“Lebanon, Cuba, National Liberation and US Empire”

Nate George
Rice University, United States
nategeorge00@gmail.com

In a 1988 essay published in Tricontinental, the Havana-based journal of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL), Lebanese Communist Party Secretary-General George Hawi connected the nascent Palestinian intifada, the Lebanese resistance against Israeli occupation, and the revolutionary wars in Central America by tracing a trajectory of “national liberation movements” fighting against local, US-backed counterrevolutionary forces. His analysis of the ongoing Lebanese Civil War was thus situated in a global context that was inseparable from the local. This paper looks at this and other examples of Arab-Cuban interchange – such as the 1979 trip of Lebanese Communists to Cuba and OSPAAAL’s solidarity propaganda – and considers their function during the Lebanese Civil War era (1975–1990). These transnational movements were connected because and despite of US imperial strategy and policy, which attempted to prevent such interaction through the blockade of Cuba. However, enforced isolation was impossible and there were many such independent exchanges between Third World movements, a history somewhat obscured since the end of the Cold War and the triumph of the unipolar order. This paper is based on multiarchival research conducted in Lebanon, Cuba and the United States.