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Abstract

International education is seen as an effective form of soft power. This article reviews one of history's largest and most ambitious attempts to achieve global influence through university education, and to reshape the world—the Soviet university aid program, 1956–91. Drawing on existing research and Soviet archival materials, we lay out and contextualize characteristic features of the Soviet education aid program. Specifically, we identify its focus on students from “developing” and newly independent countries, and its ambition to form graduates who would return home to become national leaders sympathetic to Soviet socialism. We conclude by approaching the program from a world-systems perspective. Here, we highlight the intended catch-up style modernization and national economic development for countries through their participation in the Soviet university aid program as well as the intended development of the human capital of participant countries. The complex impacts on participants throughout the world and their subsequent worldview are the subject of ongoing research by the authors. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)