

Abstract

Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Algeria, Zambia, Ethiopia, and many other African countries; that is exactly where you can find great water works, machines, hydrological maps, plans, or the imaginary "footprints" of hydro experts from Czechoslovakia dwelling here especially before 1989. How is such a thing possible in a landlocked, central European country without a colonial history?

The decolonisation of Africa, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, gave rise to a number of new states. These countries, until recently completely dependent politically and economically on their colonial capitals, were now looking for the most appropriate political, economic, and social model for their future direction. As part of full independence, they were trying to modernise their economies, which, in addition to supplementing their lack of infrastructure, meant making better use of their natural resources. The notion of a path to modernization through large-scale industrialization and the necessary electrification that went hand in hand with it made African leaders seek to make better use of the water resources their countries possessed. Given the lack of their own funds, experts and technology, the new governments were mostly dependent on cooperation with states in the Global North for water resources development. Water resources development, or the export of the technology and expertise required for it, thus became a political tool that Global North states began to use extensively to achieve implicit or explicit policy goals in the particular region. This phenomenon refers to the so-called *technopolitics/hydrotechnopolitics/hydropolitics*, which has been defined in a similar vein by e.g., G. Hecht, Ch. Sneddon or T. Mitchell. Having completed its domestic hydro-construction in the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia began to actively market its hydro-expertise towards the countries of the Global South to further its foreign policy or economic goals or to support the positions of its socialist allies.

This dissertation thesis looks at the hydropolitics and developmentalist efforts of Global North states in the Global South, particularly in the field of water resources development, through the perspective of socialist Czechoslovakia. It sees water development itself, especially the building of dams and large water works, as a global phenomenon (in line with the works by V. Legendijk and F. Schultze). It views the Cold War period primarily as an accelerator of water resources development.

The main argument that the thesis presents is that socialist Czechoslovakia, especially since the 1960s, has participated extensively in the development of water resources in African countries as part of its development activities. Like the United States or the Soviet Union, it had its own hydro-politics, which was used to pursue or support its foreign policy objectives or to strengthen its own, or its partners', positions. Czechoslovak hydroexpertise was an active part of global hydroexpertise. Furthermore, the thesis answers such questions as how the forms, practices, and goals of the Czechoslovak hydroexport model changed from the 1960s to the 1980s and contributes to the discussion on the permeability of Cold War ideological and physical boundaries. Finally, the thesis conveys the perspective of hitherto neglected actors, the bearers of expertise - hydroexperts - on their mission, agency, and role in Czechoslovak hydro-politics vis-à-vis the states of the Global South.

The thesis is structured into one introductory and five thematic chapters. The first thematic chapter is a contribution to the history of the Cold War scientific and technological internationalization. It explains how Czechoslovakia became one of the water leaders of the Eastern Bloc. It charts the formation of Czechoslovakia's industrial and expert capacities in the field of water management and focuses on the hitherto neglected export of Czechoslovak water management expertise and technology from the 1930s to the 1980s, represented mainly by the state company Hydroprojekt. It also explains how, given the domestic needs and the state of construction, these capacities were made available for use abroad. The chapter also analyses the motivations and forms of such applications, which changed significantly from the 1950s to the 1990s. The second, third and fourth chapters are de facto case studies of the specific exports of Czechoslovak hydroexport equipment and technology to Africa. Each of them focuses on one country - Ghana and Egypt in the 1960s and Ethiopia in the 1980s. Chapter 5 looks at the bearers of "socialist" hydro expertise at home and abroad, i.e., the Czechoslovak experts. Using a sample of six selected individuals, it views the experts not only as actors in the process of Cold War internationalisation and the global circulation of knowledge, but it also portrays them as being creatures of flesh and blood.