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World cinema at Soviet festivals: cultural diplomacy and personal ties

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ABSTRACT

This article traces informal world cinema networks at Soviet film festivals. It argues that the cultural diplomacy approach, where state objectives determine the value of cultural exchange, fails to account for the full range of connections made at Soviet film festivals during the Cold War. Personal ties have been crucial to the development of film festivals and the cinematic movements they engendered. The Soviet state aimed to position Soviet cinema as a better alternative to decadent European and commercial Hollywood cinemas, and as a model for film cultures in socialist Eastern Europe and decolonization-era Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This article first demonstrates how the Moscow International Film Festival (1959-present) and the Tashkent Festival of Asian, African, and Latin American Cinema (1968–1988; Latin America included from 1976) constructed a more inclusive map of world cinema than major European film festivals at Cannes, Venice, and Berlin. It then shows how African, Cuban, and Vietnamese delegations forged informal alliances around the emergent Third Cinema (militant Third World cinema) movement at the 1967 Moscow festival. Strong unofficial connections formed by international festival guests transcended and contradicted the aims of Soviet cultural diplomacy.

KEYWORDS

Film festivals; world cinema; third cinema; cold war; cultural diplomacy; Soviet Union

Introduction

If you read official reports, you would think no Chinese guests attended the First Tashkent Festival for African and Asian Cinema in Uzbekistan in 1968. In 1962, Mao Zedong broke diplomatic relations with the USSR over the withdrawal of Soviet nuclear arms from Cuba and Nikita Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' with capitalist nations (Lüthi 2008). Chinese filmmakers had declined invitations to the Moscow International Film Festival in 1963, 1965, and 1967. Tashkent festival organizers sent invitations to almost every Asian and African country but none to China (RGALI 2944/24/126/1).¹ They reported with satisfaction: 'There were no anti-socialist pronouncements and declarations in the spirit of Chinese propaganda' (RGALI 2936/4/1835/3). From the perspective of cultural diplomacy, Tashkent '68 was a win for the USSR: a major Afro-Asian event that excluded China.

In fact, Chinese culture was present at Tashkent. Si-Lan Chen, an internationally known ballet performer and daughter of a prominent anti-imperialist Chinese diplomat and lawyer, came with her husband, Jay Leyda, an American historian of Soviet cinema. At Tashkent, Leyda discussed Chinese cinema with Gordon Hitchens, the editor of US magazine *Film Comment* (JSCL 11/4). Leyda was completing a book on the subject, a result of his stay at the Chinese Film Archives in Beijing from 1959 to 1964. After Tashkent, Hitchens put Leyda in touch with Akira Iwasaki, a Japanese critic who made several trips to China between 1935 and 1965.² Iwasaki's letters helped Leyda to complete his work, published in 1972 as the first book-length account of Chinese cinema in the United States (Leyda 1972). Iwasaki and Leyda met in person for the first time the same year, at the next Tashkent festival. Informal encounters at Tashkent contributed to the transnational circulation of knowledge about Chinese cinema.

This article traces informal transnational networks at Soviet film festivals. 'World cinema,' as a concept and a film canon, developed historically, in part via transnational film festival networks.³ Participants and scholars remember the 1960s especially as the time of a 'world cinema revolution' when aesthetic 'new waves' from France, Czechoslovakia, Brazil and elsewhere swept international festivals (Cowie 2006; Andrew 2004, 12). Intellectuals from decolonized nations used the idea of 'world cinema' to make sense of encounters at festivals among cinemas from the West, the Socialist 'Eastern' Bloc, and the Global South – then called the First, Second, and Third World, respectively.⁴ Devendra Kumar, an Indian critic and publisher, penned four books on 'world cinema' between 1966 and 1970, surveying films from all three 'worlds' shown at international festivals from San Sebastian to New Delhi (1966a, 1966b, 1967, 1970). 'It is via the Film Festival that an unknown genius of the film medium instantly transcends narrow national limits and achieves the statue of a world figure,' wrote in 1979 Edwin Ariyadasa, a critic and translator who was among the first to teach film studies at Sri Lankan universities. Ariyadasa was introducing *Film Festivals: A Third World Assessment*, a book by his countryman, critic and festival programmer Neil Perera (Perera 1979, 8). In part one of this article, I examine how Soviet festivals shaped 'world cinema' as an idea and a film canon.

Soviet film festivals exemplify the clash between state purposes and informal networks. At its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, the Moscow International Film Festival held enough sway to bring major film professionals from all corners of the world, including Western Europe and the United States.⁵ The Tashkent festival held particular importance for Asian, African, and Latin American countries.⁶ The Soviet state aimed to position Soviet cinema as a better alternative to decadent European and commercial Hollywood cinemas, and as a model for film cultures in socialist Eastern Europe and decolonization-era Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Joseph Stalin's Council of Ministers of the USSR resolved in 1946 that Soviet delegates to European festivals should strive for 'the fullest popularization and promotion of Soviet films abroad' (RGALI 2456/4/103/3). Home-grown festivals, founded after Stalin's death, adopted the same goal. The 'inaugural' 1959 Moscow festival 'demonstrated the flourishing of socialist art, especially in the Soviet Union,' organizers reported to Nikita Khrushchev's Central Committee of the Communist Party (RGALI 2936/1/1324/53-54). 'Many filmmakers, especially from African countries, expressed a desire to learn from the Soviet Central Asian film production experience,' Tashkent festival heads informed Leonid Brezhnev's Central

Committee in 1968 (RGALI 2944/26/36/4). ‘Our main goal is again to use the [Moscow] festival as a propaganda tool,’ reiterated leaders of the State Committee for Cinematography (Goskino) to the Central Committee in a secret missive in 1973 (RGALI 2944/25/30/6). Soviet film festival diplomacy, vigorous and consistent in its aims, spanned the Late Stalinist, Thaw, and Stagnation eras.

This article is not about the success or failure of Soviet aims, however. It argues against the cultural diplomacy framework where state objectives determine the value of cultural exchange. Focusing on Soviet rivalry with the capitalist West, Kristin Roth-Ey stresses how state-controlled press coverage of the Moscow festival touted ‘Soviet cinema’s progressive role,’ ‘drew an explicit contrast with film festivals in the West,’ and strained to live up to ‘the us/them comparison that was the bread and butter of Soviet cinema’s identity’ (2011, 109–110). Her book tells a story of what Soviet leaders wanted and what they failed to achieve: it is subtitled ‘How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War.’ In a seminal article on Second-Third World relations, David Engerman also zeroes in on state purposes and their outcomes, including ‘Soviet defeat in the battle for “hearts and minds”’ in Indonesia (Engerman 2011, 195; see also Westad 2005).

Framed in this way, the cultural diplomacy approach fails to account for the full range of transnational connections made at film festivals during the Cold War. To be sure, the Soviet state financed and regulated the Moscow and Tashkent festivals, shaping them into what Mary Louise Pratt calls a ‘contact zone’ of economic inequality and power imbalance (Pratt 1991; Djagalov and Salazkina 2016). But these festivals mattered on the global arena because they brought together a critical mass of international, especially Global South, guests. On Soviet terrain, these visitors formed lasting transnational friendships and coalitions – what Leela Gandhi terms ‘affective communities’ (2006). Such personal ties have been crucial to the development of film festivals and the cinematic movements they engendered.⁷ These ties were especially important for ‘Third Worldist’ movements that aimed to use cinema as a weapon for liberation in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the second part of this article, I explore foreign visitors’ informal alliances around the emergent Third Cinema (militant Third World cinema) movement, drawing on reports from translators who worked with African, Cuban, and Vietnamese delegations at the 1967 Moscow festival. Strong unofficial connections forged by international festival guests transcended and contradicted the aims of Soviet cultural diplomacy.

Defining world cinema at Moscow and Tashkent

Soviet festivals constructed a more ecumenical definition of world cinema than major European film festivals. The top three European festivals, then and now, include Venice (Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica), launched by Benito Mussolini in 1932; Cannes, aborted in 1939 by the Nazi invasion and reopened in 1946 by the government of France; and Berlinale, launched in 1951 by West German officials with American support. In the 1950s, the early festivals, including also Karlovy Vary in Czechoslovakia, founded in 1946, solicited films from national governments and often gave away prizes for political reasons (Valck 2008). After the communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Karlovy Vary included more films from developing countries, per Soviet Bloc policy. After 1962 these pictures competed in a separate Symposium of Young and

Emerging Cinemas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Blahova 2015, 254; Kumar 1966a, 20). In the 1960s, and especially after the political upheavals of 1968, side programs at Cannes and Berlin pioneered a more inclusive and independent selection of films. The Critics' Week at Cannes from 1962, the Directors' Fortnight at Cannes from 1969, and the Forum of Young Cinema at Berlinale from 1971 solicited direct submissions from auteur filmmakers and focused especially on Third World cinema (Ostrowska 2016).⁸

Major European festivals championed art films against commercial cinema represented by Hollywood at the same time as they aligned with the American film industry in their own film markets and star glamor (Valck 2008, 58–61). They upheld European standards for art cinema, including, for example, non-linear narrative and an identifiable self-reflexive individual 'auteur' style (Kovács 2007). Participation at a top festival made a film known among critics worldwide. It could lead to better chances for distribution in the arthouse circuit, attract financing for future film production, and make a world reputation of an aesthetic movement and a national cinema (Valck 2008). As outsiders in the global art cinema distribution system, the Moscow and Tashkent festivals had little power to propel a film to international stardom in this way. Film critics hailed postwar international art cinema 'waves' as they emerged at major European festivals: Italian neorealism with Roberto Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* (1945) at Cannes in 1946, Japanese cinema with Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) at Venice in 1951, the French New Wave with François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959) at Cannes in 1959, or Brazilian cinema *nôvo* with Glauber Rocha's *Barravento* (1962) at Karlovy Vary in 1962.⁹ Such a perspective constructed implicit cinematic hierarchies, where a national or regional film movement did not get a spot on a world cinema 'map' until it got 'discovered' at a major European film festival.

The Moscow festival used diplomatic sway to counter both the art cinema focus of major Western European festivals and the commercial power of Hollywood. With its political slogan, 'For humanism in film, for peace and friendship among peoples,' the 'first' 1959 Moscow festival hosted 700 delegates from 48 countries and two international organizations (United Nations and UNESCO), and featured 281 films (RGALI 2936/1/1324/17). At the time, this lineup surpassed any major festival in its geographic breadth. Karlovy Vary did not take place in 1959 because from then on it alternated with Moscow, but in 1958 it included 414 delegates from 37 countries and 174 films (Kumar 1966a, 19–20). In 1959, neither Venice nor Cannes had any jury members representing Asia, Africa, or Latin America; Berlinale had one. Venice featured 12 countries in the competition, with only one director coming from outside of Europe and North America; Cannes, 20 countries and six directors; Berlinale, 21 and nine. At Moscow, 32 countries competed, including three jury members and 11 directors from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.¹⁰ A more inclusive guest list could transform a film's reception at a festival. Cannes audience received Roberto Rossellini's documentary *India Matri Bhumi* (1959) with tepid respect, as a flawed work by a neorealist master. At Moscow, spectators booed and walked out (Gallagher 1998, 628–629). 'The film gives an utterly distorted and prejudiced view of India,' reported Bimal Roy, Indian director and jury member at Moscow in 1959, '... as a primitive country which is peopled by snake-charmers, sadhus and mendicants.' (Roy 1994, 24). A critical mass of non-Western participants made this a majority opinion at the festival.

The Tashkent festival aimed for diplomatic influence in the Third World. Its initial focus on Asia and Africa responded to the rise of new cinemas in decolonized and nonaligned countries, and the emergence of several festivals focused on these developing cinemas. In 1968, the first Tashkent festival organizers cited the Asian Film Week in Frankfurt-on-Main as capitalist competition (RGALI 2936/4/1833/17). They also cited the International Film Festival of India in New Delhi and the Carthage Film Festival of Arab and African cinema in Tunisia as other notable 'Afro-Asian festivals' (RGALI 2936/4/1833/30). In combining film screenings with roundtable discussions, Tashkent followed the structure of Karlovy Vary's Symposium of Young and Emerging Cinemas. But Tashkent represented Africa and Asia, and later also Latin America, on a much larger scale than any existing festival. Between 1968 and 1976 the foreign contingent grew from 247 to approximately 400 guests overall, and from 49 Asian and African states to 73 Asian, African, and Latin American countries (RGALI 2936/4/1835/1; RGALI 2944/26/69/1). Officially, Latin American nations became part of the festival only in 1976, but representatives and films participated from the very beginning (Massip 1969). The festival's political focus could attract important films only later declared masterpieces. The socialist government of Mozambique sent the first feature film made in the recently liberated country, *Mueda: Memory and Massacre* (1979), by Mozambican-Brazilian director Ruy Guerra, to premiere at Tashkent in 1980. It became 'the most talked about film' of the festival: a part fictional, part documentary retelling of a key revolutionary moment in Mozambican history (Holloway 1980; RGALI 3159/1/262/18-25). After seeing *Mueda* at Tashkent, Gerhard Schoenberger, a programmer for Berlinale's Forum of Young Cinema, invited it to the Forum, where it played in 1981 with less fanfare, primarily as a work by an acclaimed *cinema novo* director (*Variety* 1980; Vogel 1981). Film scholars 'rediscovered' *Mueda* as one of 'Africa's lost classics' only in 2010s (Schefer 2014). It was first recognized as an important work of cinema by Asian, African, and Latin American participants at Tashkent.

The Moscow festival continued to feature Third World cinemas in competition after the Tashkent festival was established.¹¹ This makes Soviet decision to launch a separate Afro-Asian film festival in 1968 distinct from the special attention to Third World cinemas in side programs at Cannes, Berlin, and Karlovy Vary. After 1968, major film festivals expanded their lineups and asserted their artistic integrity but segregated developing cinemas into parallel or informational sections. As Cannes Director-General Gilles Jacob explained in 1978, 'it is impossible to enter certain films of the Third World into competition – confronting them with productions of the big cinematographic countries would be to send them to slaughter. I believe it is preferable for them to put them in our [information] section, "Un certain regard" [inaugurated in 1978] or the parallel events [the Critics' Week and the Directors' Fortnight]' (Perera 1979, 44). Conversely, at the Moscow festival, the low point for Asian, African, and Latin American participation was 1965 (two out of 13 jury members and nine out of 44 competition films), and the high point was 1975 (six out of 15 jury members and 17 out of 36 competition films). A Cuban picture, Humberto Solas's *Lucia*, won the top 'Golden Prize' at Moscow in 1969, one year after the first Tashkent event. This was intentional: the proposal for the 1969 festival vowed to showcase films from 'developing nations' (RGALI 2944/24/126/11). While Cannes featured not a single film from a Sub-Saharan African country in competition during the 1970s, Moscow invited six films, from Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana, and bestowed prizes on now-canonical directors Ousmane Sembène and Djibril Diop Mambéty.¹² In this case, Soviet

functionaries, focused on diplomatic representation, drew a more inclusive ‘map’ of world cinema than Cannes programmers who adhered to European standards for film art.

To be sure, Moscow and Tashkent constructed their own cinematic maps and hierarchies. Soviet organizers disinvented films from enemy political camps, including, in different periods, China, Albania, Israel, and South Korea. They organized each festival as an ‘open mass event,’ where Bollywood stars eclipsed European avant-gardists and thousands of Soviet spectators felt free to signal their displeasure with a political or art film by walking out en masse (RGALI 2936/1/1324/9; Eichenberger 1974). The diplomas at the non-competitive Tashkent festival and the top prizes at Moscow went to films compatible with Soviet ideology. In 1963 the international jury unanimously judged Federico Fellini’s *8 1/2* the best at the Moscow festival but Soviet organizers condemned the film as too individualistic and ‘bourgeois,’ especially after Nikita Khrushchev fell asleep during the screening. Only after several members walked out in protest the jury was allowed to award the top prize to *8 1/2*. This one exception only confirmed the Soviet rule for prizes. The scandal, widely reported at the time, became emblematic of Soviet ideological censorship of the best in film art (Karl 2007, 286; Pisu 2016, 217–228; Gilburd 2018, 172–178).

If we look beyond the European art film canon represented by *8 1/2*, however, the definition of ‘the best in film art’ in this period becomes less assured. As festival careers of *India Matri Bhumi*, *Mueda*, and sub-Saharan cinema show, the aesthetic value of a film could plummet or soar depending on the politics of a particular festival. By inviting films that could not compete at Cannes or Venice, Moscow and Tashkent inspired an aesthetic curiosity for pictures that did not conform to European standards for art cinema. Informal reactions to films from liberated or decolonizing countries in particular show world cinema’s pecking order in flux. A translator’s report on Hilmar Hoffmann, director of the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival in West Germany, presented a typical opinion of a guest from Western Europe about Vietnamese films at the 1965 Moscow festival: ‘Hoffmann is quite critical about the selection of films [because of] political considerations, for example, the two Vietnamese films should not have gotten prizes. ... Some developing countries are too weak to be featured at festivals’ (RGALI 2936/1/2058/62).¹³ Less typical was Jay Leyda’s response to the same pictures in his review of the festival: ‘... this practice of encouraging so many countries to enter films has advantages, no matter how deep you have to dig for them. ... The clash between soft manner and hard theme in *The Young Soldier*, from North Vietnam, is the reflection of an actuality that few of us can experience directly’ (Leyda 1965, 67–68). Disputes at Moscow and Tashkent pointed to alternative circulatory film networks, along Third World and anti-imperialist routes and away from the European art cinema circuit. Official Soviet internationalism and festival guests’ anticolonial politics combined to re-imagine world cinema as a contested terrain, or what Lúcia Nagib and others theorize as a ‘polycentric phenomenon’ (Nagib, Perriam, and Dudrah 2012, xxii).

Third Cinema networks at Soviet festivals

The official Soviet concept of ‘developing’ cinemas – evident in the Tashkent festival’s slogan ‘For peace, social progress, and freedom of the peoples’ – clashed with the global militant cinematic movements that emerged around the 1968 moment. By the 1970s some militant European filmmakers stayed away from the Soviet Union and Eastern

Europe. To them, Soviet peaceful coexistence doctrine betrayed the ideals of socialist internationalism. Joris Ivens, a veteran Dutch political documentary filmmaker, collaborated with the Soviet film institutions since the 1930s. He frequented the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival in East Germany and still came to the Moscow festival in the early 1960s, but abandoned Soviet alliances for Maoism shortly thereafter. He explained his disillusionment with Eastern Bloc festivals in a letter to Jay Leyda of 5 September 1970:

I follow the principles also of my own pol[itical] consciousness, also of my youth, as a combatant, militant filmmaker, who no longer agrees with the friendly countries that lose the combattivity [sic] and arrange [sic] co-existence with other countries that are our enemies. You see that even going to a festival such as in Leipzig has become impossible for me. That festival is no longer a free tribune for militant documentary films (JSCL 4/32).

Likewise, Guy Hennebelle, a pioneering French chronicler of avant-garde, militant, and Third World cinema, participated in the Tashkent festival in October 1968 despite the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia several months prior. But he soon reversed his position. During the debates at 1974 *Rencontres internationales pour un nouveau cinéma*, a gathering of militant Third World filmmakers in Montreal, he chided Cuban delegates for ‘certain alliances that Cuba practices with certain countries such as the Soviet Union’ (Cited in Rozsa and Salazkina 2015).

This critical stance aligned with the view of Argentinian directors Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, who in their influential manifesto for a revolutionary ‘Third Cinema’ categorized Soviet cinema, together with Hollywood, as a reactionary and imperialist ‘First Cinema.’ As a prime (and the only Soviet) example, they cited Sergei Bondarchuk’s *War and Peace* (1966), a double winner of the top ‘Grand Prix’ at Moscow in 1965 (for its first two parts) and a Best Foreign Language Film Oscar in 1968 (Solanas and Getino 1969). In 1980 an article in the Soviet flagship film journal *Iskusstvo kino* admitted, with some consternation, that Solanas and Getino held complete sway over left filmmakers in Europe and the United States (Melvil 1980, 138). In agreement with the ‘Third Cinema’ view, crucial Third World Cinema meetings in the 1970s, and organizations formed there, such as the Third World Cinema Committee, either ignored or denounced Soviet political and aesthetic policies (Mestman 2002; Mestman and Salazkina 2015).

In practice, however, many Third World filmmakers did not have the luxury of boycotting Soviet festivals. Several key participants in the Third World Cinema Committee and related Third Cinema organizations, such as the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI), frequented both festivals. These include Senegalese Ousmane Sembène, Mauritanian Med Hondo, Chilean Miguel Littin, Tunisian Tahar Cheriaa, and others. Soviet festivals benefited from the global disparity of access to film production, circulation, spectatorship, and critical exchange. Most Third World filmmakers, especially those in exile from their home countries, had to scrape together funds from many different sources to live, travel, and study, as well as to make, show, and see movies. The Palestinian Liberation Organization’s delegation at Tashkent in 1974 included two Palestinians and a Jordanian who had studied in Bucharest, Rumania. The team filmed with Soviet cameras; edited in Iraq and Syria; and gave a postbox in Beirut, Lebanon as their mailing address (Hitchens 1974). Soviet festival

organizers paid Third World filmmakers' airfare and staying expenses and used their presence and pro-Soviet statements as evidence of Soviet leadership in global socialist movements and Soviet influence on new cinemas of decolonized countries.

The reports of Soviet influence were greatly exaggerated. Senegalese filmmakers Ousmane Sembène and Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, for example, combined their commitment to the militant cinema with ties to the Soviet Union. Sembène and Vieyra maintained close ties with the Soviet Union at the same time as they organized FEPACI, which would play a key role in the Third Cinema movement (Diawara 1992, 35–50). Vieyra had been coming to Soviet film festivals since the 1957 Youth Festival in Moscow (Vieyra 1969a, 74–89). Sembène came to Tashkent in 1958 for an Afro-Asian Writers Conference, and studied cinema with Mark Donskoi at the Gorky Studio in Moscow in 1962 (Katsakioris 2006, 24; Chomentowski 2017, 27–28). Throughout the 1960s–1980s they stayed in contact with Soviet institutions, including the Filmmakers' Union, the Writers' Union, and the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Contacts (SSOD). On 15 April 1968, soon after Sembène finished *Mandabi*, Vieyra, who produced the film, brought it up to SSOD representative Boris Shabaev at a cocktail party in Dakar (GARF P9576/14/186/60). Sembène came with *Mandabi* to Tashkent in October 1968. Sembène and Vieyra attended almost every Moscow and Tashkent festival in the late 1960s and 1970s. Every film Sembène made in the 1970s played at Moscow, in competition, and at Tashkent. Vieyra served on the Moscow jury in 1971, 1973, and 1985.

Soviet officials kept inviting Sembène in particular because they hoped that, as a Soviet-trained African filmmaker, he would serve as a figurehead for socialist cinema practices. When Sembène's first feature *La Noire de ...* (1966) won Grand Prix at the first Carthage Film Festival of Arab and African cinema in Tunisia in 1966, Igor Chekin, the Soviet delegate at the festival, interpreted it as a victory for the USSR. 'Ousmane Sembène studied with our director M.O. Donskoi during the filming of *Hello, Children* [1962]. ... It is very good that we are planning to invite him to serve on the [documentary and short film] jury of the next Moscow festival,' Chekin wrote to Aleksei Romanov, the Goskino Chairman, on 20 July 1966 (RGALI 2944/13/876/26). Sembène accepted the invitation.

At the 1967 Moscow festival, Sembène viewed films, participated in seminars and jury deliberations, gave dozens of interviews, and met with many Soviet and international friends and colleagues. But he also met several times with African delegations, especially those from Mali and Guinea. His translator A. Sutarmina described his activities in detail in her report (RGALI 2936/4/1593/27–30).¹⁴ 'He on his own united at the festival all African filmmakers,' she wrote (27). In general, Sembène was careful not to talk politics, but he abandoned circumspection when he debated with his African friends. Among other things, he argued that African countries should unite against Western monopoly on film distribution, in order to ensure that Africans can see African films (28). African filmmakers, Sutarmina reported, 'met under his direction and drafted a declaration about convening a conference in Dakar in December' (27). According to Vieyra, such conversations continued at the back-to-back Carthage and Tashkent festivals in 1968 and culminated at the First Pan-African Festival in Algiers, where African filmmakers formed a Pan-African Association of Filmmakers in July 1969 (Vieyra 1969b, 191), renamed FEPACI at the Carthage festival the following year. Sembène, Vieyra, and Côte d'Ivoire director Désiré Ecaré all attended Tashkent in 1968; Sembène and Ecaré then took leadership positions at the Algiers meeting in 1969 (Vieyra 1969b, 192). African

filmmakers have been working toward a Pan-African association of filmmakers since at least the late 1950s (Diawara 1992, 36). Given that Senegal, Mali, and Guinea were all active in the FEPACI's early stages, it is likely that Sembène's African meetings in Moscow in 1967 formed a part of this long-term organizing.

Apart from his Pan-African activities in 1967, in Moscow Sembène was both circum-spect as a diplomat and uncompromising as a film critic. He gave interviews to Soviet and international media but refused to talk to a Chinese radio agency saying that 'the Chinese question is delicate and he prefers not to butt into it' (27, 30). At the same time, during jury deliberations, under considerable pressure, he never budged from his view that the top prize should go to *Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th* (1967) by Cuban director Santiago Álvarez. That year, Fidel Castro publicly chided the Soviet Union for abandoning Third World countries under attack by Western powers, citing especially lukewarm support for the North Vietnamese in their increasingly brutal war against the United States (Gleijeses 2002, 96–97). Seeking to inspire the same spirit of militant solidarity, Álvarez intercut quotes from Cuban poet José Martí, a brief biography of Lyndon B. Johnson, his own footage of everyday labor in North Vietnam, and the American bombing of Hanoi on 13 December 1966 that caught him in the act of filming (Chanan 2004, 228–229). The Soviets were not about to reward a documentary that exemplified the very reason why relations between the two countries were strained. According to Sutarmina, Sembène nevertheless pronounced the Cuban film 'the best, useful for the entire world, and interesting for many countries, and also a superior work of art. No arguments and pleas could make him change his mind' (28–29). He was overruled. The jury, headed by renowned Soviet documentarian Roman Karmen, awarded Golden prizes to two Vietnamese documentaries: *Guerillas of Cu Chi* (National Liberation Front of South Vietnam [NLF], 1967) and *On the Crest of the Waves, Facing the Storm* (Democratic Republic of [North] Vietnam [DRV], 1967).¹⁵ *Hanoi* got a Silver prize, along with three other documentaries: a Soviet, a Dutch, and a British (RGALI 2936/4/1577/95).

Hanoi went on to win the Golden prize at Leipzig later that year. At Leipzig, it was recognized for a masterpiece of militant cinema it is considered today. Havana film journal *Cine cubano* reproduced some of many telegrams praising the picture and requesting copies for screenings from people who had seen it in East Germany (1968). But *Hanoi*'s first screenings took place in Moscow. Álvarez completed last edits on July 8 and immediately air-shipped the reels to the festival. Against official reservations, mixed Soviet and international audience applauded Vietnamese and Cuban delegations at the premiere (Likhitchenko 1967). Vietnamese filmmakers would see the film, about their own national war, for the first time. Feature film directors who did not frequent Leipzig, like Sembène, first saw and appreciated it in Moscow.

Sembène's critical views may have contradicted Soviet priorities but were in line with Cuban activities at the festival. The Cuban contingent included Alfredo Guevara and Saul Yelin, the founders of the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC); Pastor Vega, a director whose later film *Portrait of Theresa* would compete at Moscow in 1979; Luz María Collazo, a ballerina and actress who had appeared in Mikhail Kalatosov's *I Am Cuba* (1964); and Julio García Espinosa, a member of the short film jury and director of a competition film at Moscow, *The Adventures of Juan Quin Quin*. In 1969, García Espinosa would pen what is now cited as a canonical Third Cinema manifesto,

‘For an Imperfect Cinema’ (García Espinosa 1969, 1979). Translators reported that the Cuban delegation completely ignored the Soviet film retrospective devoted to the 50th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, spending all their time in meetings with the two Vietnamese delegations (RGALI 2936/4/1593/71-74). The Cubans interviewed Vietnamese filmmakers, went to screenings of Vietnamese documentaries and a feature film, and invited both Vietnamese delegations to the screening of *Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th*. Finally, all three delegations met at the NLF permanent mission, exchanged gifts, and viewed more Cuban and Vietnamese documentaries about the Vietnam war. According to A. Moskalev, an interpreter from Spanish during this last meeting, the two Vietnamese delegations thanked Cubans for their help and solidarity, while Cubans praised the Vietnamese struggle against American imperialism. ‘The Soviet Union and its help to Vietnam did not come up,’ he added (72).

The tricontinental activities at the 1967 Moscow festival participated in a series of events that reconfigured world cinema maps and hierarchies in the late 1960s. Oberhausen’s Hilmar Hoffmann revised his opinion of Vietnamese cinema entirely compared to the previous Moscow festival. ‘He thought that Vietnamese films deserved their prizes,’ his translator reported (RGALI 2936/4/1593/26). Possibly, Vietnamese cinema dramatically improved in two years. More likely, Hoffmann felt differently because of the changing political and aesthetic ‘structures of feeling’ (Williams 1977, 128–35) about world cinema that emerged in the course of those two years, inspired, among other things, by the Tricontinental Conference in Havana, Cuba in January 1966 that formed the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Mahler 2018).¹⁶ Watching and debating Vietnamese and Cuban cinema on the short film jury at Moscow with Sembène and García Espinosa likely helped Hoffmann to inhabit these structures of feeling with more conviction.

Some Soviet translators described, and shared, the excitement about the changing world context at the festival. According to Sutarmina, Sembène ‘was literally besieged by Soviet and foreign journalists; many prominent international figures know him and respect his opinion.’ She found working with him so thrilling that she requested to interpret for him at the next Moscow festival (RGALI 2936/4/1593/27, 30). Translator Sergei Zmeev conveyed García Espinosa’s aesthetic views with flare: the Cuban director believed that ‘the essence of cinema is not representation of reality;’ yet he also believed that his competition film – notable by its picaresque narrative and characters speaking in comic-strip balloons – reflected ‘the realities of the entire contemporary “Third World” (for him it includes Cuba), and Latin America in particular,’ where ‘raising workers’ consciousness through armed struggle’ was crucial. ‘I think that this is not only [García] Espinosa’s opinion,’ Zmeev noted for his superiors, ‘but also the opinion of many other Cuban comrades’ (RGALI 2936/4/1593/18). Vietnamese filmmakers were at the center of attention from Soviet and foreign reporters and festival guests, especially participants from East Germany, Rumania, and leftists from Japan and the United States (RGALI 2936/4/1593/69). To be sure, certain Soviet and Western observers did not share this enthusiasm. *Variety* agreed with one Soviet delegate, who quipped about the many awards bestowed on the Vietnamese: ‘they could have shown blank reels of film and still won’ (Hawkins 1967). The joke nailed the Soviet diplomatic party line. Yet it also obscured the unofficial affective communities that formed around the emergent Third Cinema movement at the festival.

Conclusion

These African, Cuban, and Vietnamese interactions reveal Moscow and Tashkent as nodes on a transnational network where Third Cinema organizing *avant la lettre* took place. Soviet festivals continued to matter into the 1970s. FEPACI participated officially in the Tashkent festival and film market in 1972 – only the second film festival (after FESPACO, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou in Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso) since the association was founded (Vieyra 1972). Tashkent film market mattered for FEPACI because it could potentially help confront Western monopolies on film production and distribution in Africa. Enthusiastic reception in Moscow places Vietnamese documentaries alongside celebrated Santiago Álvarez's *Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th* and the omnibus *Far from Vietnam*, also released in 1967 and featuring segments by European directors Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda, Joris Ivens, William Klein, and Claude Lelouch. *Hanoi*, NLF's *Guerillas of Cu Chi*, and *Far from Vietnam* all played and received prizes at Leipzig in November 1967 (Moine 2014, 213; *Iskusstvo kino* 1968). The celebrated Cuban, European, and American Vietnam war documentaries drew inspiration from the Vietnamese documentaries made during the war. These forgotten Vietnamese films won prizes and acclaim at Moscow, Tashkent, and Leipzig, and found enthusiastic audiences through radical distribution networks such as Third World Newsreel in the United States (Buchsbaum 2015, 59–60). Early transnational militant cinema networks running through Moscow and Tashkent receded from view as the idea of 'Third Cinema' became institutionalized in manifestos (Solanas and Getino 1969, García Espinosa 1969) and associations (Diawara 1992; Mestman 2002), and later reimaged in critical discourses (Gabriel 1982; Guneratne and Dissanayake 2003). But they deserve further investigation.

Informal transnational film festival networks have been more important than the cultural diplomacy approach has allowed. Unofficial activities at Moscow and Tashkent festivals connected the evolving understanding of world cinema to global political transformations, including decolonization, Third Worldist political movements, and transnational opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War. Global South encounters at Moscow and Tashkent were tangential and unhelpful to the main Soviet diplomatic goal of promoting Soviet cinema. But they were crucial for Asian, African, and Latin American festival participants, and to their North American and European allies such as Jay Leyda and Hilmar Hoffmann. Friendships formed at festivals helped delegates do their cinematic work: shoot films, put together festival lineups, research articles and books, advance aesthetic and social movements, organize associations, and, last but not least, meet each other and debate 'world cinema.' The alliances described in this article advanced Third Worldist cinematic institutions and contributed to the transnational circulation of knowledge about Global South cinemas. Telling the history of Soviet film festivals solely in terms of Soviet leaders' objectives in the cultural Cold War would misrepresent and disrespect that work.

Notes

1. I cite archival references according to their location: RGALI and GARF – fond/opis/ed.khr./page number; JSCL – box/folder.

2. For Leyda's relationship with Iwasaki, see their correspondence in JSCL 4/33.
3. On the contemporary analytical concept of 'world cinema' as an evolving canon of cinemas, movements, and styles, and its relationship to 'transnational cinema' flows, see, for example, Nagib, Perriam, and Dudrah (2012); and Ďurovičová and Newman (2010). On early film festivals, see Fehrenbach (1995), 243–59; Blahova (2015); Moine (2014); Kötzing and Moine (2016); Valck (2008). Because of space constraints, in this article I only cite a few representative works from large literatures on world/transnational cinema, Third Cinema/Third World Cinema, film festivals, and cultural diplomacy.
4. For historical consistency, I use the designations First, Second, and Third World throughout this paper.
5. The original Moscow International Film Festival took place in 1935. It was re-launched in 1959 as a biannual festival alternating with Karlovy Vary. The organizers for later installments referred to the 1959 festival as the first; I follow their designation. On the Moscow festival, see Karl (2007); Pisu (2016), 209–246; Roth-Ey (2011), 107–110; Gilburd (2018), 172–178.
6. The biannual Tashkent festival alternated with Moscow, was launched in 1968, included Latin America from 1976, and ended in 1988. On the Tashkent festival, see Djagalov and Salazkina (2016); Kirasirova (2018).
7. On this point, see also Kötzing and Moine (2016), 9–10; Mestman and Salazkina (2015), 13.
8. The Venice festival was on hiatus in the 1970s. After 1968, the Pesaro Festival of New Cinema became the major festival in Italy for militant and Global South films.
9. On 'new waves' at festivals, see Andrew (2004), 14–13; Giovacchini and Sklar (2012), 14, 105–104; Kovács (2007), 251; Câmara (2016), 65.
10. I draw my statistics from detailed Wikipedia entries for every year at Berlinale, Cannes, Moscow, and Venice between 1959 and 1979, and from festival websites (Berlinale 1951–2018; Cannes 1946–2018; Moscow 1959–2017).
11. This paragraph refutes the assumption of 'the dwindling of Third-World films from the programs of the Moscow film festival after the establishment of the Tashkent festival in 1968' (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 291). It also complicates the more general assertion about the 'division of labor' whereby the Soviets invited Western visitors to Moscow but directed Third World visitors to Central Asian republics (Djagalov and Salazkina 2016, 291–292; Kirasirova 2018, 62).
12. Sembène won a Silver Prize for *Emitaï* (1971) in 1971. Diop Mambéty received a Diploma and a FIPRESCI Prize for *Touki-Bouki* (1973) in 1973.
13. For more on Hillmar Hoffmann, see Heide Fehrenbach's article in this issue.
14. Soviet documents give only initials and last names for translators.
15. On Vietnamese cinema in this period, see Diem 1983.
16. Pesaro and Carthage festivals in 1968 were also crucial for the European reception of militant Third World films; and Vina del Mar festivals in 1967 and 1969 were decisive for the formation of the New Latin American Cinema (Salazkina 2018).

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