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Rinna Kullaa & Michelle Getchell

## Endeavors to Make Global Connections

Latin American Contacts and Strategies with Mediterranean Non-Alignment in the Early Cold War

### Abstract

*This article explores linkages between Yugoslavia's influence and the roots of the Non-Aligned Movement in the Mediterranean with Latin America as a region through which the Soviet Union sought to challenge the independence of Yugoslavia and the Movement. It answers directly the question: To what extent did the foundation of the coalition of non-aligned states in 1961 in Belgrade have an impact on relations between Yugoslavia and some Latin American states? The sources used for this article consist principally of primary sources from the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation and the Archive of the Foreign Ministry of Yugoslavia.*

### Neutralism and Cold War Foreign Policies

*"[Che] Guevara told the Ambassador of the United Arab Republic today in a conversation about the non-aligned countries conference, that Cuba does not belong to any one bloc; [It] leads independent politics with an orientation towards non-bloc countries. In the current situation, Cuba cannot be neutral between the two blocs because – that could on the account of American politics – cost its independence. [Nonetheless], Guevara expects the conference of the heads of non-aligned states to be very positive and constructive. He thinks that more countries should be invited from Latin America, particularly emphasizing the importance of Ecuador and Bolivia. He is confident that the U.S. will organize a new invasion of Cuba from Central America, especially if the strategy of Stevenson and Kennedy in Latin America does not show the desired results, or if they are greeted with hostility by the masses [there]. The Ambassador of the United Arab Republic believes that a unity exists in the leadership between Fidel, Guevara, Raul and Dorticos in viewing the conference of the non-aligned as important, as well as significant for the further development of directions of the foreign policy of Cuba."*

Telegram #225, From the Yugoslav Embassy in Havana, Cuba to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, 6 June 1961.<sup>1</sup>

As the above example from Havana in 1961 shows, even when national resources have been negligible in preventing a vigorous response, states have often been compelled to respond to threats with realpolitik, military alliances, or at least indications of a willingness to go to war. Despite viewing the possibility of gaining international allies within the group of the non-aligned states important, the Cuban communist leadership, which had just survived the Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, was ambivalent about its future only 150 kilometers from the U.S. coastline without another superpower as its possible future ally. Indeed, since the First World War, neutrality in war and neutralism as a foreign policy have not been regarded as very honorable.<sup>2</sup> Previously, in the 1800s, neutrality was an almost permanent feature in international relations and after the Congress of Vienna was used as a tool of statecraft by small and large powers alike.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F.117. 418036. Letter of Zvonko Grahek, Ambassador of Yugoslavia to Cuba to State Secretariat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Belgrade, 06.06.1961.

<sup>2</sup> Fisk, Robert (1996): *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality*. Dublin: Gill & MacMillan; Laqueur, Walter (1980): *Political Psychology of Appeasement: Finlandization and Other Unpopular Essays*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Abbenhuis, Maartje (2014): *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In contrast, today's literature seems to demonstrate that however indiscriminate the threat, only a few states have responded with a policy of neutralism in the modern era when confronted by fears of the Soviet Union or Communism in the Cold War. Not much attention is paid to neutralism as a strategy in the most common curricula volumes on the study of international relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, current available literature has tended to narrow the number of states pursuing a policy of neutralism during the Cold War down to five, most often addressing the European states: Austria, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, and Switzerland.<sup>5</sup> By and large this seems to be the case when considering the classic definition of neutralism. The term neutralism has typically referred to the *sui generis* position of Switzerland in the world owing to its geographic position and economic history as Europe's banker.

In another example, Finland's neutrality was defined during the Cold War as a foreign policy that limited relations with Euro-Atlantic institutions to economic agreements, refrained from security alliances, limited cooperation with Western intelligence agencies, and allowed for the existence of an active Communist party. Another reason for the scarcity stems from an inclination to separate the history of the so-called "Third World" from the history of Europe. There are some notable exceptions, such as Vijay Prashad's seminal 2008 work *Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*, which explains how ideas and strategies of remaining outside the superpowers were influential in Asia, Africa, and Latin America after 1945.<sup>6</sup> Articles by Austin Jersild, David Engerman, and Tobias Rupperecht have drawn attention to the tendency to regard the Soviet Union and the Third World almost as one.<sup>7</sup> After a focus on modernization theory emerged in the 1960s, the Soviet Union was often analyzed from the perspective of being a modernizing state trying to catch up with the Western world. The model and trajectory was that of the development of nation-states in Western Europe. This tendency placed the USSR outside of transnational world history focused on European empires and European integration. This perspective has not been significantly altered even after the collapse of the Soviet bloc as the state has also come to be understood as an internally Europeanizing and colonizing empire during Stalinism.<sup>8</sup> Yet the Soviet Union was one of two superpowers and as such, an integral part of international relations in the Cold War. Soviet interests and actions influenced the narrative of the Non-Aligned Movement, as Nikita Khrushchev tried to draw the movement and Latin America into the Soviet orbit in the 1960s. The Soviet Union was not pursuing politics as a developing state among others, or only as an internally colonized empire, but as a Cold War superpower as well.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example, Robert Art and Robert Jervis's *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues* (12<sup>th</sup> issue, Pearson: New York, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Alecu de Flers, Nicole (2012): *EU Foreign Policy and the Europeanization of Neutral States: Comparing Irish and Austrian Foreign Policy*. London: Routledge; Andrén, Niels (1991): *On the Meaning and Uses of Neutrality*. In: *Cooperation and Conflict* 26, p. 67–83; Gehler, Michael and Rolf Steininger (eds.) (2000): *The Neutrals and European Integration 1945-1995*. Vienna: Böhlau; Goldhamer, Herbert (1972): *The Foreign Powers in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Leonhard, Alan T.: (1988): *Neutrality: Changing Concepts and Practices*. Lanham: University Press of America; Munro, Emily (ed.) (2005): *Challenges to Neutral & Non-Aligned Countries in Europe and Beyond*. Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

<sup>6</sup> Prashad, Vijay (2008): *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World*. New York: New Press.

<sup>7</sup> Jersild, Austin (2011): *The Soviet State as Imperial Scavenger: 'Catch Up and Surpass' in the Transnational Socialist Bloc, 1950-1960*. In: *American Historical Review* 116 (1), p. 109–132; Engerman, David (2011): *The Second World's Third World*. In: *Kritika* 12 (1), p. 183–211; Rupperecht, Tobias (2010): *Die Sowjetunion und die Welt im Kalten Krieg: Neue Forschungsperspektiven auf eine vermeintlich hermetisch abgeschottete Gesellschaft*. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 58 (3), p. 381–399.

<sup>8</sup> For current literature see for example, Viola, Lynne (2014): *Stalin's Empire: The Gulag and Police Colonization in the Soviet Union in the 1930s*. In: Snyder, Timothy and Ray Brandon (eds.): *Stalin and Europe: Imitation and Domination, 1928-1953*. London: Oxford University Press, p. 18–43.

The work of several historians (including the two authors of this article) has begun to consider neutralism more broadly and to demonstrate that the formerly colonial states emerging after the Second World War searched for third way alternatives and sought to adhere to a course of foreign policy independence.<sup>9</sup> These states called the variety of their foreign policies “non-aligned” or “neutral.” Rinna Kullaa’s monograph *Non-Alignment and its Origins in Cold War Europe*,<sup>10</sup> for example, is the first to argue that the Non-Aligned Movement originated in the Mediterranean area in the late 1950s growing primarily out of a foreign policy prerogative of Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt (United Arab Republic 1958-1961) against geopolitical dilemmas posed by the Soviet Union and Britain-France respectively.<sup>11</sup> It argues that the Non-Aligned Movement began as a non-partisan foreign policy initiative that sought to moderate the East-West conflict, challenge superpower influence, and represent small states through the formation of a multi-state coalition outside the East-West blocs. Much of this new work seeks to illuminate wider sets of bilateral and multilateral global connections in the early Cold War.<sup>12</sup>

This article explores some of the early attempts at contacts, strategies and responses between Latin American and Mediterranean states around the concept of non-alignment in the early Cold War. It shows that such contacts and attempts existed. In 1961, Yugoslavia and Egypt invited Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Puerto Rico, and on Cuba’s urging, Ecuador, and Bolivia to the inaugural conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade.<sup>13</sup> This event serves as the backdrop for this article. Although Tito and Nasser were ultimately not successful in engaging Latin America in the early years of the movement, their efforts show that they were looking for possible allies on the continent during a period in which Latin Americans were striving for a greater role in the international arena.

### **More than Decolonization: Early Efforts to Forge Connections with Latin American States**

One of the first countries Yugoslavia vigorously and consistently approached to join the Non-Aligned Movement in Latin America was Brazil.<sup>14</sup> Working in unison with Egypt’s Nasser and to a lesser extent India’s Jawaharlal Nehru, Yugoslav diplomats made overtures to Rio de Janeiro. In April 1961, in correspondence from Belgrade to Cairo, Accra, Conakry, Rabat, Bamako, Djakarta, New Delhi, Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Rangoon, and Rio de Janeiro, they were informed of resistance to the attempt of Indonesians to direct the conference towards becoming a Second

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<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Kullaa, Rinna (2015): *Roots of the Non-Aligned Movement in Neutralism Foreign Policies*. In: Jussi Hanhimäki et al. (eds.): *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War: Between or Within the Blocs?* London: Routledge; Getchell, Michelle (2014): *Extracting the Eagle’s Talons: The Soviet Union in Cold War Latin America*. PhD Dissertation. Austin: University of Texas.

<sup>10</sup> Kullaa, Rinna (2012): *Non-Alignment and its Origins in Cold War Europe: Yugoslavia, Finland and the Soviet Challenge*. London: IB Tauris.

<sup>11</sup> See also Vitalis, Robert (2013): *The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and other Fables of Bandung (Ban-doong)*. In: *Humanity* 4 (2), p. 261–288.

<sup>12</sup> For the Non-Aligned Movement see also: Atwood Lawrence, Mark (2013): *The Rise and Fall of Nonalignment*. In: Robert J. McMahon (ed.): *The Cold War in the Third World*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 139–155; Allison, Roy (1998): *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World*. New York: Cambridge University Press; Jackson, Richard L. (1983): *The Non-Aligned, the UN, and the Superpowers*. New York: Praeger; Willets, Peter (1978): *The Non-Aligned Movement: Origins of a Third World Alliance*. London; New York: Frances Pinter; Nichols.

<sup>13</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 117. 410630. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, 08.04.1961; cf. Kullaa (2015).

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 117. 410868. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, 12 April 1961.

Bandung, with an attendant focus on Afro-Asian solidarity. Instead, the Yugoslav Ministry outlined the central questions of the inaugural conference: worldwide peace and independence, and economic development of the less-developed countries.<sup>15</sup> These questions were centered around the acute problems of decolonization, but according to policy, global problems were not restricted solely to Africa and Asia. The purpose of the Non-Aligned Movement was to respond to the geopolitical prerogatives of Yugoslavia and Egypt globally. To balance out an Afro-Asian focus, the Yugoslavs sought out Latin American partners. Brazil's size was impressive and it was considered a key regional leader with which the Yugoslavs sought to engage.

Brazil initially replied positively to Tito and Nasser's invitation to attend the conference.<sup>16</sup> Mexico, Venezuela, and Chile did not immediately respond, and only later reported that they would not attend. On the urging of "Che" Guevara, Yugoslavia also invited Bolivia and Ecuador to Belgrade.<sup>17</sup> Both countries sent observers. However, Brazilian President Jânio Quadros was not forthcoming about his intention to attend the conference, so Tito wrote to him personally, repeatedly underlining that the purpose of the conference was broad and focused on peaceful coexistence, as well as the desire to express third-way positions on crucial issues of international relations. Tito emphasized that the conference was to be held at the highest level and therefore the attendance of the Brazilian president was desired. Alluding to Cuba, Tito assured Quadros that there would not be a propagandistic character to the discussions that would further aggravate the complicated international situation. He appealed for Brazilian participation by highlighting that the presence of other Latin American heads of states would be of critical importance for the results of the conference, for peace efforts and for better communication between nations.<sup>18</sup>

While large states such as Brazil were not ready to commit to a still unknown association, some smaller entities were. In July 1961, the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico (NPPR) wrote to the Yugoslav Ambassador to the UN delineating the struggle against U.S. colonialism and requesting to attend the conference as observers.<sup>19</sup> They petitioned for the addition of two items to the agenda: "1. The immediate and complete independence of Puerto Rico. 2. Freedom of all the political prisoners of Puerto Rico in the United States and Puerto Rico." NPPR cited the U.S. installation of intercontinental ballistic missile sites in Puerto Rico. Issues such as nuclear non-proliferation were high on the non-aligned agenda, but states with hostile relations with one or the other superpower added their own rhetoric. Thus did some Latin American participants in the movement seek to use its proceedings and resolutions to condemn the United States.

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<sup>15</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 117. 410630. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia number, 08.04.1961.

<sup>16</sup> DASMIP, PA, F. 116. 414040. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, 10 May 1961. See also Hershberg, James G. (2007): 'High-Spirited Confusion': Brazil, the 1961 Belgrade Non-Aligned Conference, and the Limits of an 'Independent' Foreign Policy during the High Cold War. In: *Cold War History* 7 (3), p. 373–388.

<sup>17</sup> DASMIP, PA, F. 117. 422647. Letter of J. B. Tito transmitted through the Secretariat for the Non-Aligned Conference Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31.07.1961.

<sup>18</sup> DASMIP, PA, F. 117. 422650. Letter of J. B. Tito transmitted through the Cabinet of Leo Mates in the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry Belgrade to the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Rio de Janeiro, 22.07.1961.

<sup>19</sup> DASMIP, PA, F. 117. 482. Letter of the Yugoslav Permanent Mission to the UN New York to the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry Belgrade number, 13.07.1961.

## Superpower Influenced: Cuba at the Non-Aligned Conference

Of the Latin American states most interested in attending the conference was Cuba, but it was also the most problematic ally for the effort. By 1961, Cuban diplomacy had already alienated some Third World leaders. In the summer of 1959, Ernesto “Che” Guevara had been dispatched on an international tour that included stops in many Third World capitals. The purpose of the trip was not merely to indicate Cuban interest in developing closer ties with the countries of the developing world, but also to make contact with Soviet officials. Reflecting the cultural and ideological divisions that would make Third World solidarity a chimera, Che sometimes clashed with other leaders of the non-aligned world. Egyptian president Nasser, for instance, was not amused by Che’s wild-eyed radicalism. His meeting with Indonesian Prime Minister Sukarno was abruptly curtailed when Che caustically dismissed the prime minister as a “latifundista [landowner].” Diplomats in Yugoslavia did not appreciate Che’s “beatnik” appearance.<sup>20</sup> Yet the trip allowed Che to enter into discussions with the Soviets, while at the same time exhibiting solidarity with the Third World.

In addition to the strains of the Cuban reputation, the U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs had occurred in April 1961, just as Tito and Nasser had begun to work intensively on conference preparations. The guidelines for membership in the Non-Aligned Movement established in June 1961 at the Cairo Preparatory Committee stipulated that the country in question should adhere to an independent policy based on the principles of peaceful coexistence, should consistently support national independence movements, and should not be a member of any multilateral military alliance. If the country did have a bilateral military agreement or remained party to a multilateral defense pact, those arrangements should not have been “deliberately concluded in the context of great power conflicts.” Moreover, if the country “has conceded military bases to a foreign power, the concession should not have been made in the context of great power conflicts.”<sup>21</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the U.S. invasion, correspondence about the non-aligned initiative with Cuba was postponed by the Yugoslav foreign ministry until the situation on the ground could be clarified.<sup>22</sup> Yugoslav officials sought to determine the outcome of the invasion for Cuba’s domestic political situation, wondering if perhaps Cuba’s dependence on the Soviet Union would increase. Despite the ministry’s decision in Belgrade to postpone further talks, the Egyptians through their ambassador in Havana continued to present the matter to Fidel Castro. In the atmosphere of competition between Yugoslavia and Egypt, the Yugoslav Ambassador Grahek took part in the meeting with Castro on the conference, leaving the Ministry to beg its own ambassador in Havana not to engage the matter with the Egyptian representatives either – an act which Belgrade had learned of from their daily correspondence with the Egyptians.<sup>23</sup> Just 17 days after the beginning of the invasion, the Yugoslav leadership was forced to inquire from its own Ambassador what exactly had been transmitted to Castro, since Belgrade had not authorized the delivery of Tito and Nasser’s letter.<sup>24</sup> In 1961 the differing relationships of

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<sup>20</sup> Reid-Henry, Simon (2009): *Fidel and Che: A Revolutionary Friendship*, New York: Walker Books. p. 203–209.

<sup>21</sup> Rajan, Mannaraswamighala S. (1990): *Nonalignment and Nonaligned Movement. Retrospect and Prospect*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 116. 413339. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia to Yugoslav Embassy in Havana, 29.04.1961.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 116. 413470. Letter from the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia to the Yugoslav Embassy in Havana, 03.05.1961.

Yugoslavia and Egypt with the Soviet Union were apparent even in such small diplomatic maneuvers, with Yugoslavia seeking to diminish the influence of Moscow.

Castro was quick to inform others, including Israel, that Cuba had been invited to the inaugural conference and had already accepted the invitation. Israeli officials protested to their Yugoslav counterparts that “Castro could not be compared with Tito, Nehru, Sukarno [and] Nasser. It is well known that Cuba in fact, already belongs more to one of the blocs. Participation of Cuba could spoil the conference.”<sup>25</sup>

Indian officials also reacted negatively to Cuba’s attendance. At the preparatory meeting for the conference in mid-June, India publicly presented a foreign policy analysis in which Cuba was negatively assessed. According to Delhi, Cuba’s sectarian foreign policy transgressed the stated purposes of the non-aligned conference.<sup>26</sup> To make matters worse, in response to the influential Indians, Cuban Foreign Minister Raúl Roa Garcia spoke out (as was his habit, in the opinion of Yugoslav diplomats) “nervously, immaturely, through slogans and clumsily.” Foreign Minister Koča Popović thought Roa’s speech especially inappropriate in its argumentation about the location of the inaugural meeting:

“[Advocating for] Havana as a candidate followed by Cairo just so that it would not be Yugoslavia. However, they did not openly present political arguments, clearly aware that they were coming in between [two leaders of the conference Yugoslavia and Egypt]. They repeated the same attempt when discussing the place where the administrative organ for the preparatory conference should be placed, despite that it would be completely illogical that it would not be in the country where it be determined the conference will be held.”<sup>27</sup>

Despite these provocations, because of the already burgeoning competition between Yugoslavia and Cuba, Popović instructed his diplomats to keep their cool and not launch rhetorical attacks on the Cubans.<sup>28</sup> He concluded that the Cubans feared offensives against them from both blocs as well as China, and that Cuba had made the decision to attend the conference “in the first place from tactical reasons, and not because of a real course for non-aligned politics outside the two blocs, and to have done so with the consent or the advice of his chief friends (the Soviet Union).” Popović concluded that Yugoslavia “would not seek from them recognition for the correctness of [its] policy, but would need to be calm and continue to warn them of their sins against us...”<sup>29</sup> The Yugoslavs were obviously irritated by the Cuban diplomacy, despite their protestations to the contrary.

Cuba, which had already announced its plans to attend the conference, was allowed to participate. The Cuban delegation to Belgrade included President Dorticós, Foreign Minister Roa, the newly named ambassador to Czechoslovakia (the foreign minister’s son) and their wives. Cuba also sent three journalists from *Prensa Latina*. By comparison, the United States had 100 accredited journalists at the conference – from, among others, the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *Christian Science Monitor*, NBC and ABC.<sup>30</sup> The Soviet Union had four accredited journalists from TASS, *Pravda* and *Problemyi mira i socijalizma*.

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<sup>25</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 116. 415366. Letter from the Ambassador of Yugoslavia to Cuba Grahek to the Cabinet of Josip Djerdje, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, 17.05.1961.

<sup>26</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 117. 418705. Letter from the Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia Koča Popović to the Embassy of Yugoslavia in Havana, 14.06.1961.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 118. 429555. Cable from the Directorate for Latin America transmitted through the Embassy in Bonn, lists of participants to the Belgrade conference, 05.10.1961.

After the Belgrade conference, a long speech by Raúl Castro declared that “American imperialism in the international [playing] field had suffered a defeat,” in Belgrade, where “a number of decisions that have entered into a final document, in which not one of the points, or topics that are discussed, even in the slightest form or detail was pleasant for imperialists, where among other things, was established the right of Cuba to its self-determination, the right of Cuba to seek from the Yankees to remove the military base of Guantanamo...” Castro lambasted imperialist newspapers that had labeled the neutrals as communists. Refuting such claims, Castro pointed to this as further evidence of “great stupidity” from the U.S. side as “the participating countries governments [were] far from socialism or Marxism-Leninism.”<sup>31</sup>

After the conference, a growing number of countries continued to object to the rhetoric and attitude of the Cubans. In Ghana, for example, President Kwame Nkrumah invited the ambassadors of the participant countries to a meeting on 23 September, but neglected to invite Cuba.<sup>32</sup>

Although many non-aligned leaders were not happy with the Cuban performance at Belgrade, the Soviets were thrilled. On September 16, 1961, Khrushchev sent a letter to Dorticós, in which he lauded the Belgrade summit. “To a significant degree,” Khrushchev pointed out, “the views of the Soviet government on the current international situation coincide” with those of the non-aligned countries. He mused that it was virtually impossible “not to be happy” that the neutral nations, with a combined population “representing *one-third of humanity*,” had “raised their voice in defense of peace” and “decisively repudiated militaristic policies.” Considering that the “entire foreign policy” of the socialist bloc, which contained “*another one-third of humanity*,” was focused on the “struggle to prevent war,” this left the remaining one-third of humanity – the warmongers – outnumbered by a factor of two to one.<sup>33</sup> The emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement was thus a welcome development indeed.

### **Sober Bolivian Reflections on the Non-Aligned Meeting in Belgrade**

The Belgrade Declaration signed at the end of the summit asserted that “the peoples of Latin America are continuing to make an increasingly effective contribution to the improvement of international relations.” It rejected the inevitability of the Cold War and denounced the military blocs that had been consolidated in the context of the War. It affirmed “the right of Cuba as that of any other nation to freely choose their [sic] political and social systems in accordance with their own conditions, needs, and possibilities.”<sup>34</sup> Yet Latin American perspectives on the results of the conference were perhaps better characterized by independent reflection on the goals of the initiative, and some criticism was expressed. The Bolivian newspaper *El Diario* acknowledged the ongoing importance of the conference but objected to its being held in Yugoslavia. It referred to political imprisonments, citing the example of Milovan Đilas in its assertion that “the regime in Yugoslavia is a totalitarian dictatorship similar to that in Russia and holds imprisoned or in confinement the best Marxist philosophers on the one hand and also a cardinal archbishop on

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<sup>31</sup> DASMIP, PA, 1961, F. 118. 429613. Cable (apparently) from Yugoslav Embassy in Accra to the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry, 23.09.1961.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> AVPRF, Fond 104, opis' 16, papka 8, delo 9, list. 40, Letter to Cuban President Dorticós from Khrushchev, 16.09.1961.

<sup>34</sup> (1972): Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, Belgrade, September 1961. In: Main Documents Relating to Conferences of Non-Aligned Countries: From Belgrade, 1961 to Georgetown, 1972. Georgetown, Guyana: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 8–11.



the other.”<sup>35</sup> After this accurate and curiously sober observation questioning the validity of Yugoslavia’s leadership in moral terms, the Bolivian paper went on to comment that the timing of the conference was most suitable because the era of Stalin, Dulles, and Eden was over. Instead, Kennedy recognized the principle of non-alignment and demanded only that neutrality be genuine and not used as a mask behind which to hide support of the Kremlin. In what can perhaps be interpreted as an overture to Washington, the paper stated its support for a genuine policy of non-alignment.

This Bolivian perspective discussed the need for “active neutralism,” a foreign policy which was different from maintaining a neutral position. “Active neutralism” demanded that the states would “without interfering directly in the particular dispute, make efforts to mitigate violence, reduce international tensions and propose ideas for solutions.”<sup>36</sup> It wondered how great the work of the conference could have been if the governments collected in Belgrade would have been able to agree on submitting to the UN a commonly endorsed solution to the dispute of the Berlin crises. There was no possibility of that dream scenario, however, because in reality some of the states present in Belgrade were not truly neutral and their neutralism was in fact opportunism – according to *El Diario*. In the context of Cuba’s performance at the conference, such commentary was warranted.

## Conclusion

Of the many Latin American states invited to the Belgrade summit, Cuba was the only one to attend while Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador sent observers. While not meeting the official criteria for non-aligned membership, and with severe Yugoslav, Indian, Israeli, and Ghanaian reservations, Cuba’s invitation was based on Third World solidarity engendered by the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, and on Third World support for the removal of the U.S. military base at Guantanamo. Although Yugoslavia and Egypt did not desire the entire focus of the new non-aligned initiative to be on decolonization, Third World solidarity became an important touchstone from the start, even if the Latin American partner engaged was not the most sought-after state. Although much of the talk at the non-aligned meetings was of solidarity and issues such as stopping nuclear proliferation, realpolitik and relations with the two superpowers affected non-aligned initiatives from the start, particularly through the influence of Cuba.

Although many Latin American states sought relations with a number of recently independent states, Fidel Castro desired a leadership role in the burgeoning Non-Aligned Movement, not merely to further his personal ambitions, but also because Castro, like Tito and Nasser, was caught in a geopolitical dilemma. U.S. opposition to the Cuban revolution was a powerful goad to Castro’s efforts to establish and strengthen relations with Third World leaders. The Cubans had realized that the Soviet protective umbrella was unreliable. In negotiating a peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev had bargained away practically everything he had offered, without even deigning to consult Castro. Becoming a part of the Non-Aligned Movement was thus not only consistent with Castro’s worldview critical of imperialism, but was also an alternate strategy to protect the Cuban revolution and prevent it from becoming isolated in the international arena. In years to come, Castro’s efforts to support Soviet policy positions from the platform of non-aligned summits and conference statements met with the

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<sup>35</sup> DASMP, PA, F. 118. 500/61. Letter of Yugoslav Delegation to Bolivia to Yugoslav Foreign Ministry La Paz, 08.09.1961.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

vigorous opposition of Yugoslav diplomats and leaders. Tito's fiercely independent policy stance towards Moscow was behind many of the repeated clashes with the Cubans.

Despite the presence of realpolitik concerns and a lack of complete neutrality from either superpower's influence in the Non-Aligned Movement, international relations between Latin American and Mediterranean countries should not be mistaken for not having considered alternative, third-way strategies and alliances in the Cold War. Both Latin American and Mediterranean states displayed more varied interest towards international relations after 1945 than often has been described. For the multitude of recently independent states examples of foreign policies outside the two superpowers were of interest in the early Cold War. These states could become new partners for Latin American states and it is such connections the Non-Aligned Movement came to represent. Outside of a few European states, neutralism did not win the day in terms of policy choices. However, this did not mean that the concept was not of interest to Latin American states and their populations, which *El Diario's* coverage as well as other evidence presented here in this article decisively demonstrates.

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