

## RE-ALIGNING YUGOSLAVIA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERITY IN THE YUGOSLAV NEWSREELS

MILA TURAJLIĆ

[mila.turajlic@gmail.com](mailto:mila.turajlic@gmail.com)

<<http://www.dissimila.rs/>>

Mila Turajlić is a documentary filmmaker whose films *Cinema Komunisto* and *The Other Side of Everything* have premiered at major film festivals (Toronto, Tribeca, IDFA) and were released in cinemas and broadcast internationally. She is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the National Film School in Belgrade, and has been a guest lecturer in Europe and the USA (Harvard University, Yale University, University of Michigan, Paris-Sorbonne University). She is writing her PhD on the use of cinema in the creation of political narratives, and is working on a documentary film about the last living cameraman of the Yugoslav Newsreels.

### KEYWORDS

1968, newsreels, non-aligned, solidarity performances, Yugoslavia

### PUBLICATION DATE

Issue 4, November 30, 2017

### HOW TO CITE

Mila Turajlić. "Re-aligning Yugoslavia: The Construction of Alterity in the Yugoslav Newsreels." *On\_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture* 4 (2017).

<<http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2017/13394/>>.

Permalink URL: <<http://geb.uni-giessen.de/geb/volltexte/2017/13394/>>.

URN: <urn:nbn:de:hebis:26-opus-133946>



# Re-aligning Yugoslavia: The Construction of Alterity in the Yugoslav Newsreels

## \_Abstract

During the 1960s, *Filmske Novosti* (the state-run *Yugoslav Newsreels*) played a key role in the representation of President Josip Broz Tito's international travels. Tito visited newly independent African and Asian countries in search of political alliances, and the newsreel reports framed these diplomatic travels as solidarity performances. Assigning two cameramen to follow the presidential trips *Filmske Novosti* produced a series of portraits of nascent nation states and their receptions of Tito, accentuating a discourse of similarity and unity as a challenge to Western political hegemony. As Yugoslav Newsreels extended their reach, exchanging these reports with a total of 40 countries by the end of the 1960s, their work became an influential medium advocating the process of decolonization in the international arena. This article looks at the legacy and perspective they offer in constructing narratives of an 'alternate' representation of non-aligned countries to Yugoslav audiences. It further argues that this strategy of representation had significant consequences for the political situation within Yugoslavia. In 1968, this narrative resulted in a public sentiment of solidarity and identification which became evident in the protests that erupted in Yugoslavia, revealing how the internal political narrative was also reshaped in terms of alterity.

## 1\_Introduction

During the 1960s, *Filmske Novosti* (the Yugoslav Newsreels)<sup>1</sup> played a central role in shaping the social discourse surrounding Yugoslavia's political orientation towards the Third World. Since President Josip Broz Tito was pursuing an independent path in foreign policy, *Filmske Novosti*'s project entailed the construction of a new narrative that depicted solidarity rather than otherness; this narrative can be traced through a study of the newsreels. The shifting of the mode of representation of non-aligned countries to Yugoslav audiences corresponded to the political and diplomatic strategy of the Yugoslav government to build alliances with African and Asian countries. Primary sources, including the newsreels themselves, and *Filmske Novosti* catalogue information reveal the discourses through which Yugoslav audiences were introduced to the political and cultural life of geographically distant countries. Using an analytical framework offered by theorists approaching international relations from a performative perspective, the Newsreels can be understood as the vehicle through which a diplomacy based on solidarity performances was articulated. Beyond their influence on the perceptions of domestic audiences, the Yugoslav Newsreels exchanged their reports with a total of 40 countries by the end of the 1960s, and thus became an agent in reinforcing the process

of decolonization in the international arena. A study of the Newsreels' content illustrates the role they played in mobilizing support for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a political platform in which Yugoslavia played a leading role having hosted its inaugurating summit in Belgrade in 1961.

Within the Cold War context of a two-bloc divide, the reports of the Newsreels reveal a complex interplay of discourses. The article argues that, while the Newsreels' narrative of solidarity shaped perceptions of unity and identification on an international scale, this ultimately had implications for the internal political situation in Yugoslavia. The crisis came to a head in 1968, when mass protests erupted for the first time in Yugoslavia, making that year a critical one for the country's political leadership. In the year which saw the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tito's leadership of the Yugoslav communist party, and the 20th anniversary of his break with Stalin and expulsion from the Eastern Bloc, Tito's leadership was challenged by the eruption of student-led demonstrations in various Yugoslav cities. The article concludes with an assessment of how the Newsreels' reporting responded to the challenge of reporting on these events, and the narrative reframing this involved.

## **2\_ *Filmske Novosti*: Film Diplomacy**

The institution of the *Filmske Novosti* was created in 1944 as the film section of Josip Broz Tito's headquarters during the final stage of partisan resistance in the Second World War. This made them not only the oldest film production institution in post-war socialist Yugoslavia, but the only one of its kind. As part of the Executive Council of the federal government (*Savezno Izvršno Veće*), they answered directly to the Information Secretariat (*Sekretarijat za Informisanje*). It is through this channel of direct political oversight that the formulation of their editorial line, rhetoric, and aesthetic should be analyzed. The political importance of the Newsreels is evident in the fact that, during the 1950s and 1960s, the screening of their weekly issues (*filmski žurnali*) before the feature film was mandatory in every cinema in Yugoslavia. Like newsreels in other socialist countries at the time, they were often screened in schools, at worker's assemblies, and in factories, extending the reach of the newsreels into daily life.

However, *Filmske Novosti*'s activities in the international arena were distinctive from those of neighboring socialist countries — a direct reflection of Yugoslavia's unique position in the geo-political world. Following a decisive break with the Soviet Union and the country's expulsion from the Eastern Bloc in 1948, President Tito had

re-oriented Yugoslav foreign policy. He concentrated his efforts on establishing political alliances with newly independent countries in Africa and Asia. Hence, as the scale of Yugoslavia's international engagement grew, so did the reach of its newsreels. By the 1960s, *Filmske Novosti* were participating in an international exchange of materials with institutions from more than 30 countries from Europe, North and South America, North Africa, and Asia. In a report submitted to the Federal Information Secretariat, the director of *Filmske Novosti* indicated the importance the institution placed on this aspect of its activity, writing, "[t]he most important of our informative-propaganda activity abroad is the exchange of filmed material with foreign newsreel agencies."<sup>2</sup> The report goes on to detail the breadth of their activities, which included the sales of filmed materials about Yugoslavia to foreign television stations, collaboration on international productions, and participation at international festivals.

The *Filmske Novosti* archives house the requests for international newsreels exchange they received, offering an insight into the complexities of the perception of Yugoslavia in the 1950s and 1960s. Having politically positioned itself between the Eastern and Western Blocs, culturally, Yugoslavia was perceived simultaneously as an extension of a European cultural heritage (one with close intellectual ties to Paris and Vienna) and as the Balkan 'Other.'<sup>3</sup> This duality permeates the thematic interest of other countries in Yugoslav Newsreels. In an uncharacteristically pithy comment in the report, the director of the Yugoslav Newsreels summed up the difference in demand between the two political blocs for newsreels on Yugoslavia:

The countries of the Eastern Bloc ask for almost everything concerning construction work (new buildings, factories, etc.), while there is little interest in social activities, events, and political activity [...] Western countries want only sensational events, folklore, exoticism, while of political events they are only interested in those which have an echo in their own countries: visits of foreign dignitaries, President Tito's important speeches, congresses where our leaders speak.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, through the thematic selectivity of newsreel programming, the 'socialist project' was reduced to its modernizing component for countries of the Eastern Bloc, and to Tito's political activity for the West. However, by the 1960s, Yugoslavia's role in the Third World had added another layer of narrative construction and reception of the Yugoslav-produced newsreels by foreign audiences. In an analysis of Yugoslavia's position vis-a-vis the non-aligned world, Alvin Rubinstein summed up the extent to which this re-orientation of the country's diplomacy shifted how it was perceived. He describes a triangular dynamic of perception and influence at play, writing: "Great

Powers tend to evaluate Tito in the light of how Africa sees him, and vice versa.”<sup>5</sup> This adds particular importance to the way in which the Newsreels represented the story of Tito’s reception in Africa, and also indicates alternative readings that different audiences may have brought to the Yugoslav Newsreel reports.

### **3\_Tito’s Travels in the Newsreels**

Just as he dominated political life in Yugoslavia from 1944 until his death in 1980, President Tito dominates *Filmske Novosti*’s newsreels. A content analysis of their entire production between 1945 and 1980 completed at the time of Tito’s death reveals that, of the 2,311 weekly stories produced in this period, more than half are devoted to Tito’s activities as head of state (1,282 stories), both in Yugoslavia and abroad.<sup>6</sup>

The first newsreel story of 1968, titled “30 Years with Tito,”<sup>7</sup> was a four-minute report on a special commemorative session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia,<sup>8</sup> celebrating the three decades of Tito’s leadership of the Communist Party. As Hrvoje Klasić notes in analyzing the strength of Tito’s political position and way it was affected by events in 1968, at the start of the year, the situation was optimistic: “In the 20 years since his break with Stalin, Tito’s personal authority had become indisputable.”<sup>9</sup> In the course of that year, 39 of the 264<sup>10</sup> weekly newsreel stories would be devoted to Tito’s activities in Yugoslavia and abroad — from welcoming Yugoslav medalists home from the 1968 Mexico City Olympics and visiting the Belgrade book fair to events of a more political nature, with the principal accent being on Tito’s travels abroad.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Yugoslavia was seeking to re-ignite activity in the international arena. It lobbied members of the Non-Aligned Movement to agree to the convening of a third NAM conference, which would eventually take place in Lusaka, Zambia in September 1970. In the first few months of 1968, Tito travelled to a total of eleven countries. His first priority on the agenda was to rally the disparate views of the various NAM members around a common platform. According to historian Tvrtko Jakovina, the aim was to “mobilise global public opinion to help solve the principle questions of independence, peace and development.”<sup>11</sup> On his first trip, which began in January and lasted one month, President Tito visited seven countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Cambodia, India, South Yemen, Ethiopia, and Egypt (UAR). On a second trip in April, he travelled for three weeks, visiting four countries, three of them for the first time: Japan, Mongolia, Iran, and the USSR.<sup>12</sup> As Jakovina points out, the choice of

destinations was strategic.<sup>13</sup> Among them were the most important and prominent countries in the Non-Aligned Movement — notably India, Egypt, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Ethiopia, which were considered key by the Yugoslav diplomacy for rounding up support for a new NAM conference.<sup>14</sup>

President Tito's 'Voyages of Peace' were the trademark of Yugoslav foreign policy. They began with a visit to India and Burma in 1954 and took him to a total of 70 countries in the space of two decades, first by ship and then by plane. As noted above, the trips would sometimes last two to three months, representing a unique example of a head of state being absent from his country for such extended periods of time. The trips were extensively reported on by the Yugoslav press, with print and radio journalists forming part of the entourage, along with celebrated Yugoslav writers.

The recent introduction of the concept of performance by a group of scholars working in international relations theory offers a particularly useful analytical framework to analyze the impact of the Voyages of Peace on Yugoslavia's perception internationally. Looking at diplomatic practice as a theatrical setting, they argue that an understanding of how an international system is conceptualized and how power is distributed among its actors can be enhanced by investigating its performative aspects.<sup>15</sup> Tito's performances, in the form of his international travels, had a constitutive function for forming diplomatic relationships, but through their framing in newsreel reports, they also had an important discursive function.

In addition to their information purpose, reports on Tito's activities also served a symbolic one. They were a visible instrument in the creation of the public narrative through which Tito's personality cult was constructed both internationally and at home. Similar to Kantorowicz's analysis of the way the body of the king comes to represent the body politic of the state,<sup>16</sup> Tito's public image came to stand in for a united Yugoslavia. In her analysis of this discursive mechanism, Maja Brkljačić argues that "representing Tito's body became a way to produce the collective identity of Yugoslav society."<sup>17</sup> The newsreel images seize on every moment of the crowd's adoration in official welcoming ceremonies — such as during Tito's arrival in Cambodia when Prince Norodom Sihanouk had organized an ostentatious welcome<sup>18</sup> — and by extension represent it as the welcoming attitude towards Yugoslavs in general. The special issue dedicated to the visit shows Tito attending a ceremony in which a city square in Pnom Penh is named after him, a memorialization of Tito's cult taking place *in vivo*.

*Filmske Novosti* established a standard practice in their coverage of Tito's voyages by assigning a two-person team to film his visits. The cameramen would send rushes back to Belgrade while on the road, and the reports would be shown as part of the weekly newsreel issues, thus permitting Yugoslav audiences to follow events from Tito's trips with a delay of only a few days. The newsreel stories were brief reports, formally structured following a classic 'official state visit' format, showing images of Tito arriving by boat or plane, being greeted in an official ceremony, speeches of welcome and official meetings with heads of state, and activities such as visiting construction sites and factories. Images of the president as modernizer were complemented by those of Tito as enlightened statesman: newsreels show him receiving honorary doctorates<sup>19</sup> in countries such as Mongolia and Ethiopia. Svetozar Rajak points out that from the perception of the countries he visited, Tito was "in a way... the first white European who did not come to subjugate and arrived instead as an equal, professing independence and mutual respect."<sup>20</sup>

As Ringmar writes in his study of performative diplomacy, "the way international systems have been performed can help us understand the terms on which they have come into contact with each other."<sup>21</sup> Tito's arrivals in these countries were first and foremost received as a sign of respect for their position on the international stage and also as validation for their political struggle. Tito's personal stature was enhanced by his wartime biography — the fight of his Partisans in Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia was frequently highlighted by the local press during his visits to nations whose independence had been won through armed struggle against colonial might. Moreover, Yugoslavia was singled out as a European nation that did not have a colonial tradition and had never participated in the creation of empire — Yugoslav historians of the period would even go so far as to stretch historical parallels by claiming that Yugoslavia had itself been colonized for a large part of its history.<sup>22</sup>

Tito's wife Jovanka<sup>23</sup> traveled with him on his 1968 Voyage of Peace, and the Newsreels usually include reports on her activities during their trip. Occasionally, such as on the trip to Pakistan, she accompanies Tito on his visit to a dam or similar infrastructure projects, or as he is being shown modernized production techniques in factories, but often Jovanka's program consists of different types of activities, and one of the two cameramen would accompany her to document her speeches and meetings, which were later included in the newsreel. In India, while President Tito met with Prime Minister



Indira Gandhi, Jovanka met with the All-Indian Women's conference and visited a children's clinic,<sup>24</sup> while in Afghanistan, she was taken to visit the Association of Afghan women, where a fashion show of traditional Afghan costumes was put on for her. During the President's visit to Japan, she visited a school for flower arrangement, where the newsreel shows her trying out her own flower-arranging skills.<sup>25</sup>

Analyzing these images from the point of view of 'solidarity performances' ultimately does more to help us understand the success of Tito's trips than a mere perusal of diplomatic communication would.<sup>26</sup> The script of 'solidarity' is enacted through the framing of Tito's exchanges with his hosts, particularly in the visual insistence on closeness and understanding, such as in images of Tito using a machine in a factory hall during a visit to Mongolia in 1968. One such unscheduled performance that is particularly interesting in terms of representations of Tito's body (and by implication, the constitution of the body politic) is a moment that occurred during his trip to Mongolia. Tito was known for placing great value on his dress, often traveling in full military regalia and wearing a white Marshal's uniform decorated with gold epaulettes and emblazoned with medals.<sup>27</sup> In the final part of the newsreel of the visit to Mongolia (a rare color documentary shot in 1968), Tito and Jovanka are taken to visit a traditional Mongolian yurt, in what the voiceover warns is an "unusual departing reception, which was not scheduled in the official program."<sup>28</sup> The president and his wife are gifted traditional national costumes, and are shown being awkwardly dressed by their Mongolian hosts in front of a gaggle of cameras and reporters. For Yugoslav audiences accustomed to seeing their leader impeccably turned out, the sight of him in a Mongol robe and head-dress might have had comic impact, but it also served to physically embody his openness to 'others,' as the voiceover explains that "in the ancient Mongol tradition this gesture means the acceptance of a new member into their community."<sup>29</sup>

The 'Mongolian costume' episode points to a wider question of differing framings and representations of meanings. To some extent, it cannot be denied that the Yugoslav delegations failed to appreciate their privilege in being white Europeans, and that this racial blindness or insensitivity is evidenced in the Newsreels. In screening the footage from Tito's African and Asian trips, one can trace an element of colonialism in their outlook, possibly stemming from depictions of Tito as tourist rather than revolutionary. The exoticism is most apparent in moments such as the final scene in the special issue dedicated to Tito's trip to Pakistan, where he is hosted by Ayub Khan: The footage



shows the two presidents hunting for wild birds in the delta of the Inde River.<sup>30</sup> Equally stereotypical in its visual representation of the African continent is the special issue “Tito in Hours of Rest — Ethiopia,”<sup>31</sup> which shows Tito going on a hunting trip, flying from a helicopter, and standing next to trophy animals; his wife Jovanka is also featured in a boat, holding a rifle and hunting for birds. These types of images draw criticism from contemporary scholars for containing traces of colonial representations, yet it must be highlighted that Tito himself frequently hosted hunting trips for visiting diplomats in Yugoslavia, and that these events were regularly featured in the Yugoslav Newsreels. As summed up by Radina Vučetić in her examination of photographs depicting Tito’s visits to Africa, “at first sight, many photos from Tito’s trips to Africa seem to contain traces of colonial representations. The emphasis is on exoticizing the ‘Other’ — one who carries a large parasol for him, performs traditional dances, or takes him on a hunting safari.”<sup>32</sup> But she concludes, “perhaps the answer to the question of exoticism and ‘otherness’ lies in the fact that the majority of diplomatic protocols in newly formed African countries relied on previously established models which, naturally, were colonial.”<sup>33</sup>

Footage from each trip was also re-edited and released as a special-edition film of ten to fifteen minutes; these films extend beyond the official protocol, often including travelogue-type images that offer Yugoslav audiences a portrait of the visited country. Finally, approximately a month and a half after the end of the January trip, a seventeen-minute documentary film titled *The Mission of Peace*<sup>34</sup> was edited that charted Tito’s entire trip. Available records from the *Filmske Novosti* archive for 1968 do not document the distribution of this particular film. However, based on standard practices for similar productions in previous years, it is quite likely that Tito would have offered *The Mission of Peace* to the embassies of countries he visited. The special-edition films would also have been exchanged internationally with Yugoslav Newsreels’ partner organizations. In view of the above-mentioned distribution channels, it can be concluded that the narration of Tito’s travels was influenced by the fact that the documentaries (and newsreels) would be addressing both a domestic and international audience.

Of the 33 special-edition and documentary films produced by *Filmske Novosti* in 1968, a total of eight films — seven special editions and one documentary — are devoted to Tito’s travels, in a year that was marked with intense diplomatic activity. An

analysis of these films will reveal how, through the performance of solidarity, the rhetoric of otherness came to be replaced by that of fraternity. Crucially, however, they also reveal the way that external policy and perception filtered into internal politics, playing a part in the seminal protests that took place in June 1968.

#### **4\_From Alterity to Fraternity?**

As Srdjan Vučetić observes, Yugoslav performances were based on two ‘scripts.’ One was the ‘common cause’ of non-alignment, while the other was the narrative of Yugoslav modernization. Indeed, more than half of the special-edition and documentary films produced in 1968 are detailed reports on the effects of Yugoslav industrialization and modernization, highlighting the unique achievements of Yugoslavia’s system of self-management and the period of liberalization that marked the first half of the 1960s,<sup>35</sup> including reports from the Zagreb fair, new factories, housing projects, and agrarian efforts.

Both scripts are visible in the newsreel reports from Tito’s travels. The report from Tito’s trip to Afghanistan, his first state visit in 1968, is a typical example of the narrative framing of his travels. The voice over describes President Tito’s trip as a “voyage of peace and international understanding” to the “brotherly countries of Afghanistan/Pakistan/Egypt,” while images highlight the close personal communication between Tito and his hosts, focusing on the welcoming gestures and physical commotion in the crowds. As Rubinstein points out in his analysis of the relationship between Yugoslavia and the Afro-Asian states with which it cooperated, there were important realities differentiating them: “geographic remoteness, a different political and cultural heritage, a more advanced economic system, and a distinctive political structure.”<sup>36</sup> It was therefore a political and discursive choice to emphasize the unifying aspects in non-alignment, while glossing over divisive issues. This is echoed not only in the narrative framing of the newsreel reports from Tito’s travels, but also in the stories reporting on the visits of foreign heads of state to Yugoslavia. The language used in the newsreel commentary takes pains to place no emphasis on otherness — in emphasizing the ‘linkages to people,’ the voice-over is replete with evocations of “common desires, sameness, fraternity.”

It is clear that the establishment of Yugoslavia in this context necessitated accepting not only cultural differences, but marked ideological contradictions as well, to the point, for example, where Tito’s close relationship with Nasser belied the fact that the

latter was actively imprisoning communists in the UAR.<sup>37</sup> However, in the newsreels from diplomatic meetings, whether in Yugoslavia or abroad, the focus remains staunchly on similarities and shared common goals, facilitated by the fact that these countries were united in their aims to end political domination by the Great Powers. Yugoslavia's perspective on this new political configuration erased the discursive reliance on the colonial division of center and periphery, replacing it with a narrative of African and Asian nations as political partners and allies, ideas formulated in the newsreels through expressions of mutual respect. The position of the Yugoslav leadership in these relationships was particularly precarious as Jeffrey Byrne points out, because the 1960s were marked by two competing definitions of the basis of Third World solidarity. As described by Byrne, one was a vision pushed most forcefully by China, of the Cold War as a race war, basing Third Worldism in Afro-Asianism and an expression of post-colonial identity. Opposed to this was the Yugoslav (and to a great extent Soviet) argument, of the Third World as "a political project, open to all who shared its goals."<sup>38</sup> Byrne concludes:

Ultimately, the politics of identity was dangerous territory for most post-colonial states, whichever camp of the cold war they tilted toward. It left the Non-Aligned Movement, with its inclusive political agenda, as the sole manifestation of 'anti-imperialist' or 'anti-neo-imperialist' solidarity.<sup>39</sup>

As noted above, Yugoslavia's conception of solidarity with its allies in the Third World was based on the notion of a similar history of struggle against colonial oppression. A second common point was a shared agenda of emancipation, which was, in Yugoslav terms, the building of socialism — something they framed as a natural continuation of post-colonialism. However, in the Yugoslav approach to NAM countries, one observes a duality that translates into the imagery of the newsreels. In his analysis of Yugoslavia's discourse towards African countries, Dejan Sretenović remarks on this double approach, of a shared communality vis-à-vis the two Cold War Blocs. But at the same time, he points out a position of privilege vis-à-vis the countries inside the Bloc, particularly as at that time they had not achieved the level of economic development that Yugoslavia had.<sup>40</sup> This adopted position of 'mentorship' of countries embarking on their modernizing (socialist) agenda is often visible in the way the newsreels accentuate the growing Yugoslav economic presence and aid in the NAM countries. The newsreel in Afghanistan reports on the agreement reached for Yugoslavia to extend loans to Af-

ghanistan for the purchase of agricultural machines.<sup>41</sup> The first weekly report from Pakistan consists mainly of Tito's visit to the Karachi shipyard, and the voiceover reports that Yugoslav shipyards are supplying Pakistan's merchant fleet, with footage of Tito touring the ship *Al-Abbas*, which is being built in Karachi with the help of Yugoslav experts. In the extended report on the trip, the film provides additional examples of assistance, adding that Yugoslav engineers and technicians have built 4,000 artesian wells in Pakistani villages.<sup>42</sup> On his trip to Ethiopia, Tito visits the construction site of the Duke of Harar Memorial Hospital, which the voiceover explains is being built by Yugoslav experts,<sup>43</sup> always citing the names of the Yugoslav companies involved in the project.

Concerning Yugoslavia's positioning vis-à-vis these countries, Jakovina claims that from a specificity that was seen as a uniqueness, Yugoslavia could not help but perceive itself as being 'above'<sup>44</sup> the Cold War blocs, and thus an important and respected subject in the world. Indeed, it is quite possible to read the newsreels primarily for the way they framed Yugoslavs' self-perception; Manojlović Pintar makes this point when she writes that

the positioning of Yugoslav communists as authentic contributors in the project of socialism as a global process powerfully defined the identity of the citizens of Yugoslavia [...] the role of state and social elites in creating and strengthening the Non-Aligned Movement created a frame within which the citizens could perceive themselves and their community as active subjects in the maintenance of world peace.<sup>45</sup>

However, if the leading role played in non-alignment was an important pillar in proping up the narrative of Yugoslav official identity, the ideological concepts that underpinned it proved to be a destabilising factor in Yugoslavia in 1968.

## **5\_ Internal Empathies and External Enemies**

In 1968, in addition to the 53 weekly<sup>46</sup> newsreel issues (*filmski žurnali*), the Yugoslav Newsreels produced twelve documentary films (*dokumentarni film*) and 21 special-edition films (*vanredni broj*). The Newsreels' catalogue does not provide information on the running time of the newsreels that year, but each weekly edition ran around 15-20 minutes, averaging between four and seven stories. On special occasions, such as state holidays, the newsreel would consist of only two or three longer stories (this happened four times that year). Exceptionally — on two occasions in 1968 — the entire weekly newsreel was devoted to one single story. This was the case on June 12, 1968,

when the newsreel consisted of a ten-minute report on the student demonstrations at the University of Belgrade, and on August 27, when the entire ten-minute newsreel covered “The Occupation of Czechoslovakia” — a telling statement of the landmark importance these two events had for the Yugoslav political leadership in one of the “most turbulent [years] in the history of socialist Yugoslavia.”<sup>47</sup>

In writing about Yugoslavia in the Cold War period, Tvrtko Jakovina points out that the country’s foreign policy should also be understood as the function of its domestic policy interests.<sup>48</sup> Support for anti-colonial liberation struggles served to extend and continually reactivate the genesis narrative on which the power of the Yugoslav Communist Party was founded: the anti-fascist struggle of WWII. Non-alignment as an international policy platform also served to prop up Tito’s idea of Yugoslav federalism internally. Tito’s biggest concern in the post-war period was the unique, multi-ethnic federal make-up of Yugoslavia, and he developed an official policy of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity known as ‘fraternity and unity.’

The difficulty for the Communist Party was that the political strategy for creating internal cohesion could not be founded on classic arguments of homogeneity. As pointed out by Dejan Jović in his analysis of communist Yugoslavia and its “Others” “instruments that would in other types of social projects help strengthen internal cohesion, such as ethnic similarities, state centralism or nationalism in both the civic and ethnic sense, were treated as hostile Others.”<sup>49</sup> Hence he concludes, the answer to the construction of national identity was an ideological one, in which identifying the “Others” played a central role. Thus, he notes, a new narrative was invented in which the

ideological concept of anti-imperialism and anti-hegemonism (i. e. opposition to both military-political blocs) was rooted in the Marxist rhetoric of global (internationalist) action against global injustice. Finally, just as Yugoslavia sided with the exploited in global terms, [...] the further decentralization of Yugoslavia [was justified] with the same argument, namely the protection of the weakest against the strongest (and thus, potentially — the most dangerous).<sup>50</sup>

This leads to what Sergej Flere stresses as the important second internal pledge — equality. In describing the concept of ‘fraternity and equality as Yugoslavia’s “civil religion” he notes the way it had evolved from stressing the joint liberation struggle to “a final stress on Yugoslavia’s world role and mission to prevent world and apocalyptic war and to lead the way to just and paritarian inter-state relations, based on parity among small and large nations.”<sup>51</sup>

The rhetoric of the newsreels fully embraces the concepts of fraternity and solidarity in playing its role aimed at inspiring the collective political imagination. As Olga Pintar Manojlović notes, “the Yugoslav position in the Non-Aligned Movement, and her positioning in a public sphere had a powerful impact on creating empathy among the citizens of Yugoslavia.”<sup>52</sup> In that sense, she argues, the non-aligned platform of supporting and seeking dialogue with countries, despite great ideological and cultural differences, provided a way to “sensibilize and synchronize the differences within Yugoslavia itself.”<sup>53</sup> This analysis finds confirmation in a quote from one of the heads of Yugoslav diplomacy, Marko Vrhunec, who declared in 1980 that their goal had been for “non-alignment to become a way of seeing the world, not just by our state, but by our peoples.”<sup>54</sup> Framing how Yugoslav peoples “see the world” lay squarely within the mandate of the Newsreels, and the insight their reports would have offered into “the lives of geographically and culturally distant but politically close Yugoslav allies,” in the words of Pintar Manojlović, “opened a space for introspection.” Yet the introspection encouraged by the openness to international movements led to an unexpected outcome for the Yugoslav leadership, resulting not in an internal balancing of different and differing ethnic identities, but in an eruption of criticism of the domestic communist system.

On April 9, 1968, the weekly newsreels featured a report titled “Rally of solidarity with the fight of the people of Vietnam — Belgrade.”<sup>55</sup> The newsreel shows a mass of people, around 300,000 strong, gathered on a main square in Belgrade, holding signs saying “Freedom,” and “After crime comes punishment ...,” as well as caricatures of Hitler. On a stage decorated with a large sign reading “Vietnam — to the Vietnamese,” prominent Yugoslav politicians can be seen holding speeches. This report was the second time the Yugoslav Newsreels had reported on the situation in Vietnam in 1968, the first being the inclusion of a foreign-produced report called “War in Saigon”<sup>56</sup> in the weekly issue of February 20, which had shown footage of American tanks on the streets and American soldiers shooting civilians.

In writing on Yugoslavia’s relationship to the Vietnam war, historian Radina Vučetić describes the 1968 demonstrations in Belgrade as a culmination of the worsening of Yugoslav-American relations.<sup>57</sup> She nevertheless points out the complexity of the ways the Yugoslav political leadership tried to maintain its balancing act between East and

West by framing the Vietnam rally as anti-war, but not anti-American. Vučetić's analysis helps us understand how the duality of the policy directed the narrative re-framing of the rallies, something that can also be observed in the newsreel reports:

It seems that the Party wanted to show a positive attitude towards youth movements both in the East and West as it did in its general foreign policy. On the one hand, the Party wanted to show sympathies with the people of Vietnam,<sup>58</sup> but on the other to use the anti-imperialism of the Vietnamese struggle to politicize youth's sentiments against capitalism and show that Yugoslavia was part of global trends.<sup>59</sup>

Madigan Fichter points out that in the period between 1966-1968, which was marked by protests of the coup in Greece and the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., "regular news coverage of student movements abroad [...] played an important role in encouraging Yugoslavia's students to openly confront what they perceived to be injustices on a domestic and international level."<sup>60</sup>

Though they began as an official state-sanctioned rally, the 1968 demonstrations ultimately deteriorated beyond the control of the state's security forces, leading to violent clashes between protesters and police, which, according to some historians, fueled youth resentment and instigated activist organization, creating the hard core of what would grow into the student movement.<sup>61</sup> Yet in the spring of 1968, the global student movement was still perceived by the Communist Party as "a confirmation of its own policy [and they] therefore more than welcomed it."<sup>62</sup> Anti-war demonstrations were indeed being organized by the state, and Vučetić traces how the state's lack of ability to channel and control these revolts led to the anti-government student demonstrations that would erupt in Belgrade less than two months later, leading to a strike at the Belgrade University and posing a serious challenge to the regime. Once sensitized to questions of morality and justice in international affairs, the youth became unsatisfied with the measured and pragmatic foreign policy led by Yugoslavia,<sup>63</sup> seeking a more defined and radical stance. Fichter also points to the prominence of demonstrations in support of international events as a means through which "young people began to suspect the state of not taking its commitment to socialism seriously enough."<sup>64</sup>

As Jakovina observes, in Yugoslavia under Tito's leadership, internal tightening of the reins of control accompanied a weak foreign position, and vice versa,<sup>65</sup> and this is especially evident in the political consequences of the production of alterity narratives. Thus, as Vučetić notes: "After the student demonstrations of June 1968 and the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the Party did not organize any more



antiwar street demonstrations on a larger scale.”<sup>66</sup> In order to shore up the internal security concerns, Tito would not leave Yugoslavia on any trips abroad for almost an entire year: His next foreign trip was to Algeria in November 1969, and as a result of the events of 1968, Yugoslavia turned even more firmly towards the non-aligned world.

## 6 Conclusion

Analyzing the newsreel reports of Tito’s travels in the non-aligned world from a performative perspective reveals the way he came to embody Yugoslavia in the international arena. To the extent that the warmth of his reception translated for Yugoslav audiences into a feeling of welcoming and acceptance, political isolation of Yugoslavia as a country caught between two opposing blocs was ended. Hence, this article has argued that the performative dimension of diplomatic communication provides a key to understanding the success of this strategy.

The solidarity performances of Tito’s voyages led to a discursive reframing of the world as filmed and reported on by *Filmske Novosti*. Their stories sought to highlight joint construction projects, cultural collaborations, and mutual agreement on the pressing issues of the day. As the Non-Aligned Movement took its place on the world stage, the conscious effort to focus on similarities and commonalities replaced Cold War discursive framings of us-vs.-them in the Yugoslav Newsreels. As the sole European country in the Non-Aligned Movement, Yugoslavia consciously sought to avoid the categories of dominant, modernized hegemonic center and the peripheral, underdeveloped world. Nevertheless, the newsreel reports do not refrain from pointing out the *primus inter alia* role of Yugoslavia, highlighting the aid and assistance it provided to countries in Africa and Asia. This, in turn, is used as evidence of the success of its own post-war modernization project and the superiority of the political-economic system put in place by its socialist regime. Ultimately, however, even ideological philosophical divisions were omitted by the newsreels, seeking to position the NAM on the common ground of understanding and peace. The voiceovers reporting on the international summitry invoke moral arguments, which turns into a double-edged sword for the authoritarian leaders espousing them. In 1968, the reports of protests in solidarity with liberation movements created a feeling of transnational unity against hegemonic injustice. This emotion spilled over into the rise of internal political dissent, making 1968 one of the most challenging moments for the dominant political order.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Filmske Novosti*, literally translated, means ‘film news.’ They interchangeably use the name Yugoslav Newsreels in English.
- <sup>2</sup> Samuilo Amodaj, *Izveštaj o informativno-propagandnoj aktivnosti Filmskih Novosti u inostranstvu u 1958. godini* (January 27, 1959). Report accessed in the *Filmske Novosti* documentation.
- <sup>3</sup> Ana Sladojević, *Muzej Afričke umetnosti – Konteksti i reprezentacije* (Belgrade: Museum of African Art, Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection, 2014), 61.
- <sup>4</sup> Amodaj, *Izveštaj u 1958. Godini*; my English translation.
- <sup>5</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 187.
- <sup>6</sup> See Radmila Stanić, “Filmografija storija Filmskih novosti,” in *Filmograf: Tito u jugoslovenskom filmu*, ed. Božidar Zečević (Belgrade: Udruženje filmskih i televizijskih radnika SR Srbije, 1980).
- <sup>7</sup> FN1/68 TRIDESET GODINA SA TITOM / JOSIP BROZ TITO / – BEOGRAD – SVEČNA SEDNICA – CK SKJ / CENTRALNI KOMITET SAVEZA KOMUNISTA JUGOSLAVIJE, black and white, length 127 meters, duration 04’:39’’, first screening January 3, 1968.
- <sup>8</sup> In 1952, the ruling Communist Party of Yugoslavia officially changed its name to *Savez Komunist Jugoslavije* (SKJ), the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY). Throughout this paper, the two names will be used interchangeably, as colloquially Yugoslavs still referred to it as the Communist Party.
- <sup>9</sup> Hrvoje Klasić, “Tito’s 1968 Reinforcing Position,” in *Revolutionary Totalitarianism, Pragmatic Socialism, Transition: Tito’s Yugoslavia, Stories Untold*, Volume 1, ed. G. Ognjenović and J. Jozelić (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 169.
- <sup>10</sup> Content analysis of the newsreels was carried out by examining newsreel titles and descriptions contained in the *Filmske Novosti* catalogue. Accessed at *Filmske Novosti*, Belgrade, in May 2017.
- <sup>11</sup> Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata* (Zaprešić: Fraktura, 2011), 61.
- <sup>12</sup> It was Tito’s ninth visit to the USSR since the *rapprochement* with Nikita Khrushchev that had taken place in 1956.
- <sup>13</sup> Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 61.
- <sup>14</sup> It is important to highlight that Tito’s travels were not the only diplomatic trips the Newsreels covered. In 1968, for instance, the weekly stories were devoted to the travels of Edvard Kardelj, former foreign minister and former president of the federal assembly, to Sudan and Tanzania (FN 10/68), and Kenya and UAR (FN 12/68).
- <sup>15</sup> See Erik Ringmar, “Performing International Systems: Two East-Asian Alternatives to the Westphalian Order,” in *International Organization* 66.1 (Winter 2012), 1–25.
- <sup>16</sup> See Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- <sup>17</sup> Maja Brkljačić, “Tito’s Bodies in Word and Image,” in *Narodna Umjetnost* 40.1 (2002), 99–127, here: 124.
- <sup>18</sup> VB 190/68 TITO U KAMBODŽI, color, length 415 meters, duration 15’:10’’, first screening February 19, 1968.
- <sup>19</sup> VB 187/68 TITO U INDIJI, ADENU I ETIOPIJI, black and white, length 300 meters, duration 10’:58’’, first screening February 19, 1968.

- 20 Svetozar Rajak, "No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest: The Yugoslav Origins of Cold War Non-Alignment," in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16.1 (2014), 146-179, here: 179.
- 21 Ringmar, "Performing International Systems," 15.
- 22 For some Yugoslav histories the South Slav's struggle against the Habsburg and Ottoman empires in 19th century amounted to anti-colonial resistance.
- 23 First Lady of Yugoslavia Jovanka Budisavljević Broz (1924–2013) was married to Tito from 1952 until his death in 1980. She boasted a war biography of her own, having joined the Partisans at the age of 17 and becoming a lieutenant colonel in the Yugoslav People's Army.
- 24 FN 6/68 PREDSEDNIK TITO NA PROSLAVI U INDIJI, black and white, length 166 meters, duration 06':04'', first screening February 6, 1968.
- 25 VB 188/68 TITO U JAPANU, color, length 260 meters, duration 09':30'', first screening May 6, 1968.
- 26 See Srdjan Vučetić, "Performing Solidarity: Whiteness and Status-seeking in the Non-aligned World," SocArXiv, accessed June 8, 2017, <<http://www.osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/x8fje>>.
- 27 For this reason, he was often ridiculed in the West and compared to Latin American dictators, as well as derided by Yugoslav intellectual elites as being an uneducated *parvenu*. However, he himself felt that the uniform spoke to the uneducated masses, pragmatically wearing it as a symbol of military authority and exceptional statesmanship. See Todor Kuljić, *Tito: Sociolosko-istorijska studija* (Beograd: Gradska narodna biblioteka Zarko Zrenjanin, 2004).
- 28 VB 189/68 TITO U MONGOLIJI, black and white, length 265 meters, duration 09':41'', first screening May 15, 1968.
- 29 VB 189/68 TITO U MONGOLIJI, black and white, length 265 meters, duration 09':41'', first screening May 15, 1968.
- 30 VB 191/FN TITO U AVGANISTANU I PAKISTANU, black and white, length 301 meters, duration 11':00'', first screening January 26, 1968.
- 31 VB 192/68, TITO U ČASOVIMA ODMORA – ETIOPIJA, black and white, length 245 meters, duration 08': 57'', first screening February 19, 1968.
- 32 Radina Vučetić, "Tito's Africa: Representation of Power during Tito's African Journeys," in *Tito in Africa Picturing Solidarity*, ed. Radina Vučetić and Paul Betts (Belgrade: Museum of Yugoslavia, 2017), 13–45, here: 28.
- 33 Vučetić, "Tito's Africa," 25.
- 34 DF 187/68 U MISIJI MIRA, black and white, length 450 meters, duration 16':27'', first screening March 20, 1968, director: Branko Šegović.
- 35 A series of reforms starting from the 1960s moved Yugoslavia onto a path of political and economic liberalization, leading to greater freedom of press and expression during that decade. At the same time, the country was opened to external influences: In 1962, requirements for tourist visas for foreign visitors were revoked, and Yugoslavs were issued passports enabling them to travel and work abroad. For an analysis on how political scientists classify Yugoslavia as neither democratic nor totalitarian, but as a "special case," see Sergej Flere, "Da li je Titova država bila totalitarna?," in *Političke perspektive Časopis za istraživanje politike* 5.1 (2012), 7–21.
- 36 Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 80.
- 37 Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 27.
- 38 Jeffrey Byrne, "Beyond Continents, Colours, and the Cold War: Yugoslavia, Algeria, and the Struggle for Non-Alignment," in *The International History Review*, 37.5 (2017), 912–932, here: 924.

- 39 Byrne, "Beyond Continents, Colours, and the Cold War," 927.
- 40 See Dejan Sretenović, Crno telo, bele maske (Belgrade: Museum of African Art, Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection, 2004).
- 41 FN 4/68 JOSIP BROZ TITO OBIŠAO AVGANISTAN I PAKISTAN, black and white, length 100 meters, duration 03':39'', first screening January 23, 1968.
- 42 DF 187/68 U MISIJI MIRA, black and white, length 450 meters, duration 16':27'', first screening March 20, 1968.
- 43 VB 187/68 TITO U INDIJI, ADENU I ETIOPIJI, black and white, length 300 meters, duration 10':58'', first screening February 19, 1968.
- 44 Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 15.
- 45 Olga Manojlović Pintar, "Predgovor. Muzeji umiru takode," in *Muzej Afričke Umetnosti: Konteksti i Reprezentacije*, ed. Ana Sladojević (Belgrade: Muzej Afričke Umetnosti, 2014), i-x, here: iv.
- 46 Newsreels were produced on a weekly basis, with an additional special New Year's issue.
- 47 Klasić, "Tito's 1968 Reinforcing Position," 169.
- 48 Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 13.
- 49 Dejan Jović, "Communist Yugoslavia and Its 'Others,'" in *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, eds. John Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest: Central University Press, 2006), 277–302, here: 284.
- 50 Jović, "Communist Yugoslavia and Its 'Others,'" 287.
- 51 Sergej Flere, "The Broken Covenant of Tito's People: The Problem of Civil Religion in Communist Yugoslavia," in *East European Politics and Societies: And Cultures* 21.4 (2007), 681–703, here: 695.
- 52 Manojlović Pintar, "Predgovor," v.
- 53 Manojlović Pintar, "Predgovor," v.
- 54 Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 10.
- 55 FN15/68 MITING SOLIDARNOSTI S BORBOM NARODA VIJETNAMA – BEOGRAD, 35mm, black and white 32 meters, duration 01':10''.
- 56 FN 8/68 RAT U SAJGONU, 35 mm, black and white, 41m, duration 01':30''.
- 57 Radina Vučetić, "Yugoslavia, Vietnam War and Anti-war Activism, Currency of History," in *Journal of the Institute for Recent History of Serbia* 2 (2013), 165–180, here: 167.
- 58 In their anti-imperial aspects, the demonstrations were a continuation of the first anti-imperial demonstrations that had taken place in 1961 following the execution of Patrice Lumumba. The demonstrations that erupted in Belgrade in February 1961 were among the largest Lumumba-inspired protests in the world, but significantly for Yugoslavia, they were the first big public demonstrations to have taken place in the country after the Second World War. These demonstrations were also extensively reported on by the Yugoslav Newsreels.
- 59 Vučetić, "Yugoslavia, Vietnam War," 177.
- 60 Madigan Fichter, "Yugoslav Protest: Student Rebellion in Belgrade, Zagreb, and Sarajevo in 1968," in *Slavic Review* 75.1 (Spring 2016), 99–121, here: 104.
- 61 See Boris Kanzleiter, "1968 u Jugoslaviji – tema koja čeka na istraživanje," in *Društvo u pokretu: Novi društveni pokreti u Jugoslaviji od 1968 do danas* (Novi Sad: Cenzura, 2008), 30–48.
- 62 Vučetić, "Yugoslavia, Vietnam War," 168.
- 63 Vučetić, "Yugoslavia, Vietnam War," 171.

- <sup>64</sup> Fichter, “Yugoslav Protest,” 105.  
<sup>65</sup> Jakovina, *Treća strana*, 15.  
<sup>66</sup> Vučetić, “Yugoslavia, Vietnam War,” 179.