because it means that I violated people's right, the right to self-determination. In other words, the transfer did not happen at their request, yet they had to leave. In order to defend their human rights, and at their request, I sincerely ask you to help me return the 15 workers to ČZM Strakonice. . . so that their right to self-determination, which is the right that belongs to all people, is preserved.¹⁰⁸

Unfortunately, the archives do not contain information on whether the appeal was successful. (The rest of the documents in the file, however, suggest that the focus by the company management was on the undue, from company's perspective, pressure the group put on the group leader, which was allegedly accompanied with threats of violence.) It is quite likely that the choice to use socialist rhetoric was largely tactical. That, however, does not diminish its importance since the principle is similar to that described by Alexei Yurchak in his analysis of how ideology operated in late-state-socialist Soviet Union, where, as he argues, "participation in performative reproduction of speech acts and rituals of authoritative discourse" not only did not necessarily cancel out, but

¹⁰⁸ ABS, OB 412 ČB, "Cizina," "Letter from Ing. Nguyen Van Them to the director of ČEZ, Koubek, dated 21 June 1983. See also letter from ČEZ deputy director for cadres work, František Lojda, to MPSV, 7 June 1983; "Přesun 15 vietnamských pracovníků – sdělení," report for the 3rd division of the State Security [secret police] Administration, České Budějovice received on 22 June 1983, and letter from ČEZ to the Vietnamese Embassy dated 24 June 1983.

could actually become constitutive of socialism's "creative and unpredictable possibilities."¹⁰⁹ Or, in somewhat less abstract language, just because people found the regime's official rhetoric and rituals empty, that did not mean that they rejected the *ideals* on which they were based, and, in fact, some would work hard to implement those ideals pursuing their own ideas about what socialism meant in practice. Thus, resorting to the figures of the official language, which, in many official speeches *were*, in fact, empty, could also be used as a resource for achieving meaningful changes.

As we have already seen, especially when used by Vietnamese (embassy) officials, this approach could be very effective. The last phase of the strike introduced in the beginning of this chapter is a striking example of that efficacy. About a month after the strike was brought to an end through police intervention, the Vietnamese deputy labor minister flew in from Hanoi. He made a trip to the company and talked with the director and the rest of the management. According to a Czechoslovak Interior Ministry report describing the visit to the company, the Vietnamese deputy labor minister said that the only mistake on the part of the Vietnamese workers was the form of the protest, i.e., strike. He condemned the intervention carried out by the Czechoslovak security forces as absolutely unacceptable. He said that under no circumstances does either he or the Vietnamese government approve of the intervention. According to his opinion, this sort of despotism has no place in a socialist country, and the situation must be never repeated. He conceded that

¹⁰⁹ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006), 29.

certain shortcomings have been identified also in the work of the Vietnamese Embassy staff, as a result of which the first secretary was dismissed from his post. As far as the strike is concerned, he puts responsibility first of all on the Czechoslovak side since Vietnamese workers' justifiable demands must be accepted.¹¹⁰

Afterward, the deputy minister met with Vietnamese workers, "listened to their complaints and in the end said that he agreed with them. He declared that they were obviously thin due to insufficient food [intake], their skin color was off due to bad living conditions, and that he would categorically demand that the Vietnamese be treated just as all other working people in Czechoslovakia are."¹¹¹ The deputy minister's resolute use of socialist vocabulary during his castigation of the company management suggests that even if socialist internationalism might have been sometimes, or even most of the time, only an empty rhetorical figure, it was also a figure that could be, and was, summoned to defend workers' rights. A Vietnamese informant¹¹² told me about another other case in which a

¹¹⁰ ABS, Kanice, "Zpráva o jednání vietnamských představitelů na okrese Chomutov," Collection no. 2126-2139/91, package no. 78.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Interview, 14 April 2011. This man's entire career revolved around the labor exchange program, and, although of retirement age now, he still is, or was until recently, doing business with Czech companies. He first came to Czechoslovakia in the mid-1960s and earned an engineering degree (Masters level) there. Then returned to Vietnam, where he became employed by the Transport Ministry. When the guest-worker form of the program was launched, he went back to Czechoslovakia as a group leader and organizer, and eventually he also worked at the Vietnamese Embassy's Department for Workers' Care. My anecdotal experience suggests that this trajectory is actually not untypical at all for Vietnamese graduates of Czechoslovak universities, and even quite a few vocational school graduates (though the path to the embassy and ministry jobs

high official got involved in defending Vietnamese workers rights, although I do not have any archival (or other) evidence to corroborate that account. In this case, the Vietnamese deputy labor minister, reportedly, flew to Prague in order to press Czechoslovak authorities into renovating electrical wiring in a large hostel that housed a high number of Vietnamese workers, after these workers' appeals for the same had been unsuccessful. This may seem like a trivial matter, however, it was far from that. The ability to prepare their own food was of great importance to Vietnamese workers (and, in fact, was a source of resentment on the part of Czechoslovak companies, which felt snubbed by workers' refusal to take advantage of company cafeterias).¹¹³ In this case, the hostel wiring, while perfectly sufficient for the needs of Polish workers, who, too, used to be accommodated there, was inadequate once large numbers of Vietnamese workers, eager to cook their own meals, moved in. When repeated appeals to the hostel's management asking it to remedy the situation went nowhere, Hanoi got involved.

Ms L., introduced in the beginning of this chapter, assessed the resolution of the conflict between her co-workers and the plant cultivation company as a victory. Talking with a slight tinge of bafflement in her voice, as though the audacity of

would have been, as a rule, closed to them, but the returns to Czechoslovakia in the capacity of group leaders, interpreters or organizers occurred frequently).

¹¹³ Companies complained that although they were obligated to provide Vietnamese workers with cafeteria meals, the workers often chose not to eat there. A report, for example, stated: "The negative attitude of a majority of Vietnamese to the Czechoslovak cuisine is also a subject of criticism. Only few take advantage of company meals plans, prepared meals are oftentimes refused without the Vietnamese actually even tasting them." (NA, "Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích," end of 1982.)

her and her friends' actions only fully hit her now, almost 30 years later, she shook her head at her past recklessness, but said more than once: "We were young, we were stupid, but it paid off! We won, we got what we wanted,"¹¹⁴ her face was beaming at the remembrance. Upon hearing this I assumed that in the strike's aftermath the women received the pay raise for which they had fought. I was stunned to hear her say that the company had not, in fact, increased their salaries. That the workers went ahead and completed the four years of work that their contracts stipulated while receiving the same wages. "That is how the treaty was written, we had to obey the terms of the treaty," she explained. The victory she spoke about lay elsewhere, in the promise – its fulfillment backed by the Vietnamese deputy labor minister – that upon the completion of the four years of work for the flower-growing company, they would be allowed to sign new contracts with another company that paid higher wages. This is also what happened; upon completion of their contracts, the women spent additional two years working in a poultry processing plant in the south of the country, which paid what they considered acceptable wages. Thus, the workers were able to accomplish what they had set out to do when they signed up in Vietnam to come as short-term migrant laborers in the early 1980s to state-socialist Czechoslovakia: save some money to take back home with them in the form of presents.¹¹⁵ Hence, Ms L concluded, the youthful stubbornness paid off, she and a hundred of her friends scored a victory.

¹¹⁴ Op. cit. Interview with Ms L.

¹¹⁵ The presents were often investment goods such as sewing machines, or valuable items such as mopeds and motorcycles either kept for household use or sold. Savings were transferred in this way since direct remittances were impossible.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined the claim, which appears frequently in literature on the GDR labor exchange programs, that state-socialist labor migration schemes were exploitative. While I do not deny that some exploitation occurred, I use empirical evidence, relevant to the Czechoslovak context, and a theoretical argument to provide a much more complex and nuanced account of the matter. On the empirical front, two issues are of crucial importance. First, the fact that we can talk about something resembling systematic exploitation only in the last, third, phase of the program, and only in relation to the category of workers it introduced, whom I call contract or guest workers (in Czech, their official title was the neutral word *pracující*, or “working people”). The second empirical finding – which is of major theoretical importance, but whose significance also lies in correcting the received image of Vietnamese workers and state officials – is that the Vietnamese workers and state officials (primarily at the embassy in Prague, but also those at ministries in Hanoi) engaged in fierce, sustained and systematic resistance to the exploitation. They did this by challenging specific policies that contributed to the weakening of workers’ position. It should be also pointed out that, as my archival evidence shows, Czechoslovak Labor Ministries, too, acted as at least *intermittent* guardians of Vietnamese workers’ rights, and thus of socialist and internationalist ideas and ideals.

Conceptually, the ground for exploitation was prepared in the late 1970s, when the principles of the contract-worker form of the program were being gradually formulated. The conceptual shift was reflected in the introduction of the concept

of “economic efficiency” as one of the rationales for the labor exchange. While concerns over costs started to appear, sporadically, already during the apprentice-worker phase, this was, nonetheless, a radically new way of conceiving of the project. This is because during the earlier phases concerns over costs, while causing some worry and dilemmas to the program’s Czechoslovak administrators, were never, until this point, the key principle structuring the program, or imbuing it with meaning. The second conceptual innovation, which accompanied and complemented the emphasis on “economic efficiency,” was the shift toward conceptualizing Vietnamese workers as a “fully mobile labor force.” This conceptualization encapsulates the push toward viewing – and, importantly, *treating* – the workers as commodities, that is to say, reducing them to the status of pure carriers of labor power, rather than rounded human beings with varied needs that require meeting.

On the practical level, this push for greater commodification of Vietnamese workers can be observed in the introduction of new rules guiding the implementation of the contract-worker form of the labor exchange. In terms of the broad framing of the program, the needs and priorities of Czechoslovak enterprises started to trump the needs of the Vietnamese state and workers. On the level of implementation and organization, one of the most important innovations was the introduction of per-worker fees that the Czechoslovak state paid to its Vietnamese counterpart (discussed both in this chapter and Chapter 4). Another one was the introduction of the so-called *transfer*, i.e., an obligatory remittance of, originally, 15% of workers’ wages into the accounts belonging to

the Vietnamese state. Two things need to be said about this innovation. One, that it was introduced exclusively at the request of the Vietnamese, not the Czechoslovak, state, and in that sense, it constituted a push for greater commodification of the workers by that state. But also, two, that the rule was modified – completely removed for workers making less than Kčs1,200, and lowered to 10% for everyone else – as a result of the vigorous protests, including strikes, carried out by the workers.

However, the most significant of all the changes marking the introduction of the contract-worker form of the program was that the Czechoslovak state abdicated on its responsibility to educate and train Vietnamese workers. It is the relinquishing of this responsibility that made the contract-worker form of the program most similar to the guest-worker schemes known from capitalist contexts because it increased considerably the separation between the processes of labor's *reproduction* and *maintenance*, which is the hallmark of migrant labor in capitalist contexts. One of the repercussions of this step on the practical level was that, without educational and training credentials (which were available to apprentice workers), Vietnamese contract workers were, by default, eligible only for lower wages (i.e., lower wage brackets). In addition, their general position as workers became weaker and they became more vulnerable to exploitation by managers of Czechoslovak enterprises, whose efforts focused on boosting their companies' wage funds. In this respect, Vietnamese workers' trajectory started to resemble that of their counterparts in non-state-socialist settings.

However, one of the most startling findings of this chapter, and perhaps the entire dissertation, is that the apprentice-worker form of the program, characterized by the Czechoslovak state's embrace of responsibility for Vietnamese workers vocational training, and in that way, assuming an important part of the costs of their reproduction *qua* workers, turned out to *not* to be losing proposition financially, despite the original anticipation that that would be the case. And despite the fact that financial, or other (such as counteracting of labor shortage) gain was emphatically *not* either the organizing principle or the motivation for the introduction of this form of labor exchange. In fact, when the productivity of apprentice workers is compared to the productivity of *praktikanti* workers, whose on-the-job training was far cheaper than the formal vocational school training received by apprentice workers, it can be argued that the apprentice workers represented a much better financial investment. It is likely that contract workers were even cheaper than the *praktikanti* workers as far as the Czechoslovak companies and state were concerned. However, at the very least, their employment came at the cost of industrial unrest and disruptions in production. Moreover, the proliferation of the different categories (and thus rules regulating the workers' lives and labor process) as well as the fact that these workers were not only in close contact with another socially but often worked side by side in the same workshops made the different degrees to which they were commodified difficult to conceal, and in that way contributed to dissatisfaction and unrest.

While the fact that the exploitation of Vietnamese workers did take place, as well as the causes behind it, are important, the resistance and open opposition to it are

equally important. The resistance came from three places. Intermittantly from the Czechoslovak Labor Ministries, which saw looking after the workers' interests as *a part* of their agenda. The Labor Ministries, however, they also faced pressure from Czechoslovak enterprises and fellow branch ministries. As a result, they acted only as ambivalent guardians of workers' interests, and thus of internationalist and socialist values.

Vietnamese workers and officials, on the other hand, protested the infringements upon workers rights more systematically and vigorously. The workers, for their part, expressed their dissatisfaction through means that ranged from refusal to apply themselves (e.g., sleeping on the job), through open insubordination to foremen's orders and verbal refusal to perform assigned tasks all the way to full-blown strikes. The embassy officials supported the workers in two ways, directly and indirectly. The latter consisted of withholding cooperation with Czechoslovak officials and authorities in the enforcement of disciplinary measures. Archival documents contain numerous instances of lamentation by the Czechoslovak administrators about the Vietnamese officials "dragging their feet," or, as a colorful Czech expression goes, "playing a dead bug" when it came to meting out punishment. The officials, however, also stood up for workers' rights openly and directly at the negotiating table during regular meetings with their Czechoslovak counterparts, and, in exceptional cases, by intervening directly in factories or hostels. The gains of this activism were often piecemeal, ad hoc and not systematic (such as in the case of policies toward female Vietnamese workers who became pregnant, or in the case of minimum earnings). Sometimes, however, notably in the case of transfer of workers from agricultural

and construction companies into industrial enterprises, they were able to achieve complete resolution. Lastly, while the arguments of the Vietnamese workers and officials in support of the changes they demanded tended to be usually framed in non-ideological, practice-oriented language, at times, and often during the moments of heightened tensions, they deployed explicit socialist and internationalist vernacular. The more obvious, and perhaps, more superficial rationale for the use of this tactic was that the ideologies provided an efficient language for the formulation of demands, as the claims couched in these terms could not be easily dismissed given that both the states used these ideologies as backbones of their legitimacy. But on a deeper level, the significance of internationalism was more fundamental: namely, it, along with the membership in the same “second” world created a situation in which Czechoslovakia – unlike receiving countries in capitalist contexts – saw itself as politically accountable to Vietnam, the sending country. Thus, Vietnam, a very poor sending country, was able to meaningfully and significantly affect the decisions and policies of Czechoslovakia, economically much more powerful receiving country.

CHAPTER 6: RACE IS ELSEWHERE: STATE-SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY AND RACIALIZATION OF VIETNAMESE WORKERS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

In the mid-2000s, the following joke could be heard in the Czech Republic. It is surely still around, only the names of the protagonists have changed with election cycles:

Presidents Bush, Putin and Klaus are together on an airplane, returning from a summit. The plane experiences technical problems and crashes in the middle of the ocean, falling on an island inhabited by a tribe of cannibals. The cannibals immediately surround the three presidents, ready to attack them. President Bush says: "You can't eat me, I am George Bush, the president of the United States, the most powerful country on earth." The tribal chief retorts: "I don't care," and orders the tribesmen: "Take him and slow-cook him with sour cream." Then it's Putin's turn: "You can't eat me, I am Vladimir Putin, the ruler of Russia, the second most powerful country on earth." The chief replies again: "I don't care, take him and make goulash out of him." Finally, it's Klaus's turn: "I am Václav Klaus, the president of the Czech Republic ..." The chief interrupts him excitedly and exclaims: "The Czech Republic! That's where I got my degree! What would you like to eat? Slow cooked meat on sour cream or goulash?"

As do many jokes of such nature, it can point us towards some tentative insights about how the Czechs see themselves and their place in the globalized world. Not the least important of these insights would have something to do with racism – what with a cannibal chief who holds a (possibly higher-education) degree. The structure of the joke creates a narrative arc across time and links Czechs' current lives with the state-socialist era, because that is the time to which the punch-line delivered by the cannibal chief refers. Specifically, the late 1960s through the late 1980s, when Czechoslovakia -- as an economically developed, advanced state-socialist society -- provided citizens from poorer socialist (or socialist-leaning) countries with higher education, vocational school training, on-

the-job training and factory work. The fact that the joke remains in circulation, even among young people who were not born when the programs were in existence¹ indicates that the memory of these programs occupies a fairly solid place in Czechs' understanding of recent history.

In the world constructed by the joke, the foreigners that arrived to be educated are portrayed as savages, yet, they are also assumed to have digested, quite literally, some core traits of Czech everyday life (if not Czech high culture, as, it is implied, their savage nature persists). The dishes in which the potentates are to be cooked are staples of Czech cuisine: meat with sour cream sauce (*svíčková*) and goulash (which, though not of local provenance exactly, has been thoroughly domesticated). The Czech president owes his luck to the fact that the "chief" fondly remembers the internationalist aid provided to him more than 20 years ago by state-socialist Czechoslovakia. In the story, no explicit racial terminology is used, but there could be hardly a stronger marker of civilizational deficit than cannibalism; education occupies a central role in the story, but the persistence of cannibalism casts some doubt on the ultimate educability of the savage"; and finally, the "savage" is unequivocally grateful for the experience. All of these traits are suggestive of typical racializing discourses, and although the omission of an explicit racial descriptor is noteworthy, it is not entirely unique.

My subject in this chapter is the racialization of Vietnamese workers in 1980s Czechoslovakia. What makes this case interesting is that, while in most scholarly

¹ I heard the joke from a cousin of mine, who was born some two years after the collapse of state socialism in Czechoslovakia.

accounts the emergence and practice of racism are fairly tightly bound with (a history of) colonial exploits, Czechoslovakia utterly lacked any firsthand colonial experience and, furthermore, globally, the “racial status” of its citizens could be described as “borderline” or “off-white.”² The origins of this status can be traced back to the Enlightenment, but the status became, if anything, only more entrenched during the Cold War. In addition, the country’s political leadership explicitly rejected racism; indeed, the workers and apprentice-workers program was supposed to exemplify socialist internationalism³ in practice, as its goal was to help bring about a global Communist society through the building of socialism in individual countries, for which industrial advancement was seen as crucial.

Given this context, how did racialized images of Vietnamese (and other foreign) workers come into being? If racialization is always determined by economic and political forces, if politics and ideology play a crucial role in the shifting meanings of race, as Omi and Winant argue in their classic work,⁴ what was it about the way in which the state-socialist government -- which disavowed

² Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997). See also Attila Melegh, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourse on Eastern Europe* (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2006), and József Böröcz, “The Fox and the Raven: the European Union and Hungary Renegotiate Margins of ‘Europe,’” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (42, 4, 2000), pp. 847-875.

³ Although as Jonathan Valdez (*Internationalism and the Ideology of Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993) makes clear, socialist internationalism was a contentious concept as, especially after the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, the struggles over its definitions were also struggles over the extent of Soviet influence over the state-socialist Central and eastern European countries.

⁴ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States from the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York, Routledge, 1994).

racism -- framed the program that made the racialization of foreign workers possible? Or, to put it in another way, how did official state-socialist ideology, as relevant to the foreign workers program, contribute to the racialization of Vietnamese workers (and other foreign laborers, particularly Cuban) in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s? To begin to answer these questions, it is first necessary to look at the existing scholarship on race in state socialism.

SCHOLARSHIP ON STATE SOCIALISM AND RACE

The spring 2002 issue of the *Slavic Review* carried a series of articles in which the contention articulated in the lead article by Eric Weitz was subjected to a lively debate.⁵ Weitz argued that the Soviet state, especially between 1937 and 1953, practiced racial politics despite the fact that it had “explicitly and loudly rejected the ideology of race.”⁶ His argument rested on the assertion that certain groups “targeted as enemies of socialism became ‘racialized’ in the sense that their suspect characteristics were seen to inhere in each and every member of the group bar none and were transmitted across generations.”⁷ In their rejoinders, critics convincingly disputed both of Weitz’s contentions. They showed that the Soviet state did, in fact, have a concept of race, but that that concept did not

⁵ Eric D. Weitz, “Racial Politics Without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges,” *Slavic Review* (61,1, 2002), pp. 1-29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

underwrite the state's policies of discrimination and exclusion, ruthless as they may have been.⁸

While the *Slavic Review* debate focused on groups internal to the Soviet state, the official authorities and the citizens of the Soviet Union, as well as those of Czechoslovakia and many other European state-socialist countries, also came into contact with groups of external (non-citizen) "others." These were the groups of, first, foreign students, and, later on, foreign workers, arriving primarily from various African and Asian (but also some Latin American) countries. According to Woodford McClellan, although the "Soviet leadership unequivocally condemned racism and racial discrimination. . .lower-level officials. . .often perpetuated stereotypes and prejudices," and hence, Africans and black Americans attending the Comintern schools in the Soviet Union in the mid-1920s and mid-1930, were "stunned and disillusioned" by the racism they experienced "precisely because it so blatantly contradicted the new regime's official posture."⁹ Julie Hessler's investigation of the position of African students in the mid-1960s Soviet Union also notes numerous incidents involving "intimidation and harassment, such as an alleged episode on the Moscow subway in which [African] students were accosted by a couple of drunken Russians, who demanded that they give up their seats: 'In your own country you aren't even allowed to be in the same subway car as whites, whereas here you

⁸ Especially Francine Hirsch, "Race Without the Practice of Politics," *Slavic Review* 61,1 (2002), pp. 30-43, and Amir Weiner, "Nothing but certainty," *Slavic Review* 61, 1 (2002), pp. 44-53.

⁹ Woodford McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26, 2, (1993), pp. 371-390.

are sitting down while white people stand.”¹⁰ Hessler does not comment on the fact that the form in which the invective was delivered evoked *American* racist practices (as imagined by the two Russian drunkards) although, as I argue below, this displacement constitutes a key feature of racist discourse in state socialism. Hessler also observed that the typical way of handling racist complaints in the Soviet Union “avoided an outright denial of the problem, but minimized its significance by presenting racism as purely incidental, a product of criminal, pre-socialist attitudes and behavior”¹¹ and, at least in some cases, the affected students accepted the officials’ argument that “racism was an unofficial aspect of Soviet life.”¹² Allison Blakely, writing in 1986, reached a similar conclusion; he argued that “such racism as it exists in the Soviet Union is of the individual, rather than systematic, variety.”¹³ Charles Quist-Adade’s examination of Soviet media and textbook coverage of Africa pointed out the exotic and paternalist depictions of the continent; in these depictions, the Soviets “infused with ‘communist compassion’ and fired by the ideas of a Soviet civilizing mission [rescued] a helpless black victim.”¹⁴ He also argued that this “white man’s burden” narrative started to turn into more explicit and aggressive form of racism during the *Perestroika* of the late 1980s when, for instance, a “member of the Russian parliament complained. . .that the former communist leadership ‘wasted precious Soviet resources on peoples who have only begun to

¹⁰ Julie Hessler, “Death of an African Student in Moscow,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 47,1-2 (2006), pp. 33-64.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 38.

¹² Ibid., p. 57, italics in the original.

¹³ Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian history and thought* (Washington, D.C., Howard University Press, 1986).

¹⁴ Charles Quist-Adade, “From Paternalism to Ethnocentrism: Images of Africa in Gorbachev’s Russia,” *Race & Class* (46, 2005), pp. 79-89, pp. 79-89.

call themselves a people, who have just descended from the palm trees, and have only managed to pronounce the word 'socialism.'"¹⁵ Maxim Matusevich, too, detected certain "condescension" among Soviets towards Africans, which adverse economic conditions sometimes pushed to "outright hostility."¹⁶ In sum, these works suggest, even if with some caveats, that although popular racism against foreign students existed in the Soviet Union, it did so, for the most part, in spite of state officials' efforts to the contrary.

In contrast to the articles discussed above, Jonathan Zatlin focuses on foreign *workers*, primarily Vietnamese and Mozambican, in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and his conceptual argument also differs.¹⁷ Zatlin argues that the GDR government assumed an "imperialist posture" and that "Marxist-Leninist practice revealed itself to be every bit as rapacious as its capitalist competitors. Rather than displaying solidarity with their socialist allies, the East German authorities sought to exploit the asymmetries of power inherent in these relationships for economic gain."¹⁸ Zatlin then argues, in a stark contrast to the literature on foreign students in the Soviet Union, that it was precisely the "socialist state's naked exploitation and outright abuse of non-Europeans [that]

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 84.

¹⁶ Maxim Matusevich, "An Exotic Subversive: Africa, Africans and the Soviet Everyday," *Race & Class* 49, 4 (2008), pp. 57-81. See also Maxim Matusevich, "Probing the Limits of Internationalism: African Students Confront Soviet Ritual," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27, 2 (2009), pp.19-39 and Maxim Matusevich, "Revisiting the Soviet Moment in Sub-Saharan Africa," *History Compass* 7, 5 (2009), pp. 1259-1268.

¹⁷ Jonathan R. Zatlin, "Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971-1989," *Central European History* 40 (2007), pp. 683-720.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp., 705, 706.

facilitated popular racism.”¹⁹ Thus, in his account, the commitment to socialist internationalism was no more than a fig leaf used by the GDR government to exploit foreign workers, which, moreover, fueled popular racism.

It might be that the reason for the differences between the arguments presented earlier and Zatlin’s is that the Soviet and the East German states differed in their approaches. It is, however, perhaps more likely that the state-socialist states treated foreign students and foreign workers differently. It is clear, for instance, that their respective material conditions differed. One difference was the fact that foreign workers not only made money but, as a rule, also saved large amounts of their earnings,²⁰ which they then used, especially at the end of their stay, to purchase goods to take back home.²¹ In the conditions of the command economy, in which shortages of certain goods would occur every so often, this frequently led to resentment on the part of East German customers, who felt that the Vietnamese or other foreign workers were “buying up” the goods to which East Germans should have priority access. My own research confirms that Czechoslovak customers gave in to similar resentments.

Taken together, these works provide us with valuable insights into the racialization of foreigners in some state-socialist regimes. However although they do not quite suggest that the practices of popular racialization existed

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 715.

²⁰ Zatlin cites figure of 50% of net earnings, which corresponds to the maximum allowed (by treaties) figure for Czechoslovakia as well.

²¹ These transactions were, in fact, substitutes for cash remittances, which were not possible due to Eastern European currencies’ inconvertibility.

independently of, or even in contradiction to, the official ideology, they do not specify how an explicitly anti-racist official ideology became translated into, or perhaps refracted in, popular stances that trafficked in racialized images and attitudes.

RACE IS ELSEWHERE

To see how official state ideology affected the popular racialization of Vietnamese workers, it is necessary to sketch out, at least briefly, how race, race relations and racism were discussed in public discourse. In late-state-socialist Czechoslovakia, race as an explicit topic of discussion appeared, as far as the general public was concerned, for the most part only in newspapers and biology textbooks. Biology textbooks treated race and racism in a highly uniform and abstract fashion.²² They started by positing that there are three main races (referred to usually as “breeds,” *plemena*) -- white, yellow and black. These were always (in both elementary and high school textbooks, and in all editions) enumerated in this exact order.²³ This statement was then followed by some variation on the emphatic declaration that “members of all breeds that exist today are of the same origin, absolutely equal, and have the same potential for

²² Due to centralization and the state’s control over curricula, the textbooks used by all schools of a given level were identical, existing in two linguistic mutations -- Czech and Slovak. Hence, examining any state-socialist textbook guarantees that we are looking at the normative interpretation that was widely disseminated.

²³ Interestingly, this classification almost exactly duplicated the racial classification of Immanuel Kant; the racism of Kant’s anthropological writings has been criticized by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, “The Color of Reason: The Idea of ‘Race’ in Kant’s Anthropology in Emmanuel Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997), as well as Mills, op. cit.

biological and cultural development.” This idea was made even more explicit in the coda, according to which “it is absolutely wrong to assert that human races are not equal -- that contention lies at the basis of racism.”²⁴ The last few lines were usually devoted to examples of such racisms in practice, using one or more examples of the following: German Nazism, the treatment of African Americans in the United States, and South African Apartheid.

This insistence that, to paraphrase Milan Kundera, race, and especially racism, was always elsewhere was exemplified in the print media. In a way, the stories appearing in newspapers could be read as just the latest examples of the thesis put forth in biology textbooks. One example, typical of many, was an article titled “Condemnation of Racism” published in the main Czechoslovak Communist daily, *Rudé právo*, in February 1982, in which the Republic of South Africa was discussed.²⁵ It contained a mention of the United States as well, noting that “the American stance towards South African Apartheid is also a result of a thoroughgoing racism and racial discrimination as they exist in the United States.” Later on in the article, the “South African racists” were accused of making use of “Hitler-style” methods. So, in this case, it actually managed to fit in all three textbook cases into a single piece of journalism.

The following excerpt from a secret police report written in 1981 shows how the public at large -- in this case, the inhabitants of a new housing development --

²⁴ Milan Stloukal et al., *Biologie pro III. ročník gymnázií* (Praha, Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1986), p. 53.

²⁵ “Odsouzení rasismu” [Condemnation of racism], *Rudé právo*, 16 February 1982, pp. 1, 7.

incorporated this racism-is-elsewhere thesis into their own discourse about foreign workers, in this case Cubans:

Inadequate facilities in the housing development, such as shortages of roads, stores, and so forth, only increase the dissatisfaction with the institutions of the local government. In this group of dissatisfied residents, some have voiced the opinion that not addressing problems at the housing development, conjoined with the disturbances caused by the Cubans, might result in local elections not unfolding well. Recently, the situation has escalated to such an extent that groups of young people are saying that if the coloreds behave everywhere the way the Cubans do in [the town of] Blatná, then they are not surprised that there is racism in the world.²⁶

As this report shows, the residents -- who implicitly describe themselves as not racist (they threaten to become racist) -- used the racism-is-elsewhere element of the state's ideology in order to express an unabashedly racist stance. Besides being racist, the statement was also tactical. It can be interpreted as an attempt to use the foreign workers, or their putative 'disorderly' conduct, as a bargaining chip, a means to hold the state-socialist government -- which sponsored foreign workers -- to account for the pledges regarding living standards it had made to local people. In this regard, the reference to the local elections is crucial. By referring to them, the residents go beyond merely voicing dissatisfaction: they issue the state an implicit threat, in fact, two. The first, and more obvious, is to disrupt the local elections. This would have been a potent threat since, as recent literature (in contrast to totalitarian theories)²⁷ argues, there is much evidence that the Party-state needed at least some degree of legitimacy, which lead to extensive negotiations between party elites and various groups of citizens in

²⁶ ABS, Objektový svazek Zahraniční dělníci, StB České Budějovice; report from 19 May 1981, OB 332.

²⁷ A recent example is Jason C. Sharman, *Repression and Resistance in Communist Europe* (London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

state-socialist countries.²⁸ However, through their complaints, the residents articulated another threat: By warning that they might openly profess allegiance to racist attitudes, unless the state deliver on its promises, they threatened to challenge the state's ideological definition of the country as one in which racism had no place. Thus, through these two threats, the residents challenged the competence of the state on two counts: as ultimate manager of economic allocations, and as the supreme ideologue. They were able to do this because, since official ideology posited that there was no racism in Czechoslovakia, the housing estate residents could present themselves as non-racist to begin with, and then use the threat of becoming racist to bargain with the state authorities.

'HONEST WORK' AND RACE

To get a sense of Czechoslovakia's state-socialist racial politics in practice, one needs to look at the treatment of the Roma, the only group that sometimes figured in the passages devoted to race in biology textbooks. Even though in the late 1920s (still the pre-socialist era) some anthropologists and criminologists in Czechoslovakia started to "[emphasize] the 'racial' or 'biological' factors that allegedly influence the Gypsy character," nonetheless, "the definition of the Gypsy remained suspended between ethnic and sociological criteria," according

²⁸ For the Czechoslovak case, see especially Michal Pullmann, *Konec experimentu: Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Prague, Scriptorium, 2011). For the Soviet Union, see especially Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006). For Hungary and the GDR, see, for example, Esther Bartha, "Welfare Dictatorship, the Working Class and the Change of Regimes in East Germany and Hungary," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63,9 (2011), pp.1591-1610, and Jeffrey Kopstein "Ulbricht Embattled: The Quest for Socialist Modernity in the Light of New Sources," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 4 (1994), pp. 597-615.

to Celia Donert.²⁹ The Roma were seen by the Czechoslovak state as “a problem, indeed an obstacle to progress,”³⁰ that is, to progress in the building of socialism, and the point of state interventions was precisely to undo Roma’s “backwardness.” The meticulous study by Vera Sokolova makes it clear that, among other things, one important feature that characterized state-socialist Czechoslovakia’s approach to the Roma was its steadfast insistence on their ability to change, to leave behind behaviors that “ran against the idea of the modern state,”³¹ and to become proper socialist citizens. This belief was lodged so deeply in the core of the state’s policies that, if census commissioners or other authorities assessed particular Roma households (originally classified as Roma by the very same authorities) as having left behind their old ways of life and having adopted living “conditions considered ‘normal’ enough to pass as ‘Czech’ or ‘Slovak,’”³² they were no longer considered Roma. As a result, the numbers of Roma residents in the country statistics constantly fluctuated not because of changes in birth or death rates but because of these re-classifications.

This practice suggests an idea of race that is rather fluid and very different from the way the concept of race is used in current scholarship, where it is defined as a “symbolic category. . .that is misrecognized as a natural category,”³³ and racism

²⁹ Celia Donert, “‘The Struggle for the Soul of the Gypsy’: Marginality and Mass Mobilization in Stalinist Czechoslovakia,” *Social History* 33, 2 (2008), pp. 123-144.

³⁰ Vera Sokolova, *A matter of speaking: racism, gender and social deviance in the politics of the “Gypsy question” in Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945-1989* (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2002) p. 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 239.

³³ Matthew Desdemon and Mustafa Emirbayer, “What is Racial Domination?” *Du Bois Review* 6, 2 (2009), pp. 335-355.

as the “dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group to congenital superiority.”³⁴ For, if anything, the efforts of the Czechoslovak state – even when misguided – were intended to undermine the idea of naturalness of race in as thoroughgoing a way as possible.

What is crucial to note here is the centrality of labor, specifically “honest socialist work,” as it was then often termed, to these efforts by state officials to “erase” race. The role that “honest work” played in this process can be exemplified by the fact that before the (pre-socialist) law on the registration of nomadic persons was rescinded in the 1950s, individuals could petition for an exemption from the obligation of being registered as a nomadic Gypsy if they were able to prove that they lived “by the honest labor of [their] own hands.”³⁵ It is clear that this approach was perfectly in line with the Marxist understanding of race, and so it could be argued that its implementation was unsurprising. But given that one of the most frequent criticisms of the state-socialist state is that it did not put its money where its mouth was, so to speak, it is essential to note the centrality of this understanding of race to actual policies. What is more, this idea was not only a vital element of the state’s ideology, but also became another of the features of official discourse (along with the race-is-elsewhere element) that was accepted by public at large and then reworked into one of the key tools used in the articulation of the relationship to foreign workers.

³⁴ Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism* cited in Avtar Brah, “Ambivalent Documents/Fugitive Pieces: Author, Text, Subject, and Racializations” in Karim Murji and John Solomos, eds., *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

³⁵ Donert, op.cit., p. 130.

References to “honest socialist work” in relation to foreign workers are frequently found in archival documents, particularly in accounts of conflict situations. For instance, a man testifying to the police about a brawl in a beer pub is quoted as saying that the Vietnamese sitting at a neighboring table were loud, and that he [the Czech man] and his companions “were critical of them, and we were saying that they should return back to Vietnam; they don’t work anyway and money is paid to them unnecessarily.”³⁶ There are similar formulations in the reports of undercover officers who were tasked with monitoring the reactions of Czech citizens to a police intervention against Vietnamese workers on strike for increased wages. The genuineness of the vernacular used in the reports suggests that the officers faithfully set down what they had heard, or overheard, thus making the statements in the reports into a sort of “anthropological notes from the field.”³⁷ Thus, one such report said:

The intervention [against the strike] was positively evaluated by the [Czech] workers; their opinion is that our people would not dare do such a thing, and [the Vietnamese] instead of appreciating that they were given work, even refuse to work. [The source] said that people were saying that [the Vietnamese] should be driven back where they came from on foot (*že by je bylo třeba hnát pěšky odkud přišli*).³⁸

³⁶ ABS, Case from 13 June 1985; č.př. 2849-2860/96, balík č. 68.

³⁷ See historian Carlo Ginzburg’s use of transcripts of 16th century inquisitorial witch trials for study of popular piety in Carlo Ginzburg, “Witchcraft and Popular Piety: Notes on a Modenese trial of 1519” in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

³⁸ ABS, “Úřední záznam k reageni občanů na situaci mezi vietnamskými státními příslušníky, kteří pracují jako dělníci u n.p. Sempra Tušimice,” 27 March 1983; 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

Another report noted that “the opinions out there are that Vietnamese citizens do not appreciate what our state has done for them, and if they do not want to work, then the time has come to show them that, although we are good, we are not simply going to sit and let people do whatever they please.”³⁹ A third report echoes the previous two:

[Railway workers chatting about the event] stated that the police finally decided to put things in order, [which was justified since] they didn’t want to work, which affected other workers [in the company]. . .they stated that [the Vietnamese] are paid for work that they did not do, and so forth. . .In [a bistro], I overheard a conversation among four men on the topic. One of them was saying that at least now [the Vietnamese] would stop being a bother, and there would be no more trouble, and that [the Vietnamese] thought that they could do whatever they pleased in our country and now they see that that is not how it works, that they must behave themselves.⁴⁰

In all of these statements, the speakers expressed their hostility to the Vietnamese workers through criticism of the alleged shortcomings in their work ethic. The speakers anchored their arguments in the state’s official position on “honest socialist labor” but reworked it in a particular way. The official stance imbued “honest socialist labor” with the power to fundamentally change a person’s quasi-racial status, as we saw in the case of the Roma. In the case of the Vietnamese workers, this stance is reworked in popular discourse so as to be used in reverse: if “honest socialist labor” is a mechanism that uplifts, then any alleged deficiency of it warrants -- in this popular refraction of the official ideological discourse -- degradation. And, in a further refraction, the degradation is applied not on an individual basis (the way the changes in the

³⁹ ABS, “Úřední záznam k ohlasu na zásah pořádkové jednotky VB v Tušimicích - ubytovny SEMPRA Tušimice,” 24 March 1983; ABS, 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

⁴⁰ ABS, “Úřední záznam k ohlasu na reakci lidí v souvislosti s občany Vietnamské socialistické republiky; 24 March 1983”; 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

status of the Roma households were implemented according to state policy), but indiscriminately, to the entire group. To do that, the Czech speakers carved out for themselves the identity of model socialist citizens, who appreciate both the opportunity for, and the value of, “honest work.” Using this identity, they would then portray the foreign workers as willfully violating socialist precepts, thus allowing themselves to express hostility against foreign workers without fearing official reprisals since, technically, they were echoing the state’s ideology.

An interesting aspect of the reworking of official ideology is that, at first glance, it appears identical to the calls of native workers in capitalist economies directed against their foreign migrant worker counterparts. However, in the capitalist context, the defensive rationale behind the call is the fear of the foreigners being too good -- too efficient, too cheap -- as workers; whereas in the state-socialist context the defensive rationale rests on precisely the opposite: the foreigners are accused of not being good enough workers. This is directly related to the specific functioning of the state-socialist economy, in which the ability to find and keep a job was defined as a right (and an obligation), hence the fear of foreigners as “those who steal the jobs that rightfully belong to us” was for the most part nonexistent. Instead, the adage could be reformulated as: a fear of foreigners as “those who pre-empt us from acquiring the goods that should be rightfully ours,” as Zatlin also found.⁴¹

⁴¹ Zatlin, *op. cit.*

Allegations of a defective work ethic functioned as a discursive strategy used by the public at large, regardless of the actual situation. One of my informants, who became friends with a Czech foreman managing a group of Vietnamese workers, said: “The public used to say that they were lazy but that was not true at all, they were not lazy. . .the foreman said: ‘No, they are not lazy at all, I don’t know why people are saying that.’”⁴² The existence of this particular discursive strategy can be explained by the fact that partaking in the ideological discourse centered on labor and “honest work” allowed people to express racially tinged hostility to foreign workers without incurring sanctions from the authorities, as, on the surface, such statements essentially endorsed the official stance.

One more dimension appears in the ways in which the official ideology of labor was refracted among the public at large: the theme of gratitude, or lack of it, for all that the Czechoslovak state had done for the foreign workers, not the least of which was giving them jobs. Their alleged failure to demonstrate such gratitude was used in tandem with the allegation that they failed to work properly, in racially tinged castigations of foreign workers.

GRATITUDE AND THE STATE-SOCIALIST *MISSION CIVILISATRICE*

While the public did not have access to internal ministerial documents or details of the treaties, the notion of the Czechoslovak state “spending money” on foreign workers was firmly lodged in the collective consciousness. This notion persisted

⁴² Interview, 22 February 2011.

despite the fact that the Czechoslovak economy largely benefited from the exchange. We can see this notion at work in a letter sent by an angry citizen to a Labor Ministry department responsible for the program's administration.⁴³ In a long (almost eight handwritten pages) letter, written on 17 October 1988, a woman living in a house adjacent to a hostel housing Vietnamese and Cuban workers complained:

We are amazed at how much money our state spends on foreign "workers." And why? If they behaved with at least a modicum of decency toward us, if they observed our laws, if they made up with their work at least a part of the resources that our state expands on them. . .they send home big boxes filled with goods for the purchases of which they could not have possibly earned enough money through honest work. . . And all the while, our women. . .are working their guts out in bad working conditions, and on top of that they must stand in lines for various goods, which should be routinely available [but are not], and in addition they raise children, who are for a large part of the day thrown back out on the street since only first- and second-graders are able to attend the after-school care program as there is no money for expanding the space or for paying additional instructors. Would it not be better to send all these ineducable [*nevychovatelné*] immigrants home, and use the saved resources to create conditions for a better education of our children?. . .Our children suffer because of the insufficient time the family and school devote to them -- if mothers were not overburdened with work and the need to chase after [scarce] goods, and if schools could have enough teachers [disjointed syntax in the original].⁴⁴

In the letter, the woman brings up once again the allegation that foreign workers fail to work honestly. But to this, she adds another supposition: that their participation in the Czechoslovak economy was purely a favor extended by the Czechoslovak government to its Vietnamese counterpart -- rather than

⁴³ The Labor Ministry forwarded a copy of the letter to the Industry Ministry with the request that it check the situation in the employment and housing of foreign workers employed by the relevant company (Veba Broumov). No further information on how the case was further handled is available in the archives.

⁴⁴ Uncatalogued, unarchived, held by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Prague.

something that benefited Czechoslovakia economically (as well) -- for which the foreign workers should be grateful. As Chapters 2 and 5 make clear, her supposition was factually wrong, but it was no less strongly present in popular consciousness for that, we can find reports of it even in contemporary ethnographic accounts.⁴⁵ This supposition fed on the way the state-controlled media talked about Vietnam and about the workers' and apprentices' program. Media coverage thematized dire economic conditions in Vietnam,⁴⁶ and steadfastly talked about the program as an instance of "brotherly help," even when referring to the guest worker-like phase. Moreover, many people were aware that the Vietnamese received a donation of clothing and personal items on arrival -- in part because sometimes (though not always) companies purchased the garments in bulk, as a result of which some groups of Vietnamese workers appeared to be wearing a sort of "uniform." The donation dramatized for Czechs and Slovaks in a vivid and concrete way the hierarchical relationship between the two countries.

In the media, an important element of this hierarchical conceptualization was a pronounced tendency to patronize, as illustrated by a short "human interest" story that appeared in the *Rudé právo* daily in 1985. The journalist's emotionally tinged language evokes an image of a clearly paternalistic relationship. In the

⁴⁵ Ivo Vasiljev, "Vietnamští pracující ve vědomí naší společnosti." Etnické procesy IV: etnické procesy v pohraničí českých zemí po r. 1945, sborník referátů přednesených na konferenci s mezinárodní účastí konané ve dnech 5.-8. listopadu 1984 v Sobotíně, okr. Šumperk, část 3 (Praha, Československá akademie věd, Ústav pro etnografii a folkloristiku, 1984).

⁴⁶ See for example a series of articles "Čtyři tisíce kilometrů po jižním Vietnamu" [4,000 kilometers through southern Vietnam] published *Rudé právo* in installments on 30 January, 5 February, 10 February and 16 February 1982.

story, a Czech female worker in charge of training Vietnamese apprentice-workers in a textile factory is described as interacting with one of the Vietnamese women (most of whom were 24 years old) in the following way: “Marie Šimánková runs her hand over a roll of cloth, looking for a mistake. There is none. She strokes the girl’s hair, smiles and praises her for work well done. Then she takes a closer look at the tender face of the Vietnamese girl and adjusts her hairdo a bit to make her even prettier.”⁴⁷



Photo 6: Illustration Accompanying the Rudé Právo Article.

Original caption: “Hero of socialist labor Marie Šimánková from Velveta Varnsdorf (in the middle) passes on her copious work experience to Vietnamese girls who attend the vocational school here. In the picture, with Le Hong (on left).”

⁴⁷ “Bystré oči, šikovné ruce” [Sharp eyes, skillful hands], *Rudé právo*, 13 September 1985, pp. 3.

While the article intended to portray the Vietnamese workers in an unmistakably positive light, it was also exceedingly patronizing. The reference to the woman in her mid-20s as a ‘girl’ might perhaps be explained by contemporary vernacular. Nonetheless, this practice -- and other widespread linguistic strategies that portrayed the Vietnamese as young, even children⁴⁸ -- both reflected existing condescending images of Vietnamese workers, and contributed to consolidating them even further. While many such condescending practices were subtle, the practice of using the word *ty* to address Vietnamese workers in public was not. *Ty*, which is one of the two Czech equivalents of the English “you,” is normally reserved only for children, friends or family, and never used in polite speech for addressing adults in public (for which the more polite *vy* form is used). Nonetheless, *ty* was the pronoun routinely used to address Vietnamese. Shockingly, the practice remains alive and well in the Czech Republic today, and as such can be seen building upon the patronizing stances developed in the state-socialist era.

That this patronizing stance was not lost on Czechoslovak citizens is evident also in cases when they went out of their way to show goodwill towards Vietnamese workers and treat them as well as possible (often in a conscious effort to countervail the animosity of their compatriots). One of my interviewees told me of her motivation to help the Vietnamese while everyone around her seemed to try to avoid any contact with them and trafficked in the coarsest of racist

⁴⁸ See Alena Alamgir, “Bureaucratic Disgruntling and Intimate Interventions: Vietnamese Trainees and Temporary Workers in (the Care of) State-Socialist Czechoslovakia,” paper presented at *Comparing Past and Present* conference, UC Berkeley, 12 August 2009.

prejudices and rumors (such as that after a dentist pulled a tooth of a Vietnamese worker the hole was crawling with worms). She described it in the following way: "I felt terribly sorry for them, I kept telling myself: 'It is not these people's [Vietnamese] fault,' they came here so that they would become somehow. . .I don't know how to put it. . .so that they would become civilized [*zcivilizovali se*] here."⁴⁹ And again later in the interview: ". . .because I felt sorry for them, and I told myself that another country would get civilized if we. . .I don't know, I simply felt that the whole world should be doing well." This notion of the need to "civilize" Vietnamese workers came up also in an interview with a man who was in charge of a group of Vietnamese workers in a mining company. He told me that the company decided to remove gas stoves from the apartments in which it planned to house the workers (and replace them with small electric plates) since "we did not know whether, how well they could operate gas stoves." When I asked him whether he or anyone in the company had heard about any accident happening to Vietnamese workers in some other place, to do with gas stoves, he said that no, the measure was "preventative."⁵⁰

These examples show that in public discourse, the program was to an important extent conceptualized as a socialist *mission civilisatrice*, for which, as the letter cited above and the invectives against foreign workers quoted in police reports show, foreign workers were expected to show gratitude through their honest work. Their perceived or alleged lack of gratitude served to rationalize hostility to them. Education, both in the narrow and the wider sense, was at the heart of

⁴⁹ Interview, 22 February 2011, op.cit.

⁵⁰ Interview, 27 January 2011.

this civilizing mission so it is noteworthy that the writer of the angry letter labels foreign workers as “ineducable.” The root of the Czech word she used (*nevychovatelný*) is “*výchova*,” which connotes education in a wider sense. It can refer to the accumulation of knowledge, but it refers even more strongly to a holistic notion of “upbringing” and conjures up associations with “good manners.”⁵¹ By labeling the foreign workers *nevychovatelný*, the letter writer attacks not just the foreign workers themselves, but also assesses the entire “civilizing mission” as hopeless and thus attacks the key ideological rationale for the program, which was to produce workers who were both technically qualified and good socialist citizens.

Finally, just like the residents of the housing estate, from whom we heard earlier, this woman, too, used her complaint against the foreign workers to remind the authorities of the promises the state-socialist state made to its citizens in regard to their welfare. Thus, to the extent that the expressions of hostility against foreign workers were tactical, they were used by Czechoslovak citizens as a means of holding state officials accountable for their promise to deliver satisfactory living standards in exchange for citizens’ support (or at least abstention from subversion) of the regime.

TRIANGULATION AND ‘NORMALCY’: VIETNAMESE, CUBANS, ROMA

⁵¹ The names for a number of school subjects contain the word *výchova* in Czech, although, as a rule, they are subjects that combine skill-based and knowledge-, or ethics-based learning: physical education, art education, civics, religious education, and so forth.

Interestingly, whereas Czechoslovak citizens who were not in close contact with foreign workers racialized them as ungrateful loafers, those who worked alongside them in factories, or were in charge of them as shop floor supervisors, racialized them in precisely the opposite way: as almost fabulously diligent, docile, and disciplined factory workers. A former Labor Ministry clerk emphasized: “the Vietnamese, they are hardworking.”⁵² A former HR manager in one of the largest Czechoslovak industrial conglomerates of the period echoed the sentiment: “The Vietnamese, they had a more pronounced tendency to apply themselves at work. . .the first groups were absolutely ideal.” And: “The Vietnamese, they work relentlessly, they are very diligent.” And again later on in the interview: “The Vietnamese, more so than the Cubans, the Vietnamese were better liked [by Czechs and Slovaks], they were more industrious and kind of more disciplined and calmer.”⁵³ An official report from 1981 (written for the perusal of the head secretary of a Communist Party regional branch) echoes these personal reminiscences:

Currently, there are 20 [female] Vietnamese nationals working in the plant 01 Horní Staré Město and plant 06 Poříčí. There are talks under way with the Vietnamese Embassy about the placement of another 40 workers once they complete the language course. The management of [the spinning mill company] notes that the Vietnamese workers’ work morale is incomparably better than the morale of the [female] workers from Cuba.⁵⁴

One striking aspect of these accounts is the strong relational component in the images of the Vietnamese presented by their Czech supervisors; the comparisons and contrasts with Cuban workers. These comparisons alert us to the fact that

⁵² Interview, 20 April 2010.

⁵³ Interview, 27 January 2011, op.cit.

⁵⁴ ABS, “Informace o operativní situaci ve VčK pro vedoucího tajemníka KV KSČ,” 15 July 1981; přír. HK z roku 1988, obal 11.

the mechanism was, actually, not bilateral but rather triangular as it stemmed from two sets of comparisons, which were mutually embedded -- Vietnamese-Cubans and Vietnamese-Czechs. Such triangulation has been documented as playing an important role in the racialization of other foreign workers in other, non-state-socialist, settings.⁵⁵ The Vietnamese were most frequently compared with Cubans, and only occasionally with other foreign workers, such as Poles. In this way, the supposed division of humankind into three distinct races, which Czechoslovak citizens were taught in biology classes throughout elementary and high school,⁵⁶ was articulated in that both the Vietnamese and the Cubans were perceived as racially different from the Czechs and Slovaks, and hence comparable to each other, whereas the Poles were perceived as fundamentally similar to the local population and not so easily comparable with the overseas workers. Hence, racial criteria trumped mere foreignness, which suggests that the “othering” of Vietnamese and Cubans was not “just” xenophobia, but, in fact, had racist roots.

Additionally, comparisons were drawn at times between the Vietnamese and the only local minority identified by biology textbooks as a racial “other” -- the Roma. During a 1982 incident, for example, a Czechoslovak citizen “while intoxicated, goaded Vietnamese citizens. He attacked them verbally, called them

⁵⁵ Marta María Maldonado, “Racial Triangulation of Latino/a Workers by Agricultural Employers,” *Human Organization* 65, 4 (2006), pp. 353-361.

⁵⁶ During biology classes in the 1980s teachers would sometimes show students large, perhaps a square foot in size, color photographs of people purportedly representing, in an ideal-typical way, the three racial types (author’s personal recollection). Such practice trained students to see both the Vietnamese and the Cubans as racially different, but, say, the Poles as not.

Gypsies, and said that he would throw them out of the pub.”⁵⁷ This suggests that, in the popular imagination and discourse, people took to heart the unambiguous assertion that distinct biological races existed, as posited in textbooks, but ignored anti-racist admonitions, and carved out a space for the Vietnamese in existing racial hierarchies.

Tellingly, the Vietnamese living in the Czech Republic today are routinely compared to, and contrasted with, the Roma, echoing the “model minority” discourse familiar from the United States.⁵⁸ One of my informants showed me a high-rise apartment building in which the Vietnamese workers used to be housed, explaining that the workers did not occupy the entire building, but that in some apartments “normal [by which he meant Czech] people lived as well” since “the Vietnamese are not like the Gypsies.”⁵⁹ By this he wanted to communicate that the Vietnamese, in contrast to the Roma, were relatively easy to live alongside. Both his use of the word “normal” and the comparison with the Roma are significant as they are instrumental in creating a hierarchy. The word “normal” is used as a synonym for “Czechs,” who are located at the apex. The Roma are located at the bottom, while the Vietnamese, who are explicitly described as “better” than the Roma, but not subsumed under the “normal” category, are assigned the middle position. The significance of “normal” is also demonstrated in a study of the Vietnamese community in the Czech Republic

⁵⁷ NA, “Incident v Milevsku -- vzájemné napadení občana L. Medka vietnamskými občany a občana Jakubíka v Hořovicích,” dated 20 July 1982.

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Arthur Sakamoto, Kimberly Goyette, ChangHwan Kim, “Socioeconomic Attainments of Asian Americans,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 35, (2009), pp. 255-276.

⁵⁹ Interview, 1 February 2011.

today, in which a teacher is quoted as describing a Vietnamese pupil first as a “good, thoughtful, smart, cooperating” only to conclude by saying that “if he did not have those slanted eyes, he would be quite a normal boy.”⁶⁰ Elsewhere in the same study, teachers are quoted as comparing Vietnamese and Roma children and saying with a sigh: “Why cannot the Gypsies be like [the Vietnamese]?”⁶¹ Sokolova’s work confirms the centrality of the “binary opposition of ‘normal,’ meaning Czech or Slovak, and ‘deviant,’ meaning ‘Gypsy,’”⁶² to the articulation of difference in regard to the Roma, which was developed during the state-socialist period and remains operational to this day. With the end of the state-socialist regime, the Czechs (and Slovaks) discarded the ideology of state socialism and with it also the potentially equalizing capacity of “honest work,” so finding themselves in a situation today where “slanted eyes” are an obstacle to “normalcy.” The “savages” are seen as potentially educable, but the date for the fulfillment of this potential seems to be getting forever postponed.

CONCLUSION

Two findings presented in this chapter are particularly relevant to the arguments made in the other parts of this dissertation. The first is the fact that, in the 1980s, Czechoslovak citizens articulated their racially tinged hostility against Vietnamese (and other foreign) workers by linking the presence of these workers

⁶⁰ Veronika Kahlerová, *Vietnamská menšina v Plzni* (M.A. thesis, Plzeň, Katedra sociální a kulturní antropologie, Fakulta humanitních studií, Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2000), pp. 67.

⁶¹ Ibid., footnote 32, pp. 67.

⁶² Sokolova, op. cit. pp. 12.

to the failures of the Czechoslovak state to deliver on its promises on securing the level of services and welfare it pledged. Deploying a rather cunning rhetorical maneuver, Czechoslovak citizens made arguments that relied on an *implicitly* racist language while “threatening” the state with becoming *openly* racist should it not deliver on the promises it made in regard to the level of services, welfare and “social comfort.” The power of this rhetorical strategy lay in the fact that it took aim at one of the principal ideological bases on which the Czechoslovak state (just as its counterparts in the rest of the state socialist world) rested its legitimacy, namely the assertion that, unlike many countries outside the state-socialist bloc, it did away with racism. By connecting foreign workers with the economic shortcomings of the Czechoslovak state with racially tinged hostility against Vietnamese workers, the citizens challenged the state on two counts: as the ultimate manager of economic allocations, and hence the provider of care, and as the supreme ideologue of equality.

The second finding that connects this chapter with the larger argument made in this dissertation is the citizens’ reading of the program as a socialist civilizing mission of sorts. This reading was clearly based on the state’s own framing of the program articulated in the early stages (late 1960s-early 1970s), when the state defined and treated Vietnamese *praktikanti* workers as objects at which it directed its care. While, as far as the Czechoslovak state was concerned, by the 1980s, this framing came rather close to becoming the “fig leaf” that other scholars, cited earlier, accuse it of being, Czechoslovak citizens embraced it enthusiastically. Interestingly, both those who used it to express hostility toward foreign workers *and* those who felt morally compelled to stand up for them drew

heavily on it. Especially the latter case belongs to the category of those instances, analyzed by Yurchak,⁶³ in which the citizens of state-socialist countries resourcefully appropriated and worked with the ideological apparatus and institutional structures that often appeared to be emptied out of any meaning and use them for work that was meaningful. In some respects, this process can be said to constitute a re-appropriation of socialist ideas and ideals “from below.” Ideology being what it always is – a set of ideas whose meaning and interpretation cannot be fixed, or effectively policed, by its originators or sponsors – meant that if it could be re-appropriated by individuals who used it in their best efforts to pursue non- and even anti-racist conduct, it could just as well be appropriated for forging modes of conduct departing from it diametrically.

⁶³ Alexei Yurchak in *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2006).

CONCLUSION

When I embarked on this project I did so because I was intensely curious about two things: One, what life in state-socialist Czechoslovakia was like for the Vietnamese, whom I remember encountering, and observing, in public spaces when I was in elementary and high school but with whom I never spoke at the time. And two, how would the society in which I grew up and came of age appear when looked at with the benefit of hindsight. That is likely the reason why, when I embarked on my research, I had two foci: the Vietnamese workers and the Czechoslovak state. Only gradually did I come to realize that by focusing on the program that brought them to Czechoslovakia I could use one (the Vietnamese workers) to gain perspective on the other (the Czechoslovak state), and learn something about both of them in the process. So, at the heart of this dissertation is the examination of the nature of the 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovak state socialism while using the program through which tens of thousands of Vietnamese citizens were brought in as a lens. Since I have always been partial to inductive reasoning (and to whodunit stories in which mysteries are solved based on clues that appear utterly marginal, and even unreliable, at the outset), I started forming my argument based on the things I found in archival materials and heard from people who were part of the program in some capacity and generously agreed to share their memories with me. I was struck by the fact that many of my Vietnamese informants, after sharing with me quite freely their misgivings about the shortcomings of the program and mistakes that had been made, would, at the end, when I asked them for their overall

assessment, tell me how grateful they personally, and Vietnam as a country, were for what they continued to describe as needed help, given the dire economic situation in which Vietnam found itself at the time. I will admit that I first discounted these statements as mere pleasantries motivated by the need to uphold decorum. However, when re-reading the transcripts of the interviews months later, I also noticed that the praise generally tended to emphasize the apprentice worker form of the labor exchange in particular. This piqued my interest because it meant that I had to ask myself: What is it that differentiated the apprentice-worker form of the program from the guest-worker form? On the one hand, the answer is obvious and trivial: the education and training the Vietnamese citizens received before joining the shop floors of Czechoslovak factories as blue-collar workers. But why did it matter so much? And was that the only difference? At this point I realized that I needed to compare the apprentice-worker form of the program systematically with the guest-worker form, and also that, since there does not seem to be any theory of labor migration between state-socialist countries, I needed to see how what I was looking at differed from, or was similar to, the functioning of labor exchanges in the capitalist contexts.

Embarking on the comparisons made one thing clear immediately: It is not possible to treat and talk meaningfully about the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program as though it were one single entity that remained unchanged through time. The most interesting aspect of the program was *that*, and *how*, it changed over time. Putting these changes in the context of theorizing on labor migration in capitalist contexts made me realize that what changed was the

relationship between the migrant workers and the receiving state. The status of the Vietnamese workers in relationship to the Czechoslovak state changed from that of being (treated as) an object of the Czechoslovak state's care, one that the state protected against (or limited the degree of) commodification through social, educational and welfare policies and services, was transformed by becoming conceptualized as a "fully mobile labor force" whose employment (and deployment) was much less dependent on the developmental goals of the Vietnamese state, and much more determined by the economic priorities of the Czechoslovak one. The latter were in part motivated by the "bottom line" interests (the harbingers of the new times in the making) and, in part, by the need to plug the holes in the apparently insatiable labor market (the vestiges of the older times, slowly departing from the scene). Thus, in their capacity as "fully mobile labor force," imported on the basis of their "economic acceptability," or even "economic effectiveness," Vietnamese workers were, in the 1980s, no longer the objects of the Czechoslovak state's care (except when it came to boosting their capacity as productive creatures – hence the continued provision of healthcare while in the country), but rather became the *means* that the late-state-socialist Czechoslovak state used to deliver, as best it could, "social comfort" it had promised to its own citizens (by, for instance, placing them into production lines that were desperate for workers, and by relying on their willingness to incur overtime hours whose number was veritably stunning).

What can the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program tell us about the differences between labor import schemes in capitalist and socialist contexts? To begin with, the *motives* for introducing labor exchange and import schemes

were different. While the driving motor behind the classic guest-worker schemes in the capitalist European countries were the economic preoccupations of the *receiving* countries, such as their interest in filling existing or future labor market vacancies with temporary workers who could be returned to their home countries in the event of economic stagnation, the impetus for the launch of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange originated squarely in the economic preoccupation of the *sending* country, i.e., Vietnam. Accordingly, the second difference lies in the fact that while in the capitalist context the initiative invariably started in the labor-receiving countries, which approached the potential labor-supplying governments with requests for labor recruitment, in the Czechoslovak case, the initiative came clearly from Vietnam. Second difference lies in the *point in the economic cycle* when these schemes were introduced. While the West European recruitment schemes were a response to the post-WWII economic boom (and the loss of lives, and thus labor power, in the war), the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese program got off the ground at the end of the 1960s, gained in momentum in the 1970s and peaked – and adopted some characteristics of the capitalist guest-worker programs – in the 1980s. In other words, the program was introduced and peaked at a time when, according to general consensus, Czechoslovak economy, just like the rest of the economies in the Soviet bloc, started on a downward trend. This mattered primarily in the last (1980s) phase, when – as the historical evidence available to me suggests – the Czechoslovak state started to conceptualize the program and foreign workers as a tool in its last-ditch efforts to mitigate the trend.

Yet, this is not the whole story. If it were, it would be rather depressing, and not really *that* different from the usual narrative about what socialism was and how it treated its (guest) workers. While the Czechoslovak state's retreat from the socialist and internationalist commitments it had made earlier is important, so is the resistance to it on the part of Vietnamese workers and the Vietnamese state. It is important because it happened at all, and because it was robust. This fact alone disrupts the taken-for-granted images depicting foreign workers in socialist economies as helpless and hapless victims, and their governments as only too eager to suppress them further for their own purposes.¹ Without wishing to idealize Vietnamese government representatives in the 1980s, it would be a grave omission not to see them *also* as labor rights activists, working diligently on behalf of their workers. What is interesting theoretically about their effort is that it was made possible by the existence of socialist and internationalist ideas and ideals. This is to some extent paradoxical given that the transformation of Vietnamese workers' status from that of objects of care to the means used to help secure care for Czechoslovak citizens reflected a retreat from these very ideas. Yet, the existence of these ideas, and the fact that both the states publicly proclaimed their allegiance to these ideas, meant that the Vietnamese workers and officials could use them as a resource on which to base their claims

¹ Typical in this respect is this depiction of foreign workers' situation in the GDR: "[the workers] were subjected to an intense and intrusive surveillance by a variety of authorities. On the one hand, they lived under the rigorous control of supervisors, translators, and secret police officers from their home countries. . . On the other hand, migrant workers. . . had to contend with the strict supervision of East German officials. East German overseers monitored the cleanliness of the dormitories, restricted the ability of foreigners to visit each other, kept tabs on the mail. . . informed East German customs officials of their consumer habits, and tried to disrupt smuggling operations and drug-running" (Zatlin, "Scarcity...", op.cit.)

and demands, since the ideologies provided them with a language in which they could formulate them effectively. Even more importantly, however, the existence of these ideas meant that Czechoslovakia continued to be *politically accountable* to Vietnam for the wellbeing of Vietnamese workers. This aspect constitutes the chief difference between state-socialist labor exchanges, even in their most decentralized and “quasi-marketized” forms – that is to say, during the period when the Czechoslovak state started to shed the responsibility for some of the labor renewal costs (chiefly, education) that it had assumed earlier – from labor exchanges in the capitalist contexts.

However, this political accountability did not rest only on ideology, it had structural roots as well. Namely, it was due to the fact that the Czechoslovak state was not only the *receiving state* – as is the case in capitalist contexts – but also the Vietnamese workers’ *ultimate employer*. As such, it was politically accountable to its Vietnamese counterpart in *both* of these capacities, i.e., as the workers’ employer and as a partner-negotiator in inter-state relations.

There was a third factor (in addition to the two states’ shared commitment to socialist and internationalist ideas and the fact that the Czechoslovak state, by virtue of the fact that it had nationalized the means of production, was both the political *and* the economic entity ultimately responsible for foreign workers) that contributed to the Czechoslovak state’s accountability: the actions of the Vietnamese state. Namely, the fact that the Vietnamese officials relentlessly and consistently advocated for their workers’ interests and rights during formal negotiations as well as during less formal contacts with the Czechoslovak

administrators of the program at the Labor Ministry that were geared toward resolution of mundane issues. The existence of this political accountability – which rested on (1) the commitment to the ideology of internationalism, (2) the fact that the labor-receiving state (Czechoslovakia) was both the foreign workers’ ultimate employer while being also the official political partner in inter-governmental relations of the labor-supplying state (Vietnam), and (3) the robust and persistent actions of the Vietnamese officials in defense of the workers’ rights – constitutes the most important and fundamental difference between labor import schemes in the state-socialist contexts and those in capitalist countries. And this crucial difference comes with a no less crucial corollary exemplified primarily by the middle (apprentice-worker) form of the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese labor exchange program. This corollary goes against the unspoken assumption that lies at the basis of practically all research on labor migration: namely that the import of workers from abroad “works,” i.e., makes financial sense, only if the workers are (more or less) exploited. In other words, that the receiving state can either engage in altruism, and in that case it will lose money, or else it can look after its bottom line, in which case the exploitation of foreign workers is inevitable. Indeed, this was the expectation espoused even by the Czechoslovak state-socialist administrators of the program! Yet, as we saw, this actually turned out *not* to be the case in the apprentice-worker phase. Finally, my findings clearly show that for this to be the case – or, for that matter, for any meaningful defense of foreign workers’ rights – *robust* state action, based on political accountability, by *both* the sending and receiving states is absolutely indispensable.

APPENDIX

**OUTFITS ALLOCATED TO THE CITIZENS OF THE DRV UPON THEIR ARRIVAL,
CONSISTING OF UNDERWEAR, CLOTHING, FOOTWEAR, AND SMALL PERSONAL
EFFECTS**

[Jednorázové vybavení občanů VDR prádlem, oděvem, obuví a drobnými osobními potřebami]

A. MEN

Walking footwear.....	1 pair
Work footwear.....	1 pair
Home footwear.....	1 pair
Ordinary socks.....	3 pairs
Work socks.....	3 pairs
Boxer shorts.....	2 pcs
Briefs.....	2 pcs
Undershirts (singlets).....	2 pcs
Flannel shirts.....	2 pcs
Poplin shirts.....	2 pcs
Pajamas.....	2 pcs
Neckties.....	2 pcs
Corduroy pants.....	1 pc
Suit.....	1 pc
Woolen coat.....	1 pc
Knitted gloves.....	1 pair
Beret – cap.....	1 pc
Handkerchiefs.....	6 pcs

Work handkerchiefs.....	4 pcs
Working clothes.....	2 pcs
Towels.....	3 pcs
Briefcase – duffel bag.....	1 pc
Suitcase.....	1 pc
Sweatsuit.....	1 pc
Pullover.....	1 pc
Knitted scarf.....	1 pc
Toiletries (soap, toothbrush and tooth paste, washcloth)	

B. WOMEN

Walking footwear.....	1 pair
Work footwear.....	1 pair
Home footwear.....	1 pair
Sweatsuit.....	1 pc
Socks.....	2 pairs
Polyamide stockings.....	2 pairs
Cotton stockings.....	2 pairs
Panties.....	3 pairs
Underwear sets.....	3 pairs
Garter belt.....	1 pc
Bras.....	2 pcs
Pajama – nightgown.....	2 pcs
Summer dress.....	1 pc

Woolen dress.....	1 pc
Headscarf.....	1 pc
Woolen coat.....	1 pc
Gloves.....	1 pair
Scarf.....	1 pc
Handkerchiefs.....	6 pcs
Work handkerchiefs.....	4 pcs
Work clothes.....	2 pcs
Towels.....	3 pcs
Pullover.....	1 pc
Woolen skirt.....	1 pc
Blouse.....	2 pcs
T-shirts (upper layer).....	2 pcs
Handbag – duffel bag – briefcase.....	1 pc
Suitcase.....	1 pc
Sanitary napkins.....	2 packs
Toiletries (soap, toothbrush and tooth paste, washcloth)	
Woolen pants.....	1 pair
Kintted scarf.....	1 pcs

C R I T E R I A

TO BE USED TO ASSESS THE MEDICAL FITNESS OF DRV CITIZENS NECESSARY FOR THE COMPLETION OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN CZECHOSLOVAK ORGANIZATIONS

[Kriteria pro posuzování zdravotní způsobilosti občanů VDR k absolvování odborné přípravy v československých organizacích]

(A) REQUIRED EXAMS

Family and personal medical history (tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, heart and vascular disease, liver disease, urinary tract and kidney disease, surgeries, injuries, infectious and parasitic disease, nerve disorders, epilepsy, psychological and other problems):

Subjective complaints:

Medical diagnoses:

Patient's overall appearance:

Work history:

Height, weight, urine (protein, sugar, urobilinogen, puss, sediment):

Head

Eyes (vision sharpness, pupils, conjunctiva, presence of trachoma)

Ears, hearing (discharge, eardrum exam)

Nose (passability, sense of smell)

Mouth (tongue, teeth, voice)

Nasopharynx (tonsils)

Neck (thyroid, lymph nodes, pulsation)

Chest (shape, symmetry, mobility, X-ray photo)

Lungs (percussion and auscultation)

Heart (size, sounds, number of beats, blood pressure)

EKG

Abdomen (condition of abdominal walls, viscera)

Gynecological exam, spleen, liver, hernias

Genitalia, rectum, venereological exam (BHR, gonoculture)

Spine (deformities, sensitivity, mobility)

Upper extremities (pathological changes, malfunctions, function, leftism¹)

Lower extremities (deformities, static changes, malfunctions, varicose veins)

Central nervous system (reflexes, tremors, paralyses, nystagmus)

Mental conditions (psychoses)

Skin (coloring, traces of exanthema or enanthema, fungal and suppurative skin disease, including in hair, scabies)

Microbiological and parasitological stool exam (including Shigell and Salmonella bacteria carrier status)

Results of microbiological exam (results of thick blood smear – presence of malaria plasmodium in blood)

Hematological exam (hemogram [complete blood count] – erythrocyte [red blood cell], leucocyte, blood differential, hematocrit); erythrocyte sedimentation.

¹ It seems that the “lower” and “upper” extremities labels are reversed given that the physicians were asked to report “leftism” in the case of the latter and on “varicose veins” in the case of the former.

Vaccination against: (list all vaccinations, manner and type of vaccination)

Smallpox,

Cholera,

Tetanus,

Diphtheria

Diagnostic summary:

(B) HEALTH CONDITION REQUIREMENTS:

- good physical development, good nutritional and muscular condition (height and weight), asthenic individuals to be excluded,
- symmetric growth with no conspicuous deformities of the spine, upper and lower extremities,
- healthy skin with no signs of skin disease, without any larger scars that would affect the performance of the organism,
- sense organs in good condition, both left and right vision 6/6 without corrective devices, hearing – whisper both left and right at the distance of 6 meters, no pathological changes of the hearing apparatus,
- side nasal cavities without any pathologies
- no abnormal findings in the throat, no enlarged lymph nodes, normal working, not enlarged thyroid,

– no abnormalities in respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, genitourinary and locomotive systems, no abnormalities in central and peripheral nervous system, the same goes for the systems of endocrine glands, normal blood pressure

(C) CONTRAINDICATIONS

All forms of tuberculosis (including those found outside of lungs)

Sexually transmitted diseases

More serious forms of neuroses, psychopathic states, psychoses

More serious forms of post-traumatic (post-injury) states, both inborn and acquired deformities limiting the ability to work

Serious asthenic conditions and more serious nutritional defects

Serious heart and vascular disease (valvular defects)

Chronic urinary tract and kidney disease

Liver disease (chronic liver inflammation, cirrhosis)

Tumor disease

Vision defects (more than 6 diopters), acute trachoma

Hearing defects

Leprosy

Carrier of the T A, Para A B, Shigellosa, intestinal amoebiasis bacteria

Pregnancy

(D) VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS

Vaccination against smallpox, administered at most three years prior, is required.

If the DRV citizen being sent to Czechoslovakia cannot prove that he received this vaccination in the last three years, the vaccination must be performed prior to departure.

Vaccination against tetanus is required. If the DRV citizen being sent to Czechoslovakia cannot prove that he received this vaccination in the last five years, the vaccination must be initiated prior to departure (first shot).

(E) STATE OF HEALTH CERTIFICATE

(in French and Czech languages)

Last, first name

Born on in [place]

Identification card number Sex

Will be trained in the field of

The opinion of the physician performing selection before the departure to the
ČSSR:

Conclusion: fit, [or] fit with limitations for work in the field of

In [place] On [date]

.....

Physician's signature and stamp

Declaration by the patient:

I hereby proclaim that I have not concealed during the medical examination any disease, defect or injury for which I have received treatment.

.....

Patient's signature

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SECONDARY SOURCES

Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turks in Europe: From Guest Worker to Transnational Citizen* (Berghahn Books, New York, 2011).

Manolo I. Abella, "Contemporary Labour Migration from Asia: Policies and Perspectives of Sending Countries" in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim, and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 263–278.

Kristel Acacio, "Managing Labor Migration: Philippine State Policy and International Outflows, 1969–2000," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 17, 2 (2008), 103–132.

Alena Alamgir, "Race Is Elsewhere: State-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia," *Race & Class* 54, 4 (2013): 67–85.

Hans E. Andersson and Susanna Nilsson, "Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants' Increased Social Rights in Sweden," *International Migration* 49, 4 (2011), 167–188.

Lenore Ansorg and Renate Hürtgen, "The myth of female emancipation: contradictions in women's lives" in Konrad H. Jarausch (ed), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York 1999).

Robert L. Bach, "Mexican Immigration and the American State," *International Migration Review* 12, 4 (1978), 536–558.

Eszter Bartha, "Welfare Dictatorship, the Working Class and the Change of Regimes in East Germany and Hungary," *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, 9 (2011), 1591–1610.

Judy Batt, *Economic Reform and Political Change in Eastern Europe: A Comparison of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Experiences* (New York, 1988).

Rainer Bauböck, "Towards a Political Theory of Migrant Transnationalism," *International Migration Review* 37, 3 (2003), 700–723.

Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism* cited in Avtar Brah, "Ambivalent Documents/Fugitive Pieces: Author, Text, Subject, and Racializations" in Karim Murji and John Solomos, eds., *Racialization: Studies in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005).

Ivan T. Berend, *Central and Eastern Europe 1944–1993: Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Pieter Bevelander, "The Employment Integration of Resettled Refugees, Asylum Claimants, and Family Reunion Migrants in Sweden," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, 1 (2011), 22–43.

Josef Blabol, *Péče o vietnamské pracovníky v průmyslovém podniku* (MA thesis, Department of Adult Education, Charles University, Prague, 1990).

Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought* (Washington, D.C., Howard University Press, 1986).

József Böröcz, "The Fox and the Raven: The European Union and Hungary Renegotiate Margins of 'Europe,'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, 4, (2000), pp. 847-875.

József Böröcz, "Informality Rules," *East European Politics and Societies* 14, 2 (2000), 348–380.

József Böröcz, *The European Union and Global Social Change: A Critical Geopolitical-Economic Analysis* (Routledge, London, 2010).

Paulina Bren, "Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall. . . Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and Its (Dis)Contents," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, 4 (2008), 831-854.

Stanislav Brouček, "Aktuální problémy adaptace vietnamského etnika v ČR," available at the Czech Interior Ministry website, <http://www.cizinci.cz/clanek.php?lg=1&id=107> (last accessed on 13 February 2014).

Laszlo Bruszt, "'Without Us but For Us'? Political Orientation in Hungary in the Period of Late Paternalism," *Social Research* 55, 1–2 (1988), 43–76.

Michael Burawoy, "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 81, 5 (1976), 1050–1087.

Michael Burawoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes under Capitalism and Socialism* (London, 1985).

Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York, Routledge, 1992).

Kevin Callahan, "Performing Inter-Nationalism in Stuttgart in 1907: French and German Socialist Nationalism and the Political Culture of the International Socialist Congress," *International Review of History* 45 (2000), 51–87.

Manuel Castells, "Immigrant Workers and Class Struggles in Advanced Capitalism: the Western European Experience," *Politics and Society* 5, 1 (1975): 33–66.

Stephen Castles, "Why Migration Policies Fail," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, 2 (2004): 205–227.

Anita Chan and Hong-zen Wang, "The Impact of the State on Workers' Conditions – Comparing Taiwanese Factories in China and Vietnam," *Pacific Affairs* 77, 4 (Winter 2004/2005): 629–646.

Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge, UK, 2007).

Christine Collette, "'Friendly Spirit, Comradeship, and Good-Natured Fun': Adventures in Socialist Internationalism," *International Review of History* 48 (2003), 225–244.

Derek Martin Da Cunha, "Aspects of Soviet-Vietnamese Economic Relations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 7, 4 (March 1986), 306–319.

Karen Dawisha and Jonathan C. Valdez, "The New Internationalism in Eastern Europe," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 36, 4 (1987), 119–131.

Matthew Desdemon and Mustafa Emirbayer, "What Is Racial Domination?" *Du Bois Review* (6, 2, 2009), pp. 335–355.

Celia Donert, "'The Struggle for the Soul of the Gypsy': Marginality and Mass Mobilization in Stalinist Czechoslovakia," *Social History* 33, 2 (2008): 123–144.
Slavenka Drakulić, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed* (New York, HarperCollins, 1993).

Radka Dudová, "Interrupce v socialistickém Československu z foucaultovské perspektivy," *Gender, rovné příležitosti, výzkum* 10, 1 (2009), 25–36.

Barbara Einhorn, "Gender Issues in Transition: The East Central European Experience," *The European Journal of Development* 6, 2, (1994), 119–140.

Line Eldring, Ian Fitzgerald and, Jens Arnholtz, "Post-accession migration in construction and trade union responses in Denmark, Norway and the UK," *European Journal of Industrial Relations* 18, 1 (2012), 21–36.

Gøsta Esping-Andersen, "Multi-Dimensional Decommodification: A Reply to Graham Room," *Policy & Politics* 28, 3, (2000), 353–359.

Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology in Emmanuel Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1997).

Thomas Faist, "Transnationalization in International Migration: Implications for the Study of Citizenship and Culture," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, 2 (2000), 189-222, 192.

Éva Fodor, "Smiling Women and Fighting Men: The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary," *Gender & Society* 16, 2 (April, 2002), 240-263.

Éva Fodor, "The State Socialist Emancipation Project: Gender Inequality in Workplace Authority in Hungary and Austria," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, 3, (2004), 783-813.

Tomas Frejka, "Fertility Trends and Policies: Czechoslovakia in the 1970s," *Population and Development Review* 6, 1 (Mar. 1980), 65-93.

Elaine Fultz and Silke Steinhilber, "Social Security Reform and Gender Equality: Recent Experience in Central Europe," *International Labour Review* 143, 3 (2004), 249-273.

Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007).

Carlo Ginzburg, 'Witchcraft and popular piety: notes on a Modenese trial of 1519' in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore, MD, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

Joanna Goven, *The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society, and the Anti-Politics of Anti-Feminism, 1948-1990* (PhD dissertation, UC Berkeley, 1993).

Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, "The Economics of Transnational Living," *International Migration Review* 37, 3 (2003), 666-699, 690.

Cindy Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective," *Labor History* 44, 1 (2003), 69-94.

Tomas Hammar, "Laws and Policies Regulating Population Movements: A European Perspective" in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992).

Lynne Haney, "From Proud Worker to Good Mother: Women, the State, and Regime Change in Hungary," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* XIV, 3, (1994), 113-150.

Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare Hungary* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002).

Andrew Hardy, "From a Floating World: Emigration to Europe From Post-War Vietnam," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 11, 4 (2002), 463–484.

Donna Harsch, "Society, the State, and Abortion in East Germany, 1950-1972," *The American Historical Review* 102, 1 (Feb 1997), 53–84.

Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic: Women, the Family, and Communism in the German Democratic Republic* (Princeton, 2007).

Alena Heitlinger, "Pro-Natalist Population Policies in Czechoslovakia," *Population Studies* 30, 1, (1979), 123–135.

Alena Heitlinger, *Reproduction, Medicine and the Socialist State* (New York, 1987).

Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination," *International Migration Review* 19, 3 (1985), 469–484.

Ulrich Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980: Seasonal Workers/Forced Laborers/Guest Workers* (Ann Arbor, 1991).

Julie Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 47,1-2 (2006), 33-64.

Francine Hirsch, "Race Without the Practice of Politics," *Slavic Review* 61,1 (2002), 30-43.

Buu Hoan, "Soviet Economic Aid to Vietnam," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 12, 4 (March 1991), 360 –376.

Ondřej Hofírek and Michal Nekorjak, "Od pásu ke stánku – a zpět? Proměny ekonomických aktivit Vietnamců v České republice," in *Vybrané aspekty života cizinců v české republice* (Prague, Výzkumný ústav práce a sociálních věcí, v.v.i., 2010), 77– 94.

Jude Howell, "The End of an Era: The Rise and Fall of GDR Aid," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 32, 2 (1994), 305-328.

José Itzigsohn and Silvia Giorguli Saucedo, "Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism," *International Migration Review* 36 (2002), 766–798, 768.

Patrick R. Ireland, "Socialism, Unification Policy and the Rise of Racism in Eastern Germany," *International Migration Review* 31, 3 (1997), 541-568.

Eva Janská, Zdeněk Čermák and Richard Wright, "New Immigrant Destinations in a New Country of Immigration: Settlement Patterns of Non-natives in the Czech Republic," *Population, Space and Place*, wileyonlinelibrary.com, DOI: 10.1002/psp.1824.

Konrad H. Jarausch, "Beyond Uniformity: The Challenge of Historicizing the GDR" in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 3–14.

Konrad H. Jarausch, "Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship" in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 47–69.

Molly Wilkinson Johnson, "The *Friedensfahrt*: International Sports and East German Socialism in the 1950s," *The International History Review* XXIX, 1 (2007), 57–82.

Veronika Kahlerová, *Vietnamská menšina v Plzni* (M.A. thesis, Plzeň, Katedra sociální a kulturní antropologie, Fakulta humanitních studií, Západočeská univerzita v Plzni, 2000), pp. 67.

Bartłomiej Kamiński and Robert W. Janes, "Economic Rationale for Eastern Europe's Third World Policy," *Problems of Communism* 37 (1988), 15–27.

Joon K. Kim, "State, Civil Society and International Norms: Expanding the Political and Labor Rights of Foreigners in South Korea," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 14, 4 (2005): 383–418.

Sooyong Kim, "Labor Migration from Korea to the Middle East: Its Trend and Impact on the Korean Economy" in Fred Arnold and Nasra M. Shah, eds., *Asian Labor Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1986), 163–174.

Christoph Kleßmann, "Rethinking the Second German Dictatorship" in Konrad H. Jarausch (ed.) *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999).

Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley, 1998).

Jürgen Kocka, "The GDR: A Special Kind of Modern Dictatorship" in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1999), 17–26.

Jiří Kocourek, *Historie příchodu a působení příslušníků na území ČSR (resp. ČSSR) v letech 1950-1975* (MA thesis, Charles University, Prague, Vietnamese Studies, 2001).

Jiří Kocourek, "Kořeny vietnamské migrace do ČR před rokem 1989" in Jan Černík, Ján Ičo, Jiří Kocourek, Petr Komers, Šárka Martínková, Kateřina Nováková, Eva Pechová, Phung Thi Phuong Hien, Ivo Vasiljev, eds., *S vietnamskými dětmi na českých školách* (H&H, Prague, 2006).

Jiří Kocourek, "Podmíněnost současné migrace Vietnamců do Česka" in Dušan Drbohlav, ed. *Nelegální ekonomické aktivity migrantů. Česko v evropském kontextu*, (Karolinum, Prague, 2008) pp. 233–245.

Jeffrey Kopstein, "Ulbricht Embattled: The Quest for Socialist Modernity in the Light of New Sources," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, 4 (1994), 597–615.

Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Princeton, 1993).

Jiri Kosta, "Aims and Methods of economic Policy in Czechoslovakia 1970–1978" in Alec Nove, Hans-Hermann Hohmann and Gertraud Seidenstecher (eds) *The East European Economies in 1970s* (London, Butterworths, 1982), 139–179.

Tereza Kušníráková, "Česká stopa ve Vietnamu," *Geografické rozhledy* 21, 1 (2011), pp. 26–27.

Tereza Kušníráková, "Vztah vietnamských navrátilců předlistopadové imigrace k československému státu a jeho společnosti," *Český lid* 99, 1 (2012), 45–66.

Martha Lampland, "Biographies of Liberation: Testimonials to Labor in Socialist Hungary" in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism* (New York, 1989).

Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Ludwik Landau, "Seasonal Emigration From Poland to Germany and Latvia," *International Labour Review* 40, 2 (1939), 195–208, 200.

Joan B. Landes, "Marxism and the 'Woman Question'" in Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp, and Marilyn B. Young (eds), *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transitions to Socialism* (New York 1989).

Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change* (Berkeley, 1978).

Ben Lewis, *Hammer & Tickle: The History of Communism Told Through Communist Jokes* (London, Phoenix, 2009).

Peggy Levitt and Nadya Jaworsky, "Transnational Migration Studies: Past Developments and Future Trends," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007), 129–156, 131.

William S. Logan, "Russians on the Red River: The Soviet Impact on Hanoi's Townscape, 1955–90," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, 3 (1995), 443–468.

R. A. Longmire, *Soviet Relations with South-East Asia: An Historical Survey* (London, Kegan Paul International, 1989).

M. Maldonado, "Racial triangulation of Latino/a workers by agricultural employers," *Human Organization* (65, 4, 2006), pp. 353-361.

David G. Marr and Christine P. White, eds, *Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development* (New York, 1988).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto" in Robert C. Tucker (ed) *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York, 1978).

Philip L. Martin and Mark J. Miller, "Guestworkers: Lessons From Western Europe," *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 33, 3 (1980), 315-330.

Douglas S. Massey, "International Migration at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century: The Role of the State," *Population and Development Review* 25, 2 (1999): 303-322.

Vlasta Matějová, "Podmínky pobytu vietnamských pracujících" in *Zahraniční pracující: Materiál k problematice etnických skupin na území ČSSR, Sv. 8* (Zpravodaj KSVI pro ethnografii a folkloristiku č. 9. Praha: ÚEF ČSAV, 1988).

Maxim Matusevich, "An exotic subversive: Africa, Africans and the Soviet everyday," *Race & Class* (49, 4, 2008), pp. 57-81.

Maxim Matusevich, "Revisiting the Soviet moment in Sub-Saharan Africa," *History Compass* (7, 5, 2009), 1259-1268.

Woodford McClellan, "Africans and Black Americans in the Comintern Schools, 1925-1934," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* (26, 2, 1993), pp. 371-390.

Patrick McGovern, "Inequalities in the (De-)Commodification of Labour: Immigration, the Nation State, and Labour Market Stratification," *Sociology Compass* 6, 6 (2012): 485-498.

Attila Meleg, *On the East-West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourse on Eastern Europe* (Budapest, NY, Central European University Press, 2006).

Ina Merkel, "Working People and Consumption Under Really-Existing Socialism: perspectives from the German Democratic Republic," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 55 (1999), 92-111.

Mark J. Miller, "Evolution of Policy Modes for Regulating International Labour Migration" in Mary M. Kritz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik, eds., *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992), 300-314.

Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997).

Mihaela Miroiu, "Communism Was a State Patriarchy, not State Feminism," *Aspasia* 1 (2007), 197–201.

Petra Müllerová, "Vietnamese Diaspora in the Czech Republic," *Archív Orientální* 66 (1998), 121–126.

Martin Myant, *The Czechoslovak Economy 1948–1988: The Battle for Economic Reform* (Cambridge, UK, 1989).

Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

Libora Oates-Indruchová, "The beauty and the loser: cultural representations of gender in late state socialism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 37, 2 (2012), 357–383.

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York, Routledge, 1994).

Jochen Oppenheimer, "Mozambican Worker Migration to the Former German Democratic Republic: Serving Socialism and Struggling Under Democracy," *Portuguese Studies Review* 12, 1 (2004), 163–187.

Matthew J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 2003).

Vratislav Pechota, "Czechoslovakia and the Third World" in Michael S. Radu, ed., *Eastern Europe and the Third World: East vs. South* (New York, Praeger, 1981).

Jorge Pérez-López and Sergio Díaz-Briquets, "Labor Migration and Offshore Assembly in the Socialist World: The Cuban Experience," *Population and Development Review* 16, 2 (1990), 273–299.

Mark Pittaway, "The Reproduction of Hierarchy: Skill, Working-Class Culture, and the State in Early Socialist Hungary," *The Journal of Modern History* 74, 4 (2002): 737–769.

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Beacon Press, Boston, 1957).

Liba Paukert, "The Economic Status of Women in the Transition to a Market System: The Case of Czechoslovakia," *International Labor Review* 130, 5–6, (1991), 613–633.

Alejandro Portes, "Migration and Underdevelopment," *Politics and Society* 8, 1 (1978): 1–48.

Alejandro Portes, "Introduction: Toward a Structural Analysis of Illegal (Undocumented) Immigration," *International Migration Review* 12, 4 (1978), 469–484.

Alejandro Portes and József Böröcz, "Contemporary Immigration: Theoretical Perspectives on its Determinants and Modes of Incorporation," *International Migration Review* 23, 3 (1989), 606–630.

Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt, "The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, 2 (1999), 217–237.

Michal Pullmann, *Konec experimentu: přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Prague, 2011).

C. Quist-Adade, "From Paternalism to Ethnocentrism: Images of Africa in Gorbachev's Russia," *Race & Class* (46, 2005), pp. 79–89.

Michael Radu "East vs. South: The Neglected Side of the International System" in Michael Radu, ed. *Eastern Europe and the Third World*, (New York, Praeger).

Susan E. Reid, "The Khrushchev Kitchen: Domesticating the Scientific-Technological Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, 2 (April, 2005), 289–316.

William M. Reisinger, "The International Regime of Soviet-East European Economic Relations," *Slavic Review* 49, 4 (1990), 554–567.

Robert E. Rhoades, "Foreign Labor and German Industrial Capitalism 1871–1978: The Evolution of a Migratory System," *American Ethnologist* 5, 3 (1978): 553–573.

Ray C. Rist, *Guestworkers in Germany: The Prospects for Pluralism* (New York, 1978), 61.

Andrew Roberts, "The State of Socialism: A Note on Terminology," *Slavic Review* 63, 2 (2004), 349–366.

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, "Philippine Migrant Workers' Transnationalism in the Middle East," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79 (2011), 48–61.

Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics & Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

Martin Rudner, "East European Aid to Asian Developing Countries: The Legacy of the Communist Era," *Modern Asian Studies* 30, 1 (1996), 1–28.

Martin Ruhs, "The Human Rights of Migrant Workers: Why Do So Few Countries Care?" *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, 9 (2012), 1277–1293.

Martin Ruhs and Philip Martin, "Numbers vs. Rights: Trade-Offs and Guest Worker Programs," *International Migration Review* 42, 1 (2008): 249–265.

Johan Fredrik Rye and Joanna Andrzejewska, "The structural disempowerment of Eastern European migrant farm workers in Norwegian agriculture," *Journal of Rural Studies* 26 (2010), 41–51.

Arthur Sakamoto, Kimberly Goyette, ChangHwan Kim, "Socioeconomic attainments of Asian Americans," *Annual Review of Sociology* (35, 2009), pp. 255–276.

Saskia Sassen-Koob, "Towards a Conceptualization of Immigrant Labor," *Social Problems* 29, 1 (1981): 65–85, 79.

Otey M. Scruggs, "Evolution of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942," *Agricultural History* 34, 3 (July, 1960), 140–149.

Otey M. Scruggs, "Texas and the Bracero Program, 1942–1947," *Pacific Historical Review* 32 (1963), 251–264.

Carol Schmid, "Gastarbeiter in West Germany and Switzerland: an Assessment of Host Society–Immigrant Relations," *Population Research and Policy Review* 2 (1983): 233–252.

Robert C. Smith, "Migrant Membership as an Instituted Process: Transnationalization, the State and the Extra-Territorial Conduct of Mexican Politics," *International Migration Review* 37, 2 (2003): 297–343.

Karen Schönwälder, "Why Germany's Guestworkers Were Largely Europeans: The Selective Principles of Post-War Labour Recruitment Policy," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 27, 2 (2004): 248–265.

Hilda Scott, *Does Socialism Liberate Women? Experiences From Eastern Europe* (Boston, 1974), 141.

Nasra M. Shah and Fred Arnold, "Government Policies and Programs Regulating Labor Migration" in Fred Arnold and Nasra M. Shah, eds., *Asian Labor Migration: Pipeline to the Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1986), 65–77.

Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Chicago, 1988).

David Stark and László Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge, UK, 1998).

Vera Sokolova, *A Matter of Speaking: Racism, Gender and Social Deviance in the Politics of the 'Gypsy Question' in Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945-1989* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Washington, 2002).

Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe* (Chicago, University Of Chicago Press, 1995).

Nigel Swain, *Hungary: The Rise and Fall of Feasible Socialism* (London, 1992)

Ivan Szelenyi and Balazs Szelenyi, "Why Socialism Failed: Toward a Theory of System Breakdown – Causes of disintegration of East European State Socialism," *Theory and Society* 23, 2 (1994), 211–231.

Piotr Sztompka, "Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22, 2 (1993), 85–95.

Lawrence H. Theriot and JeNelle Matheson, "Soviet Economic Relations with the Non-European CMEA: Cuba, Vietnam, and Mongolia," *Soviet and Eastern European Foreign Trade* 21, 1/2/3 (1985), 144–190.

Eszter Zsófia Tóth, "Shifting Identities in the Life Histories of Working-Class Women in Socialist Hungary," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 68 (Fall 2005), 75–92.

Heike Trappe and Rachel A. Rosenfeld, "A comparison of job-shifting patterns in the former East Germany and the former West Germany," *European Sociological Review* 14, 4 (Dec 1998), 343–368.

Otakar Turek, *Podíl ekonomiky na pádu komunismu v Československu* (Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, Praha, 1995).

Jonathan Valdez, *Internationalism and the Ideology of Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, UK, 1993).

Marko Valenta and Zan Strabac, "State-Assisted Integration, But Not for All: Norwegian Welfare Services and Labour Migration From the New EU Member States," *International Social Work* 54,5 (2011), 663–680.

Ivo Vasiljev, "Vietnamští pracující ve vědomí naší společnosti," in *Etnické procesy IV: Etnické procesy v pohraničí českých zemí po roce 1945: Společnost a kultura* (Zpravodaj KSVI. Praha: UEF ČSAV, 1986), 153–164.

Katherine Verdery, "From parent-state to family patriarchy: gender and nation in contemporary Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies*, 8, 2 (Spring 1994), 225-255.

Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1996).

Antonín Vlček, "Zpráva o dosavadním průběhu šetření mezi vietnamskými pracujícími v závodě Spolana v Neratovicích," in *Zahraniční pracující: Materiál k problematice etnických skupin na území ČSSR, Sv. 8* (Zpravodaj KSVI pro ethnografii a folkloristiku č. 9, Praha: ÚEF ČSAV, 1988), 44-49.

Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, "Transnationalism in Question," *American Journal of Sociology* 109, 5 (2004): 1177-1195.

Amir Weiner, "Nothing but Certainty," *Slavic Review* (61, 1, 2002), pp. 44-53.

Eric D. Weitz, "Racial Politics Without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges," *Slavic Review* (61,1, 2002), pp. 1-29.

Sharon Wolchik, "The Status of Women in a Socialist Order: Czechoslovakia, 1948-1978," *Slavic Review* 38, 4 (Dec 1979), 583-602.

Sharon L. Wolchik, "Elite Strategy Toward Women in Czechoslovakia: Liberation or Mobilization," *Studies in Comparative Communism* XIV, 2-3 (Summer / Autumn 1981), 123-142.

Betram D. Wolfe, "Nationalism and Internationalism in Marx and Engels," *American Slavic and Eastern European Review* 17, 4 (1958), 403-417.

Brenda S. A. Yeoh, Shirlena Huang and Joaquin Gonzales III, "Migrant Female Domestic Workers: Debating the Economic, Social and Political Impacts in Singapore," *International Migration Review* 33, 1 (1999), 114-136.

Robert C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford, UK, 2001).

Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006), 296, 298.

Jonathan R. Zatlin, "Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971-1989," *Central European History* 40 (2007), 683-720.

Jonathan R. Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (New York, 2007).

Susan Zimmermann, "Gender Regime and Gender Struggle in Hungarian State Socialism," *Aspasia* 4 (2010), 1-24.

Aristide Zolberg, "Matters of State: Theorizing Immigration Policy" in Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz and Josh deWind, eds., *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience* (New York, Russel Sage Foundation, 1999), 71–93.

PRIMARY SOURCES

CZECH NATIONAL ARCHIVE, NA

Undated sources:

“Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR” (circa 1966).

“Ujednání o o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR” (circa 1966).

“Zpráva o výsledcích jednání československé delegace ve Vietnamské demokratické republice o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích.”

“Návrh: Protokol z jednání o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích v letech 1975 a 1976,” undated, likely written in early 1976.

“Zpráva z jednání Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí s vládní delegací Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v Československé socialistické republice.”

“Informace o odborné přípravě občanů VDR,” undated, likely written in early July 1976, drafted by Sekretariát pro výchovu vietnamských pracovníků při Ministertvu práce a sociálních věcí ČSR.

“Přehled o stávkách a další závažné protispolečenské činnosti vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” authored by Department (odbor) 32 Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs,” written sometime toward the end of 1982.

“Informace o některých incidentech vietnamských pracujících v ČSSR,” written sometime in 1982.

“Informace o současných problémech spojených se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” fall 1982.

“Odborné školení vietnamských pracovníků v MZVŽ [Ministerstvo zemědělství a výživy] (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistice),” likely early 1984.

“Zpráva k návrhu usnesení předsednictva vlády ČSSR na uzavření koordinace národohospodářských plánů mezi ČSSR a VSR na období 1981 – 1985.”

Dated sources:

Letter from J. Kohout, secretary of the Czech part of the State Commission for Technology (Státní komise pro techniku) to the Embassy of the Vietnamese Democratic Republic, dated 20 May 1966.

Letter from the Foreign Ministry to the State Commission for Economic and Scientific and Technical Cooperation, "Zaškolování občanů VDR," dated 10 June 1966.

"Zpráva o žádosti vlády Vietnamské demokratické republiky na zaškolení 2,100 vietnamských příslušníků v Československé socialistické republice," 29 August 1966.

Fond: 02/1, Sv. 8, Ar. j. 8, b. 13, Předsednictvo Ústředního výboru KSČ; Důvodová zpráva, Číslo pořadu 13, K bodu: "Zajištění návštěvy stranické a vládní delegace ve Vietnamské demokratické republice – září 1966," 3 September 1966, henceforth ÚV KSČ 3 Sep 1966.

Fond 02/1, sv. 11, ar.j. 12, 68 pages, Předsednictvo Ústředního výboru KSČ K bodu: "Dodatečná informace ke zprávě o pobytu čs. stranické a vládní delegace ve VDR," presented on 7 October 1966.

"Zpráva k návrhu usnesení o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," sent to the Government Presidium on 16 January 1967.

"Záznam z porady konané dne 16. února 1967 ve Státní plánovací komisi a připravovaném návrhu usnesení vlády o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," dated 17 February 1967.

"Informace k návrhu usnesení vlády. Věc: Zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR," dated 14 March 1967, drafted by the Department for national economy (*národohospodářský odbor*) of the government presidium (*předsednictvo vlády*).

"Usnesení Vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. března 1967, č. 74 o zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v ČSSR."

"Zásady materiálního zabezpečení občanů VDR vyslaných do ČSSR na odborné školení a praxi," an addendum to the Czechoslovak Government's resolution no. 74 from 15 March 1967.

"Zpráva předsedy Státní plánovací komise o opatřeních prováděných k zabezpečení odborného školení a praxe občanů VDR v Československu pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády," dated 19 April 1967.

"Informace o průběhu příprav k zajištění přijetí vietnamských praktikantů v ČSSR," report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 20 June 1967.

Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 42, ar.j. 43 “Důvodová zpráva, K bodu: Návrh ÚV MSDS na koordinaci vojenské pomoci Vietnamu,” 19 August 1967.

“Zpráva o průběhu přípravy vietnamských praktikantů k zaškolování v československých podnicích” report by the SPK chairman (and deputy prime minister) to prime minister, dated 29 September 1967.

NA, “Zpráva o příjezdu II. turnusu vietnamských praktikantů do ČSSR -- pro operativní poradu předsednictva vlády,” report by the SPK chairman to prime minister, dated 14 December 1967.

“Dary a ostatní formy pomoci Československé socialistické republiky Vietnamské demokratické republice; K bodu: Návrh ÚV MSDS na koordinaci vojenské pomoci Vietnamu,” 19 August 1967. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, svazek 42, archivní jednotka 43.

Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 107, ar. j. 176. “Žádost Vietnamské demokratické republiky o hospodářskou pomoc od ostatních socialistických zemí; K bodu Žádost Vietnamské demokratické republiky o poskytnutí čs. hospodářské a vojenské pomoci na rok 1970 a další léta,” 8 October 1969.

Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, sv. 143, ar. j. 221, “Zpráva k návrhu usnesení vlády k žádosti Vietnamské demokratické republiky o poskytnutí hospodářské pomoci v roce 1971 a dalších letech a o pomoc v oblasti speciálních dodávek v roce 1971; K bodu: Stanovisko k žádosti vlády VDR o poskytnutí čs. pomoci v r. 1971 dodávkami zboží civilního a vojenského charakteru,” 29 October 1970.

“Informace o návštěvě velvyslance DRV v Praze s. Nguzen Huu Ngo u tajemníka ÚV KSČ s. V. Biřáka,” information on visit from 25 October 1970. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, Praha – předsednictvo 1966-1971, svazek 143, archivní jednotka 220/k informaci 9.

“Záznam o přijetí velvyslance VDR, Duong Duc Ha, ministrem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR, s. M. Štanclem, dne 10. dubna 1973,” dated 10 April 1973.

“Zpráva o jednání federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí s vládní delegací Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých podnicích a návrh opatření vládních orgánů ČSSR -- pro schůzi předsednictva vlády Československé socialistické republiky,” dated 9 July 1973.

“Zpráva o stavu zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušné

mezivládní Dohody" written for the perusal of the deputy prime minister, dated 17 September 1973.

"Politické zdůvodnění návštěvy a návrh na řešení ekonomických otázek v roce 1974 a v další perspektivě," report presented at the 28 September 1973 meeting of the ÚV KSČ. Fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989. Sv. 94, Ar.j. 91, b. 4.

"Návrh: Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích," November 1973.

"Zpráva o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů VDR v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušných smluvních dokumentů" prepared for the meetings of the Czech, Slovak, and federal governments, respectively, dated November 1973.

"Zpráva o zabezpečení odborné přípravy občanů VDR v československých organizacích a k návrhu příslušných smluvních dokumentů"; report presented at the 27 February 1974 meeting of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic by Labor Minister Michal Štanceľ.

"Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích" signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974.

"Kritéria pro posuzování zdravotní způsobilosti občanů VDR k absolvování odborné přípravy v československých organizacích" – addendum to "Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské demokratické republiky v československých organizacích" signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974.

"Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstvem práce VDR o odborné přípravě občanů VDR v československých organizacích," signed in Hanoi on 8 April 1974 by Czechoslovak Labor Minister Štanceľ and Vietnamese Labor Minister Khieu.

"Záznam z přijetí delegace Národního shromáždění Vietnamské demokratické republiky ve Federálním shromáždění ČSSR dne 16. Května 1974," presented at the 6 June 1974 meeting of the ÚV KSČ; fond 02/1, sv. 123., ar. j. 123, b. 6.

"Poskytnutí bezplatné materiální pomoci Jihovietnamské republice na r. 1975," ÚV KSČ meeting on 3 September 1974, fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, sv. 128, ar.j. 129, b. 13.

"Informace pro s. ministra: Zpráva o příjezdu III. turnusu občanů VDR," dated 29 April 1975.

"Oficiální přátelská návštěva stranické a vládní delegace Vietnamské demokratické republiky v čele s I. tajemníkem ÚP VSP v československu ve dnech 19.-27. října 1975, fond: KSČ-ÚV-02/1, KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945-1989, sv. 170, ar.j. 173, b. 5a.

"Zajištění odborné přípravy občanů VDR v roce 1976," dated 18 January 1976.

"Informace o možnostech zaměstnávání vietnamských občanů v ČSSR a návrh dalšího postupu," received by the Presidium of the Government (Úřad předsednictva vlády) on 7 April 1976.

"Stanovisko ekonomického oddělení ÚV KSČ k návrhu stanoviska zástupce ČSSR v Radě vzájemné hospodářské pomoci k návrhu usnesení 78. zasedání výkonného výboru RVHP k otázce koordinace pomoci zainteresovaných členských států RVHP Vietnamské socialistické republiky na mnohostranném základě," dated 6 October 1976; catalogued with documents from 1 October 1976 ÚV KSČ meeting.

"Podklady pro ÚV KSČ: Současný stav a problémy v odborné přípravě občanů VSR v čs. organizacích," dated 29 October 1976.

"Zpráva o přípravě II. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," presented at 4 April 1977 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

Protokol II. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," presented at 27 May 1977 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

"Ujednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky a ministerstvem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v etapě výrobní práce a dalšího odborného růstu," signed on 14 July 1978.

Fond ÚV KSČ, "Informace o současném stavu československo-vietnamských vztahů a plnění přijatých dokumentů," report drafted by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented at the ÚV KSČ meeting on 28 September 1979.

"Zpráva o výsledcích IV. zasedání Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci," report from meeting that took place 21-26 November 1979, prepared for 4 January 1980 meeting of ÚV KSČ.

"NÁVRH: Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," November 1979.

"Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 19. prosince 1979, č. 337 o sjednání dohody s Vietnamem o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích."

"Zápis o jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky s delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky," dated 21 December 1979.

"Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," signed on 21 December 1979.

"Zpráva o oficiální přátelské návštěvě čs. stranické a státní delegace, vedené generálním tajemníkem ÚV KSČ a prezidentem ČSSR s. G. Husákem, ve Vietnamské socialistické republice, Kambodžské lidové republice a Laoské lidově demokratické republice ve dnech 12.-17. 2. 1980," material presented 21 February 1980 meeting of the ÚV KSČ.

"Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. května 1980, č. 172 o zásadách pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů spojené s odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích po roce 1980."

"Stanovisko ekonomického oddělení ÚV KSČ k návrhu na uzavření koordinace národohospodářských plánů mezi ČSSR a VSR na období 1981 – 1985," dated 11 June 1980.

"Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích," signed in Prague on 27 November 1980.

"Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 3 - 13. března 1981."

"Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků ve II. pololetí 1981," dated 31 March 1982.

Letter from Vagónka Česká Lípa to MPSV, 19 July 1982.

"Incident v Milevsku -- vzájemné napadení občana L. Medka vietnamskými občany a občana Jakubíka v Hořovicích," dated 20 July 1982.

Report written by Antonie Veselá, deputy director for cadres (human resources) and staff work for Léčiva company, dated 30 July 1982.

“Záznam ze dne 24.8.1982 z jednání navazující na stížnosti stěžovatelů vedených jako jejich zástupcem s. Otčenáškem Václavem u ZKLK, kontrolně u s. Džupiny Andreje, poslance federálního národního shromáždění.”

Letter from, the director of Pražský stavební podnik, to the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, dated 23 September 1982.

Letter from the director of Pražský stavební podnik to the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, dated 30 September 1982.

“Odjezdy vietnamských dělníků v roce 1983.”

“Zpráva z jednání delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci,” 27 April 1983.

“Zápis z porady na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí k projednání výsledků jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR v dubnu 1983,” dated 19 May 1983.

“Zabezpečení odjezdů vietnamských občanů do VSR ze zdravotních důvodů,” 13 September 1984.

“Odjezdy vietnamských občanů ze zdravotních důvodů do VSR,” 15 September 1984.

Letter from Deputy Labor Minister Ing. Milan Kyselý to SRV Deputy Labor Minister Nguyen Van Diep, dated 24 October 1983.

“Problémy se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistice),” 13 February 1984.

“Problémy se zaměstnáváním vietnamských pracovníků (výňatky z komentářů podniků ke statistikám),” dated February 1984.

“K jednání s delegací vietnamského ministerstva práce,” document produced by Czech Labor Ministry, dated 5 March 1984.

“Informace o zastavení vysílání dalších pracovníků z VSR do ČSSR,” 12 May 1984.

“Zpráva o plnění úkolů z VI. zasedání Čs.-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci a závěrů z porady čs. části výboru ze dne 21. prosince 1983,” dated 29 May 1984.

“Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 29 října 1987 č. 296 o programu dlouhodobé hospodářské a vědeckotechnické spolupráce s VSR do roku 2000.”

“Protokol o změně Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980,” signed in Hanoi on 6 April 1989.

MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS ARCHIVAL MATERIAL, MPSV

Undated sources:

“Kontrolní informace o stavu a úrovni odborné přípravy občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky ve tříletých učebních oborech a ve dvouleté speciální přípravě na povolání,” undated.

Podklady pro s. ministra Dr. Hamerníka k přijetí vietnamské vládní delegace vedené nám. ministra práce VSR s. Phan Van Huu,” undated but likely drafted at the end of March or the beginning of April 1980.

“Zpráva ke sjednání Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích.”

“Zápis z jednání mezi zástupcem ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí České socialistické republiky a zástupci Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky o upřesnění počtu přijatých vietnamských učňů a praktikantů v roce 1985 a způsobu přepravy vietnamských učňů, praktikantů a občanů se středoškolským vzděláním z VSR do ČSSR v roce 1986.”

“Dodatek k Pokynům pro věcné, organizační a finanční zabezpečení dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích z roku 1981, vydaných Federálním ministerstvem financí pod čj. F 214/519/81-6800-818.”

“Dodatek k: Informace pro jednání delegace FMPSV v Hanoji s delegací ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” undated, likely drafted sometime in 1989.

“Zpráva o současném stavu odborné přípravy a dočasného zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v československých organizacích a o výhledu této spolupráce do roku 1990.”

Dated sources:

Letters from TESLA Pardubice to the Labor Ministry dated 28 November and 27 December 1975.

"Zápis z prověrky připravenosti na přijetí občanů VDR v Pozemních stavbách Brno," 23 February 1976.

"Záznam z prověrky připravenosti OU n.p. Silon Planá n. L. k přijetí občanů VDR z V. turnusu," 17 February 1976.

"Informace o možnostech zaměstnávání vietnamských občanů v ČSSR a návrh dalšího postupu," received by the Presidium of the Government (Úřad předsednictva vlády) on 7 April 1976.

"Zápis o průběhu a výsledcích jednání mezi delegací expertů federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky a delegací expertů Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky, dated 10 September 1979.

"Stanovisko odboru 32 k návrhu na sjednání dohody s vládou VSR o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v čs. organizacích," November 1979.

"Zpráva ke sjednání Dohody s Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v československých organizacích," November 1979.

"Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 19. prosince 1979, č. 337 o sjednání dohody s Vietnamem o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích."

"Zápis o jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu Vietnamské socialistické republiky s delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky," dated 21 December 1979.

"Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské demokratické republiky o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v československých organizacích," signed in Prague on 21 December 1979.

"Zásady a podmínky pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů v čs. organizacích spojené s odbornou přípravou po roce 1980," appendix to "Usnesení vlády Československé socialistické republiky ze dne 15. května 1980, č. 172 o zásadách pro dočasné zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů spojené s odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích po roce 1980."

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti odborné přípravy a dalšího zvyšování kvalifikace občanů v československých organizacích v roce 1981 a návrzích na rok 1982,” dated 21 July 1980.

“Návrh na sjednání dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” presented at the meeting of the ČSSR government on 1 October 1980.

“Dohoda mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” signed on 27 November 1980.

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981,” signed in Prague on 27 November 1980.

“Vietnamští pracovníci podle oborů a profesí, kategorií pracovníků a přijetí v roce 1980 a 1981 v ČSSR,” addendum no. 2 to “Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981.”

Letter from General Headquarters of the Meat-Processing Industry to MPSV from 11 February 1981.

Letter from MPSV to the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition, dated 13 February 1981.

“Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Tien Thi v Hanoji ve dnech 9.-13. března 1981,” dated 13 March 1981.

Letter from Industry Ministry of the Czech Socialist Republic to the Labor Ministry of the Czechoslovakia from 26 March 1981.

Letter from Sempra, fruit and forest tree nursery company, to MPSV from 21 May 1981.

“Pokyny pro věcné, organizační a finanční zabezpečení dočasného zaměstnávání zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky

spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích," imprint of Federal Labor Ministry and Federal Finance Ministry from June 1981.

Letter from Paper and Cellulose Industry Headquarters to MPSV dated 11 June 1981.

"Přehled zaměstnanosti zahraničních dělníků podle krajů a resortů ke dni 30.6.1981"

Letter from Spofa healthcare products maker to MPSV from 14 July 1981.

"Záznam: Zaměstnání a odborná příprava občanů VSR v r. 1982," drafted by Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1981.

Letter from Federal Ministry of Electrical Engineering to MPSV, 17 July 1981.

Letter from the director of MEZ Frenštát heavy-current electrical engineering company to MPSV from 22 July 1981.

Letter from Středočeská Fruta, fruit canning company, to MPSV 4 August 1981.

Letter from the Research and Development Base of Sugar Industry (Výzkumná a vývojová základna cukrovarnického průmyslu) to MPSV dated 18 August 1981.

Letter from the Ministry of Agriculture and Nutrition to MPSV from 24 August 1981.

"Zápis z jednání mezi ministrem práce a sociálních věcí československé socialistické republiky s. Michalem Štanclem a ministrem práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Dao Thien Thi ve dnech 4. až 15. září 1981."

"Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1982," outcome of talks conducted between 4 and 15 September 1981 in Prague.

"Vietnamští pracovníci podle oborů a profesí, kategorií pracovníků a přijetí v roce 1980 a 1981 v ČSSR," addendum no. 2 to "Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1981."

"Výnos federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ze dne 10. října 1981."

"Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků v I. pololetí r. 1981," dated 20 October 1981.

Letter from the Czechoslovak deputy transport minister to the Czechoslovak deputy labor minister, dated 3 November 1981.

“Zápis z jednání mezi zástupci ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSR a zástupci ministerstva práce VSR o upřesnění profesního složení a plánu přepravy vietnamských pracovníků v roce 1982,” 12 January 1982.

“Komentář k vývoji stavu a pohybu vietnamských pracovníků ve II. pololetí 1981,” dated 31 March 1982.

“Porušení pracovní kázně vietnamských tlumočnicků,” 2 July 1982.

Letter from Sukno wool processing company to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1982.

Letter from Oseva seed company to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 16 July 1982.

Letter from Crystalex to MPSV from 1 September 1982.

“Zápis z jednání mezi náměstkem ministra práce a sociálních věcí Československé socialistické republiky s. Milanem Kyselým a náměstkem ministra práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky s. Nguyen Van Diepem ve dnech 4.-8. listopadu 1982 v Hanoji.”

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti odborné přípravy a dalšího zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích v roce 1983,” signed in Hanoi on 8 November 1982.

“Povolení k placení nákladů přepravy na cizích úsecích trati za vietnamské občany, přijaté k odborné přípravě nebo do dočasného zaměstnání v ČSSR – dodatek č. 1 ke všeobecnému devizovému povolení č. 6019,” 14 April 1983.

“Zpráva delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27.11.1980 a o návrzích na zlepšení další spolupráce, která se předkládá předsedům obou částí Československo-vietnamského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci,” 27 April 1983.

“Záznam z jednání delegací Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce Vietnamské socialistické republiky, které se konalo ve dnech 18.-27. dubna 1983 v Praze, o některých otázkách vyplývajících z realizace mezivládní Dohody o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR, spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27.11.1980,” 27 April 1983.

“Zápis z porady na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí k projednání výsledků jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR v dubnu 1983,” dated 19 May 1983.

Letter by Deputy Labor Minister Milan Kyselý to Deputy Labor Minister Nguyen Van Diep, dated 24 October 1983.

“Stanovisko k jednotlivým otázkám projednávaným mezi s. nám. Ing. Kyselým, Csc. a velvyslancem VSR v Praze 4.1.1984 v Praze,” 11 January 1984.

“Otázky k jednání – K jednání s delegací vietnamského ministerstva práce,” 5 March 1984.

“Zápis z jednání delegací ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o výsledcích realizace mezivládní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 a o návrzích opatření na zlepšení další spolupráce na úseku dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích,” 15 March 1984.

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1984,” signed in Prague on 15 March 1984.

“Zápis z porady k výsledkům jednání s delegací ministerstva práce VSR ve dnech 1.-15. března 1984, konané na federálním ministerstvu práce a sociálních věcí dne 12. dubna 1984,” dated 13 April 1984.

“Rámcové podmínky pro působnost organizátorů a vedoucích skupin vietnamských občanů dočasně zaměstnaných a odborně připravovaných v československých organizacích,” dated 27 June 1984.

Letter from Czechoslovak Labor Minister Miloslav Boďa to Vietnamese Labor Minister Dao Thien Thi, dated 12 October 1984.

Letter from Dr. Nguyen Phuc Loc, CSc., the head of the Department for Workers' Care at the Vietnamese Embassy in Prague, to Ing. Karel Kozelka, the head of the Foreign Workers Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 12 November 1984.

“Úhrada nákladů za předčasné odjezdy vietnamských občanů v roce 1984,” 11 March 1985.

“Zápis o jednání delegací expertů Ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a Ministerstva práce VSR o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 27. listopadu 1980 o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných vietnamských pracovníků spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v čs. organizacích,” the meeting took place from 28 March 1985 through 3 April 1985.

“Zápis z jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu VSR a federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR o spolupráci při provádění

vládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace občanů VSR v československých organizacích," record of meeting that took place between 7 and 21 October 1985 in Prague.

"Záznam z prověrky zaměstnání zahr. prac. v k. p. TESLA Rožnov," dated 18 November 1985.

"Informace pro soudruha ministra Ing. Vladislava Třešku, CSc ve věci zahraničních pracovníků, v resortu MZVŽ ČSR (jak pro zemědělské podniky, tak pro potravinářský průmysl)," dated 24 February 1986.

Letter from Ing. Vladimír Rudolf, the director of the Department of Labor Force Reproduction at the Construction Industry Ministry, to J. Šretr, the head of the Labor Force Department at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 21 March 1986.

"Informace pro soudruha ministra Dr. Hamerníka ve věci zahraničních pracovníků, v resortu ministerstva zemědělství a výživy ČSR," dated 27 March 1986.

Letter from Pavel Měchura, deputy construction industry minister, dated 8 April 1986.

Letter from Václav Karas, the deputy labor minister of the Czech Socialist Republic, to Pavel Měchura, deputy construction industry minister, dated 18 April 1986.

"Protokol o predĺžení pracovného záväzku o dva roky u vybraných vietnamských pracovníkov, ktorým končí pracovný záväzok v československých výrobných organizáciách v roku 1986," dated 1 July 1986.

"Záznam z jednání delegace federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce VSR," dated 1 July 1986.

Informace pro soudruha ministra Ing. Vladislava Třešku, CSc ve věci zahraničních pracovníků, v resortu MZVŽ ČSR (jak pro zemědělské podniky, tak pro potravinářský průmysl)," dated 24 February 1986.

Letter from Jan Hošek, the deputy director for cadres and personnel work at ESKA, n.p., Cheb, to Comrade Souček, Foreign Workers' Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, dated 27 February 1986.

"Záznam z jednání delegace federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce VSR," dated 1 July 1986.

"Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1987," signed on 1 July 1986.

"Protokol o predĺžení pracovného záväzku o dva roky u vybraných vietnamských pracovníkov, ktorým končí pracovný záväzok v československých výrobných organizáciách v roku 1986," dated 1 July 1986.

"Informace pro s. nám. Ing. Kyselého, Czechoslovakia., Věc: Spolupráce československých a vietnamských resortů v oblasti zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v ČSSR," 1 August 1986.

"Záznam z jednání mezi federálním ministerstvem práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a oddělením péče o pracující velvyslanectvím VSR v Praze o problémech vzniklých v průběhu realizace mezivládní Dohody o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných vietnamských pracovníků v čs. organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980," dated 29 August 1986.

Letter from Svit Gottwaldov to MPSV dated 2 September 1986.

"Záznam z jednání delegací Státního výboru pro odbornou přípravu VSR a Federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí o spolupráci při provádění vládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích," record of meeting that took place 23-29 September 1986 in Prague.

"Zápis z jednání mezi představiteli HTS VSR a FMVS ČSSR," dated 19 January 1987.

Letter from federal deputy labor minister, Milan Kyselý, to Czech deputy labor minister, Václav Karas, dated 5 February 1987.

Letter from JUDr. Miloš Brunclík, the head of the Foreign Workers' Secretariat at the Czech Labor Ministry, to Sklounion, dated 29 March 1987.

"Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR," dated 12 May 1987.

Letter from Motorpal, Jihlava to Czech Labor Ministry, dated 7 September 1987.

Letter from Josef Šretr, the head of the Labor Force Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, to Štefan Karabín, the head of the Labor Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, dated 16 September 1987.

"Program dlouhodobé hospodářské a vědeckotechnické spolupráce mezi československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou na období do roku 2000," presented to the presidium of the Czechoslovak Communist Party's Central Committee at its 2 November 1987 meeting.

“Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva práce, válečných invalidů a sociálních věcí VSR,” record from the meeting that took place between 7 and 14 December 1987 in Prague.

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasněho zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1988,” signed 14 December 1987 in Prague.

Letter from Ústřední Celní Správa to Štefan Karabín, the head of the Labor Department at the Federal Labor Ministry, dated 4 January 1988.

“Metodický pokyn pro pobyt a ubytování zahraničních občanů dočasně zaměstnaných a odborně připravovaných v ČSSR na základě mezivládních dohod a ujednání,” dated 15 February 1988.

Letter from Václav Karas, deputy labor minister of ČSR, to Ing. Milan Kyselý, deputy labor minister ČSSR, dated 16 March 1988.

“Informace pro jednání s delegací ministerstva vysokého a středního odborného školství VSR dne 5.12.1988.”

“Záznam z jednání delegací federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ČSSR a ministerstva vysokého a středního odborného školství VSR o spolupráci při provádění mezivládní Dohody ze dne 21. prosince 1979 o odborné přípravě a dalším zvyšování kvalifikace vietnamských občanů v československých organizacích,” record from a meeting that took place between 5 and 15 December 1988 in Prague.

“Pokyny ke způsobu provádění úhrad nákladů spojených se zaměstnáváním zahraničních pracovníků v československých organizacích,” dated 30 December 1988, signed by ing. Štefan Šťastný, deputy labor minister, ing. Július Jombík, first deputy finance minister, ing. Václav Věrtelář, first deputy chair of the Czechoslovak Planning Commission.

“Přehled o zaměstnávání zahraničních občanů – rok 1988 (bez učňů).”

“Přehled o čerpání finančních prostředků vyčleněných v roce 1988 ze státního rozpočtu na odbornou přípravu zahraničních občanů v čs. organizacích na území ČSR.”

“Protokol o změně Dohody mezi vládou Československé socialistické republiky a vládou Vietnamské socialistické republiky o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980,” signed in Hanoi on 6 April 1989.

“Informace k Protokolu o změně Dohody mezi vládou ČSSR a vládou VSR o dočasném zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků VSR spojeném s další odbornou přípravou v čs. organizacích ze dne 27. listopadu 1980.”

“Prováděcí protokol o spolupráci mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Vietnamskou socialistickou republikou v oblasti dočasného zaměstnávání kvalifikovaných pracovníků Vietnamské socialistické republiky spojeného s další odbornou přípravou v československých organizacích v roce 1989,” signed on 6 April 1989 in Hanoi.

“Výklad ke způsobu provádění úhrad nákladů spojených se zaměstnáváním zahraničních pracovníků v čs. organizacích,” issued on 12 June 1989.

“Výnos federálního ministerstva práce a sociálních věcí ze dne 31.7.1989 č.j. 221-8747-5123.06 05 89, kterým se mění a doplňuje výnos ze dne 16. října 1981 č.j. 316-1099/81-7300 o odměňování a poskytování cestovních náhrad vietnamským občanům dočasně zaměstnaným v Československé socialistické republice” signed by Ing. Miloslav Boďa, minister of labor and social affairs of the ČSSR.

“Informace pro jednání s delegací Státního sekretariátu pro práci a mzdy NDR o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků dne 29.8.1989,” dated 25 August 1989.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARCHIVE, MZV

“Záznam z rozhovoru tituláře ČSSR v Hanoji s. Eibela s titulářem BLR s. Videnovem dne 23. dubna 1970,” 145/117, 1970-1972, 3. teritoriální odd.

“Záznam o přijetí velvyslanceckého radu MLR v ČSSR s. Miklosa Barityho vedoucím 3 t.o. s. dr. V. Moravcom na MZV dňa 21.1.1970,” 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/117, 1970-1972.

“Informace k otázce efektivnosti čs. ekonomické a vojenské pomoci pro VDR” by Dr. Zdeněk Eibel, Czechoslovak ambassador to Vietnam, 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/211, 1970-1974, dated 7 September 1972.

“Záznam z rozhovoru III. tajemníka s. R. Šmída se III. tajemníkem ZÚ MLR s. K. Lainczekem dne 26. 2. 1973.” MZV: 3. teritoriální odbor, 145/117, 1973.

“VDR – přehled styků” letter from Dr Josef Šiktanc, the head of international relations department at the Federal Labor and Social Affairs Ministry, to the Federal Foreign Affairs Ministry’s 3rd territorial department, dated 14 March 1973; 145/112, 1973-74.

“Záznam rozhovoru III. tajemníka R. Šmída se s. Nghia, pracovníkem konsulárního odd. MZV VDR dne 26.6.1973,” 145/117, 1973.

"Záznam z rozhovoru s. Kodaty s radou velvyslanectví BLR," 13 March 1974; 145/117: 1974.

"Informace o vztazích mezi ČSSR a VDR, Informační materiál k přijetí delegace NS VDR v ČSSR," dated 7 May, 1974, 145/112: 1973-1974.

"Zprávy a informace ZÚ: Politická zpráva č. 3 – O návštěvě parlamentní delegace FS ČSSR ve VDR," 145/311, 1970-1973.

"Zpráva o průběhu vědeckotechnické spolupráce mezi ČSSR a VDR," 145/112, 1973-1974.

ARCHIVE OF SECURITY FORCES (INTERIOR MINISTRY ARCHIVE), BRNO-KANICE AND PRAGUE LOCATIONS, ABS

Objektový svazek Zahraniční dělníci, StB České Budějovice; report from 19 May 1981, OB 332.

"Informace o operativní situaci ve VČK pro vedoucího tajemníka KV KSČ," 15 July 1981; přír. HK z roku 1988, obal 11.

"Výběr pozantků získaných prostředky StB v teritoriu VČK za uplynulý měsíc – pro informaci vedoucího tajemníka KV KSČ," 15 May 1982; addition HK, 1988, package 11.

"Informace o státobezpečnostní situaci na úseku kontrarozvědné ochrany čs. Ekonomiky za měsíc květen 1982" -- weekly information for the interior minister, 9 June 1982; Souhrnné informace 1982-87, XI. S. SNB, carton 61.

"VSR státní příslušníci," OB 332 "Dělníci" 332 ČB; around 14 October 1982 (strike took place on 13 August 1982).

"Nenastoupení pracovníků VSR na odpolední směnu," 18 August 1982. OB "Dělníci" 332 ČB.

ABS Kanice, "Pobyt a činnost občanů Vietnamské socialistické republiky v Západočeském kraji – zaslání podkladů," 20 October 1982; č. př. 1756/1988, balík č. 6.

"Pokyny k zajištění operativního rozpracování problematiky 'Zahraniční dělníci' v rámci Jihočeského kraje," 17 March 1983, OB 412 ČB, "Cizinci."

OB 412 ČB, "Cizina," "Letter from Ing. Nguyen Van Them to the director of ČEZ, Koubek, dated 21 June 1983.

Letter from ČEZ deputy director for cadres work, František Lojda, to MPSV, 7 June 1983; "Přesun 15 vietnamských pracovníků – sdělení," report for the 3rd division of the State Security [secret police] Administration, České Budějovice received on 22 June 1983, and letter from ČEZ to the Vietnamese Embassy dated 24 June 1983.

"Úřední záznam k ohlasu na zásah pořádkové jednotky VB v Tušimicích -- ubytovny SEMPRA Tušimice," 24 March 1983; ABS, 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

"Úřední záznam k ohlasu na reakci lidí v souvislosti s občany Vietnamské socialistické republiky; 24 March 1983"; 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

"Úřední záznam k reagenci občanů na situaci mezi vietnamskými státními příslušníky, kteří pracují jako dělníci u n.p. Sempra Tušimice," 27 March 1983; 2126-2139/91, bal. č. 78.

"Zpráva o jednání vietnamských představitelů na okrese Chomutov," Collection no. 2126-2139/91, package no. 78.

Case from 13 June 1985; č.př. 2849-2860/96, balík č. 68.