

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP *CARIBBEAN: REGION OF GLOBAL IMPORTANCE: COMMUNIST EUROPE AND THE CARIBBEAN DURING THE COLD WAR. DIPLOMACY, ESPIONAGE, MIGRATIONS AND OTHER FORMS OF MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT*
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On September 25, 2019, the Centre for Ibero-American Studies of the Charles University in Prague hosted an interesting event – a workshop called *Caribbean: Region of Global Importance: Communist Europe and the Caribbean during the Cold War. Diplomacy, Espionage, Migrations and Other Forms of Mutual Engagement*. Its principal aim was to gather scholars from Central Europe and abroad and discuss the relations between Communist Europe and the Caribbean. The latter region was considered from a broader perspective and included Central America.

The principal topic of the encounter was, of course, Cuba and its ties to the Soviet Bloc. The keynote speaker James Hershberg (George Washington University) presented an interesting example of personal diplomacy: “Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki’s Visit to Cuba and Talks with Fidel Castro, June 1962: A Mysterious Mediation Mission (or Two)?” Cuba was also the topic of the first block of lectures, opened by Darina Zavadilová (Academy of Arts, Architecture, and Design in Prague, UMRUM), who focused on cultural contacts during the eventful decade of the 1960s: “Czechoslovak-Cuban Cultural Relations in the 1960s”. The variety of topics was complemented with a presentation about sport from Mónika Szente-Varga (National University of Public Service, Budapest), who talked about “Sports Relations between Hungary and Cuba in the Cold War”. The session was concluded by Mervyn J. Bain (University of Aberdeen). His idea was to prove

that the Cold War relations between Cuba and the USSR had put down roots as early as in the inter-war period. The speech “Havana-Moscow Relations, the Nexus of Cold War Tensions” was well received.

The second block was focused on other countries in the Caribbean basin. First, Michelle D. Getchell (US Naval War College) spoke about the international dimension of the US invasion of the Dominican Republic: “Internationalizing the 1965 Dominican Crisis: The Soviet Bloc and the Politics of Regional Security in Latin America”. Then two Centre for Ibero-American Studies scholars, Lukáš Perutka and Radek Buben, talked about Czechoslovak involvement in the Guatemalan Revolution and in Sandinista Nicaragua respectively. Their two presentations: “Informal Diplomacy between Czechoslovakia and Guatemala and the Fall of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954” and “Czechoslovakia and Sandinista Nicaragua in the 1980s” concluded the block.

The workshop was successful in bringing scholars together especially during the final round-table discussion, and will soon bear fruit. The topics presented will be published in a book that will surely help readers to understand the relations between two regions of global importance, their principal and secondary actors, motivations, goals, and, most importantly, results.

by Lukáš Perutka
(Written in English by the author)