

Dissertation

Title

Polish Workers in Czechoslovakia: Unwelcome Friendship
Specific features of temporary labor migration in the socialist system

Author

Ondřej Klípa

Summary

The aim of the dissertation is to study the case of Polish workers in Czechoslovakia who were employed on conditions set by intergovernmental treaties. Most of them were women. This case had two specific features. First, it was highly regulated by both of the co-operating states. Second, the state bodies tried to control intensively both the workers in order to isolate them from local population and the public discourse of this topic. In this study I argue that both of the features arise from fundamental elements of socialist system, which are “economy of shortage” and totalitarianism. These elements were identified in the work of Hungarian economist János Kornai. Instead of totalitarianism as a coherent concept I use only certain totalitarian practices that were exercised with variable intensity, depending on circumstances. In the dissertation I examine causality between these two fundamental elements (independent variables) and both regulation and control (dependent variables). For this purpose I consider the studied case as a specific model of temporary labor migration in socialist system. The case is also situated in a broader context of other similar cases in Czechoslovakia, other socialist countries, and outside socialist bloc. In a way of comparing the case with other described cases I also try to generalize the causal relations of this model to some extent. The case is also placed into migration typologies and explored with migration theories. I argue that this migration process could be studied with traditional migration theories with difficulties. Another focus of this dissertation was the effect of the studied migration process on interethnic relations. In my opinion, the effect was rather negative. As far as the main hypothesis is concerned, it was proved that there is quite clear causal relation between principles of “economy of shortage” and bureaucratic regulations. Chronic shortages caused mainly regulations dealing with permanent need for labor force and inability to attract the workers financially at the same time. Totalitarian practices did not always cause effective instruments of control however. Moreover, elaborated methods of control and isolation of foreign workers from local population can be found also outside socialist system, i.e. without state totalitarianism. Nevertheless, strong effect of totalitarianism – in a form of propaganda – was observed in the field of public discourse, predominantly control of media coverage.