Tashkent '68: A Cinematic Contact Zone

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In early October 1968, over 240 filmmakers, actors, critics, government and business figures involved in film from 49 African and Asian countries, as well as a smaller number of east and west European observers descended upon Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. The occasion was the inaugural First Tashkent Festival of African and Asian Cinema (which was expanded, for the Fourth Festival in 1976, to include Latin America). Tashkent '68 was fortunate to secure the participation of some major film-makers: Raj Kapoor, an important actor, director and producer in the Indian film industry since 1948, and a protégé of Nehru's; Ousmane Sembene, the Senegalese novelist and best-known filmmaker to come from sub-Saharan Africa; Fumio Kamei, a prominent Japanese documentary filmmaker who had studied film in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s; and Tolomush Okeev, the pre-eminent Kirgiz director. In addition to cultural producers, there were film trade representatives, several ministers, and dozens of embassy officials from Afro-Asian countries allied with, hostile to, or neutral towards the Soviet state. To the best of our knowledge, none of the invited guests had chosen to boycott the festival after the Warsaw-pact invasion of Czechoslovakia that occurred just over a month earlier, despite the call to do so issued by the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESI) at the Venice Film festival a month earlier.[1] Indeed, the absence of any serious repercussions on Soviet–Third-World relations as a result of the crushing of the Prague Spring contrasts with the virtual freeze that took place in Soviet engagement with western cultural producers. In this way, as well as a multitude of others, Second–Third-World relations had fault lines and a logic distinct from those between Soviet and western cultural producers.

Every even year from 1968 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union—with the exception of 1970, when a cholera epidemic broke out in Asia and the festival was cancelled—hundreds of cinematic guests would repeat this journey to Tashkent, the major Soviet show-case city for Third-World film.[2] There, they would get to know each other, interact with local audiences in the movie halls designed especially for the festival, and explore Tashkent's Central Asian modernity as well as the narrow streets of the Old City.[3]

1. Russian State Archive for Literature and the Arts (RGALI) f. 2944, op. 13, d. 1204, l. 155. This observation is also confirmed by Masha Kirasirova in her recent talk "The Eastern International: Soviet Central Asia and the Afro-Asian Colonial World" (paper, Jordan Center for the Study of Russia at NYU, 2015), at www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8JX3SP7nPw (last accessed December 18, 2015).

2. Throughout this essay we use the term "Third World" as a historical concept that had particular meaning at the time and was shared by many of the participants of the festivals—if not by the Soviet authorities, as we will explore later in the text.

3. Central Asian cities, factories, kolkhozes, and places of culture served as the main showcase spaces for Third-World visitors to the Soviet Union. Of the cities, Tashkent was the main destination. See Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging of a Soviet City, 1930–1966* (Pittsburgh, 2010), 202–34.

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The first, 1968 Tashkent festival, showcased 71 feature fiction films and forty-four documentaries from forty-nine countries of Asia and Africa. In 1972, at the second festival, sixty-one countries of Asia and Africa were represented with 106 fiction films. And in 1974, at the third festival, still Afro-Asian in its title, but now including Latin American filmmakers in an "observer" status, the number of participating countries increased to sixty-eight, with 176 films presented and over 300 guests participating in the event.[4] Over the entire lifecycle of the festival it was quite simply the venue where one could see the largest number and widest variety of films representing the world beyond Europe and North America.

Tashkent film festival's combination of sheer geopolitical ambition and its adopted format make it stand apart from other film festivals, as can be confirmed by surveying the rich scholarly literature on the topic.[5] This paper will offer an account of the festival as the most visible link in the Third-World filmmakers' and Soviet cultural bureaucracies' ambitious but now-forgotten effort to construct, with Soviet help, a Third-World cinematic field that could compete against Hollywood or west European cinema's global domination in the realm of both aesthetics and distribution. Although it is now largely forgotten in historical accounts of either regional cinemas of Asia and Africa or global film festivals, the Tashkent festival served as the main forum common to Second and Third-World cinemas, providing the latter with a major site for interconnectivity while offering the former its major window on the cinemas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Viewed in retrospect, the festival underscores the often conflicting ideological agendas and geopolitical formations that typify the global film festival phenomenon of the Cold War era, and prefigures some of the more contemporary developments on the world film festival scene whose center is gradually shifting beyond Europe. This paper seeks to reconstruct the elements that came into place during the crucial First Tashkent festival to make it the main contact zone in the larger field of interaction between the Soviet bloc and Third-World cinemas.[6]

As a contact zone, however, Tashkent was peculiar. In defining that term as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other," Mary Louise Pratt brings to focus the "highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today."[7] The contact zone constructed at Tashkent cannot be reduced to the "colonizer-colonized," "center-periphery," or any singular hegemonic model (including the Cold War binary). With so many different social actors representing a wide range of geopolitical and cultural formations with various degrees of impact on the organization

4. Semion Chertok, *Tashkenskii festival'* (Tashkent, 1975), 6–7.

5. For an annotated biography on the whole subfield of international film festival studies, see Skadi Loist and Marijke de Valck "Thematic Biography on Film Festival Research—Update: 2009" in Dina Iordanova and Ruby Chong, eds., *Festival Yearbook 2: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities* (St. Andrews, 2010), 220–58.

6. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), 4–5.

7. Ibid, 4–5.

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and outcome of the event, what makes Tashkent film festival so fascinating is the variety and instability of hegemonies at play. As a whole, the Soviet terrain is much more multifaceted and more utopian than Pratt's colonial "contact zone" as suggested previously in earlier work by Slavists such as Harsha Ram's study of Russo-Georgia poetics, Jeff Sahadeo's description of Central Asian migrants in post-WWII Moscow and Leningrad, or Monica Popescu's reconstruction of South African Lewis Nkosi's experience with Soviet-bloc Poland.[8] Like these studies, our account emphasizes the polyvalence of Soviet interactions with the non-Soviet world, thereby offering a counterpoint to the work of such prominent scholars as Evgeny Dobrenko, who have stressed the top-down nature of Soviet interactions with foreign cultures. At once clearly drawn and yet elusive at the moment of actual encounter, constantly shifting and collapsing, these emerging alliances and conflicts could be seen as producing new potentialities for the geopoetics of Third-World cinema, which was represented at the festival.[9]

Pratt borrows the concept of "contact" from linguistics, where the term "contact language" refers to improvised languages that develop among native speakers of different languages who need to communicate with each other consistently. Such languages, she reminds us, "begin as pidgins, and are called creoles when they come to have native speakers of their own."[10] Indeed, we can productively think about the Tashkent film festival as a confluence of multiple cinematic languages, which we can categorize in one of two ways: either "languages of cinema" (that is, styles, topoi, camera and narrative techniques, and poetics of the various cinemas represented) or as discourses on what cinema is or could be, such as its role in society as well as the need for solidarity in the common struggle against Hollywood, or more generally, western domination.

In this first sense of this shared cinematic language, Tashkent witnessed the contact of Soviet film, complicated through its multiple Central Asian dialects, with the highly-codified structures of newsreels, travelogues and other traditional documentary forms from around the world, including the well-established and yet diverse commercial cinematic languages of Japanese genre film, Indian popular cinema, the art house and political innovations of New Latin American Cinema of the 1960s and Third Cinema of the

8. Harsha Ram, "Towards a Cross-cultural Poetics of the Contact Zone: Romantic, Modernist, and Soviet Intertextualities in Boris Pasternak's Translations of T'itsian T'abidze," *Comparative Literature* 59, no. 1(Winter 2007): 63–89; Jeff Sahadeo, "Druzhba narodov or Second-Class Citizenship? Soviet Asian migrants in a post-colonial world," *Central Asian Survey* 26, no. 4 (December 2007): 26(4), 559–79; and Monica Popescu, "Lewis Nkosi in Warsaw: Translating Eastern European Experiences for an African Audience," *Journal of Post-Colonial Writing* 48, no. 2 (May 2012): 176–87.

9. The concept of "geopoetics" has undergone numerous expansions and redefinitions since the Scottish poet and philosopher Kenneth White originally proposed it in the late 1970s. The clearest and most generative definition, and the one that the authors of this paper have adopted, was formulated by Dennitza Gabarkova: "The relationship between aesthetic and creative strategies and geographic and geopolitical issues." See: "A Hole in the Continent': The Geopoetics East/West of Tawada Yōko," *Études gérmaniques* 259, no. 3 (2010).

10. Pratt, 6.

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1970s, as well as the emerging vernaculars of post-colonial African and Asian film. The analysis of this shared cinematic language will remain outside the scope of this paper, and we will instead focus on the construction of the new shared language *about* Third-World film that the Tashkent festival contact zone helped develop. Ultimately, however, these two types of languages are interpenetrative and impossible to isolate: the larger geopolitical imaginaries, institutional structures, and circulatory networks that intersected at Tashkent contributed to the creation of shared cinematic languages. This kind of geo-poetics was new and unstable at the time, heavily reliant on the transcultural translation that contact zones like Tashkent enabled, its idiom still highly fluid and sometimes heavily experimental. But our understanding of this phenomenon needs to proceed from the specific material conditions that activated the particular political and ideological forces that, in turn, shaped the First Tashkent Film Festival to be unlike any other sphere of such encounters. As a starting point for such analysis, this paper turns its attention to the archival materials left by the organizers of the festival, which will help us place it in relation to the wider Soviet agenda and the international networks of which it formed a part.

Seeing (Third-World Cinema) like a (Soviet) State

The Soviet archives offer unusually rich and almost unexplored perspectives on African and Asian culture. In the post-Stalin era, Soviet cultural bureaucracies returned to their pre-WWII ambition to intervene internationally in all possible cultural frameworks, using the material resources and reputation of Soviet cinema and contacting a vast number of artists and cultural figures sympathetic, or at least not actively hostile, to the Soviet project. They also fostered translations and visits to Soviet sites of interest as a preface to possible collaboration with left-leaning foreign cultural producers. In the case of the emerging post-colonial world, the Soviet initiatives, starting from the late 1950s, were ploughing virgin soil. What is striking about them is their counterintuitive power dynamics, which David Engerman describes in his magisterial review article on Soviet diplomacy and economic policy *vis-a-vis* the newly decolonized African and Asian countries.[11] Even though the Soviet state was the party with the resources and the reputation of having achieved its socialist revolution, it often played the role of the supplicant, the initiator, the ingratiating host, in its dealings with Third-World cultural producers. Although occasionally attempted, a hard line and/or imperial haughtiness were rarely an option in the competitive logic of the Cold War. In the cultural field, too, the Soviet state could be quite obsequious at times. For the Tashkent festival to claim a comprehensively representational status, practically all Afro-Asian societies with at least the beginnings of cinema had to be invited, whatever the cost.

To this end, in the months before October 1968, the Soviet festival organizers sent two or three-person delegations to practically all of the invited

11. David Engerman, "The Second World's Third World," *Kritika: Explorations of Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no.1 (Winter 2011): 183–211.

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countries with the aim of persuading the cultural establishment to participate and to make selections of films to be screened. These delegations, who were required upon their return to produce accounts of the state of cinema in their assigned country, established contacts with filmmakers, and helped select films, actors and directors to represent that country. Some choices were fairly simple to make: Sembene Ousmane, in particular, represented the ideal intersection of international reputation (a famous writer, whose novels had been translated and published in the journal *Inostrannaia literatura*, as well as celebrated director of the first sub-Saharan African feature film) and political commitment (though his membership in the French Communist Party might have lapsed, he remained loyal to the idea to the end of his life). As someone who had received his cinematic training in the USSR, in Moscow's Gorky Film Studio, under the supervision of Mark Donskoi, Sembene could be further showcased as a product of Soviet education.[12] Moreover, he had participated in several Soviet cultural events before, including his involvement in the First (inaugural) Congress of the Afro-Asian Writers' Movement in Tashkent in 1958, and was therefore known to the festival organizers to be reliable. Raj Kapoor's importance to the organizers of the Tashkent festival had different origins: Kapoor was not only one of the most successful Indian filmmakers but also the director and star of some of the most beloved and commercially successful films in the Soviet Union of the time, notably *Brodiaga/The Vagabond* (*Awara*, 1951), which made Kapoor probably the most popularly recognizable figure of all the visitors to the First Tashkent Festival. He had also been to the Soviet Union in 1954 as part of the first official visit of Indian filmmakers, where, as legend has it, a crowd picked up his car (with the actor in it) and carried it to his hotel from a theatre. He visited again in 1956, as a guest of the Second Indian Film Festival held in Moscow.[13]

Beyond the focus on such obvious "stars," the politics of whom to invite to the festival were much more difficult to negotiate. In India and Japan, for example, the delegation would approach commercial studios, individual artists, and cultural figures (as well as regional chapters of the local communist parties) with invitations to participate in the film festival. In states such as Pakistan and Iran, the government played a decisive role in the film industries and reserved the final say on what films and figures would participate, sometimes allowing input from the festival organizers but sometimes not.

The problem of establishing criteria for selecting films for festivals was one of the key topics hotly debated by the major European festivals—Cannes, Berlin and Venice—throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. By 1968, the model of a festival as a national showcase—whereby different countries submitted a selection to represent their national cinema, effectively constituting the festival's program—began to be seen as antiquated. Starting from the early 1970s, it was the films and directors who would be represented—not nation states—and it was the festival directors and programmers who were to select

12. Josephine Woll, "The Russian Connection: Soviet Cinema and the Cinema of Francophone Africa" in Françoise Pfaff ed., *Focus on African Films* (Bloomington, 2004), 225–28.

13. Shobhan Saxena, "Give comrades Bollywood," *The Times of India* (May 6, 2012).

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them. Similarly, one of the consequences of the fiasco of the 1968 Cannes film festival, which had to be cancelled due to protests, was the decision of several major European film festivals, including both Cannes and Venice, to cancel their prizes and instead introduce specialized programs to better reflect the artistic and ideological diversity of cinema beyond its representation of "the national."[14]

Tashkent's selection process stands curiously apart from these developments. Unlike its European counterparts, the organizing committee was focused mainly on producing the widest possible showcase of cinemas of individual nation states. This move was hardly a gesture towards any notion of artistic independence or the autonomy of the programmer as a cultural producer. While European film festivals' insistence on controlling their programs was primarily geared towards making sure that a film's selection would reflect rigorous artistic criteria—privileging individual artists over national film industries and thus contributing to the rise of the very categories of "art" and "auteur" cinemas—Tashkent's attempts to bypass (or, more commonly, negotiate with) the national governments in selecting films was driven by an opposing drive: to produce a diverse repertoire, privileging politically left-leaning filmmakers without excluding either popular commercial cinema or what started to be identified as "art cinema" in general. European film festivals discussed the selection of films on the basis of their artistic quality as a guarantee of a degree of objectivity and freedom from nationalist biases and the cronyism of formal and informal networking of governments and commercial interests. This perspective was quite opposed to the selection criteria for films used at the festivals in Asia, Africa and Latin America, which emerged around the same time and for which the celebration and promotion of cinema as an art was secondary compared to the political urgency of cinema's emancipatory potential. Thus, the structure of the selection and evaluation process in Tashkent reflects its status as a compromise between several contradictory models.

The detailed reports that Soviet delegations wrote upon their return from trips abroad to finalize the selections and lists of guests constitute at once a unique snapshot of Third-World film cultures, an overview of Soviet aesthetic, political, and commercial criteria in relation to non-western culture, and a record of priorities of self-representation on the part of the post-colonial film makers and cultural bureaucrats. The reports also make clear that one of the key goals for the festival was to establish networks that would enable better import and exhibition possibilities for Soviet films in Asia and Africa, as well as facilitate opportunities for co-productions. In this respect, Tashkent was not unlike other film festivals anywhere else. It also demonstrates that the rhetoric promoted by the festival of struggle against the global dominance of Hollywood concealed a similar cultural-colonialist agenda on part of the Soviet organizers.

The geopolitical contours of the festival and their nomenclature deserve

14. The prize cancellation was a short-lived phenomenon, though special programs became a significant part of the restructuring of the European festival organization. See De Valck, 63–64.

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a closer look. Despite its political currency at the time, "Third-World cinema" was not the term used by the festival organizers. The Soviet cultural bureaucracies defined the cinemas they invited to Tashkent as Afro-Asian (adding subsequently Latin American) since this formula allowed them a place at the Third-World table by including the Soviet Union's Asian republics. Those Republics did, of course, foster distinct cinema traditions: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia all had film studios, which were showcased as part of the festival. The continental designation came with its own problems, however, which the organizers debated at great length, notably the inclusion in this formula of the major industrial and cinematic power of Japan, by no means a Third-World country but a significant presence in the festival, as well as China, Israel and the Republic of South Africa, which the Soviet organizers could not invite for political reasons.

But if "Third-World cinema" seems for these reasons a problematic designation for the films shown in Tashkent, it nonetheless captures the tension between the two different logics operating within Soviet cultural bureaucracies. The more intuitive of the two meanings is the inclusion of all the national cinemas of the Third World—or, in the Soviet parlance of the time, "developing"—countries. This definition includes films, filmmakers, and film-industries so multifarious that they have little in common except for the geographic origins of their production. As the Soviet festival delegation visiting South Asia was forced to conclude, the prolific Indian cinema (by 1968 the Bombay-based Indian entertainment industry alone was already producing over 300 feature films per year, and enjoying wide international circulation) had little in common, for example, with Cambodian cinema (whose sole director and producer was Prince Norodom Sihanouk himself).[15]

The second meaning of Third-World cinema is associated with political cinema, which served the emancipatory Third-World project, the cinematic equivalent of the Non-Aligned Movement.[16] Such a definition sounds like a very loose formulation of Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's notion of a *Third Cinema*, borrowing its overall spirit of political engagement from the anti-imperialist struggles of national liberation and cinema's direct participation in that project. Published in 1969, Solanas and Getino's manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," proposes a different mode of film production in opposition to both studio-based entertainment cinema exemplified by Hollywood or the state-sponsored film industry such as Mosfilm, which they saw as merely different wings of establishment cinema, and modernist auteur cinema, exemplified by European art cinemas (the "Second Cinema"). Third Cinema, by contrast, was meant to explicitly change the System, directly engaging in political realities, providing analysis of revolutionary causes, and directly contributing to the liberation by involving both filmmak-

15. RGALI f. 2944, op. 13, e.x. 1200, l. 81–91.

16. "The Third World was not a place. It was a project" are the first two sentences of Vijay Prashad's magisterial *The Darker Nations: People's History of the Third World* (New York, 2007), xv. In Prashad's interpretation, the Non-Aligned Movement was the political instantiation of this project while anti-colonial struggle, socialism, and emancipation constituted its ideological content.

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ers and audiences in political acts.[17] By choosing "For peace, social progress, and freedom of the peoples" as the motto of the festival (unlike their Western counterparts, Soviet-bloc festivals occasionally had themes), the Tashkent film festival organizers were gesturing towards this second, explicitly emancipatory promise of "Third-World cinema." However, the selection of the festival did not focus on the type of independently-produced, explicitly-political filmmaking associated with Third Cinema, and in fact included a very wide range of cultural products from the region, many of whom would arguably fall under the "First" or, occasionally, "Second" cinema rubric. At the same time, many of the filmmakers who became directly associated with the tricontinental project of Third Cinema—such as Ousmane Sembene, Patricio Guzman, and Mrinal Sen, to name just a few—became regular and much celebrated participants over the course of the Festival's history. Their participation made Tashkent a premium destination to see a wide variety of films connected to this movement and enabled a limited exhibition of these films in select venues elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Soviet bloc never embraced the theoretical and ideological articulations of Third Cinema. Thus, throughout its history, the Tashkent Festival never resolved the tension between the two meanings of "Third-World cinema," since the desire of the organizers to make it an explicitly political festival conflicted with their ambition to fully represent the cinema of all of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Additional forces in shaping Tashkent's program included commercial pressures, incentives rooted in already existing audience preferences as well as Soviet cultural-expansionist agendas.

The Soviet delegations visiting African and Asian countries before the festival were thus left with the task of negotiating between the two meanings of Third-World cinema in practice. To be sure, the need to produce a *comprehensive* invitation list usually trumped political considerations. Ruled by a regime that had three years earlier killed 500,000 Communist Party members and sympathizers, Indonesia was not a state with which the USSR maintained diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, even Indonesia was formally invited and eventually represented at the Festival.

The Soviet delegation sent to Japan faced another particular predicament: it had to select delegates and films from three different and competing film consortia—the Japanese Film Association, which included the major studios and distribution channels; the Association for the Renewal of Japanese Film, which was affiliated with the Japanese Communist Party (JCP); and the Filmmakers' Guild, which had ties to a breakaway current within JCP. The politics that the Soviet representatives G. B. Mariamov and S. Shermukhamedova had to navigate were quite complex: the Association for the Renewal of Japanese film used its proximity to JCP to claim that it alone should represent Japanese cinema in the Soviet Union while the other two groups refused to participate if the national delegation included an Association cadre. Japanese cinema

17. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," *Tricontinental* no. 13 (October 1969), a publication of OSPAAL (Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America).

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was at the time the leading non-Western cinema of European film festivals, which made securing a broad representation a priority for festival organizers.[18] They somehow succeeded in bringing films and representatives from all three Japanese film consortia to Tashkent.[19] As a result, the representation of Japanese films at the First Tashkent film festival ranged widely across the Japanese cinematic spectrum. Exhibited were the works of Masaki Kobayashi, one of the most prominent Japanese directors of the Golden Age (1950s-60s), much celebrated on the European film festival circuit for his formally innovative, pacifist treatment of WWII. His film was shown alongside that of Kaneto Shindo, whose career as a director and international success owed much to the Grand Prize of the 1961 Moscow film festival for his visually striking film without any spoken dialogue, *The Naked Island* (*Hadaka no shima*, 1960). Also presented was Satsuo Yamamoto, a political filmmaker and member of the Japanese Communist Party well known for his anti-war epics (he was also a regular at the Moscow Film Festival, and was later dubbed "the Red Cecil B. DeMille" in Japan). The works of such producers of standard genre entertainment fare as Tokuzo Tanaka and Koreyoshi Kurahara also featured on the festival program.

In countries where cinema was a matter of state interest, the negotiations were with state officials, but were in no way simpler. The Soviet film archives contain the diplomatic correspondence regarding Iranian participation in the Tashkent festival.[20] Upon being invited by a Soviet diplomat, Iranian officials coolly agreed to consider the invitation, but refused to host a Soviet film delegation and rejected any form of Soviet participation in the selection of Iranian delegates or films to be screened. In an effort to entice Iranian diplomats, the Union of Soviet Cinematographers organized Iranian evenings in Moscow at which it had screened a short Iranian documentary film about the coronation of the King and Queen. Gratefully noting this and other Soviet overtures, the Iranian cultural bureaucracy agreed to participate, and in addition to sending a fiction film, hastily produced a documentary entitled *Soviet Prime Minister A. N. Kosygin's Visit* (1968), which it entered in the short and documentary film section of the festival.

In fact, most countries' selections took the short film and documentary program as an opportunity to exhibit national propaganda. Just a quick look at some of the titles at the first edition of the festival reveal the prominence of this mode of filmmaking: Morocco, for example, was represented by *The Country of Civilization*, Liberia by *The Country of the Future*, Uganda by *Our National Monuments*, Pakistan by *Panorama of Pakistan*, and Uzbekistan by *8 Minutes According to Uzbekistan*. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam called attention to its plight with *One Day in Hanoi*.

Indeed, whenever festival organizers were not able to send delegations, the task of securing participation fell to Soviet embassy officials, who left their

18. Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) was the first non-Western film to be awarded a major film festival prize (Venice's Golden Lion in 1951), symbolically marking Japanese film's breakthrough onto the world stage.

19. RGALI f. 2944 (Soviet Union of Cinematographers), op. 13, e.x. 1200, l. 22–25.

20. RGALI f. 2944, op. 13, e.x. 1202, l. 5–6

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own stamp on the process. In arranging Cambodia's participation in the festival (Prince Norodom Sihanouk's film *Shadow of Angkor*), for example, Ambassador Kudriavtsev advised the festival organizing committee:

> It would be desirable if the relevant authorities ensured that the reception and the whole visit of the Cambodian delegation went well and also awarded the film *The Shadow over Angkor* with one of the festival prizes. [To support the latter suggestion, Kudriavtsev attaches a local review of the film, where we read:]
>
> From among the films of the Head of State this is the deepest and most interesting one, testifying to the talent of the author. This, however, does not mean that all previous films of the Head of State are less interesting.[21]

While this may appear to be a merely amusing anecdote, it illuminates the complex political logic of this process: in 1968 the neutralist stance of Sihanouk was crucial to the strategy of the Vietnamese revolutionary forces. Courting the ruler of Cambodia through his films was a point of intersection between not only a *third-worldist* politics (galvanized by the war in Vietnam), but also a very local political strategy on the part of the Soviet state. And in fact, the published review of *Shadow over Angkor* for the festival report describes the film as a "keen political work . . . a direct response to all those who try to push Cambodia away from its path of independence and neutrality, directed against the American conspirators from the CIA and their Thai and Saigon accomplices."[22]

However, at the same time that political and geo-political concerns were of the highest importance for making the festival representative of the field, the Soviet delegations were also concerned about meeting commercial goals. Although film trade was deliberately kept less conspicuous than at class A festivals such as Cannes, Venice, or Berlin, an important part of the organizers' calculus was to establish direct cinematic trade relations among Afro-Asian nations, and even more importantly, to create a market for Soviet cinematic exports and imports. These two conflicting agendas embody the contradictions of the festival as a hybrid form between the two alternatives to the established European festivals of the time—the former being a major goal of Third World festivals of the period, the latter reflecting the expansionist economic and political logic of the Soviet bloc's culture. What often provided the rhetorical connection between these two conflicting incentives was the resistance to western, and in particular Hollywood, domination over the world film market.

In order to accomplish their expansionist goal, wherever they went, Soviet delegations reported on the presence (or absence) of Soviet cinema on the local screens. They asked about opportunities to export Soviet film to that country and about the nature of film distribution there (especially who controlled it: foreign or local firms or the state itself). The author of the report about Sri Lanka, V. A. Volkov, complained that Hollywood and Bombay-

21. RGALI f. 2944, op. 13, e.x. 1202, l. 118. Archival translation, here and elsewhere, is Rossen Djagalov's. In fact, Sihanouk's 1966 *La Forêt Enchantée* (*The Enchanted Forest/ Robam Tepmonorom*) was entered into the 1967 Moscow Film Festival.

22. B. Kimiagarov, "Novaia glava v istorii kino," from *Ekran 1968* (Moscow, 1969), 220.

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based Hindi films dominated the Sri Lankan market, leaving little space for Soviet ones. Indeed, U.S. monopoly over film distribution in African and Asian countries emerges as a motif in a number of these reports, and later forms one of the key topics for discussion among the guests of the festivals, as documented in the interviews and press conferences. Instead of trying to break into the existing film distribution systems, Volkov suggested renting cinema halls to exhibit Soviet films and otherwise expanding the efforts of the Soviet embassy, which sponsored the Soviet Society for Friendship, and the Colombo Film Society.[23] He also informed his superiors that he had engaged in preliminary negotiations with politician and film producer Reggie Pereira and sent the script Pereira proposed for a possible Soviet-Sri Lankan co-production.[24] In their role as commercial representatives of Soviet cinema, the Soviet delegates themselves had to field uncomfortable queries by cultural bureaucrats or film studio representatives of foreign countries about the Soviet Union's own closed cinema system: a Japanese official, for example, pointed out that over the last three years $1,947,000 worth of Soviet films had been bought by Japan whereas the Soviet side had procured only $222,000 worth of Japanese film.[25]

The problems faced by the Soviet film delegation visiting India on the eve of the festival were of entirely different nature. By the time it arrived, of course, Indian cinema not entirely new to Soviet audiences and film professionals. Starting in the early 1950s, when Vsevolod Pudovkin led an official delegation of Soviet film professionals to India, which resulted in the organization of the first Indian Film Festival in Moscow in 1954, Soviet audiences became quite enamored with many of best known actors and directors of Hindi popular cinema: Raj Kapoor, Nargis, Dev Anand, and K. A. Abbas were already household names for many Russians, and by 1968, many of the popular Indian films had circulation in the Soviet Union.[26] After Raj Kapoor's *Awara* surpassed all domestic and foreign films for a whole decade when it was screened in the mid-1950s, Soviet import-export organizations became keenly aware of the profitability of Indian films.[27] In 1967, a new agreement was signed by the Soviet Film Export Agency with the Indian Ministries of Information and Broadcasting and Trade, reaffirming reciprocity in film commerce.[28] Thus, when the Soviet delegation went to India to promote the Tashkent film festival and secure India's participation in it, they had formal and informal ties in place, some basic knowledge of the industry, the assurance of Soviet audience's interests and established taste, and ample political and commercial incentive to use the festival as a springboard for further collaboration. Unsurprisingly, Raj Kapoor, Nargis, and K.A. Abbas were the first points of contact during

23. Such a solution was typical of Soviet international film policy starting from the 1920s–30s. But what this also meant was that the Soviet films exhibited were not part of the commercial distribution system and could not generate much-needed revenue.

24. RGALI f. 2944, op. 13, e.x. 1200, l. 81–91.

25. Ibid., l. 27.

26. Sudha Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas: The Culture of Movie-Going after Stalin* (Bloomington, 2008).

27. Rajagopalan, 66.

28. Ibid, 80.

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their visit. The Soviet delegation, however, was eager to expand on these existing contacts, and reach out to the regional film industries in India, beyond Bombay. The delegation, comprising N. Ia. Volchenko, the chair of the foreign commission of the Soviet Filmmakers' Union, S. M. Mukhamedov, the chair of the Uzbek Union of Cinematographers, and A. P. Kaiumov, the head of the Tashkent festival, had sent out invitations to 29 film associations across the country to submit films for the Tashkent festival. In Calcutta, the delegation was particularly interested in attracting the interest of Satyajit Ray, whose reputation as an international *auteur* was well established by that time, and whose artistic sensibilities were fully in line with the Soviet film representatives' expectations of "serious" cinema. They were also impressed with the social consciousness of Tapan Sinha's films, whose *Apanjan* (1968) was selected for Tashkent. In Madras, however, the Soviet delegates reached the limit of their cultural and artistic openness in their encounter with South Indian popular cinemas:

> In Madras, inside a spacious, well-designed studio, we watched a number of films, which were united in their absence of taste. Their audience can't have been a particularly demanding one: the unmotivated tricks and fistfights in which those films abounded were mixed with equally unmotivated singing and dancing. The one conceivable motivation for the making of those films is the desire to make money.
>
> On Aug. 7, 1968 we met the prominent artist and film producer Randy. Then we saw a film of his about the noble actions of a young man, who stood up to the evil deeds of his father. At Randy's recommendation we also saw the film *Love and Money* about the triumph of the good over greed and social prejudices. We had to invite both films.[29]

While such judgment mirrors much of the reception of Indian popular cinema from the western critical establishment (as well as the anti-commercial discourses within India's own criticism), what is perhaps more surprising is that in the Soviet delegation's report this judgment was almost exclusively reserved for South Indian films. The Soviet report praises the acting of most of the Bombay-based industry stars such as Nargis, Mumtaz, and Sunil Dutt, while expressing their surprise at the popularity of their Southern counterparts, such as the star of Tamil cinema Sivaji Ganesan—stating that his success could only be explained by the "singularity of cultural taste."[30] And while criticizing the narrative conventions of Indian popular films in general, they repeatedly comment on their effective use of music, and praise some of the Hindi movies they were shown—for example, *Hamraaz* (B. R. Chopra, 1967)—as clever and engaging. In fact, even though the range of Indian films shown at the festival throughout its history was extremely broad—from the masterpieces of the earlier generations of Indian filmmakers such as Raj Kapoor and K.A. Abbas, to the new "alternative" cinemas of Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mrinal Sen and Ritwik Ghatak, who became regular guests of the festival in the 1970s—the Indian programming at Tashkent largely contributed to

29. RGALI f. 2944, op. 13, e.x. 1200, l. 48.
30. Ibid.

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the popularity of Hindi popular films, which reached their peak in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s.[31]

Constructing a Third-World Cinematic Field

From our current perspective within an over-saturated mediascape, it may be hard to appreciate just how unusual the Tashkent program was. In the 2010s, many kinds of film festivals proliferate outside Europe and North America, most notably in Dubai and Busan—which the global film industries can ill afford to ignore. Starting in the 1980s, in tandem with the acceleration of globalization, there was more considerable inclusion of non-European art cinema in the major festivals, and, largely through the growth of diasporic and specialized film festivals, much greater access to both popular and activist films from around the world. In 1968, however, a festival of Third-World cinema on this scale was unique, with no other festival coming close to it in terms of its diversity and reach in the representation of the cinemas of the world, as well as the sheer number of films exhibited.

Of course, cinemas from outside western Europe and North America were not completely ignored by the older and more prestigious film festivals, such as Venice, Cannes, and Berlin; however, their representation was extremely limited. With the emergence of cinematic new waves and stronger translational ties between leftist filmmakers and critics in the 1960s, many of the new European festivals, such as Rotterdam, Sestri Levante festival of Latin American Cinema, or Pesaro Festival of New Cinemas became important centers for the exhibition of new cinemas from around the world. The emphasis on the competition, the conservative aesthetic criteria, and the largely European orientation towards auteur or Art Cinema of those festivals proved significant barriers for African, Asian, and Latin American entries, however. Even the Rotterdam festival, which distinguished itself by snubbing the usual festival preoccupation with commerce and stars and making a much greater investment in new forms and geographies, stuffed African and Asian films into its "special programs," that is, films screened outside of the main competition. The signature Soviet-bloc film festivals—the Czechoslovak Karlovy Vary (founded in 1946) and the newer Moscow Film Festival (founded in 1959)—had recruited a significant number of Third-World films into their selections, but this policy only reinforced those festivals' reputation for political rather than aesthetic choices. Despite their insistence on including Third-World films in their selection, these films were still subject to clear Euro-centric hierarchies, and usually relegated to special programs and separate awards, reflecting and underlining the general pro-western orientation of Soviet culture. One can notice the dwindling of Third-World films from the programs of the Moscow film festival after the establishment of the Tashkent festival in 1968. As with literature and politics, a geographical division of labor was emerging: western visitors, be they politicians, writers, or cultural emissaries, would head to Moscow whereas their African, Afro-American, Asian, and Latin American

31. For a detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinemas*.

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colleagues were shunted to Tashkent (or Alma-Ata, Samarkand, Bukhara, and other cities for showcasing the USSR's Asian modernity).

By the end of the 1960s, the case for a specifically Third-World film festival was growing progressively stronger as most newly decolonized countries had produced at least one feature film. Several international film festivals outside Europe had begun to emerge: Mar de Plata and the short-lived Montevedeo Film Festivals in Latin America started in the late 1950s, followed in the 1960s by Cartagena and Viña Del Mar. The Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage, founded in 1966, became the obligatory festival stop for Arab and North African films, and was fundamental for the 1969 establishment of FESPACO *Festival Pan-Africain du Cinema.*[32] In practice, however, most of those festivals were largely regional and therefore limited in their international reach. Moreover, many of them were specifically tasked with increasing the visibility of their films among friendly western (largely European) cinematic institutions, which could result in distribution on the broader western-dominated global market. As such, these festivals were themselves often bound by the contradictory dual logic of the desire to establish new networks of production and distribution that could bypass western ones, and the need for recognition by these very western-dominated institutions. Tashkent film festival played an uneasy role in this process. As a more radical alternative, after 1968, the more explicitly Third-World agenda emerged with the foundation of the Third World Cinema Committee whose overt objective was to create non-aligned South-South lines of communication among the artists and independent film industries. The committee, active in 1973–74 and alternating between Algiers and Buenos Aires, included many of the key participants in the Tashkent festival but evidently adhered to a program of neutrality that was wary of both superpowers and sought a venue outside the umbrella of Soviet influence with which the Tashkent festival was inevitably associated.[33] Unlike Tashkent, the Committee was also much more politically radical in its conception and absolutely hostile to popular commercial cinemas. But it was also considerably more limited geographically and much smaller in scale: its meetings were attended by some 40 filmmakers, mainly Africans (apart from the host country, Egypt, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Congo, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Tunisia), Latin Americans (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay), and Palestinians, as well as some European observers.[34]

While there was considerable overlap among participants at such festivals, and many of them were united in their opposition to Hollywood and/or European cinematic hegemony, the scale of the Tashkent film festival, both in terms of the number of countries represented and the breadth of cinematic

32. After 1968, a few more festivals were established such as the short-lived but lavish Tehran International Film Festival (1972–1979) under the patronage of the Shah, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival in Ougadougou (ran by the government of Burkina Fasso since 1969), and the Cairo Film Festival, which was first held in 1976.

33. Its key participants included Lamine Merbah (Algeria), Santiago Alvarez (Cuba), Ousmane Sembene (Senegal), Jorge Giannoni (Argentina) and Hamid Merei (Syria), all of whom were regular visitors to Tashkent in the course of the 1970s.

34. See Mariano Mestman, "From Algiers to Buenos Aires: The Third World Cinema Committee," *New Cinemas. Journal of Contemporary Film* 1.1 (2002), 40–53.

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production included, gave it the edge as the premier Third-World festival showcase. There was simply no other cinematic forum for the movies of the Global South that could compete with its scale, and hence, capacity to establish interconnections among filmmakers and audiences.

The Tashkent festival therefore took its place in the world festival system as a unique site, balancing between several other types of festival formation, and enabling international circulation of cinema beyond its European and North American centers. Within the Soviet-bloc film festivals circuit, it gained credibility due to its ties with such prestigious sites as Moscow or Karlovy Vary, whose main goal was to assert the centrality of the eastern bloc's ideological and political power in international cinema. Testifying to the prestige that the Soviet state accorded it, the Tashkent festival abroad was promoted and supported by multiple state institutions: from the USSR's diplomatic missions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to its state-run tourist agency (Intourist), and all manner of Soviet "public" or international organizations.

While they were eager to portray their event as incomparable to other such festivals, the Tashkent organizers were intent on creating a new, important node in the context of the existing international film festival circuit. With this in mind, the organizers agonized over the proper setting, seeking a propitious time of the year for the festival to take place, and requesting travel subsidies to entice some participants. To enable the participation of Arab filmmakers, for example, the Tashkent organizers had to arrange a special Aeroflot flight to transport participants directly from the Carthage film festival, which was scheduled just days before the Tashkent festival at the end of September 1968.

However, as we have already mentioned, in one important way, organizers were determined to violate the norm for the A-class festivals to which they liked to compare their own: they did not set up a mechanism to award prizes. The Tashkent festival was non-competitive and without a jury. This decision was not wholly a reflection of some egalitarian ethic; rather, it was a canny way of bypassing the rules laid down by most of the well-known festivals that films competing for the prize at one could not do so at another. This rule allowed films to participate at other festivals only under certain conditions, for instance, in auxiliary film programs. If the Tashkent film festival had awarded prizes, it would have foregone the work of some of the more ambitious African and Asian filmmakers. Making a virtue of necessity, the festival publicized its anomalous and less elitist organization, delegating the prize-giving to Soviet public organizations such as labor unions, creative artists' organizations, women's committees, newspapers and magazines. As a result, most films screened at Tashkent returned home with some prize, none of which stood out as more prestigious than others.

Despite such egalitarian strategies, there was no way to smooth over the cinematic inequalities evident at the festival. As was already mentioned, the countries represented ranged from cinematic powerhouses such as India, Japan, and Egypt to Syria, which had just produced its first feature film. The Soviet state, as organizer of the event, was represented by nine different cinemas from its eight republics (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), and Russia. This accounted

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for the vast majority of Soviet films at the First Festival and aroused some grumbling about Soviet overrepresentation by foreign participants.[35] There was a commercial incentive for this choice as well—since among the festival participants there were many trade representatives looking for suitable Soviet films to import to their countries.

Ideologically, the agenda that united most participants, Soviet cultural bureaucracies and Afro-Asian filmmakers alike, was the common sentiment that these cinemas suffered unfairly from their peripheral status vis-à-vis western (Hollywood, but also west European) cinematic hegemony. It is this aspect that Soviet coverage of the First Festival singles out—only to be seconded by many third-worldist filmmakers: "We must push out of our cinemas [western] B-movies. But all the movie-theaters belong to Italians and the choice of films to screen depends on them," said the Somali filmmaker Hadj Mohamed Giumale. The African-American actor, film-maker, and African solidarity activist Ossie Davis could not exhibit his film *Kongi's Harvest* based on Wole Soyinka's play by the same name in Nigeria because, in his words, "The film distribution system is controlled by Lebanese and Indian businessmen, who doubt the economic potential of Nigerian films and don't give us [the political film studio he and other Nigerian filmmakers had set up] a chance."[36]

The insurmountable difficulty for Third-World film (in the political sense of the term) to break through the foreign monopoly of domestic and international film distribution became the main refrain of the Filmmakers' Seminar held at all festivals. Indeed, while informal encounters and film screenings were the most important ways in which filmmakers, actors, and other kinds of participants from different countries met each other at the festival, the Seminar—another unusual feature of the festival—was the only venue where their conversations were transcribed and made available. Entitled "On the Role of Art in the Struggle for Peace, Social Progress and Freedom of the Peoples" and usually chaired by Vladimir Baskakov, the irreplaceable chair of the All-Soviet Research Institute of the History and Theory of Cinema and the deputy head of Goskino (1963–1973), these seminars brought together the leading directors who had come to the festival. Partly as an expression of the filmmakers' gratitude to their hosts but also reflecting a genuine sentiment, the participants in these seminars would again and again return to the point of Tashkent's importance as a meeting place for Third-World cinema.[37] Writing after the '68 festival, Giumale emphasized that it was there that he first had an opportunity to meet his fellow filmmakers from other African nations and see their films. Already the following year he was involved in establishing the Fédération Pan-Africaine des Cinéastes (FEPACI), which too sought to develop Pan-African relationships but without the mediation of the Soviet Union. Similarly, in interviews conducted at the First Festival, the Guinean minister of

35. To avoid the appearance of Soviet domination, in future festivals Soviet Asian films were listed separately from foreign films.

36. "Pervyi somaliiskii." *Iskusstvo Kino* 1 (January 1969): 134.

37. Transcripts of all the seminars except the first were published under the title *Kino v bor'be za mir, sotsial'nyi progress i svobodu narodov (tvorcheskaia diskussia na Mezhdunarodnom kinofestivale stran Azii, Afriki (i Latinskoi Ameriki)* a few months after each festival by the Research Institution for the History and Theory of Cinema in Moscow.

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information and Soviet-educated film director Costa N'Diane remarked that a Senegalese filmmaker had to go to Tashkent in order to see a Guinean film.[38] Echoing him, the Senegalese filmmaker Blaise Senghor confessed to seeing Somali film for the first time in the Soviet Union.[39] In fact, the sub-Saharan African program of the First Tashkent festival was quite remarkable, including short films from Chad (Edouard Sailly's *Le Troisieme Jour*, 1967), Sierra Leone, Guinea, Uganda, Mali, Cameroon, and of course, Senegal. While some of these films were also being screened at Rotterdam and Leipzig, at Tashkent, it was the critical mass of works and directors that allowed for a productive site of exchange. In this context, Tashkent emerged not only as a space where Third-World filmmakers could be guaranteed a spot to screen their films, but also meet each other, see each other's work, and set up networks for further collaboration.

In addition to other Third-World filmmakers, the foreign participants at the Tashkent festival were also able to interact with local audiences, leaving both parties with deep impressions. Indeed, the articles published about Tashkent in the foreign press (especially the western press) frequently mention the highly impulsive reaction of local audiences to foreign films, contrasting it with the much more disciplined Moscow viewers. In a piece entitled "The Second World Organizes a Festival for the Third," describing the 1974 edition of the Festival, Father Ambros Eichenberger, President of the International Catholic Organization for Cinema, wrote: "Uzbeks, if they don't like a film, react thoroughly "normally": they whistle and leave the hall. This happened particularly frequently during the screenings of political films: sometimes the whole of the 2,300-seat Palace of Culture would get emptied out."[40] The reverse side of this reaction, Eichenberger argues, is the audience's enthusiasm for popular genre films. The average Tashkent filmgoer, he concludes, is not that much different from his Swiss counterpart and seems similarly averse to experimental film.[41]

That same discovery caused much greater distress to politically engaged visitors such as Mrinal Sen, whose own films brought together avant-garde technique and radical political consciousness. In his remarks at the filmmakers' roundtable of the third Tashkent festival, he expressed his great discomfort with the applause the Tashkent audience gave to the Pakistani film *Clay Doll*, which he labelled as "anti-worker." The viewers' reaction, he claimed, testified to the fact that the broad masses have remained the same as they were fifty years ago despite officially proclaimed socialism.[42]

38. Semion Chertok. "Kino chernoi Afriki: problemy i nadezhdy," *Zarubezhnoe kino segodnia* 3 (1972), at www.scepsis.ru/library/id_819.html (last accessed December 18, 2015).

39. Ibid.

40. Ambros Eichenberger, "The Second World Organizes a Festival for the Third," *Zoom-Filmberater* (#13, 1974) in *III Kinofestival' stran Azii I Afriki v Tashkente (Otkliki zarubezhnoi pressy)* (Moscow, 1975), 100.

41. Ibid.

42. Devendre Kumar, "Tashkent Promises a Cinematic Brotherhood," *Cine Advance* (11 July 1974) in *III Kinofestival' stran Azii I Afriki v Tashkente (Otkliki zarubezhnoi pressy)* (Moscow, 1975), 85.

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Despite the clear preference of the local festival audiences for popular entertainment and genre films, it was the African program at Tashkent that proved to be perhaps most important in terms of its impact, generating long-lasting interest in and knowledge about sub-Saharan African cinema in film and cultural circles in the Soviet Union. The 1968 Tashkent festival was followed by several small retrospectives of African cinema in Moscow in subsequent years. It was also a decisive moment for the beginning of Soviet scholarship on African cinema, as many French- and English-to-Russian translators involved in the festival were students or recent graduates of film institutes who went on to become film historians and scholars. While working on European and US cinema was fraught with much political peril and tight ideological control, focusing on Third-World cinemas allowed young scholars more freedom and academic opportunities.[43] Although African cinema never reached popular audiences in the Soviet Union, the festival played an important role in its critical reception and interest, which further facilitated contacts between African artists and intellectuals and the Soviet establishment, securing the place of VGIK (All-Union State Institute of Cinematography) as a rival to Paris as a main educational destination for African filmmakers.[44]

In sharp contrast with many other such cultural gatherings organized by the Soviet state and featuring foreign guests, the contact zone Tashkent offered was significantly less controlled by the Party and KGB; both Soviet and foreign participants and professionals working for the festival were given unusual leeway. According to Elena Razlogova, for example, at the Tashkent film festival, translators did not face the kind of pressure to produce reports on foreigners as they did at the Moscow film festival or the Afro-Asian Writers' Association's Congress in Tashkent (1958).[45] Visitors (Soviet and foreign alike) often spoke about their experience as a sort of utopian state of exception, where various cultural and social norms were temporarily suspended, a kind of a temporary autonomous zone in the midst of a highly organized and orchestrated state event, which became a showcase of Soviet solidarity with a commitment to the world of developing nations. Julie Hessler reaches a similar conclusion in her work about the African students who started coming to Soviet campuses in the late 1950s. Despite the multiple restrictions and inconveniences that came with living in the Soviet state, and the occasional racism of their hosts, many African students testify to their time as one of freedom. As internationally important objects of prestige to the Soviet state, they enjoyed expanded personal rights in comparison to Soviet citizens. But it was the multiple, spontaneous encounters with other African, Asian, and Latin American students, as well as Soviet women, against the background of cities like Moscow, Leningrad, and Kiev, that made their time so exciting and

43. Interview with Kiril Razlogov taken in Moscow on May 26, 2012. For more on the role of the translators and interpreters in the Soviet Union, see Elena Razlogova, "Listening to the Inaudible Foreign: Simultaneous Translators and Soviet Experience of Foreign Cinema," in Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina, eds. *Sound, Music, Speech in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, (Bloomington, 2014).

44. For more on this, see Josephine Woll, "The Russian Connection," 223–41.

45. Elena Razlogova, "Listening to the Inaudible Foreign," 168.

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generative.[46] Even otherwise skeptical visitors to the USSR from the Third-World consistently reported their excitement about their encounters with fellow Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans, as did the multiple guests of the inaugural 1958 Tashkent congress of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, which took place ten years before the first film festival.[47] Despite official programs and events designed by the Soviet hosts to regulate participants' time, there remained plenty of opportunity and space outside of conference halls for unscheduled encounters to take place.

In addition to the festival's role as a heterogeneous and productive site for understanding the complex relationship between Second and Third-World culture, the Tashkent cinematic space deserves a closer look in relation to the present moment. The particular inter-Asian and African constellation that the festival represents in many ways prefigures contemporary developments, which recently began to find their conceptual manifestation in inter-Asian studies. Works such as Chen Kuan Hsing's *Asia as Method* place previously marginalized regional media at the geopolitical center of the global order, defying the Cold War binary, but potentially engaging the Soviet sphere in a different geopolitical constellation.[48] It puts into motion a shifting of boundaries for what is politically imaginable, creating a different set of relations between the center and periphery conceptually and practically; under these shifts, new alliances and flows of communication are formed. Because of the sheer scale of the festival, where so many of the "marginalized" cinemas were represented, the cinematic "centers" (such as India or Japan) were not dominant factors, representing only a small fraction of the festival. Moreover, at least in the case of India, because the selection included such a wide variety of Indian regional cinematic industries, and different kinds of cinema (documentary, politically-engaged experimental, auteur, popular, and anything in-between), the usual hierarchies through which the European and North American cinema communities recognized Indian film were decentered.

Although the festival organizers clearly privileged certain personalities, many of the participants were more interested in Tashkent as a stepping-stone to the more important European film festivals, and the political prejudices of both parties were often displayed, nonetheless, the achievement of the Tashkent film festival was unlike anything else at that time. Given the gradual emergence of inter-Asian media culture in contemporary decades, as well as some of the new Asian–Latin American developments such as the intense ties between contemporary Cuba and China and the role the latter plays in the development of media industries, Tashkent in retrospect provides us with a fascinating historical precedent to festivals such as Busan in Korea or Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, both of which represent global Asia in its selection and prizes. While it was shaped through a concourse of historical and ideological

46. Julie Hessler, "Death of an African Student in Moscow: Race, Politics, and the Cold War," *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 47, no. 1/2 (2006), 33–64.

47. The Soviet organizers of the 1958 Congress had assembled a whole folder of articles the participants had written after returning from Tashkent. See RGALI f. 631, op. 2, ex. 6100.

48. Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Towards Deimperialization* (Durham, 2010).

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forces that are very different from those at play in the post-communist world, the Tashkent festival nevertheless prefigured a different kind of a geopolitical imaginary and a different socio-cultural formation that stood in striking contrast to the cinematic culture of Europe and North America in 1968. Western-centric scholarship has been slow to see the significance of the Tashkent event. The Soviet Union's exceptional status—as a Cold War multi-national superpower, at the same time fostering a certain kind of internationalism and seeking to serve as its undisputed political center—can sometimes obscure the complex role it played in this process.

Tashkent was a site in which a wide range of competing agendas of individual participants and the nations they represented, the priorities of the Soviet state (often varied and contradictory themselves), and the interest differences between the local (Tashkent) and the center (Moscow) assumed a brief equilibrium, a fragile peaceful co-existence. Far from being free from ideological pressures, political power structures, and cultural hierarchies, it still allowed for a dialogue and room to maneuver, which proved to be productive for all the parties involved—and the festival continued to evolve and play a key role in the development of international cinematic networks throughout the 1970s and the earlier part of the 1980s. Its role in forging a Third-World geopoetics, the cinematic imagining of a tricontinental alliance, remains to be written.

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