

Introduction

In early October 1968, more than 240 guests from forty-nine African and Asian countries, as well as a smaller number of European and American observers, descended on the city of Tashkent, the capital of the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. The occasion was the first Tashkent Festival of Cinema of Africa and Asia. In addition to filmmakers, actors and actresses, critics, and other cultural producers, there were film trade representatives, ministers, and dozens of embassy officials from African and Asian countries. There, they would interact with each other, their Soviet hosts, and local audiences; they would explore Tashkent, as well as other Central Asian cities, factories, collective farms, and places of culture; but, most important, they would watch hundreds of films screened in spacious movie halls, some designed especially for this event.¹ In 1966, the city had experienced a devastating earthquake that left three hundred thousand Tashkenters homeless. All but one movie theater had been destroyed. The 1968 festival was a powerful testimony to the successes of Soviet modernization, with Tashkent once again serving as a showcase for international visitors, as it had on other occasions in its history.² After 1974, the festival would expand to include Latin American cinema and, in 1976, change its official title to the Tashkent Festival of Cinemas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

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 canceled—hundreds of guests would make this journey to Tashkent. From 1972, the festival would take place from late May to early June, lasting ten days, with press conferences and roundtable discussions every morning, followed by between two and four film screenings in the official program at the Tashkent Palace of the Arts, which seated around two thousand spectators, and additional screenings—of documentaries, shorts, films outside the official program and the “market” selection, intended for distributors but also open to the public—in other movie theaters around the city. By 1974, the guests stayed at Tashkent’s first four-star hotel, The

Uzbekistan, where all festival participants could be accommodated. Even with such an intensive official program, most guests still praised Tashkent's laid-back festive atmosphere, which allowed ample time for socializing and discussion, as well as singing, dancing, and flirting. Participants' recollections often feature enormous trays of locally grown fruit at every event, not only the official receptions but also dinners at the local organizers' homes, as well as improvised eateries set up in street alleys, which often were open late into the night. This informality, singled in many festival participants' memories with a strong erotic charge, signals it as the space of cultural exception, as much at odds with the ideological objectives of the event as it was with the official norms of either the host country or most of the guests'.

Alongside filmmakers such as K. A. Abbas, Ousmane Sembene, Souleyman Cissé, Mohamed Slim Riad, Fumio Kamei, Kobayashi Masaki, and stars like Raj Kapoor, Nargis, and Magda, among the guests were also the film historian Jay Leyda and his wife, Sylvia (Si-Lan) Chen. In her memoirs, written in the 1980s, Chen recalls her experience of attending the festival. Comparing it to the Moscow International Film Festival, which she says was "not greatly different from others," she highlights Tashkent's unique festival character, all of it "out of the ordinary."³ She briefly mentions the "surprises" among the screenings: a "modestly effective film from Turkmenistan"—likely *Makhtumkuli* (Alty Karliev, 1968)—"something good from Kirghizia"—probably *The Sky of Our Childhood* (*Nebo nashego detstva*, Tolomush Okeev, 1966)—"the first film from Bangladesh"—here conflating the first and second editions, as 1972 included films by Zahir Raihan, who did, however, attend the 1968 festival but as part of the Pakistani delegation.⁴ She singles out Ousmane Sembene as "a real discovery" for both herself and Leyda, whose career the historian and critic would follow enthusiastically in subsequent decades.⁵ But most of Chen's recollections center on a different aspect of the festival: the receptions where, amid "lots of wine and oriental food . . . everyone was dancing."⁶ There Chen was delighted to reunite with her former teacher Tamara Khanum (fig. I.1), a celebrated Armenian-Uzbek performer and musician, who served on the festival's jury. Chen's recollections capture the thrill of spontaneity in the midst of a highly choreographed event as she describes how, at the closing reception held at the Uzbek film studio, "the skilled drumming caught me up in the excitement of the occasion. I jumped onto the stage; the drummers got more excited, and I was dancing my Uzbek dance again!"⁷

This brief episode at first glance tells us as much about Si-Lan Chen as the festival itself. A Sino-Trinidadian dancer and political activist, Chen was the daughter of the leftist first foreign minister of Republican China, exiled to the Soviet Union with his family in the 1920s. She began her dancing career in Moscow, where she met her future husband, Jay Leyda, in 1933. This was soon after her passionate affair with Langston Hughes, who was in Moscow for the making of the movie *Black and White*. When that project failed, Hughes traveled around the country, spending



FIGURE 1.1. Tamara Khanum with the Indian delegation (*far left*: S. Sukhdev) at the second edition of the Tashkent festival, 1972. Photo used by permission of Sputnik International.



FIGURE 1.2. Tamara Khanum dancing, 1939. Photo used by permission of Sputnik International.

several months in Uzbekistan: for most nonwhite foreign visitors, as early as the 1930s, Central Asia—or, as Hughes himself called it, the USSR's own “dusty, colored, cotton-growing South”—was both a showcase and a test of the racial equality in the Soviet Union, attracting much interest and attention.⁸ Chen herself spent time in Central Asia just a year prior, as part of her dance tour, performing at the Opera Theater in Tashkent and learning Uzbek folk dance from Khanum, who was one of the first women to perform unveiled in Tashkent in the 1920s (fig. 1.2). It was Hughes's writings about her (published in the US Popular Front journal *Theater Arts* in 1934) that brought Khanum her international recognition.⁹ By the late 1960s, Khanum, who epitomized the liberation of Soviet Central Asian women, was an important cultural ambassador, having performed abroad in Afghanistan,

India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Burma, Vietnam, and other countries, with a repertoire of songs in eighty-six languages.¹⁰ Chen's own artistic practice and travel trajectories reflected similar commitment, her dance bringing together the different facets of her own identity, experience, and ideology: at once Caribbean, Chinese, Soviet, and internationalist.¹¹ And the Tashkent festival was in many ways the cinematic equivalent of such artistic internationalism.

Thus, from Chen's brief recollections of the festival emerge the contours of earlier intertwined histories—of internationalist solidarities and transracial affinities, of personal bonds and institutional connections, of multifaceted artistic expressions and political commitments, and the role that gender played in shaping these histories. These same genealogies were also foundational for this new phase of Soviet efforts to lead cultural internationalism that the Tashkent festival represented and whose cinematic reach this book seeks to reconstruct.

Chen's husband, Jay Leyda, was also an important part of this *histoire croisée*. As one of the first foreigners to study at the Moscow Film Institute (VGIK) in the 1930s, his educational trajectory prefigures that of many of the VGIK alumni from Asia, Africa, and Latin America—Sembene among them—who were featured during the twenty years of the festival. By the late 1960s, Leyda had become known as a translator and popularizer of Sergei Eisenstein's work, as well as the first English-language historian of Soviet and Chinese cinemas.¹² For him, the festival offered a rare opportunity to (re)establish contacts and exchange ideas with some of the key emerging film critics and historians of Asia and Africa—Tahar Cheriaa from Tunisia, Samir Farid from Egypt, Iwasaki Akira from Japan, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra from Senegal, and Guy Hennebelle from France. The Tashkent festival, then, was not only an important site for showing films but a crucial space for the articulation of shared discourses on cinema that was rooted in a profound belief in the power of international solidarity behind the filmic apparatus to achieve socialist and decolonialist ends.

But Chen's perspective allows us a glimpse into a more ineffable aspect of this history: the unmistakable gendering of artistic and intellectual spheres, the peculiar blurring of official staging of cultural diplomacy with joyful spontaneity and powerful affective bonds, and unexpected cinematic juxtapositions, blending names and titles that are very familiar to most contemporary film scholars with those whose very existences have been largely written out of mainstream cinematic history. As this book reconstructs the geopolitical and artistic networks the festival engaged, as well as the shared cinematic forms it promoted, it also seeks to attend to the affective affinities and ambiguities, contradictions, and erasures as equally constitutive of this history of global cinema culture.

As a Soviet-organized event, the Tashkent festival was always inaugurated and interspersed with official speeches given by various representatives of the state cultural bureaucracy and the Communist Party. Yet those held surprises, too. The opening address in 1968 was given by Sarvar Azimov, chairman of the festival's



FIGURE 1.3. Sarvar Azimov at the opening of the first Tashkent festival, 1968. Photo from author's private collection.

Organizing Committee (fig. 1.3). Azimov was a highly accomplished Uzbek writer and scholar, an active participant in the Afro-Asian Writers' Association, and a key political figure in Uzbekistan (as deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and minister of foreign affairs of Uzbek, SSR). In 1968 he was on the brink of starting what would turn out to be a remarkable diplomatic career: the following year, he would be appointed as the Soviet ambassador to Lebanon, where he would conduct the first official diplomatic meeting with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), making him a major mediator for Soviet-Palestinian relations in the course of the 1970s. He would continue to play this role even after his 1974 transfer to Pakistan, where he would serve as a trusted confidant of the Bhutto family, thus acting as a Soviet link within the complex and shifting political nexus between the Middle East and South Asia.¹³ His presence points to the degree to which this film festival served as a node within a network of the multifaceted geopolitical alliances between the Soviet Union and the decolonial world.

Although his speech in 1968 was hardly memorable, in his reflections on the occasion of the tenth edition of the festival, Azimov gives a remarkable account of the festival's origins. He describes a meeting at the III Afro-Asian writers conference taking place in Beirut in 1967 at the house of Kamal Jumblatt, the founder of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon, the chair of the 1960 Afro-Asian People's Conference, and a renowned supporter of Palestine.¹⁴ There, according

to Azimov, Fairuz, the famous Lebanese singer and movie actress, together with Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer, the founding members of the Indian Progressive Writers Association, voiced the need for a film festival that would bring together Soviet film achievements with those of the developing world and suggested that Tashkent would be the perfect place for such an event to take place on a regular basis. Such a festival would be a celebration, not a competition—"a film school where everyone would be both a teacher and a student."¹⁵ This, Azimov concludes, was the spirit of Tashkent as it got manifested in all the subsequent editions of the festival from 1968 on.

Azimov's recollections, different as they may seem from Chen's, are equally revealing of yet another crucial aspect of the mythology, genealogy, and historical trajectory of the Tashkent festival, one that positions itself outside the Soviet Union. It is presented as rooted in the earlier experiences of anticolonial internationalism and the popular front (personified by Raj Anand and Zaheer) and marked by its shared commitment to a socialist and Palestinian cause across the Arab world (embodied in Jumblatt). Like Chen's account, this narrative places cinema in the broader network of cultural production with music and literature; women in these accounts are almost exclusively politically committed star performers (such as Fairuz). Azimov also affirms the utopian horizon for the creation of the Tashkent festival in distinction from the norms of the film festival circuit. Here the emphasis is not on competition but solidarity (no awards, participation of both established and brand-new film industries) and education ("a film school"). He places particular emphasis on the festival's affective powers ("a celebration," "the spirit of Tashkent"), albeit construing this as inseparable from geopolitics in their most concrete institutional (state-level diplomacy, party-affiliated) sense.

The "spirit of Tashkent," which is so frequently mentioned by the Soviet organizers of the festival, also refers to the city's history—from the ancient role of Central Asia as the civilizational crossroads forming part of the trade routes of the Silk Road to Tashkent's long-standing status as a showcase city of the Soviet East's socialist modernity and "tourist magnet for the Asians, Africans and Latin Americans who traveled to the region on government and cultural exchanges."¹⁶ Soviet policy makers had long exploited its geographic location to create a convenient entry point for Asian visitors, with the city's airport boasting direct flights to Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Burma, Indonesia, and what is now Sri Lanka. Via a Moscow transfer, it was connected with many cities around the world and, crucially (for the purposes of the festival), with the nascent airflight infrastructure of Africa.¹⁷ It was the site for the first Afro-Asian writers Congress (in 1958), which had originally included the first iteration of an Afro-Asian film festival—a crucial moment in the exercise of Soviet "soft power" vis-à-vis the new "neutralist" bloc of nations.¹⁸

One of the hosts of that earlier festival was Kamil Iarmatov; an ethnic Tajik, he was one of the first Central Asian actor-filmmakers who studied at VGIK in

the 1930s, becoming by the late 1940s one of the main figures at the Uzbek film studio. He was also a prominent early participant of the Afro-Asian film circuit, having already participated in the week of Afro-Asian cinema in Beijing in 1957 and playing one of the key organizing roles for the film festival as part of the Writers Congress in 1958.¹⁹ A tireless promoter of Tashkent's position as the center of internationalist Afro-Asian culture, Iarmatov was one of the official organizers of the 1968 festival as well, and in the months leading to the festival's opening, he had been dispatched to Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt to ensure their participation in the upcoming event. Iarmatov's *Riders of the Revolution* (*Vsadniki revoliutsii*, 1968), a historical epic depicting the establishment of Soviet rule in Central Asia, was the opening film of the festival. Another movie of his, a lavish historical melodrama *Poem of Two Hearts* (*Poema dvukh serdets*, 1966), would go on to win an award in an international film festival in Cambodia in December 1968. Unlike the politically heavy-handed *Riders of the Revolution*, which failed to impress either domestic or international audiences, *Poem of Two Hearts* (also shown as part of the market selection at Tashkent) became one of the Soviet Union's most successful international film exports that year, being sold for commercial exhibition in Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Sri Lanka, and Morocco.²⁰ Indeed, Iarmatov's mark as a filmmaker was the dramatization of stories from the Islamic Golden Age: *Alisher Navoi* (1949), a biopic of the fifteenth-century Turkic poet and statesman; and *Avicenna* (1958), a biopic on the life of the Persian polymath philosopher. As we will see, this emphasis will be emblematic of many of the festival's international selections as well, activating a sense of shared cultural legacies while also providing plenty of film import-export opportunities. Although set in the distant past, these were without a doubt highly political films: as Iarmatov was proud to recount, during a visit to Vietnam he learned that *Alisher Navoi* was the first Soviet film to be screened in Indochina and was intended to serve as an inspiration "to the partisans, Ho Chi Minh's comrades, who were fighting the French colonialists."²¹

We will see how the strands, which are already visible in its first edition—from the importance of Palestine to the legacies of the Islamic Golden Age, from the involvement of film critics and educators to women's visibility as dancers and performers, and from the intertwining of entertainment genres and radical cinematic histories—will shape not only the history of the Tashkent festival but become paradigmatic for the world socialist cinema that crystallizes around it. On the most fundamental level, the biographic trajectories of these artists, writers, and filmmakers illustrate Rossen Djagalov's claim about the close relationship between the cultural and political spheres, a historical condition shared by Soviet and Afro-Asian cultural elites, of which the festival itself was a powerful manifestation.²² It also helps us understand how the intertwined agendas of postcolonial national heritage, internationalist anti-imperialist solidarity, and commercial and popular audience preferences from the very beginning of the festival constructed an

assemblage that foreshadowed its subsequent development while also testifying to its ties to an earlier epoch of cinematic socialist internationalism.

World Socialist Cinema investigates the intersection of these entangled histories—personal, artistic, and political—as they emerged in the Tashkent festival during the crucial decades from the 1960s to the 1980s. This formation resists many of the categorizations, both geographic and formal, that we have come to accept in film scholarship, and as the first step toward coming to terms with this history, the book undertakes the ambitious goal of examining not only the material networks but also the forms—artistic, cultural, discursive, ideological—that were broadly shared across film cultures of the Global South and former Soviet bloc. In so doing, it necessarily evokes the affects, ideologies, and social structures that provided common references and moments of recognition for those millions across the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The relations within this space were highly uneven, the motivations for participation greatly varied, and agents often perceived and narrated them differently. Yet taken together, the festival constituted a major site where ideological and aesthetic positions and worldviews were articulated and negotiated, and a different kind of world cinema began to take shape.

As Djagalov and Razlogova have argued, the Tashkent film festival's combination of ambitious geographic scope and its unique format served to make it the key forum for Second and Third World cinemas, providing the latter with a major site for interconnectivity and expanded room to maneuver while offering the former its major window on the cinemas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.²³ Yet beyond the official declaration, the status of the festival throughout its existence was uncertain. An event focusing on Asian and African cinemas seemed to many Soviet critics and filmmakers in 1968 like a diversion from more pertinent conflicts taking place in the socialist bloc (notably Czechoslovakia) and the Soviet film industry, signaling a turn away from the emerging serious (auteur) cinema and toward, as they saw it, "tasteless entertainment from the under-developed countries" that would corrupt Soviet audiences' taste and push domestic cinema further toward "low" entertainment genres.²⁴ Nor did the festival's numerous Asian, African, and Latin American participants necessarily share the sense of its importance: it did not make or break cinematic careers, lacking the European publicity of the Moscow film festival, while at the same time, to many committed Third-Worldist filmmakers, it was too redolent of Soviet hegemonic ambitions and commercial goals. For some, the film selection was not militant enough, whereas others had a decided preference for Western-style auteur cinema, for which Tashkent was, indeed, a poor showcase. Despite such reservations, most participants kept coming back, year after year, as the festival continued to grow.

From a historical perspective, however, Tashkent comes across as a vibrant space in which ideologies, both political and aesthetic, and power hierarchies competed for dominance—more of a contact zone than a neutral "friendship zone," as

it was referred to in Soviet parlance.²⁵ The sheer quantity and variety of invitees from film cultures around the world created a fascinating instability of the hegemonies at play. Such heterogeneity and instability lend themselves poorly to both national(ist) narratives and internationalist histories of militant political cinema, which dominate accounts of this period in film scholarship. As such, the book also constructs a different geography of knowledge, one that resists the Anglo-Atlantic Eurocentric canon of film history or Area studies compartmentalization.²⁶ This shared sphere produced a different, situated notion of humanist universalism that overlapped at times with the notion of socialist internationalism and at other times departed and deviated from it. Irreducible to North-South, East-West, Orientalist or Cold War binaries, these networks borrowed and transformed epistemological models across various divides in complex and interconnected ways. Placing cinematic production that constituted these networks in relation to each other, therefore, produces a powerful shared body of work—one I term *world socialist cinema*—a unique historic cinematic formation through which to explore the cultural and political dynamics of the era.

As much as they were shaped by the total Cold War order, the transnational and transcontinental movements at the center of this study were directed at transforming it. But they operated under the consensus that socialism—however differently understood, imagined, or practiced—should form the shared horizon of that transformation. This horizon was for some a dream worthy of struggle and self-sacrifice, while for others it manifested itself as oppressively real negotiations with the demands of the state. For some, it opened new opportunities; for others, it delivered something other than what it promised. Moreover, socialism as discussed in this book did not lend itself to a single definition, existing in different forms in terms of both the specific economic and social state organization (for countries under state socialism) and ideological orientation (for example, in terms of its inclusion in national constitutions or regional formations—such as Nehruvian socialism, Arab socialism, or African socialism).²⁷ The neoliberalism that pervaded all discussions of socialism in the post-Cold War era discredited it as, at best, naive or opportunistic. As a result, all the cultural production associated directly with it has been largely discussed as either propaganda or, should it have any artistic value, as implicit or explicit dissent. For works produced outside the socialist bloc, connections to socialism, either as ideology or as production mode, have been systematically downplayed or subjected to a similar set of Cold War binaries. In contrast, I argue that carefully reconsidering both the promises and realities of global socialism in all its complexity and the body of films it produced reconfigures how we must think of history and the geography of cinema, at the very least.

This book singles out just one period within this longer history, taking as its starting point the mid-1950s and as its ending point the late 1970s. The mid-1950s saw the activation of the decolonialization process in most of the world, which

could be summed up, emblematically, with the Bandung Meeting and the formation of institutionally articulated, nonaligned Afro-Asian solidarity networks. The relation of these networks to the socialist bloc was further impacted by the Cuban revolution and the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party resolution on the principle of peaceful coexistence. Two other factors—the Vietnam War and the 1967 Israel-Arab War—also helped define this relationship, forming the background for the fateful events of 1968, which happened to be the first year of the Tashkent festival of the cinemas of Asia and Africa. I am taking this festival as the center of gravity for a specific configuration of world socialist cinema—one of many, sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing socialist cine-geographies, to use the term from Eshun and Gray.²⁸ Its contours were in many ways determined by Soviet Cold War geopolitics, but its specific ideologies and aesthetics need to be considered in the context of its multiple local conditions and developments, which often extended far beyond Soviet vision or understanding.

The Tashkent festival foregrounded a shared awareness on the part of socialist and postcolonial nations of cinema's multiple social and cultural functions—as political motivator, agent of international solidarity, purveyor of cultural diplomacy and national or regional cultural identity, and acknowledger of cinema's explicit potential in education in its broadest political and epistemological senses. Yet such centrality of cinema for an analysis of solidarity and socialism more generally in some ways goes against an established scholarly tradition of associating socialism with literary culture as the “hegemony of the intelligentsia.”²⁹ Régis Debray makes the starkest version of this argument in his 2007 essay “Socialism: A Life-Cycle,” which goes as far as to directly connect the decline of socialism with the rise of audiovisual media: “The collapse of the graphosphere has forced [socialism] to pack up its weapons and join the videosphere, whose thought-networks are fatal for its culture.”³⁰ While there is little doubt that most socialist cultures in the twentieth century had an intimate relationship to literature and literacy—from placing it as the highest cultural form in terms of cultural prestige to sharing a certain popular penchant for, say, public recitations—this study is part of a larger body of scholarship that demonstrates how for much of the twentieth century, audiovisual media was crucial to the construction of socialist internationalism and cosmopolitanism.³¹ And by midcentury, in particular, cinema in the socialist world had come to occupy a rather privileged role, especially when it comes to international cultural diplomacy, and nowhere more so than in its relationship to the Third World.

There are many reasons for this: cinema's industrial/technological basis, its collective production mode and mass and public consumption, and, finally, its profitability were all integral to this status, as was cinema's global appeal. As an industrial art, cinema came to emblemize technological progress, a triumph of modernization—whose very existence, let alone international visibility, spoke to the success of the alternative (socialist) modernization model, and in its global

circulation, it was akin to space exploration, albeit more accessible. Its collaborative mode of production was a fitting model for collectivism, which socialism celebrated, and a fitting experiment in new economic organization of labor. Its mass and public consumption made it particularly fitting as a mode of social and political (as well as, of course, aesthetic) education; it was also a good showcase for the state. For most socialist economies, which invested in the cultural public sector, by the mid-twentieth century it also had become one of the most profitable sectors, especially through film import and export.³² At the same time, for newly independent postcolonial states, international visibility through festivals and coproduction was often the only road to financial viability of the new medium. Even in countries where socialist and leftist cultures opposed the state, independent film production and exhibition through alternative, noncommercial channels was typically tied to leftist politics (not least by opposing economic hegemonies controlling the film industries), often leading to increased international collaboration—which the Soviet bloc eagerly extended.

Beyond these reasons, there is much to be said about the affective impact of cinema and its world-making potential. Paul Gilroy's account of the role of records in shaping a transnational cultural and political Black consciousness provides a good model for thinking of the affective force of cultural objects and technologies: "For a spell, plastic discs stuck with colored paper—'records'—furnished unlikely and unanticipated vectors for a restless, traveling sensibility. They became part of counter-national culture-making, and their history extends arguments about the role of communicative technologies in augmenting and mediating forms of social and political solidarity beyond the imagined communities achieved via the almost magical agencies of print and cartography."³³

While cinema, unlike music records, had closer ties to both official cultures and nation-states, its narrative and audiovisual heterogeneity allowed it to conjure new affective communities and forms of solidarity. As Łukasz Stanek, following Édouard Glissant, argues for the view of transnational socialist architecture as a form of "socialist worldmaking," I similarly posit cinema in its transnational iteration as providing powerful and often unexpected imaginaries of future communities.³⁴ Through its variety of cinematic forms—from travelogues and industrial documentaries to popular genre films and art cinema—the history of the Tashkent film festival provides a unique glimpse into this process and an opportunity to discern some of its formations.

In its understanding of such worldmaking, *World Socialist Cinema* offers a history of world cinema rooted largely in cinematic expressions and experiences of the world beyond its Euro- and US-centric circulatory networks. I approach this world cinema as a powerful extension of the ideals and practices of twentieth-century socialism, broadly conceived: as an expression of official ideologies and a tool for disseminating and mobilizing belief systems and, at the same time, as a reflection and mediation of collective experiences, as well as a way of constituting

communities through both filmmaking and film viewing. The close and interdependent relationship between the state and film production and exhibition within socialist cinema, as well as cinema's costly industrial apparatus, made it much more subject to top-down processes. Yet its collective mode of production and consumption, the democratic nature of its reach, the indexicality and heterogeneity of its formal structures, to say nothing of the strength of its visceral and affective impact, made cinema a powerful interface with genuinely popular culture, both reflecting and asserting the agency of the people, validating their experiences and contributing to the way communities are formed.

The bulk of my analysis is focused on the most active years of the Tashkent festival—from 1968 to the end of the 1970s, when global art cinema becomes the dominant mode of transnational cinematic culture, while TV and video become the dominant modes for global popular audiovisual circulation; mediatic shifts that in many ways displaced “militant anticolonial” cinema and global popular cinema alike. During this time, we witness the 1973 oil crisis, which for many of the countries I focus on here meant “oil boom” signaling, as the famous saying in Arabic goes, *al-fawra mahal al-thawra*, “‘the spurt’ (meaning oil) in place of the revolution,” with the end of the Non-Aligned Movement and the rise and fall of the New International Economic Order (first drafted in Algiers in 1974).³⁵ Many historians trace the collapse of the Soviet economy—and, consequently, all of the socialist world's economies—to this period.³⁶ The mounting anxiety among progressive forces during this period testifies to the disconnect between the politico-cultural capital of the Soviet bloc by the mid-1970s (whether in sciences, arts, or geopolitical strategy) and the loss of prestige of the socialist model in the Global South.³⁷

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan not only eroded the goodwill toward the Soviet bloc as a liberating force; more generally, it signaled a profound loss of faith in the nation-state-based model for emancipation in the Global South. In many ways, both the Islamic revolution in Iran and the emergence of the humanitarian NGO structure as the privileged global engine of aid can be seen as responses to this crisis of legitimacy (already prefigured within the theoretical formulations of post-1968 Marxism of *autonomia* and other antisystemic movements around the world). Thus, even though the Tashkent festival continued through the 1980s, and some important examples of what I call world socialist cinema (especially Syrian and Lusophone African films) continued to circulate almost exclusively within this network, the late 1970s serves as an obvious boundary to the story narrated here.³⁸

The specific geographic contours of global socialist cinema as presented in this book are thus dictated as much by the book's being centered on Tashkent as by its specific periodization. A direct consequence of this is the absence of China and the larger cinematic and ideological sphere with which it becomes associated in the period of the 1960s and 1970s. While Chinese cinema was quite actively integrated in the global socialist cinematic circuits of the 1950s and into the early

1960s, after the Sino-Soviet split and the advent of the cultural revolution, it came to occupy a rather isolated position vis-à-vis many of the cinematic developments described herein; thus, while China actively participated in the Afro-Asian solidarity network in the immediate post-Bandung years, engaging in coproductions and exporting films all over the socialist bloc, by the late 1960s, when so many of the tricontinental networks fully developed their cinematic apparatus (both in the sense of developing their own film production and formalizing the relationships through festivals and meetings), China largely withdrew itself from this general process. At the same time, even in its absence, as this book does explore, it continued to exert considerable push and pull on the alliances and solidarities of the socialist Global South.

At the same time as Chinese cinema exited the Soviet exhibition circuit, the cinemas of Mongolia and the Korean National Democratic Republic continued to be actively represented through international socialist networks, always participating in Tashkent and many other festivals within the region. The lack of attention given to these cinemas in my account is a reflection of a relative inaccessibility of primary sources and a lack of scholarship, which would have allowed me to reconstruct the respective cinematic and cultural contexts of their contributions, given my total lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge of these areas. It remains an exciting field to be explored by other scholars. Overall, in my discussions of films and national film industries, some are prioritized because of the greater visibility of their presence at these international circuits, either for the reasons of their dominance (as with Japan, India, and Egypt) or for their ideological importance (as with relatively small but politically resonant output by Vietnamese, Palestinian, Bangladeshi, and Chilean filmmakers). But availability of sources, especially films themselves, remains a serious problem, reflecting the tragic state of film preservation of much of world cinema. The difficulties of finding 1970s films by Iraqi, Afghani, or even Moroccan filmmakers prevented me from an in-depth discussion of their works, even as they were prevalent at the Tashkent festival. This is even more the case with nonfiction films. My choice of focusing on specific films was an attempt to find a sweet spot between their availability, the degree to which they reflect dominant trends at the festival, and their relative absence from English-language scholarly discussions.

It is also important to state that while my discussion of the key issues and topoi constituting world socialist cinema certainly extends to all of the socialist bloc cinemas, Eastern and Central European film cultures had their own distinct intersecting histories of affinities, solidarities, and alliances with Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Karlovy Vary and Leipzig, in particular, were important hubs of the broader festival network I describe here, and while I occasionally mention them, they certainly deserve separate investigation. Polish, Czechoslovak, and Hungarian films loom large in many of the memoirs of the international participants of these festival networks, and their role and the place they occupy in relation to the

cinematic formations, which emerge out of Tashkent, also deserve to be addressed in greater depth. In general, Eastern European countries had their own distinct and complex role within the cinematic field of global socialism. These dynamics were always further complicated by an ambiguous or antagonistic relationship to Soviet cultural and political hegemony, as well as much greater claims on European identity, which further transformed their self-understanding vis-à-vis decolonial nations. Yugoslavia's unique status as one of the founding members within the Non-Aligned Movement certainly placed it within a very distinct position in relation to Asian, African, and Latin American cinemas (including a special relationship with China, which continued after the Sino-Soviet split), and Romania and Albania's geopolitics placed them in a considerably different situation vis-à-vis the kinds of cultural constellations the Tashkent festival embodied. There is no doubt that research focusing specifically on these relationships is much needed and, hopefully, forthcoming.³⁹

As a result, in my identification of shared tropes and problems across global socialist cinemas and my suggestion of certain developments, I focused on what emerged most clearly from the corpus of films with which I was working—leaving out many other possible cinematic formations within global social filmmaking that deserve to be fully explored on their own terms. A more comparative analysis of global commercial film genres—such as comedies, westerns, spy thrillers, or melodramas—which could take into account the global geographies of socialist filmmaking, while not sufficiently represented at Tashkent to focus on in this book, would constitute an important further venue for research in order to reconstruct conventional notions of “world cinema.”⁴⁰ Some of these formations certainly bridge the Cold War divides and competing film festival networks. For example, in the 1970s, the general sense of disillusionment shared by cultural elites/intelligentsia across the socialist bloc and the Third World was probably nowhere more visible than in auteur cinema of the period, with its alienated heroes in the films by Andrei Tarkovsky, Youssef Chahine, Satyajit Ray, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and Krzysztof Kieślowski. Given that these directors already enjoy full cultural and scholarly legitimacy in the West, through festivals and increasingly through criticism and cinematic canons as they emerge from university curricula and film scholarship, they largely fall beyond the scope of this work. Focusing on such socialist articulations of art/auteur cinema would create a narrative continuous with the dynamics and developments within the cinemas of Western Europe or the Anglo-Atlantic in a way that would have been more familiar to the reader, consistent with how we usually learn and teach these historical developments within a traditional film studies curriculum as rippling effects of the movements and waves (often originating in France, Italy, or the US).

Without negating the importance and validity of such a narrative, this book follows a different trajectory. By approaching this history “from the South,” and bringing together the former Second and Third Worlds into a shared cultural

and cinematic space, this book argues implicitly for the historical exceptionalism of the liberal Western, Euro-Atlantic (especially North American) cultural forms, therefore decentering the assumptions of their primacy, as well as bringing cinematic developments from the rest of the world into focus instead of relegating them to the marginal or secondary position implied by most accounts of film history.

My position is driven not only by ideological concerns of decolonizing film studies, although this certainly has always been one of my broader objectives. My retrospective focus on film history stems from our contemporary vantage point, characterized by the overwhelming global dominance of neoliberal racial capitalism and continuously reemerging forms of nationalism. Yet it has also become increasingly clear that the Global North is no longer the sole driving force of the most important movements and developments, politically, economically, and cinematically. And just as so many headlines herald the end of the American Empire, Hollywood struggles to maintain its dominance, and the global film market is increasingly reoriented by other growing economic and political hegemonies, we have a chance to consider the prehistory of some of these developments and attempts to both conceptualize and bring into existence cinematic networks independent of US or European film industries and taste formations. At the same time, we have an opportunity to look back to the moment when the victory of global capitalism did not yet appear inevitable, with an eye to activating a genealogy that could open up new possibilities for solidarities and alternatives—but one that does not disavow failures, contradictions, and problems that constitute this history. In short, I ask readers to keep in mind that what I offer here is an invitation to a conversation in hopes of triggering enough interest for others to pursue the many venues that I was unable to attend to in this book.

As I mentioned earlier, the narrative of the book falls into two parts, each governed by slightly different methodological goals. The first is focused on the history of the Tashkent International Festival of the Cinemas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s. The second expands on that history, shifting from the examination of networks to the discussion of overarching cinematic tropes and specific films. This second part draws on a larger body of films, of which the festival selection was exemplary, to reconstruct some of the main features and preoccupations of the particular configuration of world socialist cinema that emerges from it. As a transition between the two parts, the book attends to one particular iteration of world socialist cinema that was rendered largely invisible at Tashkent but, I argue, presents an important corrective to it: a body of work made by socialist women filmmakers. Although it was mostly extraneous to the cinematic networks mobilized by Tashkent, a closer look at some of these films externalizes many of the connections and contradictions of world socialist cinema's practices and ideologies, thus serving as a dialectical transition between the two parts of the book and setting up the themes of the final three chapters.

Thus, if the first part of the book draws out the dynamics of this cinematic space and the specificities of the networks, movements, and individual participants, as well as historical developments and ideological positions that animated it, the second part focuses largely on the films and their representational regimes. Building on the wealth of historical detail provided in the first four chapters, the concluding three advance an analysis of the specific cinematic formation that the festival projected, as a shared vision of the world whose contours defy national boundaries. I identify three topoi characteristic of world socialist cinema as seen from Tashkent: industrial modernity, cultural heritage, and armed struggle. In each case, I offer an overview of their historical, political, and economic significance, and the range of genres and aesthetic modes they engendered, before moving on to a closer analysis of a small number of representative films.

Chapter 1 draws out the historical background (with its various political, as well as cinematic, developments) to the first Tashkent festival in 1968. These developments include the intense international exchange brought about by the Bandung conference and the Soviet Thaw, as reflected in new cinematic networks in those states foregrounding Afro-Asian solidarity, paralleled by the rapid development of Soviet Central Asian film culture. The latter emerged as a privileged site in the Soviet cultural relations with the Global South. The chapter provides an overview of the circulation of political cinema from Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the existing network in this period, leading up to the first edition of the Tashkent festival in 1968.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the film programming at the 1968 edition of the festival, identifying many of its key participants, both Soviet and international, and major films presented at the festival, while placing them in relation to their respective national and regional cinematic contexts. The films are discussed synchronically, in relation to the other festival selections, and diachronically, as reflecting the history of cinematic ties with the socialist bloc and foregrounding some future developments.

Chapter 3 offers a more condensed version of the programming choices in the 1972–78 editions, reading them in relation to geopolitical changes and cinematic trends as represented at the festival. Together, these first three chapters make the case for the uniqueness of Tashkent in bringing together filmmakers and cinemas that are rarely discussed in relation to each other, highlighting both their shared concerns and their aesthetic and political divisions.

Chapter 4 shifts away from programming to discourses, speeches, roundtables, seminars, interviews, and publications that formed an integral part of the Tashkent experience and the key problems and issues that emerge from these discussions.

Building on one of the topics of frequent festival discussions—the denunciations of representations of sexuality in bourgeois cinema—chapter 5 focuses on the overlapping discourses on the “women’s question” and their reflection in cinematic socialist and Third-Worldist spheres as an alternative to Western liberal feminism. The glaring absence of female directors and critics at the festival,

on the one hand, and the construction of female stars as cultural ambassadors, on the other, demonstrates the complex dynamics of gender politics of the Tashkent festival space. As an alternative iteration of world socialist cinema, the chapter offers a discussion of several films made by women directors: Larisa Shepitko's *Wings* (*Kryl'ia*, USSR, 1965), Assia Djebar's *The Nouba of the Women from Mount Chenoua* (*La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, Algeria, 1977), and Lana Gogoberidze's *Some Interviews on Personal Matters* (*Neskol'ko interviiu po lichnym voprosam*, USSR, 1978). Concluding with an analysis of Gogoberidze's film (as the least internationally known), the chapter proposes women's cinema as a limit case of world socialist cinema—albeit one largely excluded from the Tashkent festival circuit—a cinema capable of offering a distinct and crucial perspective on the politics of emancipation.

Part 2 shifts from the festival selection to a consideration of a larger body of cinematic work that constituted world socialist cinema. My approach privileges two constitutive dialectics: (1) modernization and tradition; (2) war and peace. Chapter 6 centers on films dealing with industrial modernization and development as an integral part of the socialist ethos expressed in cinema: a Syrian documentary by Omar Amiralay (*Film Essay on the Euphrates Dam* [*Film-Muhawalalah 'an Sadd al-Furat*], 1970) and a failed Soviet-Egyptian coproduction about the building of the Aswan High Dam directed by Youssef Chahine (*People on the Nile* [*al-Nass wa'l-Nil*], 1968 and 1972).

Chapter 7 addresses another aspect of world socialist cinema's engagement with modernity: the (re)construction of cultural heritage, which takes its expression through the genres of ethnographic films, literary adaptations, and historical epics. I focus on two films: a Soviet Uzbek production of a biopic of al-Biruni, the early modern Islamic polymath (*Abu Raikhan Beruni*, Shukhrat Abbasov, 1973) and a multipart adaptation of the classic Persian epic *The Shahnameh*, made in Tajikistan by Boris Kimiagarov (*The Legend of Rustam* [*Skazanie o Rustame*], 1971; *Rustam and Sukhrab* [*Rustam i Sukhrab*], 1972; and *The Legend of Siavash* [*Skazanie o Siavushe*], 1976). I will explore the complex constructions of different imaginaries of past communities and the way these films negotiate different conceptions of "world cultural heritage" across various national, liberal, postcolonial, and socialist internationalist frameworks.

Chapter 8 concludes the book with a discussion of the cinema of armed struggle as constitutive of the Cold War discourse on peace within global socialism. After a brief discussion of the Soviet reception of the Japanese Left's antiwar commemorations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the iconography of Vietnamese revolutionary cinemas, the chapter concludes with a reading of *Stop Genocide* (1971), a documentary detailing the Liberation War of Bangladesh made by a communist-affiliated filmmaker, Zahir Raihan. My analysis identifies the specificities of the representational regime of international war documentaries, while also drawing out its internal contradictions, in particular in relation to the representation of women.

The unusually broad scope of this project necessitated a particularly multifaceted and flexible methodology. Soviet published sources and some archival materials allowed me to reconstruct the Tashkent festival's programming and discourses. But the book changes lenses, as it were, quite frequently: it shifts from historical narratives of international Cold War geopolitics to overviews of specific national and regional film industries and cultures (in both cases synthesizing a large number of secondary sources), to the descriptions of the inner workings of the festival and details of its programming choices, with sporadic discussion of specific films. Textual analysis emerges more centrally in the second part of the book, and the choice of films I take as my examples there was dictated by a combination of their paradigmatic status for the cinematic topoi they illustrate and the simple question of availability.

But neither the geopolitical nor the institutional or textual analysis proved sufficient to trace the various contacts and relationships among the participants of the exchanges, which formed the networks the book seeks to reconstruct. I therefore rely heavily on memoirs, (auto)biographies, and letters by the filmmakers, artists, and functionaries. Alongside the film critical press coverage of the festivals, these primary sources form the bases for some of the biographical sketches of the many cultural figures whose trajectories I see as in many ways paradigmatic of the international cultural milieu this book describes. They are often of figures who may be considered "minor characters" within our auteur-oriented universe of film studies: many of them are cultural bureaucrats, writers, actors, or filmmakers who are not well known outside their national cultural histories. Their stories provide an important dialectical counterpoint to the "grand" histories of the Cold War film sphere, illustrating and complicating the dynamics depicted in the films themselves.

Finally, to address what I regard as affective affinities, I had to rely at least to some degree on personal impressions and memories, including many online and social media postings, as well as personal conversations. When trying to talk about their experience with the festival participants from different countries, I found that formal interviews contributed little to the official accounts of the festival gathered from archival and published sources. But through informal conversations "off the record," I found that many of the anecdotes and personal memories of the festival resurfaced. These were often crucial for my own understanding of the complex dynamics governing these spaces and experiences, even if they were often recounted with an understanding that they would not be cited. While this methodology presented a certain challenge to the traditional modes of scholarly documentation, it informs many of the speculative aspects of my analysis throughout the book. As such, my analysis stems from knowledge produced not only through theoretical investigations or my own personal experiences (as is the case for much contemporary feminist and queer scholarship) but through others' recollections and personal anecdotes whose accumulative shapes allowed for certain interpretive leaps.

The book's ambitious geographic scope, combined with its attention to detail (such as names, titles of films, and their production and cultural background), may come across equally as dizzying for readers as they did for this writer, especially as I expect many will be encountering a number of the films and filmmakers for the first time. I anticipate that in chapters 2 and 3, most scholars will be drawn to the discussions of their own geographic areas of research; therefore, my goal was to retain at least to some degree the relevant information so as to offer some discoveries for area specialists, while at the same time making the less-familiar topics as accessible as possible.

It is my hope that despite the high demands that such transnational scholarship places on readers, they will be willing to venture into unfamiliar territories with me. But if not, the specific sections they will find relevant will differ from one reader to another, while still adding up to the overall understanding of the book's argument and goals. While the idiosyncratic format of the Tashkent film festival was motivated by its highly strategic political and economic stakes for both its Soviet organizers and its participants, the festival's hybridity resonated with the participants' understanding of the multiplicity of functions of cinema in the world. Thinking about such an extremely heterogeneous selection of films—produced in different countries on different continents, under quite varied industrial and political conditions, and belonging to different modes, styles, and types of filmmaking—as one body of work is a risky gambit. Yet despite these crucial differences, reading these films together as part of an ongoing transnational dialogue allows us to see the global socialist world of the Cold War, whose cinematic contours this book reconstructs.

As the title of the book suggests, I approach both the Tashkent festival and world socialist cinema as spaces that reflected and produced powerful collective affinities, alliances, and solidarities across various divides. I see these three modalities of connectedness and relationality as operating simultaneously yet not necessarily in sync with each other. The existence of both the Tashkent festival and the broader cinematic sphere it represented was first and foremost a result of historical alliances—the actions, movements, and organizations that deliberately crossed not only national but broader geopolitical lines across the Global South and the Soviet bloc (as well as the Global North). Soviet cultural policy toward the Third World was expansive enough to create room for a wide range of strategic alliances that could adapt to changing (geo)political and economic needs. The ideal of nonalignment, crucial as it was for the development and practice of both national self-definition and internationalist solidarity across the Global South, often remained less a reality than an orientation, a horizon. For a host of powerful reasons, the anti-imperialist Left from the Global South found it difficult to entirely avoid affiliations with the “actually existing socialist” countries—whether it was Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, Cuba, or China. These affiliations came in the form of aid, military support, training of specialists, or other forms of cultural exchange.⁴¹

Most of these alliances were heavily mediated by state institutions and other top-down structures, yet these official channels often produced possibilities for more informal and unstructured kinds of artistic and intellectual dialogue. Nor were these efforts necessarily dictated by the superpowers. As the editors of *Alternative Globalization* demonstrate:

This new globalization should correctly be seen as a project of the USSR and other socialist states, and yet its actual shape cannot be attributed to the designs of Moscow or to any one actor alone. As was the case with prewar internationalism, the project was contested and plural from the outset. Furthermore, this new globalizing impulse did not take shape in isolation from the postwar capitalist order, which remained a source of emulation and trade; nor can it be considered separately from postcolonial efforts to create a nonaligned world order independent of the two superpowers and the former colonial empires. Rather, we can understand postwar state-socialist globalization as a process shaping and shaped by these other projects of connectivity.⁴²

The same dynamic played out on the level of cultural activities, in cinema in particular. The specific alliances, both highly strategic and frequently shifting, continued to be visible at the festival both on the level of programming and discourses, as this book will explore.

More ephemeral than alliances, cultural affinities often functioned on the level of structures of feeling and affects rather than as traceable influences or similarities, yet they took a symbolic shape that resonated through transnational cultural reception. Akin to what Michael Herzfeld famously termed “cultural intimacy,” these affinities were manifested as the experience of familiarity or proximity: “a recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality.”⁴³ We see plenty of illustrations of such “common sociality” in the accounts of the relationships that formed in the course of the festival years, cutting across the hosts, foreign guests, and film audiences. Such affinities and intimacies were sometimes experienced as intensely political and other times as not political at all, and they did not exclude the mutual perception of each other’s cultures as foreign and exotic, nor did they eradicate racial and other hierarchies. In and of themselves, they can be seen as more symptomatic than transformative (although they could be seen as having a potential toward solidarity). But at the same time, the very ephemerality of such affinities lent them a certain resistance to political ideologies as they often contradicted the broader ideological structures that underpinned them. This very unruliness allows for these affinities to outlive some of the political ideologies associated with them, adapt to changes, and continue to present further possibilities—as well as particular challenges—for any vision of solidarity.

The rhetoric of internationalist solidarity—both actual and potential—was, indeed, the governing logic that organized the official exchanges between the Second and Third Worlds, solidarity that was intended to be forged through and

supported by cultural expression and artistic production at events such as the Tashkent festival. Unlike affinities, solidarities move beyond a shared sensibility to a formation of a (new) collectivity with a possibility of shared collective political action. And unlike alliances, which I understand primarily in strategic and functionalist terms (as means to specific ends), solidarities are mutually transformative and, therefore, open-ended. For many of the artists in this book, film was both an expression of collectivities and a way to form them for the sake of real social and political transformation directed against oppression and inequalities. Solidarity for them entailed transformative relationality, not sameness or position of equality—necessary precisely across uneven relations of power and geographies. As David Featherstone asserts in his discussion of this notion, “the forging of links in opposition to common enemies . . . can open up new political terrains and possibilities. This allows new conceptions of political subjects and actors to emerge.”⁴⁴

It is clear that such solidarities could not emerge automatically, just by virtue of the festival’s existence (as the Soviet organizers would often assume), and one should be suspicious of such assumptions given the evidence of persistent racism toward all nonwhite foreigners and a continuous (and often institutionally created and supported) sense of superiority of Western cultural models in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Yet, as this study demonstrates, both the possibility of transformation and a shared sense of history motivated the artists and intellectuals who form the core of my story, even if any conceptualizations of new political subjects and actors emerging from this experience are destined to remain speculative in the face of the collapse of both the Non-Aligned Movement and the socialist bloc as such. Flawed and contradictory as these dynamics were, however, I am not ready to leave these histories behind. Far from any recuperative logics, this book is motivated by the belief that interrogating this past is crucial to overcoming the interlocked epistemologies of the Cold War, ethno-nationalism and colonialism (with white supremacy and racialized capitalism as their direct correlatives)—epistemologies that still powerfully shape our present day, despite the apparent demise of state socialism or official colonial ownership structures.

From the more modest position of the discipline of film and media studies, these histories represent an alternative to the established narrative of film history. Their exclusion from our collective memory has resulted in a skewed image of the complex dynamics and social and political functions played by cinema in the twentieth century. A redrawing of this cinematic history and its geography—as a record of encounters, travels, and a fragile and at times short-lived but nonetheless powerful shared vision of the world—allows us to position the cinemas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in relation to those of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc as constituting radically different contours of what we can think of as world cinema. A careful (re)consideration of this history, among other things, helps interrogate the function of cinema/media in the construction of solidarity, whose future is made ever more complex but also pressing now that

globalization and the migration “crisis” have further redefined the global experience of neoliberal racial capitalism. All the more pressing is Sune Haugbolle’s call: “If we as intellectual, political, and social historians want to produce locally embedded global histories of the Left, we have to travel with these people and follow them out of our comfort zones if necessary.”⁴⁵

I hope this book can be an invitation to travel out of our comfort zones together and to begin mapping a different conception of world cinema, remaining equally attentive to the scars and dreams that mark this history.