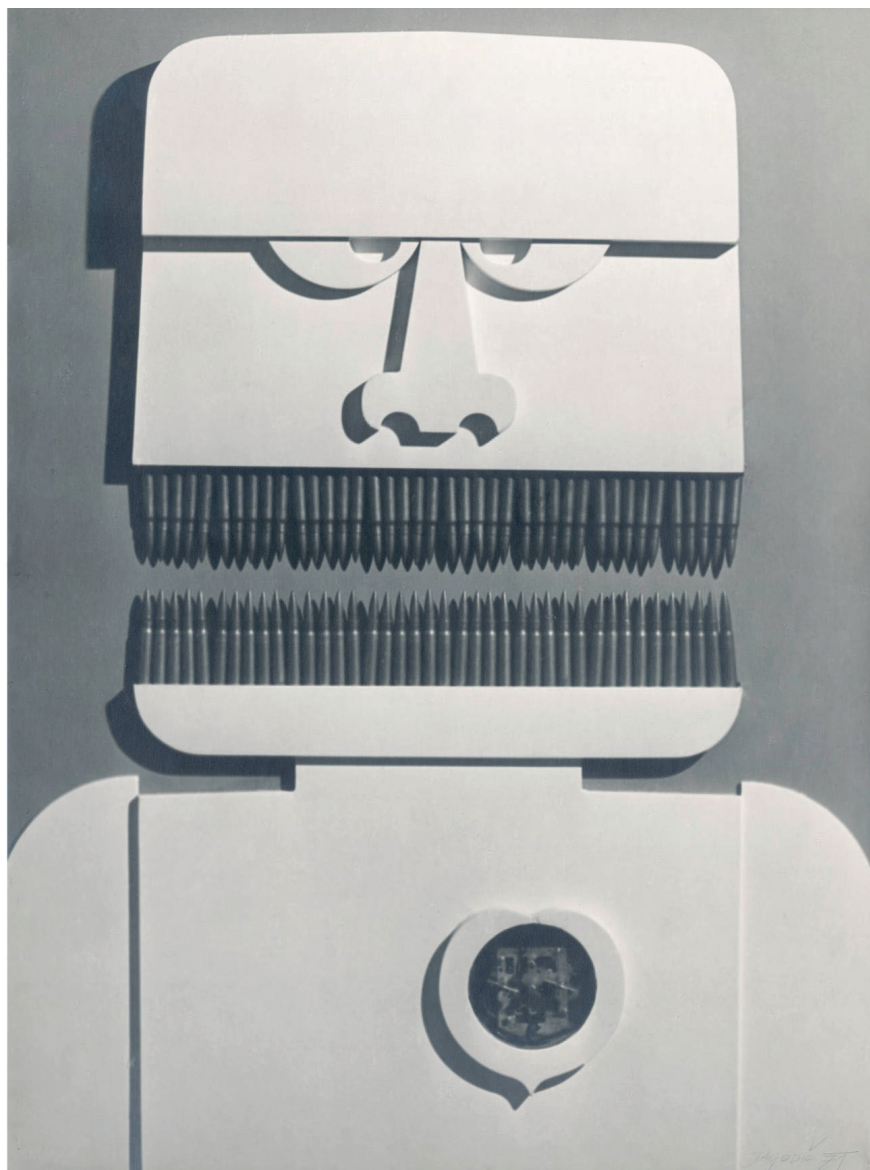


Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond



PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Edited by
Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

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UNCONDITIONAL!



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in Yugoslavia and Beyond

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Belgrade, Ljubljana
2025

PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Introduction → 11

11 → Martin Pogačar, Sanja Petrović Todosijević

Peace. Unconditional.

The Vestiges of Peace and the Socio-Political Frameworks of War

The Idea of Peace → 27

29 → Tomaž Mastnak

Unconditional Peace?

The Idea of Peace in Political Context

45 → Peter Klepec

On the Cruelty of War

63 → Petra Svoljšak

The War to End All Wars: A Broken Promise of Peace

81 → Nemanja Stanimirović

Yugoslav Dissidents as Agents of Peace in the Era of Détente

107 → Gal Kirn

Balkan Route to and from War: Reflections on Peace in Šejla Kamerić's *Cease* (2023) and Nika Autor's *Sunny Railways* (2023)

Political Practices of Peace → 127

129 → Srđan Mičić

Yugoslavia's Pacifist Foreign Policy and Actions in the League of Nations, 1920–1933

165 → Rastko Lompar

War and Peace within Interwar Yugoslav Radical Right Circles

191 → Zoran Janjetović

Indemnification for Nazi Victims, the Federal Republic of Germany and Yugoslavia

215 → Luka Savčić

“Struggle for Peace” as a Form of Yugoslav Internationalism:
A Case Study of Anti-colonialism

233 → Natalija Dimić Lompar

Entering the Cold War “Struggle for Peace”:
Yugoslavia and the International Forum for Peace, 1951–1954

265 → Jovan Čavoški

Yugoslavia, Formation of the Asian-African Group and Issues of Peace in the United
Nations, 1950–1953

289 → Luka Filipović

From Czechoslovakia to Chile, in the Shadow of Vietnam:
Anti-War Movements and the European Communists, 1968–1974

311 → Petar Dragišić

Yugoslavia and the Helsinki Summit in 1975

Images of Peace → 323

325 → Zdenka Badovinac

Peace as a Space for the Third

339 → Katja Kobolt

Pictures of War, Pictures for Peace: Memory of the People’s Liberation Struggle
in Yugoslav Children’s Literature

357 → Stanislava Barać

“Lest We Forget”: Desanka Maksimović’s Remembrance Politics and Anti-War Engagement

389 → Ovidiu Țichindeleanu

On Seeing the Socialist Culture of Peace

Peacemakers → 413

415 → Nika Grabar

Building Non-Peace

439 → Tina Filipović, Ana Kladnik

Non-State Actors as Active Agents of Peace in Cold War Europe

461 → Svetlana Stefanović

International Women’s Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women:
Equality, Development and Peace, 1976–1985 – The Yugoslav Answer

481 → Sanja Petrović Todosijević

International Children’s Friendship Meeting, 1976–1988
Social Organisation of Children in Socialist Yugoslavia and Education for Peace

513 → Vladimir Petrović

Anatomy of a Lost Chance:
Vance-Owen Peace Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Geneva, January 1993

547 → Nataša Kostić

Teaching History and Learning about the Dissolution and Wars of the 1990s
in Reconciliation Processes

569 → Martin Pogačar

Anti-Militarism in the Art of Stane Jagodič

Postscript → 575

575 → Martin Pogačar

Pax Ante Futurum

580 → Notes on Contributors

Luka Savčić*

“Struggle for Peace” as a Form of Yugoslav Internationalism: A Case Study of Anti-colonialism

Abstract The paper addresses the question of socialist Yugoslavia’s approach to the colonial issue, which is integrated into the framework of revolutionary internationalism and the issue of peace in international relations. The research looks at the context of the global Cold War, with a chronological focus on the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Yugoslavia finally shaped its foreign policy strategy, coinciding with the peak of the Cold War and the decolonisation process. The main sources for this paper were official party documents, reports and speeches from the 7th (1958) and 8th (1964) party congresses, as well as other documents that shed light on Yugoslavia’s interpretation of and role in this issue, which is used in conjunction with the relevant historiographical literature.

Keywords Revolutionary internationalism, peace, Cold War, Yugoslavia, anti-colonialism

Socialist revolutions and the question of peace

In its broadest sense, internationalism represents the idea of transnational solidarity among peoples for the sake of peace and prosperity, and it is most commonly associated with revolutions, where it is specifically identified as “revolutionary internationalism”¹. However, the term itself emerged in the mid-19th century in the context of Karl Marx and

* Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-1861-3727>

¹ Soyang Park, “Internationalisms,” in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History. From the Mid-19th Century to the Present Day*, ed. Akira Iriye, Pierre-Yves Saunier (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 586. For the complexity and various levels of meaning of the term, see: Carsten Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought* (New Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Kjell Goldmann, *The Logic of Internationalism. Coercion and Accommodation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).



Stane Jagodič, *The Pigeon of Peace*, drawing-photo, 1967

the First International, where the concept of “proletarian internationalism” was introduced as a subset of revolutionary internationalism.² In Marxist thought, which began to develop around this time, the question of peace was unequivocally intertwined with the idea of socialism, seen as the replacement for the “capitalist system” that produced war.³ The next step in shaping proletarian internationalism came with the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) and Lenin, which also influenced interpretations of peace. Therefore, Lenin approached the question of peace primarily through a critique of “imperialism”, as articulated in his work *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, where he argued that lasting peace is impossible under capitalism because the system inevitably leads to imperialist wars and the conquest of new markets.⁴ An important addition to previous interpretations of internationalism was Lenin’s idea of a natural alliance with colonised peoples in the “fight against global imperialism.”⁵

After Lenin’s death, Stalin rose to power in the Soviet Union and became the central figure in interpreting internationalism, viewing it primarily as a tool for advancing Soviet state interests, formulating the doctrine of “socialism in one country”, which entailed strengthening socialism within the Soviet Union before any further expansion of the idea could occur.⁶ Nevertheless, during his rule, numerous communist parties around the world maintained strong ties and loyalty to Moscow, aligning with all ideological shifts within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).⁷ Major changes occurred after the Second World War, with the rapid global expansion of socialism and socialist ideas, making the question of peace significantly more relevant in the new Cold War context.⁸ At that time, following the Leninist framework, the issue of colonialism, especially after Stalin’s death, became highly significant for socialist countries.⁹ In the new context of bloc division, colonialism was viewed as an important challenge to world peace, as well as an opportunity to win the “hearts and minds” of colonised peoples and guide them towards the socialist model of development.¹⁰

2 Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 64–77; Park, “Internationalisms,” 587.

3 Günter Wernicke, “The Communist-Led World Peace Council and the Western Peace Movements: The Fetters of Bipolarity and Some Attempts to Break Them in the Fifties and Early Sixties,” *Peace and Change* 23, no. 3 (1998): 265–311.

4 Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 82–87; Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought*, 67–69.

5 Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 83.

6 For more on this interpretation, see: Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution. A History of International Communism 1917–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

7 Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought*, 69.

8 Petra Goedde, *The Politics of Peace. A Global Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press 2019).

9 Stalin did not pay much attention to the colonial question, focusing on the Soviet policy of “socialism in one country”. See: Tobias Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin. Interaction and Exchange between the USSR and Latin America during the Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–4; Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 43–65, 170–184.

10 Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Numerous socialist countries called for a “struggle for peace” during the Cold War, which was an important part of their rhetoric.¹¹ At the same time, as colonial empires weakened, they supported anti-colonial movements and established cooperation with newly independent states across the Third World.¹² The activities of socialist countries towards anti-colonialism were characterised by the ideal of helping a potential ideological ally while also having a pragmatic component that involved putting ideology aside, as noted by revolutionary theorist Fred Halliday.¹³ This pragmatism primarily referred to prioritising narrow national interests, where countries, driven by non-ideological motives, worked to gather allies, seen as new markets, or, upon assessing the international situation, ignored their “ideological duty” to assist ideologically close movements.¹⁴ This was characteristic not only of the regimes in Eastern Europe, mostly under the control of the Soviet Union, but also of the newly decolonised revolutionary countries in the Third World.

The case of socialist Yugoslavia

After the victory in the Second World War and the rise of Yugoslav communists to power, the new socialist Yugoslavia fell under the strong influence of Moscow, which automatically meant the adoption of both the internal and foreign policy models of the Soviet Union. During this period, the Yugoslav party leadership followed Stalin’s interpretation of internationalism, which essentially asserted the absolute primacy of the Soviet Union in the communist movement, and the stabilisation of socialism in Eastern Europe at a time when Cold War confrontations with the West were intensifying. The adoption of this concept of internationalism also entailed embracing the views on peace, in which the Soviet Union was portrayed as the leader of peaceful forces in the world, in contrast to the Western imperialist powers.¹⁵

The next critical point in Yugoslavia’s interpretation of internationalism was in 1948, when the conflict with the Soviet Union led to Yugoslavia’s expulsion from the Cominform, which automatically signified the abandonment of Stalinist positions and the rejection of Moscow’s leading role, now perceived as a threat to peace.¹⁶ This deterioration

11 Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, 16.

12 The term refers to formerly colonised or semi-colonised African, Asian and Latin American countries that were under European dominance, or more precisely, pan-European, including American and Russian influence, see: William R. Keylor, *A World of Nations: The International Order Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

13 Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 94.

14 Ibid.

15 Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, 14–19.

16 Tvrtko Jakovina, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici* (Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 2002), 13–46; Dragan Bogetić, *Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952–1955. Jugoslovensko približavanje NATO-u* (Beograd: Službeni list SRJ, 2000); Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu, Odnosi sa velikim silama 1949–1955* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988); Ljubodrag Dimić, *Jugoslavija i Hladni rat* (Beograd: Arhipelag, 2014), 116–127.

in relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries forced Yugoslavia's state and party leadership to temporarily turn to the West, until ties with the Eastern Bloc were normalised in 1955. However, pressures from both the East and the West persisted, gradually pushing Yugoslav foreign policy toward the newly independent nations of the Third World, a shift that culminated in Yugoslavia's non-aligned policy by the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁷ In parallel with these developments, an important process that accompanied the formation of Yugoslav foreign policy was its increasingly close alignment with the United Nations, especially after the conflict with Stalin. During this period, Yugoslavia recognised the potential of newly independent Third World countries emerging from decolonisation, which also influenced its views on peace.¹⁸

Colonialism – Disruptor of global peace

The vital Yugoslav interest in the colonial question arose from two often intertwining key factors. The first relates to the ideological component of Marxism-Leninism, primarily based on Lenin's works, which identified people under colonial domination as natural allies in the struggle against imperialism.¹⁹ Yugoslavs began to align with this interpretation of Marxism-Leninism after the break with Stalin, who had not paid much attention to this issue. The second factor involves a pragmatic component, primarily reflecting Yugoslavia's search for new allies, which went hand in hand with the collapse of colonial empires, at a time when the country was facing significant pressures from both the East and the West, forcing it to soften further its ideological edge.²⁰ Additionally, the economic calculation should not be overlooked, as Yugoslavia sought new markets for its products, primarily to compensate for the Western European ones.²¹

Considering the aforementioned factors, Yugoslavia identified colonialism as one of the main disruptive factors to world peace. In its programmatic documents, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia adhered to the principles that any violent retention or denial of the right to self-determination of peoples under colonial domination directly threatened global peace.²² On the other hand, from Yugoslavia's perspective, global peace was also threatened by the aspirations of colonial powers to regain their lost positions, primarily through economic subjugation in the form of so-called neocolonialism.²³ For Yugoslav communists, the struggle against these forms of colonial rule represented "an internationalist duty in the fight for peace, the condemnation of all forms of imperialism and the support of all progressive movements".²⁴

It is important to address the terminology used by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia when defining its stance on peace, which, in party sources, was exclusively framed as the "struggle for peace", a term integral to Yugoslavia's revolutionary vocabulary.²⁵ The same terminology was employed in discussions of the colonial issue, where there were calls for the necessity of a "struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism", as well as for the "final liquidation of the colonial system", which was marked as an essential part of Yugoslavia's peace policy.²⁶ This formulation of the "struggle for peace", also used in other socialist countries as part of the ideological lexicon, clearly suggested that peace was something to be continuously fought for, especially when it involved the struggle against imperialism and colonialism.

Marked as an internationalist duty of the Yugoslav communists, the anti-colonial struggle was ideologically viewed primarily through the discourse of spreading socialism. In this context, anti-colonialism and socialism were unequivocally seen as compatible processes leading to a common goal: world peace.²⁷ The spread of socialism was thus perceived as natural and inevitable, mainly because it was believed that it would be the quickest path to overcome the consequences of backwardness and underdevelopment.²⁸ Even when it was a purely national struggle, progressive elements were recognised within it,

17 Alvin Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 28–64; Dragan Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju. Od ideje do pokreta* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2019), 51–76; Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija jugoslovenske spoljne politike* (Beograd: ISI, 2006).

18 For more on Yugoslavia's alignment with the United Nations, see: Jadranka Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Organizaciji Ujedinjenih Nacija (1945–1953)* (Beograd: ISI, 1985).

19 Primarily referring to his works: *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* and *Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions*. See: Yugoslav editions: Vladimir Ilić Lenjin, *Imperijalizam kao najviši stadij kapitalizma: popularna skica, peto izdanje* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1958); Vladimir Ilić Lenjin, *O nacionalnom i kolonijalnom pitanju* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1958).

20 Bogetić, *Nova strategija jugoslovenske spoljne politike*, 43; On the relationship between ideology and pragmatism in this context, see: Tvrtko Jakovina, "Not Like a Modern Day Jesus Christ: Pragmatism and Idealism in Yugoslav Non-Alignment," in *Socialist Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned Movement. Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Imaginaries*, ed. Paul Stubbs (Montreal & Kingston, London, Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023), 108–129.

21 Ibid.

22 Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (507), 1/VII-K1/59, Izveštaj komisije za pitanja spoljne politike i međunarodnog radničkog pokreta, april 1958.

23 This issue received considerable attention in Yugoslavia. See, for example: AJ, 507/I/VIII-K8/11, Josip Vus, SKJ u borbi protiv neokolonijalizma: referat sa Osmog kongresa SKJ, decembar 1964. Yugoslavia saw global aid and solidarity with underdeveloped countries as the only solution to this problem.

24 These formulations come from the 7th Party Congress. See: AJ, 507/I/VII-K4/40, Program SKJ usvojen na Sedmom kongresu, April 1958, 40–42.

25 This phrase was in official use and, as such, appeared in the Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in 1958. See: "Program Saveza komunista Jugoslavije," *VII Kongres Saveza komunista Jugoslavije. Stenografske beleške* (Beograd: Kultura, 1958), 977–980.

26 Љубомир Радовановић, *Југославија у борби за мир* (Београд: Седма сила 1963).

27 *Седми конгрес СКЈ*, 185.

28 AJ, Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia (142), 9–30, Stenografske beleške Komisije za politička i ideološka pitanja na Petom kongresu SSRNJ, 20 April 1960.

contributing to world peace through their fight, which marked them as natural allies of socialism.²⁹ To ensure that socialism truly led to peace, the Yugoslavs developed the approach that everyone has their own path to socialism, which became one of the pillars of their foreign policy. This formulation evolved in the context of the conflict with the Cominform, primarily aimed at defending Yugoslavia's internal order, but it was later widely used in foreign policy, particularly in relations with non-European movements and states.³⁰

From this ideological perspective, it was automatically assumed that all anti-colonial forces were labelled as peaceful, progressive and liberating, working in the interest of global socialism, as can be seen in all key party documents.³¹ The decolonisation process, from that perspective, was crucial and contributed to the "liberation of many nations and the creation of a number of new states striving for peace and representing positive forces in international relations", which automatically led to the "rise of all socialist and anti-imperialist forces".³² On the other hand, colonial powers were consistently referred to as forces of imperialism, capitalism, power and war, with their activities often linked to direct threats to world peace.³³ However, the Yugoslavs were notably optimistic, believing that the forces of imperialism would continue to diminish, creating more space for the strengthening of socialist and peaceful elements worldwide.³⁴

The premise that all anti-colonial movements contribute to world peace formed the general stance of the Yugoslav state and party leadership, but in practice, interactions with specific movements and countries revealed a policy influenced by non-ideological motives. This was especially evident in the imperative to protect national interests, which rendered the ideological positions of Yugoslav communists considerably more flexible.³⁵ In this context, Yugoslavia pursued a policy that involved closely monitoring anti-colonial movements and ranking them according to their commitment to progress and peace.³⁶

29 Stanka Veselinov, "Referat o kolonijalizmu," in *VII Kongres Saveza komunista Jugoslavije. Stenografske beleške*, 375–379.

30 On the different paths to socialism and Yugoslavia's perspective, see: Nemanja Radonjić, "Veoma različitim putevima u socijalizam. Jugoslovenski komunisti i afrički napredni pokreti (1945–1970)," in *Komunisti i komunističke partije: politike, akcije, debate. Zbornik odabranih radova s Trećeg međunarodnog znanstvenog skupa Socijalizam na klupi, 28–30 rujna, Pula, 2017*, ed. Igor Duda (Zagreb–Pula: Srednja Europa–Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli, 2019), 135–163.

31 *Седми конгрес СКЈ*, 246–249; see also Tito's report from the Eighth Congress: AJ, 507/1/VIII-K1/2, Josip Broz Tito, *Uloga Saveza komunista u daljoj izgradnji socijalističkih društvenih odnosa i akuelni problemi u međunarodnom radničkom pokretu i borbi za mir i socijalizam u svetu*, decembar 1964.

32 Ibid.

33 AJ, 507/1/VIII-K2/27, "Borba protiv eksploatacije i imperijalizma," referat Marka Nikežića sa Osmog kongresa SKJ, December 1964.

34 *Седми конгрес СКЈ*, 247; Nemanja Radonjić wrote about the imagological representations of anti-colonial movements and their enemies in the case of Africa. See: Nemanja Radonjić, *Slika Afrike u Jugoslaviji* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2023).

35 This phenomenon can best be theoretically explained by the concept of "instrumental internationalism", developed by Fred Halliday, which involves the use of internationalism as a façade for pursuing national interests. See: Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 91.

36 Nemanja Radonjić wrote that the 1958 program included a formulation that justified a flexible approach: "The goals of socialism are the same, but peoples achieve them...through different paths and means." See: Radonjić, "Veoma različitim putevima u socijalizam. Jugoslovenski komunisti i afrički napredni pokreti (1945–1970)," 136–137.

There was cooperation with a wide spectrum of liberation movements across the Third World, even though not all of them necessarily followed a socialist path of development. These were primarily, as defined by Odd Arne Westad, "nativist" movements that adopted certain "anti-imperialist" rhetoric from Marxism-Leninism, even though they were not directly fighting for a socialist revolution.³⁷ One example is Algeria, where Yugoslavia supported the nativist National Liberation Front (Front de Libération nationale, FLN) movement in its anti-colonial struggle, despite the presence of a communist party in the country. Furthermore, Yugoslavia did not view all socialist forces as peaceful, particularly in the context of the intense competition for influence among anti-colonial forces, whether between the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries, or among numerous new revolutionary forces in the Third World, such as China or Cuba, or anti-colonial movements or factions within them that were under the control of Moscow or Beijing.³⁸ Ultimately, driven by political and economic interests, Yugoslavia often softened its ideological stance towards the United States and other predominantly colonial Western European countries.³⁹

An important concept in Yugoslav interpretations of peace was coexistence, which was also inextricably linked to anti-colonialism.⁴⁰ The concept of coexistence can be traced back to Lenin, where it essentially represented a temporary foreign policy measure aimed at protecting the Soviet Union until the global revolution matured, while, on the other hand, under Stalin, this concept evolved into a defensive strategy focused on consolidation and "socialism in one country". It was only during Khrushchev's time that coexistence became a long-term policy of living alongside capitalist countries to avoid direct conflict, primarily in the context of the Cold War.⁴¹ The Yugoslav party leadership adopted this term in the mid-1950s, using it in the slightly altered form of "active coexistence", by which they meant a mediating role in the conditions of the Cold War and the global division between the blocs, specifically in the triangle of the West, the East and the Third World, encompassing formulations about the respect for independence, sovereignty, equality and

37 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 79–86. The primary goal of nativist movements was the restoration of economic, social and military strength, achieved under strong leadership with respect for tradition, as noted by Westad.

38 For an analysis of Yugoslavia's socialist competition with China in the case of Algeria, see Čavoški's work: Jovan Čavoški, "Between Revolution and Non-Alignment: The Sino-Yugoslav Competition in Algeria and the Global Cold War," in *China, Yugoslavia and Socialist Worldmaking: Convergences and Divergences*, eds. Zvonimir Stojić, Jure Ramšak, Liang Zhanjun and Jože Pirjevec (Koper: Anales ZRS, 2023), 256–291; Yugoslavia, for example, carefully monitored the actions of other Eastern European countries in the case of Angola, which can be clearly interpreted as a sign of its competitiveness. See: AJ, 142-F-434, Stav socijalističkih zemalja prema Angolskom oslobodilačkom pokretu i privremenoj vladi Angole, 1964.

39 Yugoslavia was primarily economically dependent on the West. For example, regarding economic aid from the United States, see: Jakovina, *Socijalizam na američkoj pšenici*; Драган Богетић, "Економска сарадња Југославије и САД у време другог југословенско-совјетског сукоба 1958–1959," *Историја 20. века*, no.1 (2005): 131–153.

40 During the socialist era, there were hardly any works that critically examined the concept of coexistence. However, during and after the breakup of the country, the approach shifted to the opposite extreme. See: Bogetić, *Nova strategija jugoslovenske spoljne politike*, 7.

41 For more on the evolution of the term, see: Pons, *The Global Revolution*.

non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.⁴² This doctrine, which became a key element in Yugoslavia's international strategy, reflected all the ambitions of Yugoslav foreign policy, compensating for the country's lack of size and resources.⁴³

In sources, active coexistence was given the utmost importance, often being called "the only true peace policy in the world" and "an essential element for the survival of modern humanity".⁴⁴ This is supported by the fact that immediately after the Seventh Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (1958), the term "active coexistence" evolved into "active peaceful coexistence".⁴⁵ An inseparable part of this concept was the fight against imperialism and colonialism, as it aimed to eliminate crisis hotspots, thereby directly leading to the avoidance of armed conflicts. At the same time, Yugoslav communists viewed active peaceful coexistence as a precondition for the fastest advancement of socialism.⁴⁶

It was precisely on these interpretations that Yugoslavia based its policy of non-alignment, which took shape in the second half of the 1950s and culminated in the First Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade in 1961.⁴⁷ The very idea of non-alignment was inseparable from Yugoslavia's understanding of the concept of peace and was directly tied to the process of decolonisation, which served as the starting point for this movement, as the countries liberated from colonialism formed the core around which the movement had gathered.⁴⁸ Yugoslav communists, therefore, viewed non-alignment as a fusion of anti-colonialism, active coexistence and the struggle for peace, which became the primary foreign policy priority during the Cold War.⁴⁹

42 Владимир Петровић, "Југословенска самит дипломатија 1944–1961," in *Југословенска дипломатија 1945–1961, зборник радова* (Београд: Институт за новију историју Србије, 2012), 38; Tito first publicly used the term "coexistence" in September 1954 during a speech in the small Slovenian town of Ostrožno. See: Zvonimir Stopić, "Coexistence vs. Coexistence: The Intersection between Yugoslavia's 'Active Peaceful Coexistence' and China's 'Bandung Spirit'," in *China, Yugoslavia and Socialist Worldmaking*, 198.

43 This policy was always risky, precisely because it had to be applied consistently. See: Петровић, "Југословенска самит дипломатија 1944–1961," 38.

44 Đuro Kladarin, "Referat o pitanju aktivne koegzistencije na Sedmom kongresu SKJ," in *VII Kongres Saveza komunista Jugoslavije. Stenografske beleške*, 373–374; *Седми конгрес СКЈ*, 249–250; AJ, 507/1/VIII-K1/2, Tito, *Uloga Saveza komunista u daljoj izgradnji socijalističkih društvenih odnosa i aktuelni problemi u međunarodnom radničkom pokretu i borbi za mir i socijalizam u svetu*, decembar 1964.

45 This term was already in use at the Fifth Congress of the Socialist Alliance in 1960. See for example: AJ, 142-8-26, Titov referat sa pripremnim materijalima, V Kongres SSRNJ, 1960.

46 Kiro Hadži Vasilev, "Koegzistencija i progresivni društveni preobražaj," *Socijalizam*, no. 2 (1964): 17–59; The journal *Socijalizam* was the official organ of the Central Committee, making it a platform for disseminating official party positions.

47 For more on the First Conference in Belgrade and its principles, see: Ljubodrag Dimić and Dragan Bogetić, *Beogradska konferencija nesvrstanih zemalja 1–6 septembar 1961: prilog istoriji Trećeg sveta* (Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 2013); for information on other Non-Aligned Movement summits, see: Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits. A History* (London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022).

48 Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju*, 9–11.

49 Mišo Pavićević, "Politika neangažovanih u svetlu Kairske konferencije," *Socijalizam* no. 11–12 (1964): 1521–1533.

These interpretations of active coexistence and non-alignment affirmed Yugoslavia's internationalist commitment to peace, coupled with a strong ideological component of spreading socialism globally. In such interpretations by Yugoslav communists, the search for external allies of the revolution is evident, fitting perfectly within the context of the world's division into blocs and the strong pressures from both the East and the West.⁵⁰ Yugoslavia thus viewed its non-aligned policy as the only guarantee of independence and the preservation of revolutionary achievements, forming the foundation of its internationalism.⁵¹ Additionally, in the context of gathering allies, Yugoslavia used this policy to strengthen its position within the United Nations, primarily because the process of decolonisation rapidly increased the number of new countries with voting rights.⁵² Therefore, the United Nations became a channel for articulating and advancing Yugoslav internationalism.⁵³

Anti-colonial war on peace

The decolonisation process during the Cold War represented one of the main challenges to global peace, primarily due to the fact that many Third World countries were fighting for their freedom and emancipation from colonial powers, often becoming much broader Cold War battlegrounds with multiple parties involved, for example Congo in the early 1960s and Angola in the early 1970s.⁵⁴ However, the decolonisation process generally followed two paths through which countries gained independence. The first involved countries (e.g. India, Ghana, Mauritius) that achieved independence through negotiations with the colonial metropolis, which subsequently withdrew peacefully.⁵⁵ The second group (e.g. Algeria, Vietnam, Angola) consisted of countries where anti-colonial wars of varying intensity were fought, primarily because the colonial powers were unwilling to relinquish territory and agree to a peaceful transition of power.⁵⁶ At the height of the decolonisation process, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, several anti-colonial wars were waged, with the

50 It is natural for a revolution to seek allies, especially within the framework of international organisations. See: Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 96.

51 Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju*, 21–26.

52 Representatives from 25 countries attended the Belgrade Conference, while 47 countries were represented at the Cairo Conference in 1964. As the process of decolonisation advanced, the number of member countries increased exponentially. See: Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju*, 39–47; see also: Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits*, 64.

53 For example, see Tito's speech at the United Nations, where he presents Yugoslav views on peace and anti-colonialism: UN Digital Library, General Assembly, 15th session, 868th plenary meeting, Tito's speech, New York, Thursday, 22 September 1960.

54 For research on decolonisation and the Cold War, see: Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *The Struggle Against Imperialism. Anticolonialism and the Cold War* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).

55 Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, 162.

56 Ibid; See also: Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 86–87.

most notable being in the French colonies Vietnam (1946–1954) and Algeria (1954–1962), the British colony of Kenya (1952–1960), and from the mid-1960s, the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau.⁵⁷ Numerous anti-colonial movements in these countries employed various guerrilla warfare tactics in their struggle against their colonial metropolises, which typically responded brutally, leading to significant casualties.

As anti-colonial wars were typically accompanied by significant violence, especially at the height of the decolonisation process, the belief that peaceful resolution was impossible and that the fight against imperialism embodied by colonial powers was inevitably growing stronger worldwide. Consequently, the Soviet Union and its Eastern European socialist allies supported the anti-colonial struggle, while a new, more radical form of internationalism was taking root across the Third World.⁵⁸ This was primarily embodied by well-known revolutionaries such as the Chinese leader Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary of Argentine origin, and Frantz Fanon, an anti-colonial and post-colonial theorist from Martinique, who went on to inspire many around the globe.⁵⁹ They symbolised the idea that violence was not only a legitimate act but also the only way to fight against colonialism, as Fanon referred to it, a “cleansing force”.⁶⁰

A similar perspective was held by the Yugoslav communists, stemming from the same roots of Marxism in its Leninist form, which related to nations under colonial domination, yet with various nuances shaped by their own experience. In the rhetoric of Yugoslav communists, the peaceful retreat of colonial powers was acknowledged as a clear indication of their weakness, military incapacity and inability to resist liberation movements.⁶¹ On the other hand, it was frequently noted that “any violent repression of liberation tendencies forced entire nations to take up arms as the only means to achieve freedom and lasting peace”.⁶² In this context, armed conflict was seen as a legitimate alternative when peaceful resolution and the withdrawal of colonial powers were impossible. In such cases, the colonial metropolis was blamed for the conflict, labelled as “imperialist” and “reactionary”, while the struggle was viewed as the effort of “progressive forces for peace”.⁶³

When discussing the nuances in rhetoric on these issues, the Yugoslav state and party leadership in the late 1950s and early 1960s held a stance quite similar to that of the Soviet Union, favouring a peaceful approach while acknowledging the legitimacy of anti-colonial wars as a form of defence.⁶⁴ The most significant divergence occurred with China, which adopted a much more extreme and militant rhetoric, especially after its split with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, particularly concerning revolutions and anti-colonial wars in the Third World.⁶⁵ At the beginning of the 1960s, China was at its most active in its anti-colonial rhetoric and support for liberation movements, developing the so-called “Three Worlds Theory”. Within this framework, China positioned itself as the leader of the Third World countries, while equating the United States and the Soviet Union as “hegemonic and imperialist powers”.⁶⁶

China’s attitude towards Yugoslavia during this period was also highly negative, primarily rooted in criticism of Yugoslavia’s non-aligned and non-bloc policy. Yugoslavia was thus seen as a competitor in the Third World and was labelled in China’s campaign as a “revisionist and imperialist” country.⁶⁷ In this context, the Yugoslavs viewed China as a disruptive force to world peace, mainly due to its combative stance and rejection of peaceful means and coexistence, in favour of supporting anti-colonial warfare.⁶⁸ Thus, considering the entire international labour movement, the Chinese and their sympathisers were labelled as “dogmatic forces” and distinctly separated from the other “progressive” socialist countries. Furthermore, it became clear that China, positioning itself as the centre of the global revolution and the leader in the fight against imperialism in the Third World, was a major rival to Yugoslavia in the competition for influence over the decolonising nations.⁶⁹

In addition to anti-colonial rhetoric and positions that justified the struggle of colonised peoples for freedom, many revolutionary countries directly supported liberation and anti-colonial movements. On one side were the Eastern European states, while on the other were Third World countries that had recently gained independence or undergone revolutionary changes.⁷⁰ This assistance primarily included funding, transportation, logistics, diplomatic support, as well as the most concrete military aid, which encompassed

57 For information on these cases, see: Dietmar Rothermund, *Routledge Companion to Decolonization* (London: Routledge, 2006).

58 For more on this Third World perspective, see: Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 88–91.

59 Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*, 164–167.

60 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 85.

61 Bogdan Oreščanin, “O nekim vojnim aspektima borbe za svetski mir, nacionalnu nezavisnost i socijalizam,” *Socijalizam*, no.6 (1959): 23–64.

62 Tito expressed these views in his report at the Seventh Congress. See: Тито, Задаци Савеза комуниста у вези са међународном ситуацијом и унутрашњим развојем социјалистичке изградње Југославије, in *Седми конгрес СКЈ*, 17; For more on Yugoslav positions on this issue, see also: A.J., Yugoslav Red Cross (731), 310, Sastanak eksperata-unutrašnji oružani sukobi, 25–30. October 1962.

63 A.J., 507/1/VIII-K1/2, Tito, *Uloga Saveza komunista u daljoj izgradnji socijalističkih društvenih odnosa i akuelni problemi u međunarodnom radničkom pokretu i borbi za mir i socijalizam u svetu*, decembar 1964; Nemanja Radonjić wrote about this issue in his doctoral dissertation: Немања Радонђић, “Слика Африке у Југославији (1945–1990),” (PhD diss., University of Belgrade, 2020), 149–151.

64 When discussing anti-colonial wars, Yugoslavia often drew from its own experience in World War II, drawing parallels between the two. For perspectives on the post-Stalinist Soviet Union regarding these issues, see: Rupprecht, *Soviet Internationalism after Stalin*.

65 Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 160–170.

66 Ibid., 162.

67 For more on Yugoslav-Chinese relations and the intense rivalry between these two countries in the Third World, see: *China, Yugoslavia and Socialist Worldmaking: Convergences and Divergences*, eds. Zvonimir Stopić, Jure Ramšak, Liang Zhanjun and Jože Pirjevec.

68 This issue received significant attention during the Eighth Party Congress. See: A.J., 507/1/VIII-K8/2, Boško Šiljegović, “O nekim principima saradnje SKJ sa komunističkim, socijalističkim partijama i oslobodilačkim pokretima,” referat sa Osmog kongresa SKJ, December 1964.

69 China also disagreed with the Yugoslav concept of non-alignment, thereby threatening its vital interest in gathering allies.

70 In addition to the superpowers, many other smaller players also participated in anti-colonial wars. See: Jeremy Friedman, *Ripe for Revolution. Building Socialism in the Third World* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2021).

the provision of weapons, military training and instructors.⁷¹ In rare cases, there was direct military assistance, such as Cuba's involvement on the side of the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) in the Angolan civil war, which followed the country's decolonisation in the mid-1970s.⁷² As a result, anti-colonial wars during the Cold War era became conflicts of global significance, not merely fought between colonial powers and liberation movements, but involving multiple actors.

Socialist Yugoslavia, with its developed and extensive relations with liberation movements across the Third World, was not an exception to this framework. As early as the beginning of the 1950s, it began establishing initial contacts with liberation movements in the Third World.⁷³ By the end of the decade, following the Seventh Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (1958), the Yugoslav communists finally shaped their strategy, coinciding with the advancing process of decolonisation, particularly the significant anti-colonial war in Algeria, which provided valuable lessons.⁷⁴ From this period until the very end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia supported liberation movements in anti-colonial wars, seeing its role as a link in the chain of "the struggle for peace".

In line with its resources and the international situation, Yugoslavia did not intervene militarily but instead trained fighters from liberation movements, financed them, sent weapons and provided various forms of medical assistance and diplomatic support.⁷⁵ All these Yugoslav activities in anti-colonial wars were mostly implemented by the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia and a vast network of socio-political organisations, where the most important ones were the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Red Cross, the Federation of Veteran Associations of the People's Liberation War and the League of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia.⁷⁶ As previously mentioned, before any actions were taken, there was a selection process to determine which movements to support, with the criterion being that they were progressive and aimed for peace and socialism –

a highly flexible formulation that Yugoslavia carefully considered. In some cases, Yugoslavia maintained contact with multiple movements within a single country, monitoring and ranking them by their progressiveness before deciding which one to support.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The Yugoslav interpretation of internationalism and global peace directly stemmed from socialist ideology, the dynamics of foreign policy and its specific geopolitical interests during the Cold War. This approach primarily led the Yugoslav party and state leadership to identify the problem of colonialism as a major source of instability, while on the other hand, anti-colonial war was seen as a legitimate act of resistance against colonial powers. These were the official positions of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, articulated by high-ranking party officials and ideologues, particularly at party congresses, which played a crucial and indispensable role in shaping Yugoslavia's foreign and domestic policies.

In this context, the political messages and positions established at the Seventh (1958) and Eighth (1964) Party Congresses, where considerable attention was devoted to the intertwined issues of peace and anti-colonialism, were disseminated throughout all segments of Yugoslav society. On the external front, these positions were conveyed directly to anti-colonial movements and promoted globally through the United Nations, following prior alignment with other Third World countries. The United Nations thus became a key platform for shaping Yugoslavia's anti-colonial stance and for the direct engagement of Yugoslav officials, who actively advocated for decolonisation and condemned colonial aggression on the global stage.

The late 1950s and early 1960s marked a pivotal period for the development of views on the relationship between anti-colonialism and global peace. At the height of Cold War tensions, Yugoslav communists finalised their foreign policy strategy, which rested on peaceful active coexistence and non-alignment – concepts deeply intertwined with their understanding and definition of world peace. Yugoslavia's stance on the colonial question as a destabilising factor for peace, established by the mid-1960s, remained in place until the end of the Cold War. Following the same framework shaped during that period, Yugoslavia continued to support anti-colonial struggles and assist liberation movements until its dissolution. Taking into account its positions and mechanisms of action regarding decolonisation, from the late 1950s and early 1960s, Yugoslavia also actively participated in the competition for the "hearts and minds" of colonial peoples alongside other socialist countries.

71 Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics*, 82–87; Holbraad, *Internationalism and Nationalism in European Political Thought*, 98–97.

72 See: Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington and Africa 1959–1976* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

73 See: Немања Радонић, "Слика Африке у Југославији (1945–1990)," 152.

74 Much has been written on Yugoslavia's role in the Algerian War of Independence. See, for example, Миладин Милошевић (ed.), *Југославија–Алжир. Зборник радова са научне конференције. Алжир, 27. јануар 2013* (Београд: Архив Југославије, 2013).

75 AJ, 142-F-144, *Pomoć oslobodilačkim i antikolonijalnim pokretima*, 5. mart 1964; regarding the military aspect of assistance, particularly weapons, see: Milorad Lazić, "Arsenal of the Global South: Yugoslavia's Military Aid to Nonaligned Countries and Liberation Movements," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 3 (2021): 428–445.

76 In addition, there were many other socio-political organisations involved in anti-colonialism and providing assistance to liberation movements. Their work was coordinated by the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Yugoslavia. See for example: AJ, 142-43-152, *Pismo Predsedništva Saveznog odbora SSRNJ upućeno svim organizacijama i kolektivnim članovima SSRNJ o problemima međunarodnih veza*, 1955.

77 For example, Angola was a case where Yugoslavia had contacts with multiple movements, after which it chose to support one; see: Jovan Čavoški, "Yugoslavia's Help Was Extraordinary: Political and Material Assistance from Belgrade to the MPLA in its Rise to Power, 1961–1975," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 21, no. 1 (2019): 125–150.

Summary

After a period of foreign policy turbulence and shifts – from the break with Stalin and a temporary turn toward the West to the subsequent normalisation of relations with the Soviet Union – Yugoslavia began to increasingly direct its foreign policy toward the Third World from the mid-1950s onward. The new foreign policy course of the Yugoslav state and party leadership, in response to the continuous pressures from both East and West, increasingly focused on the process of decolonisation, which also aligned with the Leninist discourse of anti-imperialism and cooperation with colonial peoples. As decolonisation was given more significance, Yugoslav communists viewed colonialism and neo-colonialism as key disruptive factors to world peace.

The party leadership thus formulated the general stance that all anti-colonial forces were progressive and peaceful, and that as such, they contributed to the expansion of socialism and peace. However, in practice, when cooperating with certain anti-colonial forces, Yugoslav policy was flexible, not always prioritising socialist interests; it was enough for the anti-colonial movement to be declared progressive. This perspective was shaped by two interwoven concepts according to the Yugoslav interpretation – peaceful active coexistence and non-alignment, both of which were inseparably tied to the decolonisation process and the interpretation of global peace.

Since anti-colonialism was viewed as part of the socialist “struggle for peace”, Yugoslav communists also saw anti-colonial war as a legitimate means of struggle for colonial peoples when colonial powers refused to withdraw peacefully. These positions on anti-colonial war, with certain nuances stemming primarily from their own experience of national liberation struggle, were more aligned with the views of the Soviet Union than those articulated in revolutionary countries in the Third World, such as China or Cuba. In this context, the Yugoslav leadership did not stop at mere rhetoric; Yugoslavia indirectly participated in several anti-colonial wars by actively supporting the struggles of liberation movements against colonial metropolises.

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