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# **Migration for Cooperation: Mobility of Highly Skilled Yugoslav Labor in Algeria**



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## **Migration for Cooperation: Mobility of Highly Skilled Yugoslav Labor in Algeria**

Recent studies on labor migration from socialist Yugoslavia have almost exclusively focused on East–West movements and their economic aspects. This paper aims to fill some of this gap in the literature by examining the migration of highly skilled Yugoslav labor to a country in the Global South, namely Algeria. As opposed to previous work that has focused on Yugoslav workers accompanying engineering investment projects in the Global South, this paper examines those who were directly employed by the receiving country. The case of Algeria as a host country deserves attention because Algeria was one of Yugoslavia’s primary partners with whom it cultivated a close political relationship. Drawing on records from the Croatian State Archives, the article will examine Yugoslav technical cooperation experts who were employed by the Algerian government between the early 1960s and the end of the 1980s. The paper will argue that, in pursuit of its political and economic interests in the Global South, the Yugoslav state encouraged and promoted the mobility of highly skilled experts in Algeria to foster cooperation.

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### **KEYWORDS:**

Algeria, experts, Global South, labor migration (mobility), non-alignment, technical cooperation, Yugoslavia

Even though most of today's international migration takes place between countries of the Global South, most migration studies have dealt with South-to-North movement. The same, in general, is true for study of migration from socialist Yugoslavia. Recent research on Yugoslav labor migration has dealt almost exclusively with East-West movements and focused predominantly on economic issues.<sup>1</sup>

Yugoslav labor migration, however, was not exclusively Western-oriented and also included Yugoslav experts contracted as part of technical cooperation programs who moved to the Global South for temporary employment. In this instance, the Yugoslav government took the opposite position in comparison to the employment of the highly skilled in the West, on which it imposed multiple restrictions to impede migration.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I argue that the Yugoslav state encouraged and promoted highly skilled labor mobility to the Global South as part of technical cooperation programs in order to further its foreign policy goals and economic interests. To demonstrate this, I will examine the case of Yugoslav technical cooperation experts employed by the Algerian government between the early 1960s and the end of the 1980s. This particular example shows that Yugoslavia dispatched highly skilled workers not only to aid Algerian development but also to serve as diplomatic assets for fostering cooperation to further Yugoslavia's political and economic objectives.

My research is based on archival documents from the Republic Bureau for International Scientific and Technical Cooperation (*Republički zavod za međunarodnu znanstveno-tehničku suradnju*) kept in the Croatian State Archives (*Hrvatski državni arhiv*) under the record group number HR-HDA-1727. The records used in this study were selected from a series connected to the organization and implementation of technical cooperation with Algeria from 1964 to 1990 and a series containing the files of experts and job candidates from the Socialist Republic of Croatia in the Global South from 1961 to 1992. Additionally, the mobility of experts in Algeria is viewed here within the broader context of Yugoslav non-alignment, so it will first provide a short overview of Yugoslav engagement with the Global South.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Ulf Brunnbauer, "Labour emigration from the Yugoslav region from the late 19th century until the end of socialism: continuities and changes," and Novinščak Kölker, Karolina, "The Recruiting and Sending of Yugoslav 'Gastarbeiter' to Germany: Between Socialist Demands and Economic Needs," in *Transnational Societies, Transterritorial Politics. Migrations in the (Post-)Yugoslav Region 19th-21st Century*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009), 17-50; 121-44; Vladimir Ivanović, *Geburtstag pišeš normalno. Jugoslovenski gastarbajteri u SR Nemačkoj i Austriji 1965-1973* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Ivanović, *Geburtstag pišeš normalno*, 58, 68.

### From International Isolation to Active Non-Alignment

Yugoslavia's foreign policy was determined by the course of the global Cold War. Its expulsion from Cominform in June 1948, combined with a strong foreign policy response, led to international isolation and increased Soviet pressure, which posed a threat to the state's security and survival. The country turned to the West for military and economic aid as a quick and temporary solution. Despite Yugoslavia's close pragmatic ties with NATO in the early 1950s, the Yugoslav political elite nevertheless resolved to avoid foreign domination and preserve the socialist regime. It therefore had to define and secure international support for a new foreign policy strategy outside the division between the two blocs.<sup>3</sup> Recognizing the importance of ongoing changes in the international system, Yugoslav leadership identified the newly independent states of Asia and Africa as potential allies.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to external pressure, emerging interest in cooperation with decolonized countries was motivated by internal factors and mainly by economic instability. By expanding economic ties with the developing world, Yugoslavia worked toward reducing dependence on the West. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, it tried to mitigate the consequences of a substantial trade deficit that had resulted from a of the newly formed European Economic Community's common external tariff and trade policy.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Yugoslav state sought to expand its market for purchasing raw materials and selling products from its rapidly expanding industrial sector. The authorities considered the degree of Yugoslav technological development to be particularly well-suited to the Global South. Due to a lack of convertible currencies, conducting trade with developing countries through barter became standard practice. However, Yugoslavia often had to artificially stimulate bilateral trade by extending credits on favorable terms involving the purchase of its goods and services.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the newly independent nations with a shared colonial past launched an initiative to resolve their common development issues. At the 1955 Bandung Conference, the participants worked out conjoint positions to improve their international political and economic status. Yugoslavia was excluded from the regional Afro-Asian grouping due to geographic and socio-historical differences, so as an alternative, it promoted the concept of globally active non-engagement that transcended geographic and racial barriers.<sup>7</sup> The idea behind the non-aligned countries' broad political platform was to take a collective position in the international arena and actively promote economic development and universal principles

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<sup>3</sup> Svetozar Rajak, "No bargaining chips, no spheres of interest: the Yugoslav origins of Cold War non-alignment," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 1 (2014): 151-54.

<sup>4</sup> Vladimir Petrović, "Jugoslovenska samit-diplomatija 1944-1961," in *Jugoslovenska diplomatija 1945-1961*, ed. Slobodan Selinić (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2012), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956-1961* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 2006), 147-68.

<sup>6</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 209-12.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey J. Byrne, "Beyond Continents, Colours, and the Cold War: Yugoslavia, Algeria, and the Struggle for Non-Alignment," *The International History Review* 37, no. 5 (2015): 921-24.

of peaceful coexistence.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Yugoslavia adopted the non-alignment policy not only to resolve issues of diplomatic isolation and national security but also to serve as an entry ticket to the global political scene, in which it played a role within the global political community that transcended its economic and military capabilities.

After the Bandung Conference, the understanding that economic emancipation was a prerequisite for achieving full sovereignty was an impetus for the postcolonial countries to represent their common interests at international forums. As a result, once they had secured political independence, the countries of the developing world continued their political engagement to reduce inequalities in the international economic order.<sup>9</sup> Together with the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia articulated the idea of pursuing collective self-reliance as a means of achieving this goal. The concept was based on increased trade and mutually beneficial collaboration within the Global South to reduce the influence of and economic dependence on the Global North in general the former colonial metropolises in particular. Another form of overcoming dependence was to build developing nations' capacities through technical cooperation,<sup>10</sup> which involved sharing knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources among developing countries to meet their common development goals.<sup>11</sup>

Despite being a European polity, Yugoslavia presented itself as a developing country and part of the Global South to facilitate cooperation.<sup>12</sup> Attempts to associate itself with postcolonial countries even went so far as claiming the historical experience of Ottoman occupation and Hapsburg rule was "colonial."<sup>13</sup> Yugoslavia understood the importance of development issues and promoted South-South cooperation through the platform of the Non-Aligned Movement. Fostered by a well-developed discourse of friendship and solidarity, technical cooperation was one of the fundamental aspects of Yugoslavia's relations with the South. The initiative behind this approach was a proposal made in June 1954 by Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, to the Yugoslav president Josip Broz-Tito for broad cooperation with an emphasis on technical assistance.<sup>14</sup>

Through technical assistance programs, Yugoslavia was able to offer expertise, hands-on training, and a socialist education by dispatching experts and consulting missions, and hosting foreign students and study visits. The main administrative body responsible for managing related

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<sup>8</sup> Rajak, "No bargaining chips," 167.

<sup>9</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018), 134-42.

<sup>10</sup> Ljubica Spaskovska, "Building a better world? Construction, labour mobility and the pursuit of collective self-reliance in the 'global South', 1950-1990," *Labor History* 59, no. 3 (2018), 335-36.

<sup>11</sup> Angela Villani, "A historical perspective on South-South co-operation: a view from the UN," *Asia Major. The Journal of the Italian think tank on Asia founded by Giorgio Borsa in 1989*, special issue, no. 1 (2018), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Spaskovska, "Building a better world?," 334.

<sup>13</sup> Ana Sladojević, *Slike o Africi/Images of Africa* (Beograd: Muzej savremene umetnosti, 2015), 15-7.

<sup>14</sup> Rajak, "No bargaining chips," 162-63.

activities was the Federal Bureau for International Technical Cooperation (*Savezni zavod za međunarodnu tehničku saradnju*), or ZAMTES. Originally established in 1952 as the Directorate for Technical Assistance (*Uprava za tehničku pomoć*) at the Ministry of Industry to handle technical aid from the UN, it was reorganized shortly afterward to extend assistance to developing countries.<sup>15</sup> The institution was tasked with promoting collaboration, equality, and partnership, which was also reflected in the semantic changes to its title.<sup>16</sup>

### Origins of Yugoslav–Algerian Technical Cooperation

As a part of a new foreign policy strategy to develop influence among non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia provided diplomatic, military, and humanitarian aid to the Algerian anti-colonial struggle.<sup>17</sup> The Yugoslav and Algerian political elites additionally strengthened their relationship by promoting a discourse of “two fraternal peoples” that was built by emphasizing similarities and comparing the Algerian anti-colonial movement to Yugoslavia’s national liberation movement during the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> After Algeria gained independence in July 1962, contact between the political elites were transferred to the interstate level and increase in frequency. By May 1962, the Yugoslav government had already developed a plan of economic, technical, and military partnership with Algeria in anticipation of its immanent sovereignty,<sup>19</sup> It sought in this manner to replace wartime aid with assistance for the state-building process.<sup>20</sup>

The Algerians, however, were aware that the Yugoslavs were attempting to build its reputation throughout the Global South through a relationship with their country, which they used to their advantage.<sup>21</sup> Technical cooperation quickly became the cornerstone of bilateral relations in response to Algeria’s primary concerns about its severe shortage of qualified workers, modern technology and scientific development. Within an atmosphere of increasingly amicable political relations, this cooperation was initiated through interstate agreements, and it was meant to serve as an example of how South–South cooperation could be implemented in practice.<sup>22</sup> The two most relevant components were Algerian employment

<sup>15</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 213.

<sup>16</sup> Nemanja Radonjić, *Slika Afrike u Jugoslaviji (1945–1991)* (PhD diss., University of Belgrade, 2020), 172.

<sup>17</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, *Jugoslavija i Hladni rat: Ogledi o spoljnoj politici Josipa Broza Tita (1944–1974)* (Beograd: Arhipelag, 2014), 280.

<sup>18</sup> Dora Tot, *Yugoslavia – Algeria Relations in the early 1960s: A Soft Power Strategy* (MA thesis, University of Zagreb, 2018), 13.

<sup>19</sup> Jovan Čavoški, “Jugoslavija, Alžir, nesvrstane zemlje i velike sile u hladnom ratu 1954–1962”, in *Jugoslavija – Alžir: zbornik radova sa naučne konferencije*, ed. Miladin Milošević (Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2013), 139.

<sup>20</sup> Tot, *Yugoslavia – Algeria Relations*, 16.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey J. Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution: Algeria, Decolonization, and the Third World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5, 165, 174–75, 204; Jeffrey J. Byrne, “Beyond Continents,” 922.

<sup>22</sup> Report on the Eighth Session of the Yugoslav–Algerian Committee, 15 January 1976, Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), Republički zavod za međunarodnu znanstveno-tehničku suradnju (RZMZTS), fond 1727/345.

of Yugoslav experts and a scholarship and training program in Yugoslavia for Algerian students. Due to a lack of human and financial resources, making experts available and hosting students at the request of its Algerian counterparts was not an easy task for the Yugoslav government.

Close technical cooperation with Yugoslavia was strongly related to the Algerian goal of diversifying its economic partners to reduce dependence on France. Moreover, the Algerian authorities were in constant fear of French aid suddenly being reduced or terminated in response to the nationalization of French assets after Algeria gained independence. Not willing to compete or interfere with the French sphere of interest, the initial plan to acquire development assistance from the United States failed. This refusal from the West encouraged Algerian authorities to turn to the socialist camp. However, building close ties with the great socialist powers carried a potential risk for Algerian ideological autonomy. To mitigate the risk of ideological influence and stimulate competition in terms of trade and assistance, Algeria adopted a strategy of playing one socialist country against the other, and in particular the Soviet Union and China. This method soon paid off, as was evidenced by generous aid and an open propaganda war between their embassies in Algiers. But partnerships with smaller socialist countries like Yugoslavia, on the other hand, had advantages because they posed very little threat to the autonomous path of the Algerian revolution.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, this diversification policy was reflected in technical cooperation and the employment of a foreign workforce. In fact, after 1966, the number of French skilled workers decreased, while the number of Soviet experts in Algeria increased and was estimated to be over 3000.<sup>24</sup> To counterbalance this, the Algerian government was interested in employing experts from other "amical socialist countries," notably from eastern Europe. These concerns were clear to Yugoslav officials, who noted that increased interest in their experts was "primarily to reduce the ideological influence of certain countries."<sup>25</sup> The newcomers from European socialist countries, dubbed *pieds rouges* ("red feet") by the local population,<sup>26</sup> took part in training national cadres who would then eventually replace them through a process of "Algerianization."<sup>27</sup>

In the first post-independence years, Algeria was the principal Yugoslav partner for technical cooperation, and Yugoslavia was highly active in this until 1965. Yugoslavia made important political gestures by filling vacant positions in vital Algerian sectors after the departure of skilled French personnel. The first group of Yugoslav healthcare experts arrived in Algeria On August 1, 1962, bringing with them equipment and medication. The arrival of two Yugoslav medical teams, which was a continuation of

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<sup>23</sup> Jeffrey J. Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, 153-67.

<sup>24</sup> David Othaway, Marina Othaway, *Algeria: The Politics of a Socialist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 234, 239-40.

<sup>25</sup> Yugoslav-Algerian Technical Cooperation Report, January 1980, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345.

<sup>26</sup> The name was a sarcastic reference to the Algerian colonial population of European origin known as *pieds noirs* ("black feet"). Byrne, *Mecca of Revolution*, 5, 159, 273.

<sup>27</sup> Philip C. Naylor, *France and Algeria: A History of Decolonization and Transformation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 68-69.

wartime medical aid, enabled the shuttered Parnet Hospital in Algiers to reopen. During a visit to Algeria in October 1962, Josip Zmajčić, the director of ZAMTES, discussed providing Yugoslav technical assistance for various sectors with Amar Ouzegane, the minister of agriculture; Mohammed Nekkache, the minister of health; and officials from the Ministry of Industry and Energy. Once more, Yugoslavia immediately responded to an emergency request, this time by selling 500 Zadrugar 50/1 tractors,<sup>28</sup> locally known as *Landin(i)s*, to the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>29</sup> By the end of the month, a group of thirty-five tractor maintenance personnel arrived along with the machinery. They provided assistance with the sowing process and held courses to train 550 tractor drivers and sixty mechanics. They were later joined by agronomy engineers who assisted with agricultural production.<sup>30</sup>

To institutionalize the growing cooperation, on July 23, 1963, the two countries signed the Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation. According to the agreement, Yugoslavia was obligated to provide a specific number of experts annually. For example, it had to provide Algeria with 287 experts for the year 1963/1964, of which fifty-two were already in the country.<sup>31</sup> Over the next two years, around 500 Yugoslav experts in healthcare, industry, agriculture, postal services and telecommunications, education, and public works temporarily relocated to Algeria. At its height, about half of the total number of Yugoslav technical experts working in the South had been dispatched to Algeria.<sup>32</sup> In addition to serving as technical advisers, they also provided vocational training for local personnel. Many of the Yugoslav experts were highly professional and hardworking, which served to represent and promote the values of Yugoslav socialism.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Algerian authorities praised them for their skill and expertise and viewed them as Yugoslavia's unofficial ambassadors.<sup>34</sup>

The fall of Ben Bella's regime, with which Yugoslav officials had developed close political ties, caused bitter disappointment in Belgrade. They feared the June 1965 coup would compromise their privileged relationship.<sup>35</sup> As overall bilateral relations began to stagnate, so too did technical cooperation, which then began a period of decline. The Convention on Scientific and Technical Cooperation of October 29, 1965,

<sup>28</sup> Tot, *Yugoslavia – Algeria Relations*, 21-22.

<sup>29</sup> Industrija motora Rakovica (IMR) manufactured Zadrugar 50/1 tractors under the license of the Italian company Landini. Between 1959 and 1968, IMR produced around 8000 tractors of that model. Dragoljub Obradović, Predrag Petrović, Zoran Dumanović, and Branka Kresović, "Hronologija i trend razvoja proizvodnje traktora u Srbiji", *Poljoprivredna tehnika* 36, no. 1 (2011): 5.

<sup>30</sup> Tot, *Yugoslavia – Algeria Relations*, 22.

<sup>31</sup> Odluka o ratifikaciji Prvog periodičnog plana naučno-tehničke saradnje između Jugoslavije i Alžira, *Službeni list SFRJ, Dodatak: Međunarodni ugovori i drugi sporazumi*, 12/1964.

<sup>32</sup> Odluka o ratifikaciji Drugog periodičnog plana naučno-tehničke saradnje između Jugoslavije i Alžira, *Službeni list SFRJ, Dodatak: Međunarodni ugovori i drugi sporazumi*, 9/1965; Blagoje Bogavac, „Jugoslavija u međunarodnoj tehničkoj suradnji”, *Jugoslovenski pregled: informativno-dokumentarni priručnik o Jugoslaviji* (June 1970): 59.

<sup>33</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 213-15.

<sup>34</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 213-15; "Iskreni dokaz prijateljstva," *Vjesnik*, 14 November 1962.

<sup>35</sup> Radonjić, *Slika Afrike u Jugoslaviji*, 117-18.

which outlined experts' rights and responsibilities had a particularly negative effect. According to the convention, salaries of Yugoslav experts were to be equivalent to those of their Algerian counterparts, and the Yugoslav government's participation in their salaries was ended.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, other countries of the South, and especially Libya, were more attractive because they offered better salaries and working conditions for foreign experts. Moreover, in February 1968, a Yugoslav expert was convicted in Algiers of corporate espionage and sentenced to three years in prison, which was a significant deterrent for potential candidates.<sup>37</sup> As a result of all these factors, over the following years, Algerian-Yugoslav technical cooperation became virtually non-existent.

Starting in the mid-1970s, there was more frequent contact between the two countries' officials and relations between them improved. As a result, the Yugoslav government was eager to revive technical cooperation and increase the number of Yugoslav experts in Algeria. Yugoslavia was genuinely interested in continuing with cooperation, and it regularly proposed new forms of scientific and technical cooperation such as direct collaboration between scientific institutions, assistance in establishing new research centers, developing joint research projects, transferring technology, and participating in conferences and seminars in Yugoslavia and Algeria.<sup>38</sup> However, most these initiatives were never implemented.

### Pawns in Cooperation

In addition to those employed through bilateral technical cooperation agreements, there were other Yugoslav workers in the Global South who were directly employed by Algerian companies and ministries through service contracts with Yugoslav companies. These contracts generally included more favorable conditions and were most often part of joint investment projects.<sup>39</sup> This was the most typical form of Yugoslav labor mobility in the Global South, and the workers who came through investment projects had a completely different experience than technical experts employed as part of the formal cooperation agreements, especially in terms of their living and working conditions. They were housed in self-sustaining Yugoslav camps set up at construction sites and had virtually no contact with the local population. Because they had relatively high salaries paid largely in convertible currency and opportunities to earn overtime pay by working night shifts and on national holidays, financial gain was their primary motivation for working in the Global South.<sup>40</sup>

Technical experts who came in connection with the formal cooperation agreements, on the other hand (and who are the subject of this

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<sup>36</sup> Uredba o ratifikaciji Konvencije o naučno-tehničkoj saradnji između vlada Jugoslavije i Alžira, *Službeni list SFRJ, Dodatak: Međunarodni ugovori i drugi sporazumi*, 9/1966.

<sup>37</sup> Information on B. A.'s contract, 22 May 1969, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/448.

<sup>38</sup> Report on the Eighth Session of the Yugoslav-Algerian Committee, 15 January 1976, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345.

<sup>39</sup> Zakon o osnovnim uvjetima za privremeno zapošljavanje i zaštiti jugoslavenskih građana na radu u inozemstvu, *Službeni list SFRJ*, 33/1973.

<sup>40</sup> Spaskovska, "Building a better world?", 9-10

paper), were employed directly by the host governments and subject to their supervision. This was an expression of the principle of non-interference promoted by Yugoslavia through the platform of non-alignment. However, experts from smaller states such as Yugoslavia did not arouse much political suspicion from the Algerian authorities.<sup>41</sup>

The Bureau for International Technical Cooperation in each socialist republic or province was responsible for finding potential candidates for employment as technical experts as part of the agreements. ZAMTES only had to approve their choices and submit the candidates' applications to the receiving government. To ensure high-quality experts, ZAMTES based the system of recruitment predominantly on recommendations. The republic or provincial bureau usually sent out an official request to public institutions or enterprises in the federal unit to inquire about and recommend employees who were suitable for positions in the Global South.<sup>42</sup> This approach made it more likely that these offers of employment abroad would be accepted by candidates who were already employed and not actively looking for work, and especially by those holding high and stable positions in Yugoslavia. This was certainly the case in the 1960s, but by the 1980s it had become difficult to find candidates this way. As a result, ZAMTES often turned to publishing open calls for applications in daily newspapers or professional journals.<sup>43</sup> Occasionally, there were also people who applied on their own initiative with an open cover letter expressing a desire to work in Algeria or in other "friendly [non-aligned] African countries."<sup>44</sup>

Highly skilled personnel recruited and dispatched to the South via ZAMTES was a specific example of Yugoslav labor mobility. Unlike the unskilled and skilled workforce exported to Western Europe, the highly skilled workforce generously sent to Algeria and the rest of the Global South was itself scarce at home. Nevertheless, the government used a variety of means to encourage and sponsor these experts for work abroad. For example, as part of the Asia-Africa-Yugoslavia exhibition at the Autumn Zagreb Fair in 1963, ZAMTES promoted cooperation with the South and invited experts to take positions in Algeria and other developing countries. The government also took concrete measures to facilitate this mobility. For example, in the first weeks following Algerian independence, the airline Adria Aviopromet began regular flights between Belgrade and Algiers, and a visa waiver agreement was signed in April 1965.<sup>45</sup>

The fact that technical cooperation, as outlined in the formal agreements, was closely intertwined with political and economic

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<sup>41</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 214.

<sup>42</sup> See for example: Replacement team for Parnet Hospital, 31 March 1964, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/346; Information about the request for agricultural experts, 21 December 1982, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>43</sup> For example, in 1985 the Socialist Republic of Croatia's Bureau for International Technical Cooperation published public calls for civil engineers in the professional journals *Gradevinar* and *Ceste i mostovi*.

<sup>44</sup> D.K. - open cover letter, Zagreb, 8 June 1963, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/455; S.D. - open cover letter, Zagreb, 13 June 1963, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/463; V.B - open cover letter, Rijeka, 30 May 1985, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/448.

<sup>45</sup> Tot, *Yugoslavia - Algeria Relations*, 24.

cooperation<sup>46</sup> explains the objectives behind promoting highly skilled labor mobility to Algeria. Yugoslav officials regarded placing experts at Algeria's disposal as a political obligation meant to foster their existing partnership. Moreover, they counted on experts taking up important positions, for instance as ministerial advisers, which would allow them to influence the outcomes of Yugoslav political and economic efforts in a positive manner.<sup>47</sup> Of no less significance were the Algerian demands for more experts in exchange for large-scale investment projects or large commodities exports. This became increasingly important, especially during the economic crisis in the 1980s, when Yugoslavia had less capital to invest in loans.<sup>48</sup> This consideration became increasingly important since by time Yugoslavia had fewer financial resources to credit these ventures, especially from the early 1980s when the country struck the effects of the economic crisis.

Despite regularly expressing interest, Algeria employed few Yugoslav experts during the 1970s and 1980s due to multiple issues on both sides. One of them was hesitation on the part of Yugoslav companies to offer their employees as technical experts, especially after a series of political and economic reforms in the 1960s that gradually gave enterprises greater autonomy in the decision-making process. At the same time, ZAMTES often failed to convince them of the possibilities for future, long-term profits.<sup>49</sup> Another crucial issue for the Yugoslavs was language competence. Insufficient knowledge of French or Arabic<sup>50</sup> significantly reduced the number of potential candidates. On the Algerian side, bureaucratic inefficiency created many difficulties for the process. For example, ministries frequently sent employment requests without defining the terms of employment, and ZAMTES was unable to inform potential candidates of open positions in a proper or timely manner, which significantly reduced interest and turnout.<sup>51</sup>

The employment conditions, which Yugoslav officials saw as "unmotivating," were the leading cause of low mobility rates. When the standard of living in Yugoslavia increased in the 1970s, the salaries offered in Algeria were no longer competitive. Yugoslav workers, who were relatively low-priced in comparison to their Western counterparts, started to come at a higher price.<sup>52</sup> They also received the majority of their salaries in local currency. The transfer rate for hard currency (US dollars) that could be sent back to Yugoslavia ranged anywhere from 45 to 75 percent. On top of that, salaries were not paid regularly and were sometimes delayed by up to six months.

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<sup>46</sup> Information on the forthcoming Eighth session of the Yugoslav-Algerian Committee, May 1974, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345.

<sup>47</sup> Information on the economic part of cooperation within the request for agricultural experts, 21 December 1982, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>48</sup> Report on the 12th session of the Yugoslav-Algerian Committee, 21 June 1983, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>49</sup> Information on the economic part of the cooperation within the request for agricultural experts, 21 December 1982, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>50</sup> Radonjić, *Slika Afrike u Jugoslaviji*, 181-82.

<sup>51</sup> A brief review of the state of technical cooperation with Algeria, 25 February 1981, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345; Note on Blaž Krstajić's conversation with Abderrahman Benmokhtar, 20 October 1982, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>52</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 215.

In an attempt to increase mobility, the government tried to create conditions for Yugoslav experts that were similar to those of other foreign experts, and in particular the French. The French *coopérants*, for example, enjoyed high salaries due to financial contributions from the French government. In accordance with this, in the 1980s Yugoslavia established the Fund for Solidarity with Non-Aligned and Developing Countries (*Fond solidarnosti sa nesvrstanim zemljama i zemljama u razvoju*) and reintroduced wage participation.<sup>53</sup>

Another consequence of an increased standard of living were the difficulties the once “highly adaptable” Yugoslavs faced in adjusting to a new environment.<sup>54</sup> Complaints about the weather<sup>55</sup> and especially about inadequate housing and lack of creature comforts were a recurring issue. Experts were usually placed in very basically furnished apartments or hotel accommodations that had to be vacated during the tourist season. They also complained about being housed far away from their job sites.<sup>56</sup> ZAMTES, whose capacity to provide the requested number of personnel was already limited, often either never received any feedback regarding the outcome of the selection process or had a high percentage of its nominated candidates rejected.<sup>57</sup>

The most concrete joint attempt to increase the number of highly skilled Yugoslav personnel was the Agreement on the Terms of Reference and Work of Yugoslav Experts in Algeria, signed on 31 December 1983. It resulted from an evaluation that found the conditions regulated according to the 1965 Convention were having a negative effect on cooperation. Hence, the two sides decided to draw up a new bilateral agreement regulating the nomination and acceptance of experts along with the rights and obligations related to their employment.<sup>58</sup> However, it did not bring about any significant changes, and even ZAMTES considered the new conditions to be “unfavorable.” According to Yugoslav officials, its terms were agreed to “under considerable Algerian pressure” and were only partially compliant with the Act on the Basic Conditions for Temporary Employment and Protection of Yugoslav Citizens Employed Abroad (*Zakon o osnovnim uslovima za privremeno zapošljavanje i zaštiti jugoslavenskih građana u inozemstvu*)<sup>59</sup> which regulated the requirements foreign countries had to follow when hosting Yugoslav workers.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Report on the twelfth session of the Yugoslav–Algerian Committee, 21 June 1983, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344; Note on planned activities to strengthen technical cooperation, 19 October 1983, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>54</sup> Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 214–15.

<sup>55</sup> Radonjić, *Slika Afrike u Jugoslaviji*, 188–89.

<sup>56</sup> Information on technical cooperation with reference to encountered difficulties, 22 October 1980, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/346.

<sup>57</sup> Report on Talks at the Fifteenth Session of the Yugoslav–Algerian Committee, 1986, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>58</sup> Note on Blaž Krstajić’s interview with Abderrahman Benmokhtar, 24 May 1982, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>59</sup> Information on technical cooperation with reference to the difficulties, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345.

<sup>60</sup> *Zakon o osnovnim uvjetima za privremeno zapošljavanje i zaštiti jugoslavenskih građana na radu u inozemstvu*, *Službeni list SFRJ*, 33/1973.

Initiatives to increase the number of Yugoslav technical experts through formal cooperation continued until the very end of the 1980s. But they were generally unsuccessful, and by the end of the decade Yugoslavia had become the partner country with the fewest experts in Algeria. Many of those who overcame the bureaucratic obstacles and made their way to Algeria encountered problems during their stay. When they returned, they spoke negatively of their experience while working and living in Algeria. Most of them, in fact, left before the end of their contracts.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, during the same period, hundreds of other Yugoslav workers hired directly as part of investment projects successfully completed their duties and were able to transfer knowledge and experience to the Algerian people.<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusions

In this paper, I have examined Yugoslav labor mobility to Algeria that was part of technical cooperation agreements. The Algerian case demonstrates how Yugoslav foreign political and economic interests resulted in the temporary migration of highly skilled labor to the Global South. Because of these interests, the Yugoslav government's stance on highly skilled labor mobility to the Global South differed from its stance on employment in the West.

This approach toward the Global South was a result of efforts to consolidate the country's international position and achieve foreign policy objectives. Yugoslavia embedded and promoted cooperation with the South as an expression of its policy of non-alignment. To facilitate these relations, it advocated addressing issues related to economic development, which were a crucial concern for decolonized countries. Due to a focus on capacity-building, technical cooperation was one of the most prominent aspects of Yugoslav bilateral relations with these newly independent countries. The Yugoslav government fostered a particularly politically relevant and close relationship with Algeria, in which technical cooperation was meant to serve as a successful example of South-South cooperation.

However, Yugoslav-Algerian technical cooperation also involved some difficulties primarily related to the engagement of foreign experts. Yugoslavia recruited experts through the Federal Bureau for International Technical Cooperation (ZAMTES) and placed them at the disposal of the Algerian government. Unlike those accompanying engineering investment projects in the Global South, these workers were direct employees of the receiving country. As a result, their personal and work experiences differed significantly. Due to multiple drawbacks on both sides, the initial flow of experts to Algeria at the beginning of the 1960s gradually ceased and had become almost insignificant by the end of the 1980s. Despite these difficulties, the government promoted the temporary migration of these highly skilled workers to improve cooperation with Algeria in all areas. Hence, their role was not to just transfer knowledge and expertise but also

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<sup>61</sup> Note about a conversation between Marijan Strbašić and Ambassador Nouredine Kerroum, 15 April 1987, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/344.

<sup>62</sup> Platform for the first session of the Yugoslav-Algerian Subcommittee, 24 September 1984, HDA, RZMZTS, 1727/345.

to influence the outcomes of Yugoslav political and economic objectives in the Global South.

Nevertheless, what the experts' motives were is yet to be explored. Whether were they ideologically motivated because they had internalized the ideas of solidarity and development promoted by the Yugoslav government, or if the state influenced their decision to take up employment abroad remains a question for further research.

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