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WORKING PAPER

ZSOMBOR BÓDY

Opening up to the “Third World” or Taking a Detour to the “West”?

The Hungarian Presence in Algeria from the 1960s to the 1980s

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Opening up to the “Third World” or Taking a Detour to the “West”?

The Hungarian Presence in Algeria from the 1960s to the 1980s*

Summary

Hungary’s opening up to the world did not start with the disintegration of the Eastern bloc, rather, it had begun as early as the 1960s. By considering the example of Algerian-Hungarian relationships, the present study investigates Hungary’s participation in globalization from the 1960s to the 1980s. Hungarian-Algerian relations reveal an increasing number and rate of contacts from the 1960s. What common or differing motivations and standpoints led the Hungarian participants (decision makers, companies, individual experts) to build these relationships during their activities linked to Algeria? To what extent was this a form of anti-colonial solidarity or, at least, cooperation against “the West,” and to what extent was it merely a matter of business? In what ways and frameworks did the Hungarian experts working in Algeria in the intersecting spaces of different cultures interpret their own experiences? The study constats, that from the mid-1960s to approximately the mid-1980s, Hungarian “intellectual export” was beneficial for both parties. The basis of cooperation was not opposition to the globalization of West-centered capitalism but rather a common notion of modernization, the top-down led projects of which received an export of experts from Hungary.

Keywords

Hungary in the globalization, Eastern block, modernization, expertise, 1960s-1980s

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In May 1980, leadership at the trade union of the El Hadjar Iron and Steel Complex in Annaba, the largest steel plant in Algeria and, indeed, the whole of Africa, had a multi-day meeting at which a discussion of the situation of foreign experts working at the company was one item on the agenda. The participants had a 13-page-long report in French to discuss. A copy of this document can be found in the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security in Budapest, which holds documents of the former State Security Organizations from the era of state socialism. This is indeed a noteworthy fact, as it offers an indication of the complex relationships between socialist Hungary and areas outside the Eastern bloc. The trade union document of the El Hadjar Iron and Steel Complex in Annaba found its way to Budapest because Hungarian State Security Organizations, following in the footsteps of Hungarian companies and experts present in Algeria, expanded their interests to Algeria and, in particular, to the steel complex. By considering the example of Algerian-Hungarian relationships, the present study investigates Hungary's participation in globalization from the 1960s to the 1980s.

Over the course of the past decade, historians and scholars have added notable nuance to the simplified picture of the Cold War as an opposition of two blocs in at least two ways. One direction in the research has pointed out that the period of the Cold War was determined not solely by the conflict between the "West" and the "East," and the processes of globalization was not simply structured around the "West" as its center. Accordingly, it was not the break-up of the Eastern bloc in 1989–1990 that ushered in globalization, which (so the thesis statement went) had been hindered by the separateness of the "East." On the contrary, as important contributions to the research persuasively show, from the mid-1950s, parallel with decolonization, the Soviet Union was striving to become an alternative center of globalization, or in other words was trying to organize a sort of non-imperialist form of international trade, and to help countries gaining their independence in their development while also promoting its own model. "Third World" counties were indeed open to this offer, as many, while not wishing to join the Soviet bloc, intended to benefit from the conflict



between the two blocs according to their own agendas, either economically or by expanding their political room for manoeuvre.¹ At the same time, findings in the research revealed that smaller satellite states of the Soviet Union, such as Hungary, likewise sought to build connections, both economic and cultural, with countries gaining their independence in order, in part, to relieve themselves from their double dependence, dependence on the Soviet Union on the one hand and, in terms of technology and capital, on “the West” on the other, in order to carve out some room for manoeuvre and gain some hard currency, which was much needed due to their lopsided economic relationships with the West. During this process of networking, Central-European experts marketed their knowledge in countries becoming independent and utilized the experience gained there in establishing scientific institutions and furthering their roles as experts in their homeland.² However, in light of the research conducted thus far, the question arises concerning the extent to which these state socialist countries’ activities in the “Third World” were motivated by anti-imperialist solidarity and the extent to which emphasis on this solidarity may have been a mere political and ideological instrument used for the sake of power and economic gain. Furthermore, European socialist states’ relationship with “Third World” countries may be deemed ambiguous. While they were looking for a common platform on the basis of opposition to the West, they themselves approached these countries much like

¹ James Mark and Yakov Feygin, “The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Alternative Visions of a Global Economy 1950s–1980,” in *Alternative Globalizations. Eastern Europe and the Postcolonial World*, eds James Mark, Artem Malinovsky, and Steffi Marung (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 35–58, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx8b7ph.5>.

² Theodora Dragostinova, “The »Natural Ally« of the »Developing World«: Bulgarian Culture in India and Mexico,” *Slavic Review* 77, no. 3 (2018): 261–684, <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2018.204>; Małgorzata Mazurek, “Polish Economists in Nehru’s India: Making Science for the Third World in an Era of De-Stalinization and Decolonization,” *Slavic Review* 77, no. 3 (2018): 588–610, <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2018.201>; Massimiliano Trentin, “‘Tough Negotiations’: The Two Germanys in Syria and Iraq from 1963 to 1974,” *Cold War History* 8, no. 3 (2008): 353–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740802222155>.



the colonizers, both economically and with regards to civilizational/cultural paternalism.³

Based on these findings in the research, it seems obvious that nuance needs to be added to prevailing understandings of the history of West-centric globalization, as this process has been more complex than expected and often claimed. The subtle study of the history of the networks between actors in the “East” and the “South” shows that these networks were increasingly intricate from the 1950s on. Thus, 1989–1990 was by no means the moment at which the former state socialist countries started to participate in the processes of globalization.⁴

The other direction in the research provides some support for the results discussed above, but at the same time, it also questions these findings in some regards. A new economic history of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc reveals that economic relations between the “East” and the world outside were not only close but also rather uneven. The existing economic seclusion was not a direct result of Moscow’s intentions, since the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc wished to gain economic advantages by properly integrating into world economy, which was hindered by the “West’s” refusal and its policy towards the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc.⁵ This direction in the research in economic history questions whether the network

³ “Eastern European »development guidance« in offering education, exporting machinery, technology and experts, and exporting their own socialist models of development could also express cultural superiority, legitimize the successes of their regimes and achieve international political recognition.” Zoltán Ginelli, “*Hungarian Experts in Nkrumah’s Ghana. Decolonization and Semiperipheral Postcoloniality in Socialist Hungary*,” <http://mezosfera.org/hungarian-experts-in-nkrumahs-ghana/>.

⁴ James Mark and Péter Apor, “Socialism Goes Global: Decolonization and the Making of a New Culture of Internationalism in Socialist Hungary, 1956–1989,” *Journal of Modern History* 87, no. 4 (2015): 852–91, <https://doi.org/10.1086/683608>; James Mark and Tobias Rupprecht, “The Socialist World in Global History. From Absentee to Victim to Co-producer,” in *The Practice of Global History: European Perspectives*, ed. Matthias Middell (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 81–113, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474292184.ch-004>.

⁵ Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, *Red Globalization. The Political Economy of the Soviet Cold War from Stalin to Khrushchev* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139628778>.



among the Soviet Union, the state socialist countries, and their partners in the “Third World,” according to or irrespective of Moscow’s intentions, actually signified the development of an alternative global network, as James Mark claimed when searching for the alternative to Western-centered processes of globalization. As a matter of fact, the relationship between the “East” and the “West” was asymmetrical. Throughout their existence, the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc were continually in need of economic relationships, technologies, market opportunities, and capital with the world outside. Without economic links to the “West,” the “East” was incapable of development, and indeed its existence depended on relations outside its sphere. In contrast, for the “West,” connections with the Soviet bloc was not vital for its development. This unevenness in the economic power relations made it impossible for the network of the Soviet Union to become an alternative to Western-centered globalization. Indeed, with regards to approaches to industrial development and economic efficiency, there was no other model than that of the “capitalist world.”⁶ Smaller European socialist countries had diverse links to countries in the “Third World” and the “West,” so it is possible to speak of them joining the network of globalization in the 1960s and 1970s as well. However, their wide-ranging involvement in global processes and the conflicts among them, such as rivalry for cheap Soviet energy sources and for their products on the Soviet market, divided these countries to such an extent that they cannot even be regarded as a “bloc,” especially considering the force of their economic and technological connection to the West, since this notion would assume a considerable homogeneity among those involved.⁷ The concept of a bloc is only meaningful

⁶ Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, “Capitalism’s fellow traveler: The Soviet Union, Bretton Woods and the Cold War 1944–1958,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56, no. 2 (2015): 290–319, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041751400005X>; Oscar Sanchez-Sibony, “Economic Growth in the Governance of the Cold War Divide: Mikoyan’s Encounter with Japan, Summer 1961,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 20, no. 2 (2018): 129–54, https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00741.

⁷ Germuska, Pál, “Attraction and Repulsion Hungary and European Integration,” in *European Socialist Regimes’ Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s*, eds. Angela Romano and Federico Romero (London: Routledge, 2020), 50–77, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429340703-4>; Lorenz M. Lüthi,



if this bloc can be set against another block and has a clarity and unambiguity of borders, which was only true in a military sense, at best.⁸ After the turn in the 1970s (the end of the Bretton-Woods system, the oil price shock, the replacement of the Fordist regime of mass production and Keynesian economic policy through the liberalization of the money market, increasing world economy integration, and the decline of traditional industries) and the rapid development of the “Western” world economy, with which the “East” could no longer keep up in the 1980s, it was clear that the Soviet bloc could not become a pole on its own in the globalizing world, nor could it resist, not even in the short term, the waves of globalization coming from the Western center.⁹

The present study analyzes Hungarian presence in Algeria from the 1960s in the research context outlined above. Hungarian-Algerian relations reveal an increasing number and rate of contacts, and this

“Drifting Apart: Soviet Energy and the Cohesion of the Communist Bloc in the 1970s and 1980s,” in *Cold War Energy. A Transnational History of Soviet Oil and Gas*, ed. Jeronim Perovic (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 371–99, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49532-3_13.

⁸ Anne Hartmetz, Kristin Hartmetz, Bence Kocsev, and Jan Zofka, *East–South Relations During the Global Cold War: Economic Activities and Area Studies Interests of East-Central European CMeA Countries in Africa*. Working Paper Series des SFB 1199 an der Universität Leipzig, Nr. 11. 2018.; Pogány, Ágnes, “Cooperation through the Iron Curtain: economic relations between Austria and Hungary after the Second World War,” in *Gaps in the Iron Ctain: Economic Relations between Neutral and Socialist Countries in Cold War Europe*, eds. Gertrude Enderle-Burcel, Piotr Franaszek, Dieter Stiefel, and Alice Teichova (Kraków: Jagiellonian University Press, 2009), 142–62.

⁹ Sandrine Kott, “The Social Engineering Project. Exportation of Capitalist Management Culture to Eastern Europe 1950–1980,” in *Planning in Cold War Europe. Competition, Cooperation, Circulations 1950s–1980s*, eds. Michael Christian, Sandrine Kott, and Ondřej Matějka (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018), 123–41.; Federico Romero, “Socialism between Détente and Globalisation,” in *European Socialist Regimes’ Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s*, eds. Angela Romano and Federico Romero (London: Routledge, 2020), 11–30, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429340703-2>; *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte*. Hrsg. Konrad H. Jarausch(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).



can be regarded as part of the phenomenon of globalization.¹⁰ What common or differing motivations and standpoints led the Hungarian participants (decision makers, companies, individual experts) to build these relationships during their activities linked to Algeria? To what extent was this a form of anti-colonial solidarity or, at least, cooperation against “the West,” and to what extent was it merely a matter of business? If it was a business relationship, how beneficial was it for the participants, and was it a relationship which could possibly be seen as somewhat neocolonialist in nature, due to differences in the countries’ technological-economic levels of development?¹¹ And what impact did these relationships have on the Hungarian participants in return, since the development of true globalization comes when those involved move more freely and to a greater extent in a transnational field of competing and complementary interests and formulate their understandings of themselves not in terms of the nation state paradigm but in discourses valid in a global reference system. The question thus arises: in what ways and frameworks did the Hungarian experts working in Algeria in the intersecting spaces of different cultures interpret their own experiences? And, as the final question, how did they relate to the new wave of globalization emerging in the late 1980s? Can the Hungarian Activity in Algeria be regarded, in comparison to the prevalent neoliberal globalization model of the 1990s, as an alternative process of globalization?

Hungarian specialized experts in the Third World from the 1960s to the late 1980s

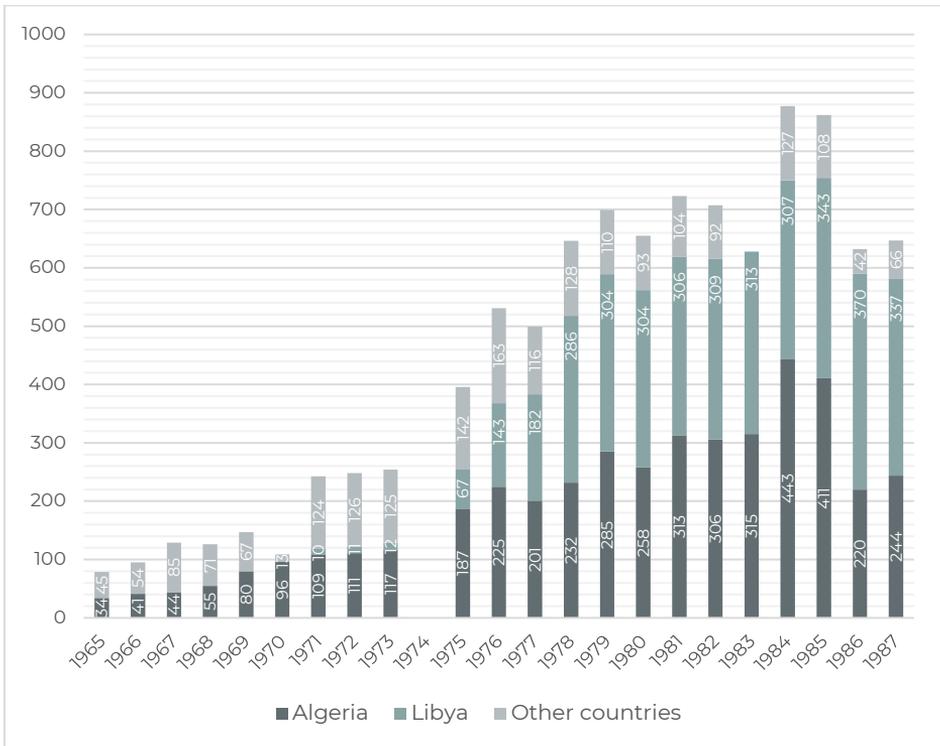
Managing Hungary professional assistance and “intellectual exports” was the task of the Enterprise Technical and Scientific Cooperation (TESCO). From the 1960s, the company welcomed

¹⁰ Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Peterson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Göran Therborn, *The World. A Beginner's Guide* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 51–3.

¹¹ Apor Péter, “Szocialista migráció, posztkolonializmus és szolidaritás. Magyarország és az Európán kívüli migráció” [Socialist Migration, postcolonialism, and Solidarity. Hungary and Migration Outside Europe], *Antro-pólus* 2, no. 1 (2017): 26–44.

scholarship students from Third World countries and outsourced Hungarian specialists and experts to overseas countries. What is analyzed here is not the issue of those arriving in Hungary from Third World countries to study or to work, but the activities of Hungarian experts abroad.¹²

Figure 1 The number of Hungarian experts on long-term TESCO postings in Third World countries (as of December 31 of the given year)



Source: Archives of the National Archives of Hungary, XXIX-G-21-a, Box 62 and 63.

¹² According to Péter Apor, despite all the slogans of internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity, in the decades of the Kádár era, foreign students in Hungary were isolated from Hungarian society and often experienced racist discrimination. Apor, "Socialist Migration".



The relevant archival sources of TESCO reveal that the number of outsourced experts grew consistently from the 1960s on. The number of those with a permanent posting (in other words, people who spent several years in a certain country) was more than 800 in the peak period of the 1980s. As experts predominantly spent three-year periods overseas, this number grew over the decades. It must be noted, however, that not all experts working long-term in faraway countries were outsourced by TESCO, but TESCO was the organization which had the management of outsourcing experts as its fundamental task.

Most of the Hungarian experts were hosted by two North African countries. For the entire period or most of it, Libya and Algeria had friendly relationships with countries of the Eastern bloc, were able to finance modernization programs owing to their mineral and energy sources, and were relatively closer to Hungary than Sub-Saharan and Far Eastern countries.

Algerian-Hungarian relationships from the mid-1960s

There are diverse sources available on Algeria in Hungary. Hungary had followed the events of the Algerian War closely. In addition to a multitude of newspaper and journal articles, several books were also published. In 1954, the party publisher (Szikra Publishing) had a volume translated from Russian and published in the series *International Issues* about the struggles of North African peoples against French colonization, which was then followed by a host of volumes written by Hungarian authors. In 1957, the publisher of the Hungarian People's Army (Zrínyi) published a volume on Algeria in the series *Mi újság a Nagyvilágban* [What's New in the World]. In 1962, the Hungarian news agency MTI published a book on Algeria's path to independence as part of the series *Világpolitikai Dokumentumok* [World Politics Documents]. In the same year, the party publisher's (then called Kossuth) series *Világeseemények Dióhéjban* [World Events in a Nutshell] included a piece on Algeria's independence, and young adult publisher Móra came out with a volume on Algeria's road to independence for young adult readers. Two years later, the party publisher published a report book



on the travels of journalist. This was the last in the list of publications on the topic of Algeria's independence.¹³ These publications unequivocally presented Algeria's fight for independence in the context of anti-colonialist ideology. They did not shy away from pointing out that it was not only those advocating the principles of Marxism and Leninism who were fighting for independence. Their "Popular Front approach" emphasized solidarity with Algeria's "progressive" political forces and, naturally, viewed them and only them as authentic representatives of Algerian society.

In addition to works providing political and ideological orientation for different strata of Hungarian society, there were also attempts to assess the opportunities inherent in economic relations with Algeria. After the Évian Accords, the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry ordered a study on opportunities for Hungary in Algeria.¹⁴ The thorough and matter-of-fact text, devoid of anti-colonialist slogans, started with the modernization program launched in Algeria in 1958 as part of the so-called Constantine Plan and focusing on large investment. This was in fact announced by De Gaulle himself, from the balcony of the Prefecture of Constantine during his trip to Algeria in 1958. The main points of the program (which can be seen as part of the phenomena identified by Göran Therborn as reactive modernization, or in other words, when the decolonizing elite adapts, at least in part, the system of values and goals that serve as points of orientation for Western modernization and tries to carry out a top-down process of modernization) included expanding the system of education, improving irrigation in agriculture, land reform,

¹³ Sz. Datlin, *Marokkó, Algéria és Tunézia népeinek függetlenségi harca* [The Freedom Fight of Peoples of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia] (Budapest: Szikra. Nemzetközi Kérdések, 1954); Árkus István, *Algéria* (Budapest: Zrínyi, Mi újság a Nagyvilágban, 1957); Gombos László (szerk.), *Algéria* (Budapest: MTI Világpolitikai Dokumentumok, 1962); Pálffy József, *Algéria* (Budapest: Kossuth, Világesemények Dióhéjban, 1962); Máté György, *Halima leveti fátylát* (Budapest: Móra, 1962); Várkonyi Tibor, *Algéria* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964).

¹⁴ *Algéria* (Magyar Kereskedelmi Kamara. Piac- és Konjunktúrakutató Főosztály. A tanulmány lezárva: 1962. szeptember hóban. (Csak belső használatra) Dr. V. U.). [Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Market and State of the Economy Research Department. Study concluded in September 1962. (For internal use only.)]



housing, and infrastructural and industrial investments. Initially, the program was to be implemented with the help of the French state budget and a policy encouraging private investment.¹⁵ The study ordered by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry postulated that this modernization program would basically continue in independent Algeria as well, and the Algerian government would be able to finance it by using its hydrocarbon resources. It was claimed that “socialist countries, and thus Hungary, too, take interest in developing foreign trade relations with independent Algeria. Algeria has the potential to become the most important market in Northern Africa because, after the consolidation of its economy, its domestic development will require widescale investment and consumer goods...”¹⁶ It was not just the export of industrial goods but also that of production technologies, machine tools, and production lines that Algeria was expected to require. Since in several sectors the processing of raw materials and production of semi-manufactured goods happened locally, it was believed that factories could be transported to further the development of the entire sector, which “would be rapid and useful assistance for the Algerian national economy.”¹⁷ One of the most essential points posited was that a large room for “intellectual export” would open up, as Algeria would need vocational training, professionals with secondary education and university degrees, as well as medical staffs, agriculturalists, geologists, and technicians.

Thus, the analysis, produced as support for decision, did not use anti-imperialist language, and its point of departure was not anti-colonial solidarity, nor did it regard the export of some “socialist model” as the main objective. Its foundation was a common vision of modernization visible in the Constantine Plan as well and believed to be persisting in independent Algeria, a vision which required not the export of the “socialist model,” but merely Hungarian expertise.

¹⁵ Muriam Haleh Davis, “Restaging Mise en Valeur. Postwar Imperialism and the Plan de Constantine,” *Review of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 176–86.

¹⁶ Dr. V., *Algéria*, 42.

¹⁷ Dr. V., *Algéria*, 43.



The study firmly believed that Hungary had technological and expert knowledge which could or even had to be marketed. Generally, state socialist systems in Central Europe did not bring together completely new groups of experts; continuity with the pre-1945 period was significant. The existence of the Eastern bloc and Comecon did not entirely exclude maintaining relationships with the Western technocracy, nor did it exclude the transfer of knowledge from the West.¹⁸ These expert capacities developed on the former bases and not isolated from “the West” were not fully utilized in Hungary, as the first big wave of extensive industrialization had already taken place in the first half of the 1950s. Thus, “intellectual export” to Algeria seemed to present an important opportunity that should be seized.

Hungary’s interest in Algerian market opportunities was therefore already a factor at the moment at which Algeria became independent. As a result, formal relationships between the two countries started to develop from the mid-1960s on. A trade agreement concerning certain goods was concluded in 1964, and a general trade and clearing agreement was reached in 1965. In the same year, a market research delegation consisting of several Hungarian company directors was sent to Algeria. In 1966, the two countries entered into a technical-scientific agreement, but this was still more of a declaration of intent. On July 7, 1967, the intended cooperative endeavor outlined in the agreement was finally made concrete, and for a long period, this document, albeit after having been modified and supplemented several times, served as the legal basis on which Hungarian experts were sent to Algeria. In this period, competent officials of the two countries frequently kept contact. 15 meetings of secretaries of state, ministers of state, and heads of department were held between 1970 and 1975.¹⁹ In 1971,

¹⁸ Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, “»Hidden Integration«. RGW-Wirtschaftsexperten in europäischen Netzwerken,” *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 55, no. 1 (2014): 179–95. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jbwg-2014-0007>.

¹⁹ MNL OL XXIX-G–21–a, Box 66. A summary of Hungarian-Algerian relations by the Department of Overseas Developing Countries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. August 18, 1975.



a new interstate trade agreement was concluded, and the president of the Presidential Council was paid a formal state visit during his African tour.

According to the 1967 record book, the two parties would exchange the list of positions to be filled and the personal files of the experts recommended for these positions. They would then decide who among those recommended would be accepted. In practice, however, Algeria recommended the positions and Hungary recommended the experts. No Algerian experts came to work in Hungary, only students. The record also touched on minor issues: wives, for example (not spouses, which indicates that the experts were always male), and underage children only had the right to the reimbursement of travel expenses if they stayed for more than two years in the country.

Hungarian experts' projects in Algeria

Based on the agreement discussed above, from the late 1960s on, there was a dramatic increase in the activities of Hungarian experts in Algeria. The first significant and indeed pioneering project, which paved the way for further commissions, was the design and construction supervision of the Olympic Stadium in Algiers, which Hungary intended to be a reference endeavor, and entry into the Algerian market. The completed building (Picture 1) displays elements reminiscent of the People's Stadium in Budapest, which had been constructed in the 1950s. The construction of the stadium, which met Olympic standards, was personally initiated by Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria. Hungary won the commission over Bulgaria not only to design and construct the stadium, with a capacity of 70,000, but also to develop its surroundings and provide the necessary equipment (the scoreboard system, etc.).



Picture 1 The Olympic Stadium in Algiers, designed by Sándor Ázbej at KÖZTI, 1972 (Photo by László Dalányi)



Source: Fortepan / Imre Ormos Foundation, 100 571.

Following this, water regulation projects and dam building were done, designed and partly carried out by Hungarian experts, as well as projects involving the construction of polyclinics, rehabilitation centers for the disabled, three “Hungarian” hospitals (some of the medical staff of which was Hungarian), secondary schools, housing estates, and the spatial planning of industrial investments. Hungarian experts also participated in the design and construction supervision of a technological university in Oran. In addition to supplying equipment and educational tools for the university, Hungary also provided teaching materials written by renowned Hungarian scholars and then translated into French, and between



20 and 30 Hungarian teachers continuously participated in the training. The project was based on a contract of 6 million USD.²⁰

To manage this largescale and diverse work, a Hungarian institutional structure with several elements was established in Algeria. Matters concerning experts in long-term postings according to interstate agreements were managed by a TESCO office in Algiers. There was also a TESCO Consulting Office in the Algerian capital, which handled the affairs of experts working in the country or participating in projects with trade contracts, as well as a TESCO-KÖZTI office, a satellite engineering office of the Public Building Construction Company, with more than 20 employees. Some companies that transported goods to Algeria frequently and in large amounts, such as Medicor (surgical instruments), MOM (optical equipment), Metrimpex, and Komplex (building industry), had their own service networks and customer services in the country.

The affairs of Hungarian experts working in Algeria within various legal frameworks were viewed as problematic by certain representatives of the Hungarian government. After his visit to Algeria in February 1976 (and after having met many members of the Hungarian community there), Minister of Justice Mihály Korom summarized his impressions: “Contradictions have arisen between those receiving funds from the state budget and those funded from company sources, with the latter being preeminent.”²¹ “A materialistic approach has come to prevail, an effort to ‘get rich fast,’ and, accordingly, there has been a reinterpretation of Hungarian provisions in order to ensure individual material benefits. [...] [I]f a Hungarian company makes a better deal, this should [not]

²⁰ Half of Oran’s population relocated from the mother country in colonial times and many left the city when Algeria became independent. Oran thus became a half empty city, with business and cultural life collapsing as compared to previous times. The Algerian state made huge efforts to revive the city and establishing the new university was one of them.

²¹ MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 67, 1. Notes by Attorney General Mihály Korom, February 2, 1976.



automatically mean higher payouts for its men, rather, this should be transferred to the state budget.”²²

Compared to circumstances in socialist Hungary and Algeria, Hungarian experts working in North African countries made good money. In the context of the agreement with Algeria, they could transfer 50% of their salary back home. (Each international bank transfer required special permission from the Algerian authorities, as in this period, international cash flow was still far from unhindered.) During periodically repeated renegotiations of the conditions in the basis of which the experts were sent, the Algerian negotiating party was noticeably concerned with how much the payments made to the Hungarian experts exceeded subsistence levels in Algeria. Therefore, they regularly postponed implementing pay raises after Algerian inflation, thus decreasing the real value of the experts' earnings. In fact, the level of remuneration was always a hard bargain. TESCO regularly and emphatically told the Algerian party that less payment would make it impossible to provide adequate financial incentives for the experts, and it did not shy away from using more pressure, either. According to the standpoint of the Hungarian Department of State, “increasing the remuneration for the experts may only be achieved with more forceful methods than before. Therefore, we agree with TESCO’s effort to slow down the pace of posting and thus call our partner’s attention to the outstanding payments for our experts.”²³

The management of TESCO was well-aware of the fact that it had to compete with other (socialist and Western) companies for jobs for its highly trained experts. In order to be able to agree on appropriate remuneration despite the competition, at times, some coordination was needed. As a record prepared for the CEO of TESCO reveals, there were cases when Eastern bloc countries, with the exception of Romania, had “friendly meetings” to coordinate the strategy to be used against Algeria. At these meetings, they unequivocally agreed that Algeria’s proposals were imprecise and that the socialist countries

²² Ibid.

²³ MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 67, July 28, 1977.



had to stand united, as each country's negotiations affect those of the others. They found typical that the Algerian negotiating party claimed that they had an agreement with the Soviet Union, which, in fact, was not actually the case. Each participant came to understand that no socialist country could get better terms with Algeria than the terms which had already been reached in the first agreement, so an increase in payments was a common objective.²⁴

To summarize, the company managing the outsourcing of experts and their superiors in the government were solely interested in business opportunities in Algeria, much as the experts themselves were drawn to take positions in Algeria because they had the chance to make better earnings than they might have made in Hungary. Although this “money-grabbing” approach bothered some members of the government, their goal, too, was potential commercial gain for Hungary. The Hungarian authorities also realized that they were in competition with other “socialist” and Western countries for the Algerian market, so they tried to improve their position by slowing down the pace at which experts were posted and forming a cartel with “friendly” countries. There was no anticolonial solidarity with Algeria, nor was there any real question of the export of the “socialist model.” Characteristically, when the strictly-speaking Marxist-Leninist Algerian communist party was invited to the conference of communist and labor parties in Budapest in 1968 (which had a distinctively anti-imperialist rhetoric), Algeria refused to accept the credentials of the newly appointed Hungarian ambassador, thereby indicating that, despite any ongoing cooperation (including military) with the “Eastern” bloc, it would not tolerate the acceptance by “socialist” countries of any Algerian political force other than the official authorities as partners. The Hungarian government argued that the conference was an international but not an interstate event with Budapest merely as but a venue, and Hungary had no say whatsoever in the question of which parties would participate, but to no avail. Eventually, Hungary was forced to appoint a new ambassador, and as events unfolded, it did not maintain contact with the Algerian communist party, lest it jeopardize cooperation by creating political tension.

²⁴ MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 66, Record for the CEO of TESCO on the negotiation meeting held at the Bulgarian Embassy in Budapest, March 2, 1980.



The meeting of cultures and guardians of identity

The dramatic increase in relationships across borders resulted in a growing number of encounters between people of different cultures in Algeria. This section focuses on the everyday lives of Hungarians in Algeria, on what it meant for them to experience interculturalism, and how they interpreted their own postings in Algeria and perceived Algerian society. Research on the history of globalization often investigates the discourses used by those in transnational spaces (and thus forced to let go of their former understandings of national and local identities) to interpret themselves and their situations. How did their new experiences throw into question the validity of the interpretations which had taken shape within the frameworks of their earlier lives?²⁵ As was pointed out decades ago, the intercultural or multicultural contact spaces formed as a result of globalization not only may open up new perspectives, but also generate schematic images of groups or communities perceived as other, while the experiences of otherness may trigger a strengthening of one's own identity and call certain social and cultural practices into being which in fact may consolidate the community.²⁶ The following discussion shall demonstrate how Hungarian experts in Algeria perceived their environment, how they reacted to their experiences (which were strikingly different from life back in Hungary), and how official and authoritarian Hungarian agents strove to supervise Hungarian experts in Algeria in the "proper" interpretation of their experiences and make sure they preserved their identity and their ties to socialist Hungary as they expected to.

The latter task was given to Algerian organizations of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP). There was a diplomatic level to keeping contact with the Algerian negotiating party,

²⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991); Timothy J. Owens, Dawn T. Robinson, and Lynn Smith-Lovin, "Three Faces of Identity," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 477–99, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040507.134725>.

²⁶ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), 164–81.



managed by the embassy. Economic negotiations were led by TESCO, while everyday matters were dealt with by TESCO offices in Algeria. The primary task of MSZMP party bodies was to manage some personal matters and potential conflicts of those posted in Algeria, in order to keep together the Hungarian colony, organize community life, and, most importantly, to make them keep the public norms and political rules of Hungarian life alive. In the peak period of the early 1980s, there were approximately 2500 Hungarians living in the official Hungarian colony in Algeria – TESCO experts, employees of company service networks and customers services, members of the diplomatic corps, and their families –, and although not every one of them, not even the experts, were party members, their number was enough to keep four MSZMP organizations running in Algeria.

By its own 1976 report, the MSZMP organization in Algiers (which was not the same as the Embassy organization, as the latter was autonomous) had officials responsible for cultural, women's movement, and youth issues, and party life in Algiers was much like that back home. Their programs included film screenings, visits to museums, sporting events, excursions. As noted in the report, "In addition to these political and cultural goals, keeping the colony together is a major duty."²⁷ The party body informed its members of domestic and foreign political events, and organized transmitting the newspapers *Népszabadság*, *Pártélet*, and *Társadalmi Szemle* to the Algerian bodies.

As reported by the Women's Committee of the party body in Algiers, there were problems with children's education in the official Hungarian colony, since it was difficult to ensure children's socialization as expected by the socialist system in Hungary. Leaving Hungary "was problematic for children at the age of 6 to 14, because this way they were completely detached from the pioneer movement."²⁸ Children's education in Algeria was an even more

²⁷ MNL OL XXIX–G–21–a, Box 67, MSZMP party body report, March 20, 1976.

²⁸ MNL OL XXIX–G–21–a, Box 67, MSZMP Women's Committee in Algiers, December 1975.



serious issue for the families. In connection with this, the biggest problem, as seen by the party body of MSZMP, was that in French schools the children were exposed to opposing western views and were not “theoretically prepared” for rejecting them, as their “emotional attachment to the socialist system was not deep enough.” For this reason, local MSZMP leaders wished to point out “to the primary party organization that providing ideological and political information for the local colonies, standing up against incorrect views (such as undervaluing Algerian people, uncritically praising the French educational system and French culture, and exaggerating Hungarian experts’ problems), and preserving, at least, the same ideological and political standard we arrived here with, was some of their main duties.”²⁹ Among the challenges to the socialist world view regarded as valid back in Hungary, the MSZMP report highlighted two tendencies as significant, when describing the undervaluing of Algerians and the Hungarian colony’s orientation to French culture. The Hungarian experts usually sent their children to French private schools instead of Algerian public education institutions. These, however, as indicated in the MSZMP report – were rather expensive and gradually decreased in number.³⁰ It was a problem that various TESCO reports also mentioned as a basic issue for the families of experts in Algeria.

For the Algerian organizations of MSZMP, the primary task was to protect Hungarian socialist identity, that is, to save experts and their families from the effects of international experience that could have pulled them away from Hungarian interpretations of society and politics. This means that they were in fact trying to counterbalance

²⁹ MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 67, Synthesis report by the party body in Algeria, March 20, 1976. 3., also: “We pay attention to young people’s situation, and to making them aware how great a responsibility it is for the family and the party organization to neutralize foreign ideological, political, and moral influences.” 4.

³⁰ For example, the son of a university lecturer working long-term in Algeria graduated from the high school Lycée Pierre et Marie Curie in Annaba. Recalling those times, his mother only mentioned European schoolmates, especially the son of a Lutheran minister from Germany. Zsakó Magdolna, *A Szamosparttól a Szaharáig. Négy év Algériában* [From the Bank of the River Szamos to the Sahara. Four years in Algeria] (Kolozsvár: Tinivár, 1997).



potential cultural influences of globalization. However, it was not only the MSZMP that considered the preservation of ruling Hungarian interpretations and systems of rules to be its mission. Division III/II of the Ministry of the Interior, that is, the counter-intelligence division likewise regarded the protection of Hungarians in Algeria from any impact undermining order in Hungary as an essential duty.

On July 11, 1979, the division created an object dossier of the Hungarian colony in Algeria with the cover name “Faraway,”³¹ in which they collected any report and record produced during the activities of Division III/II, as well as reports on the situations of the Hungarians in Algeria, obtained from various co-organizations. At the same time, a state security official with the cover name “Komáromi” was posted as CFO of the Hungarian Embassy in Algeria – a cover occupation from the aspect of the Ministry of the Interior but a job he actually did. “Komáromi’s” task was to band together a network of agents within the Hungarian colony, make proposals for further development of the network – i.e. recruit new people –, and explore what opposing influences members of the colony might be exposed to and whether they were approached by enemy intelligence. He was expected to know about the nationality of the people that members of the Hungarian colony kept contact with and whether they behaved loyally to Hungary. He was also ordered to establish relationships with Algerian security authorities, the gendarmerie and the police, and gather information about them. In general, he was to find useful tips for the intelligence and counterintelligence.

“Komáromi” had to deal with major difficulties. As he stated in his report, members of the Hungarian colony had jobs at 45 workplaces in 25 cities all over the country, and from the embassy, even with the help of his agent network, it was impossible to keep experts under the surveillance required. On average, “Komáromi” could operate a network of 12 agents, which was rather small compared to the size and dispersion of the colony. From cities

³¹ Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security 3.2.5. O-8-530/1.



such as Oran – which had a colony of 150 Hungarians – his agents' reports on members of the colony were mainly summaries of second-hand or superficial impressions, and he had no chance to check their actual connections. "Komáromi" did active research on which members of the colony could be suitable for being recruited, based on their political and moral stance. In many cases, he suggested his superiors "processing" past records of certain experts working in Algeria in order to decide whether they would be suitable as agents. Moreover, "Komáromi" repeatedly proposed that those posted should be selected in the first place according to their suitability as network agents.³²

"Komáromi's" reports clearly indicate that in the case of other expert colonies from socialist countries similar organized surveillance was exerted so that the norms of the home country could remain in force. The large group of Chinese experts, for instance, lived totally secluded under the control of its own authorities, as if in a "labor camp," as "Komáromi" noted. Soviet experts live only a bit more freely but they were forbidden to have personal contacts with even those coming from "friendly" socialist countries. "Komáromi" and a quite longtongued agent of his clearly disapproved of this situation because as a result, members of the Hungarian colony were forced to keep contact with Western, predominantly French experts and work with them on a mutual basis, for example when driving the children to school or purchasing goods that were scarce commodity in Algeria.

From the peculiar viewpoint of the reports, it seemed that the Hungarian experts would be more independent if they did not have to rely on their Western colleagues' favors, and the likelihood of harmful political and cultural influences could be lessened if the Hungarian experts received more money for buying a car. The longtongued agent carried out a quasi-sociological survey

³² There is one example in the object dossier of a person whose application was supported by Division III/II because of being a network agent: a young lecturer teaching statistics at the University and Pécs and also working as a secretary for the Hungarian Young Communist League.



in Annaba, where some 45-50 Hungarian families lived, owing to the experts working mainly at the steel factory. One of his most important findings was that the cars owned by the Hungarian families were 8.7 years old on average. Such old cars often need repairs and getting spare parts was problematic. Since it was safer to take children to school and for women to get around by car, the lack of vehicles was a serious issue. In such cases, as the experts predominantly had West-German and French cars, they usually turned to their German and French colleagues to help them order spare parts from their home country. For this reason, the agent contended that the budget for purchases of cars should be raised from 8,000 dinars to between 12,000 and 14,000 dinars, so that the Hungarian experts would not be in need of favors from their Western colleagues and thus would not end up being indebted to them.

For the Hungarian experts working in Algeria, Western cars were not the only stark symbol of much-desired consumer culture. Compared to fellow experts back at home, they had more foreign currency, which enabled them to make orders from the West-German mail-order company Quelle. Based on the catalogue of the company – also in circulation back in Hungary and viewed as representative of the admired consumer culture of the West – goods could be ordered by mail if one had enough foreign currency. In the 1970s the joint Hungarian-Romanian department of Quelle was headed by Stefan Papp, who, being of Transylvanian Saxon origin, spoke fluent Hungarian and Romanian. The Hungarian Ministry of the Interior was very much interested in Papp. They believed that he had been a soldier in the Wehrmacht on the Eastern front, but that was not why they were interested in him. They wanted access to Quelle records to monitor what goods Hungarian people ordered and in what quantity. Furthermore, they assumed that Papp shared his records on the customers with German security, who thus had knowledge of Hungarian experts' whereabouts in the world, including military officers in foreign service – from Vietnam to African countries –, spending their foreign currency at Quelle.



For official and semi-official keepers of the required Hungarian Socialist identity, influences coming from Westerners and the consumer culture they transmitted was not the only challenge. They also found it highly difficult to maintain the required attitude to Algerians. According to the long-tongued agent, “it must also be noted that cooperators often found themselves in unfriendly, harsh circumstances, because Arabs tend to see white man as ‘giaour,’³³ and if Hungarians were not prepared for the Algerian conditions, they could end up in a difficult situation; for example, they could not shout at the Arabs or make complaints at the grocer’s concerning the lack of eggs, meat, etc. Wives in particular should be careful, because many Arabs speak Hungarian, can understand what is said, and express their disapproval rather extremely. As an example, when doing the shopping and not getting certain goods, cooperator ‘Jenő Ejtő’s’³⁴ wife called the Arabs animals, and the conflict ended up at the police...”³⁵ In her report on Algiers, agent “Prewin” noted that the city was so filthy it would take more than three years for its inhabitants to clean. In her reports on relations in local society – as opposed to those of male agents – she made the observation that “Arabs beat their women.” In the longtongued agent’s view, Hungarian experts generally experienced that “constant suspicion was not just a result of the revolutionary period. Secretly watching the other is an innate attribute of Arab people [...], so cooperation needs to be done in an atmosphere of endless suspicion.”³⁶

“Komáromi” did not have a very good opinion of local society, either. In his first report upon arrival he summarized the experience of travelling from Marseille to Algiers the following way: “For the future, I do not recommend travelling aboard an Arab ship at all. Fundamentally because there are so many inconveniences

³³ In Hungarian the term “giaour” is attributed to Islam and denotes a “despised infidel” from the aspect of Islamic people.

³⁴ Cover name given by me – Zs. Bódy.

³⁵ ÁBTL 3.2.5. O-8-530/1, Report by longtongued agent upon returning home, March 24, 1982.

³⁶ Ibid.



that the European man may find repulsive at first. The chaos, disorder, and indiscipline, all that stench on the ship, the lack of civilization, culture, and security is truly depressing.”³⁷

These opinions indicate that those coming from Hungary viewed Algerian social conditions not only markedly different from their own but also inferior. Apparently, they described their experiences in Algeria on the basis of existing clichés brought along from Hungary. The term “giaour,” for example, was probably taken from the novel *Egri csillagok* [Eclipse of the Crescent Moon] – a canonized reading in Hungarian schools the story of which takes place in 16th-century Hungary during the Ottoman wars – and not from the Algerian environment, since this word of Turkish etymology is not used in the Arabic language. Back in Hungary, too, distancing oneself from peoples of Third World countries was a social norm. Students from Third World Countries studying in socialist Hungary were often treated with discrimination by the authorities and by social actors in daily life alike, and they were separated from Hungarian society despite all the proclaimed principles of international solidarity.³⁸ With the exception of one minority, Hungarian experts tended to avoid contact or making friends with Algerians, or limited their relationship to the mere essentials, such as food provision. At the same time, “Komáromi” and his superiors in Budapest were not interested in personal contact with Algerians much but focused on Hungarian experts’ relationships with Westerners, and especially on people of Hungarian origin among the Western expert – mainly those immigrating to the West at around 1945 or in 1956 –, because they were afraid that relationships with these people could lead to experts fleeing socialist Hungary, which did happen in a few cases.

Reports reveal that while Hungarians working in Algeria were not very open to the host society, they also felt that local society was not very open to them either; what is more, international contact could in fact result in a negative attitude towards foreigners.

³⁷ ÁBTL 3. 2. 5. O – 8 – 530/1. „Komáromi’s” report, April 20, 1979.

³⁸ Apor, “Socialist Migration”.



The long-tongued agent and his fellows sensed Algerian society's reservedness, a similarly contemptuous attitude in Algerian culture, the same disdain of Hungarians by Algerians than vice versa, and perceived it as cultural resistance against the effects of globalization by safeguarding Islam.

"Komáromi" also recognized these phenomena and in the early 1980s he reported on a process of "Arabization." This was the official policy of Algeria and, in "Komáromi's" view, actually a justified program. However, during implementation, it was interpreted wrongly, in an exaggerated way – here "Komáromi" used the standard explanation of East-Central European party-states of "good political decision but wrong implementation" – and in practice it hindered Hungarian experts' work. Apparently, there was a general atmosphere of disapproval, often expressed in the Algerian press as well: an opposition to employing experts from abroad and a wish to see Arab experts in their place. The Algerian government was blamed for not having a proper group of local experts available 17 years after the country had become independent – a situation that was in part the result of the fact that many of the numerous Algerian scholarship holders abroad did not return to their home country after their studies. This was also seen as the government's fault, especially by the politically more and more Islamist groups of society.³⁹ "Komáromi" concluded that because of the process of "Arabization," Hungarian experts' work in the country would become increasingly difficult. Thus, the modernization project in the North African country, intertwining with processes of globalization, also triggered negative responses in the society wishing to strengthen Algerians' national identity.

Demand for declining foreign experts was addressed at the trade union meeting of El Hadjar Iron and Steel Complex as well. The employment of expensive foreign experts in the steel complex was highly criticized and it was claimed it should be a "transfer of knowledge," not an "import of labor force." With this regard, it was

³⁹ Reports in the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior give an account of clashes between Islamist and secular students and Algerian universities, often resulting in casualties.



believed to be necessary to “double” experts, that is, to place an Algerian colleague next to each foreign expert so that the former could learn from the latter and in time take over his job. The presence of foreign experts was deemed harmful also because they brought foreign consumer goods into the country and spread foreign consumer practices, especially among young Algerians, their needs stimulated the black market, and generally caused a decline of morals. This indicates that the trade unionists of the steel complex intended to protect their own system of social and cultural norms from the effects of encounters generated by globalization just like official bodies of Hungarian state socialism. In doing so, they applied a rather simple discourse of cultural criticism and anti-globalization which posited that foreign cultural practices and goods were less valuable than those of one’s own nation.

The decline of the Hungarian presence in Algeria

In the early 1980s TESCO could cut major deals in new areas. After their solid presence – mainly the construction sector – and education, Hungarian experts arrived in the agricultural sphere, too. For this project TESCO teamed up with a Hungarian company, Duna MGT SZ. To organize the work of approximately 150 Hungarian agriculturalists in West Algeria, a TESCO–Duna MGT SZ office was opened in Oran. Another important development of the 1980s was the connection TESCO built with the Algerian air force, owing to which it won commissions for airport reconstruction and building. However, this time the prices were much lower than expected, as due to the Yugoslavian competitors bids the Hungarian tender had to be decreased. In those days Western and “friendly” Eastern companies were not the only competitors to face; conflicts of interest also emerged between Hungarian firms. KÖZTI for example, objected to the fact that the company providing the production lines also designed the factory buildings to be constructed for the Algerian partner. The quoted the “principle” according to which “intellectual export,” that is, design, should precede the export of goods.

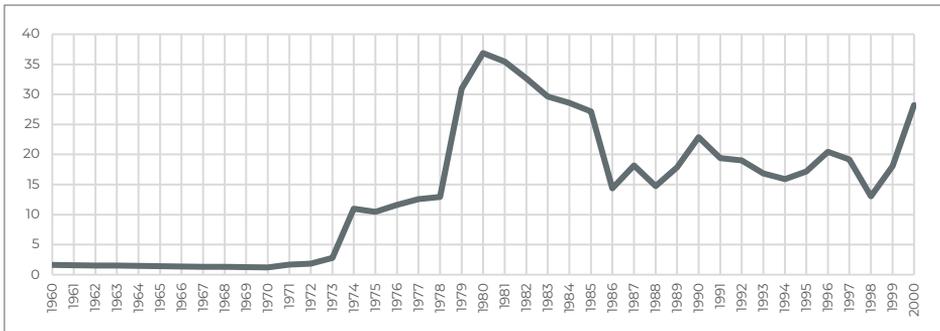


Thus, at the beginning of the final decade of the socialist system, Hungary's presence in Algeria reached its peak in terms of the number of experts posted. At this point, a Hungarian doctor was sent to Algiers specifically to look after the Hungarian colony. By the mid-1980s, however, most of the previous projects had already ended and new businesses were difficult to do. In the ongoing projects, the Algerian partners were more and more frequently late with payments. Obtaining transfer permissions for Hungarian experts to send their savings home became increasingly problematic and delayed as well. The reason behind decrease in the number of commissions and financial problems was Algeria's economic difficulties. On one hand, the price of oil considerably dropped in the mid-1980s, owing to which the North African country could no longer finance the projects of its centrally-managed modernization (see Graph 2). On the other hand, the Western companies in competition with Hungarian presence could make better business offers with credit arrangements more suitable to and favorable for Algeria's economic situation to implement investments. TESCO, too, studied the issue and negotiated with the Hungarian National Bank (MNB) to see if Hungarian companies could work with similar credit arrangements but the plan could not be realized as, obviously, the financing situation of the Hungarian economy did not make it possible. The competitive advantage of Western companies was explained by the longwinded agent in his reports to "Komáromi," written at around 1980, in which he pointed out that Western firms were used to market competition, while Hungarian and especially Soviet companies had become too comfortable in their planned economies or relied too much on the ways of operation to which they had gotten used in their monopoly back home, which proved to be inadequate in a world of real market competition.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ The longtongued agent was head of the Technical Maintenance Division at one of the plants of the steel complex in Annaba and, as he reported, in this position he had work contacts with 45 companies, two third of which were "capitalist".



Figure 2 Changes in oil price in dollars, 1960-2000



Source: Adalat Muradov – Yadulla Hasanli – Nazim Hajiyev: *World Market Price Oil. Impacting Factors and Forecasting*. Cambridge (MA): Springer, 2019. 165-166.

Due to the decreasing number of commissions, KÖZTI terminated its contract with TESCO on December 31, 1986. They claimed it was an unfortunate emergency: the operational costs of their office in Algiers were too high, while their income almost entirely stopped, so they could no longer maintain the office. They stressed that this was a huge loss for KÖZTI, too, because half of its income used to come from overseas countries.⁴¹ In the second half of the 1980s, TESCO still strove to uphold its presence in Algeria. According to a 1987 summary, in the previous 8 years they had a turnover of 60 million USD in Algeria, the largest catchment area of Hungarian “intellectual export.” Breaking this amount down to individual years clearly indicates a tendency of decrease: TESCO had an income of 12.5 million in Algeria in 1984, 10.5 million in 1985, 5.4 million in 1986, and expected 2 million USD in 1987.⁴² Still, Hungarian-Algerian economic and professional cooperation gradually declined. In September 1989 the repatriation of 400 experts and their family members was organized. Although some Hungarian experts continued to stay in Algeria and there were discussions on the possibility of further

⁴¹ MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 67.

⁴² MNL OL XXIX-G-21-a, Box 67, TESCO report on its work to the Ministry of Foreign Trade, September 23, 1987.



employment independent from TESCO if they could sign individual contracts with their employers – which, however, TESCO warned them to be too dangerous – the company finally ended its presence in Algeria in 1990.

Summary

Hungary's opening up to the world did not start with the disintegration of the Eastern bloc. Rather, it had begun as early as the 1960s. The research presented here thus reinforces the statements posited in the introduction. There were important opportunities on both sides. Hungary had an economic and, first and foremost, professional-skilled potential which was searching for an opportunity to find its market abroad, in faraway places, because it could not be fully utilized at home, and Algeria had the necessary financial resources due to the marketability of its raw materials. Hungarian supply and Third World demand for technological, medical, etc. knowledge thus could meet. By the mid-1980s, however, the drop in oil prices in Algeria led to a decrease in demand, while pressures in support of "Arabization" gradually increased as a response to processes of globalization. The capacities of the Hungarian experts may also have been running out, and they may have lost some of their marketability, as a result of which Algerian-Hungarian economic and professional relationships started to decline before the collapse of the Eastern bloc. The end of a bipolar world did little more than bring to a close processes which had already started.

Nevertheless, from the mid-1960s to approximately the mid-1980s, Hungarian "intellectual export" was beneficial for both parties. The Algerian party could make Western and Eastern companies compete with each other, while Hungarian design and construction firms could obtain foreign currency. Yet, one does not see in these relationships the birth of (or the need for) an alternative globalization process as a counterpart of the neoliberal model of globalization which emerged in the 1980s and became prevalent in the 1990s or, for that matter, any intention to promote the "socialist model" in the Third World. As the study commissioned by the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry suggests, it was a pure



business relationship from the outset, capable of overriding political and ideological viewpoints, as demonstrated by the manner in which ties with the Algerian party, which was Marxist in the narrow strict of the term, were brought to an end in 1968. Relations between Algeria and the Eastern bloc, even in their entirety, could not reach a volume that would call into question the “West-centeredness” of globalization. Within Algeria’s external trade, European socialist countries together could not reach 10% of the whole in any year of the period. France and West Germany were much more important partners for Algeria.⁴³ Socialist Hungary mainly viewed this relationship as an opportunity to obtain foreign currency based on mutual business benefits, since Western partners would have been more costly for Algeria.

The basis of cooperation was thus not opposition to the globalization of West-centered capitalism but rather a common notion of modernization, the top-down led projects of which received an export of experts from Hungary. Neither did “socialist” Hungary cooperate with official Algeria on the basis of some anti-colonialist crusade, nor did Hungarian anti-colonialism, which was very much part of the Hungarian rhetoric, harmonize with the standpoints of local trade unions in Algeria. Trade unionists of the steel complex in Annaba regarded Hungarian (and other foreign) experts as agents of an alien influence which had to be blocked. With a similar reaction, official Hungarian bodies also wished to protect the Hungarian experts working in Algeria from harmful “Western” influences, lest these influences erode the system of political and social norms valide in Hungary. Most of the Hungarian experts secluded themselves from local, Algerian influences, but they were perfectly open to “the West.” They sent their children to French or international schools and spent their incomes in a manner

⁴³ A host of French companies remained to stay in Algeria even after the country gained its independence. From an economic point of view, the new Algerian government had a fundamental interest in maintaining economic relationships with the European economic Community after Algeria ceased to be a French colony and became independent. This was ensured by the Évian Accords. Saul Samir, *Intérêts économiques français et décolonisation de l’Afrique du Nord 1954–1962* (Genève: Droz, 2016).



that reflected a Western consumerist attitude. For them, Algeria was the road leading not to the “Third World” but to “the West,” much as for Hungary, its relationship with Algeria was a matter of business which brought in Western currency, until changes in the world economy in the 1980s brought this all to an end.