

Desecrating Celebrity.
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Edited by Romana Andò and Fabio Corsini



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Romana Andò, Fabio Corsini

Introduction	5
--------------------	---

STARS, CELEBRITIES, AND FAME

Cristina Colet

<i>Ruan Lingyu (1910-1935): Celebrating a Star, Desecrating the Woman</i>	17
---	----

Renata Gravina

<i>Nijinsky and the Parable of Life as a 'Work of Art'</i>	33
--	----

Ian Dixon

<i>Fame Rotting on The Slimy Thoroughfare: David Bowie Desecrating Celebritization in 'Diamond Dogs'</i>	47
--	----

Francesca Moretti

<i>Beyoncé: The Black Goddess. How Her Pregnancy Revelation Mirrors Her Celebrification Strategy</i>	63
--	----

POWER, POLITICS, AND PRESTIGE

Arrigo Bonifacio

<i>Celebrity Management and the Struggle for Power: The Case of Marshal Tito</i>	81
--	----

Fabiana Moraes

<i>Poverty, Status and Celebification of Everyday Life: Questioning and Confirming the Model for Existence of Celebrities on Instagram</i>	95
--	----

Valentina Signorelli

<i>Famous Last Words - A Comparative Focus on Resignation Speeches to Trace Contemporary European Instability: The Cases of David Cameron and Matteo Renzi</i>	109
--	-----

CELEBRITY STRATEGIES FOR THE MARKET AND BEYOND

Jeroen Jansen

*Publishing Strategies and Celebrity in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands.
The Case of Gerbrand Bredero* 131

Neil Alperstein

*Selling out and Sailing Onward: How Micro-Celebrities Manage
their Self-Presentation on Social Media*..... 147

Sinem Gudum

Influencer Marketing and Redefining Fame in Social Media Advertisements 165

Elisabetta Zurovac

*Performing and Perceiving the Microcelebrity Status in Snapchat:
An Italian Case Study*..... 179

Contributors..... 199

CELEBRITY MANAGEMENT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER: THE CASE OF MARSHAL TITO

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Abstract

During the Cold War, major and minor individuals were elevated to a position of celebrity thanks to their role in the great East-West confrontation that characterised those years. Unsurprisingly, Cold War celebrities that had fallen into political disgrace with their own side typically faced substantial demotion and oblivion, if not the desecration of their public image. By contrast, the most important case of Cold War celebrity that escaped this framework is unquestionably that of Marshal Tito, the founding father of the Non-Aligned Movement that succeeded in aligning with and seceding from both Cold War Blocs, and the only Cold War celebrity who succeeded in overcoming several political shifts and the related desecration processes, even turning them into tools for fostering his notoriety and building a new and stronger public image of himself. The study of the history of Tito's public life, focusing on Tito's management of his celebrity as a tool to foster his political career, is therefore an interesting case of undisputable political success, as well as an opportunity to reflect on the tight interrelation between celebrity and power established during the Cold War that has been a key issue in the political game ever since.

During the Cold War, major and minor individuals were elevated to a position of celebrity thanks to their role in the great East-West confrontation that characterised those years. Unsurprisingly, Cold War celebrities that had fallen into political disgrace with their own side typically faced substantial demotion and oblivion, if not the desecration of their public image. This path may be well exemplified by the renowned cases of some outstanding Cold War celebrities, such as the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov

or U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy¹. By contrast, the most important case of Cold War celebrity that escaped this framework is unquestionably that of Marshall Tito, the founding father of the Non-Aligned Movement that succeeded in aligning with and seceding from both Cold War Blocs, and the only Cold War celebrity who succeeded in overcoming several political shifts and the related desecration processes, even turning them into tools for fostering his notoriety and building a new and stronger public image of himself.

The leader of a country that slightly exceeded twenty million inhabitants, Tito has probably been the subject of more biographical works than most twentieth century U.S. presidents or British prime ministers². Due to the uniqueness of this case, Tito's figure has indeed become by far one of the most studied of the Cold War era, captivating the interest of journalists, historians and political, social, cultural and media scientists³. Sci-

¹ For the most updated biography of Molotov, see Derek Watson, *Molotov: A Biography*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005; concerning Joseph McCarthy, for the most updated biography see David Oshinsky, *A conspiracy so immense: the world of Joe McCarthy*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

² Tito's first biographies followed the 1948 split with Moscow and were mostly oriented to a hagiographical representation of Tito; see Louis Adamic, *The Eagle and the Roots*, Doubleday, 1952; Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito*, Simon & Schuster, 1953. It should be noted that in 1953 Vladimir Dedijer was a member of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's Central Committee, and his 1953 work was Tito's official hagiography. Tito-sympathetic biographies have been common for decades, see Phyllis Auty, *Tito: A Biography*, McGraw-Hill, 1970; Fitzroy Maclean, *Josip Broz Tito: A Pictorial Biography*, McGraw Hill, 1980. Meanwhile, the works of some of Tito's former associates who had politically fallen into disgrace had started to provide some disenchanting biographies of the Yugoslav Marshal, see Milovan Djilas, *Tito: The Story from Inside*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980; Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita*, Mladost, 3 vols., 1980-1984. Thereafter, Tito's biographies have been edited by Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Tito: Yugoslavia's Great Dictator. A Reassessment*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992; Jasper Ridley, *Tito: A Biography*, Constable, 1994; Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, Carroll & Graf, 1995; Geoffrey Swain, *Tito: A Biography*, I. B. Taurus, 2010; Ivo and Slavko Goldstein, *Tito, Profil*, 2015. For the most updated biography of Tito to-date, see Jože Pirjevec, *Tito and his Comrades*, University of Wisconsin Press, 2018.

³ For a comprehensive and updated overview of the studies focused on Tito, see

entific literature therefore offers many analyses of Tito's life and public image, given by a vast series of perspectives which range from the political role of Tito in the twentieth century to the way he was portrayed by the Western press. The aim of this work is to provide a contribution to this debate by analysing the history of Tito's public life, with a focus on Tito's management of his celebrity as a tool to foster his political career.

An analysis of Tito's celebrity cannot but start from the end of the story, say by the current average perception of Tito. Among the many possible descriptions of the historical figure of Tito perhaps one of the most adequate is given by his entry in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, recently re-edited by the American-Croatian historian Ivo Banac. Here Tito is described as « [...] the first Communist leader in power to defy Soviet hegemony, a backer of independent roads to socialism (sometimes referred to as "national communism"), and a promoter of the policy of nonalignment between the two hostile blocs in the Cold War »⁴. Tito is therefore remembered mostly for his role during the Cold War, and especially for his 1948 confrontation with Moscow, during which he succeeded in splitting from the Eastern Bloc and imposing himself as the worldwide model for "*independent roads to socialism*". He is remembered as well for having been the promoter of the policy of nonalignment. Interestingly, both these achievements were the outcome of a successful overcoming of Tito's previous brand, namely that of being Stalin's most faithful man before 1948 and that of being the only Communist military ally of the West during the Cold War before the nonalignment policy. Such impressive achievements in terms of public image management are a unique case in the history of the Cold War, justifying the need for an analysis of Tito's public life from a political perspective.

Josip Broz, the future comrade and Marshal Tito, was born in 1892 in the village of Kumrovec, Zagorje, then part of the Austro-Hungarian

Emily Greble, *Foreword* of Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. VII-XII. For a work focused on Tito's stardom during the Cold War see also Nikolina Kurtovic, *Communist Stardom in the Cold War: Josip Broz Tito in Western and Yugoslav Photography, 1943-1980*, University of Toronto, 2012.

⁴ Ivo Banac, *Josip Broz Tito*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15 October 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Josip-Broz-Tito>.

Empire⁵. The son of a Croat father and a Slovene mother, his childhood was marked by poverty, starvation and little education. The seventh of fifteen siblings, only seven of whom reached adulthood, he could not even finish the local primary school and had to start work at a very early age. Like many other Habsburg subjects of his social background, Josip Broz started to switch jobs and cities very often from the time he was a teenager. He soon became fascinated with Socialist ideals and joined the Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Slavonia⁶. Despite his Internationalist ideals he would not prove to be a pacifist during his military service in the Austro-Hungarian Army, when he would eventually be recommended for an award for gallantry and initiative in action⁷. Thanks to his engagement in the Austro-Hungarian Army, Broz had the opportunity to face celebrity for the very first time, since at the age of twenty-two he became one of the Empire's youngest non-commissioned officers and he even ranked second in the 1914 Army fencing season⁸. These first tastes of notoriety may have influenced Josip Broz's awareness of the importance of his public image, which in turn may explain why Tito, who on one hand would become used to talking about his fencing successes during those years, on the other hand always tried to hide one embarrassing chapter of this early stage of his life, namely his involvement in fights against the Serbian Army during the first months of the Great War⁹. This was understandably a burning issue for a leader of Yugoslavia, a country where the Serbs were the most important ethnic group. Hiding embarrassing chapters of his life would become a theme in Tito's management of his public image, and the successful ablation of the dark parts of his past would at length be a regular feature of the varied process of "celebrification" that his figure underwent¹⁰.

⁵For the most updated reconstruction of the first twenty-two years of Tito's life see Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 6-9.

⁶Ivi, p. 8.

⁷Richard West, *Tito*, cit., pp. 41-42.

⁸Jasper Ridley, *Tito*, cit., p. 59.

⁹Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁰For the concept of "celebrification", see Olivier Driessens, 'The celebrityization of society and culture: Understanding the structural dynamics of celebrity culture', in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 2012, pp. 641-657.

In addition to the abovementioned introduction of Josip Broz to celebrity, the Austro-Hungarian military service became a key feature in the young Tito's life, in part because it gave him the opportunity to be in Russia during the 1917 Revolution. Josip Broz had in fact been taken prisoner by the Russians in early 1915, who confined him near Alaty, in the central Volga region¹¹. This period of confinement gave him the opportunity to learn Russian and blend in with the local population at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution, when he regained his liberty¹². Interestingly, except for some minor involvement, and despite being a seasoned Social-Democrat, Josip Broz did not play a significant role in the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent Russian Civil War¹³. On occasion, during those years the former Austro-Hungarian prisoner of war even hid in rural areas and mixed with the locals, which proved to be an effective shield from the various anti-Communist and anti-Socialist raids so common in Russia during the years of the Civil War: a behaviour that in 1938 would lead to the accusation of Tito's having « fled » the October Revolution¹⁴.

When the Bolsheviks eventually won the war and established the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Josip Broz applied for Soviet citizenship and Soviet Communist Party membership. The Soviet authorities did not accept either of his candidatures but, instead, helped their Croat comrade to return home, thereby giving him the opportunity to contribute to the Communist cause in his own country¹⁵. So it was that in September 1920 Josip Broz returned to his native Zagorje, now part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the country that in 1929 would be renamed "Yugoslavia". Here the old Social-Democrat-cum-Communist activist resumed switching jobs and cities quite often, which gave him the opportunity to get in touch

¹¹ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., p. 10.

¹² Ivi, pp. 10-11.

¹³ Ivi, pp. 10-12.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*; for the 1938 allegation of Tito's escape from the October Revolution see Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), f. 495, op. 74, d. 587, cited in Ivi, p. 41.

¹⁵ Arhiv Jugoslavije, 837, KPR, IV-5-a, K 38, cited in Ivi, p. 12.

countrywide with the members of the illegal Yugoslav Communist Party, banned by the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in December 1920, only three months after Broz's repatriation¹⁶. Gradually the comrade Broz, who began to be called with the cadre name "Georgijević", began to rise through the ranks of the Party, which frequently caused him to be harassed, fired and jailed¹⁷. The last of those arrests would prove to be another defining moment of his public life. Arrested in August 1928 for illegal gun possession and Communist propaganda, he made use of his position as political prisoner to write an article, titled *A Cry from the Hell of Yugoslav Prisons*, that would eventually be published by the Communist International (Comintern) magazine *International Press Correspondence*¹⁸. Furthermore, Broz took full advantage of the opportunity his trial gave him to promote his public image by declaring « Long live the Communist Party! Long live the world revolution! » during the trial proceedings, which would also give the comrade Georgijević a certain notoriety both in the local and in the global Comintern press¹⁹. For the first time since the period of his military service, Josip Broz had reached celebrity status once again, now securing his public image as a Communist activist and leader.

The 1928 trial gave Broz the opportunity to reach notoriety but earned him a five-year sentence too. Georgijević used those years of captivity for strengthening his position within the Communist Party²⁰. Soon after his release in 1934 Broz substantially rose through the ranks of the Party, becoming a member of its Politburo and Central Committee²¹. During these months, he sent a report to Moscow, signed with a new cadre name: "Tito"²². Nevertheless, when he moved to the Soviet capital in 1935, where he would spend most of his time until the outbreak of the Second World War, Comrade Broz became mostly known

¹⁶ Ivi, pp. 12-14.

¹⁷ Jasper Ridley, *Tito*, cit., p. 78.

¹⁸ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 16-17.

¹⁹ Ivi, pp. 15-16.

²⁰ Louis Adamic, *The Eagle*, cit., p. 343.

²¹ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozii*, vol. 2, 267-268.

²² Iurii Girenko, *Stalin-Tito*, Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1991, p. 18.

by the name “Walter Friedrich”²³. This second Russian chapter of his life became one of the most defining of his entire existence. Those very years were the ones of the Soviet’s Great Purge, which would be for Tito both training in the field of power management and an opportunity to accession to power after most of his political opponents within the Yugoslav Communist Party and the Comintern had been wiped out by the repression²⁴. Tito had understood early on the importance of avoiding any notoriety within that context. He quickly began dodging his fellow comrades, « especially in rooms with a telephone »²⁵. He reportedly moved « along the long corridors like an invisible mouse [...] exchanged a word with hardly anybody [...] went his own way [and] worked behind closed doors »²⁶. By that time Tito had therefore perfectly understood the importance of his own public image, and intentionally opted to keep his profile as low as it possibly could be. Historical evidence of the consciousness of his celebrity management is given by the fact that in 1939 Walter had been waiting for a long time for his visa to leave the USSR but nonetheless, when it was suggested that he ask Stalin directly for the authorisation -after all Josip Broz was at that time the Secretary General of the Yugoslav Communist Party!-, he plainly replied to his adviser: « better that Stalin ignore my existence »²⁷. Tito’s voluntary marked low profile during those years would prove to be useful not only because it allowed him to avoid the net of the Great Purges, but also because it gave him the opportunity to hide another dark and highly embarrassing chapter of his life: namely, his engagement in Spain during the Civil War years, where he likely had been involved in the killing -ordered by Moscow- of fellow Communist and Republican comrades perceived as Stalin’s political opponents or adversaries²⁸.

²³ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., p. 21.

²⁴ For the issue of the Great Purge see Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. A reassessment*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

²⁵ Milovan Djilas, *Tito*, cit., p. 74.

²⁶ Ruth von Mayenburg, *Hotel Lux*, Bertelsmann, 1978, p. 200.

²⁷ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., p. 47.

²⁸ Pero Simić, *Tito: Skrivnost stoletja*, Orbis, 2009, p. 62.

Walter's public image and not least his life would therefore survive the Great Purges intact, which was not the case of many of his rivals within the Yugoslav Communist Party, such as his predecessor to the office of Secretary General Josef Čižinský alias Milan Gorkić, executed in 1937²⁹. Meanwhile, Walter took advantage of his relatively minor notoriety to visit Yugoslavia several times, which made him one of the few leaders substantially tied with the Party's structures in Yugoslavia, in addition to being a proven achiever in underground and undercover missions³⁰. This framework heavily advantaged Tito in his rise to the ranks of the Yugoslav Communist Party, a rise that led him to be appointed as Party's Secretary General on the 5th of January 1939³¹. The appointment to the office of Secretary General occurred at the right time for Tito's political career: the Great Purge was coming to an end, and the attention of Stalin and the Soviet Union was turning to the international situation after the political situation in Europe, where the upcoming Second World War was in the air. Nonetheless, during the years between his 1939 appointment to the highest office of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the 1941 involvement of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the Second World War, Tito maintained a low profile and avoided notoriety. In the meantime, he took advantage of the political momentum to strengthen his position within the Yugoslav Communist Party, getting rid of his last internal rivals, and proving to have perfectly learned and after all accepted Stalin's model of power management³².

By the 6th of April 1941, the day Yugoslavia entered the Second World War after the Axis invasion, Walter was the undisputed leader of his Party, the political movement that during the war years would position itself as the major and leading force in the anti-Fascist fight

²⁹ Ivan Očak, 'O sudbini obitelji jugoslavenskih emigranata «narodnih neprijatelja» u Sovjetskom Savezu', in *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, Vol. 24, No.1, October 1991, pp. 181-206, particularly pp. 198-200.

³⁰ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 28-47.

³¹ Jasper Ridley, *Tito*, cit., p. 135.

³² Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 47-50.

in the Balkan country³³. Josip Broz, whose cadre name would be from this moment on only Tito, thanks to his role became a true war legend. Despite being constantly hunted by the Axis and the Yugoslav anti-Communist forces, during the war Tito succeeded in creating Europe's largest anti-Fascist partisan movement. Tito, the "Marshal", as he was appointed in 1943 by his fellow comrades, became a true global celebrity: from this moment on his whole life would be in the spotlight³⁴. The press started to show the pictures of his 1944 meeting with Churchill in Naples, portraying him as one of the great leaders of the anti-Fascist side, and describing the impressive achievement of his partisan army. Eventually, the media would also celebrate him as the only leader that succeeded in freeing his own country with his own forces without the Allies' on-field intervention, hugely contributing to make him a true icon³⁵. Now an experienced celebrity manager, Tito used this fame to secure his position as the head of Yugoslavia, the country of which he was now the undisputed living symbol.

The complete control of Yugoslavia gave Tito the opportunity to achieve his political goals in his homeland, where the non-Communist forces had been gradually ousted, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia declared, and a five-year Soviet-modelled economic plan launched³⁶. Tito had become the second most important celebrity in the Communist world and was thereafter generally perceived as the right-hand man of Stalin. His role in the Greek Civil War, where the Communist faction could keep fighting only thanks to Yugoslav support, seemed to prove this frame. Further evidence appeared to be given by the fact that when the Eastern Bloc created the first official post-war forum of the Communist parties in 1947, the Communist Information

³³ For an account of the years of the so-called "Yugoslav Revolutionary War" and the role of the Communist-led partisan movement, see Milovan Djilas, *Wartime*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.

³⁴ Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi*, cit., Vol. I, pp. 353-356.

³⁵ For an analysis of this process see Miranda Jakiša, *Partisans in Yugoslavia. Literature, Film and Visual Culture*, Transcript-Verlag, 2015.

³⁶ For the first years of Tito's rule on Yugoslavia see Jozo Tomasevich, Wayne Vucinich, *Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment*, University of California Press, 1969.

Bureau (Cominform), the headquarters of the organisation were established in Belgrade. It must have been hard to believe, therefore, on the 28th of June 1948, that Tito, the second brightest star of the Communist firmament, had been expelled by the Yugoslav-based Cominform.

As mentioned above, the 1948 Tito-Stalin split was the most important and defining moment of Tito's political life. Historiography has widely analysed the set of reasons that contributed to this resounding Cold War divorce³⁷. Interestingly, several of the many elements that contributed to the split were related to Tito's public image and celebrity management. One good example is given by the fact that Moscow could hardly appreciate the myth that Tito was the only European leader to have freed his country without relying on foreign help: Belgrade itself had been freed by the Red Army at the cost of tens of thousands of casualties. By contrast, Tito's title of "Marshal" could also be an issue, since the only other man that was given that rank within the Communist world had traditionally been Stalin, the leader of the USSR. In short, Tito was putting his political and public figure beside that of Stalin when, conversely, he would have been expected to position himself below the supreme leader of the Soviet Union. Since Tito's public image played such a key role in the 1948 Moscow-Belgrade confrontation, during those months the Yugoslav leader underwent an impressive process of desecration of his celebrity³⁸. All the Eastern Bloc and international Communist movements attacked Tito with unprecedented severity, accusing him of the worse possible charges imaginable for a Communist leader, including those of being a "revisionist", a "Marxist illiterate" and an "imperialist spy"³⁹. This smear campaign however did not harm Tito's popularity in Yugoslavia, the country he had already been the undisputed living symbol since the war times.

³⁷ Cfr. Ivo Banac, *With Stalin against Tito: Cominformist Splits in Yugoslav Communism*, Cornell University Press, 1988; Jože Pirjevec, *Il gran rifiuto. Guerra fredda e calda tra Tito, Stalin e l'Occidente*, Editoriale Stampa Triestina, 1990; Jeronim Perović, 'The Tito-Stalin Split: A Reassessment in Light of New Evidence', in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring 2007, pp: 32-63.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Cfr. Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 190-191; Iurii Girenko, *Stalin-Tito*, cit., pp. 385-386.

Indeed, the vast majority of the Yugoslavs backed Tito up, persuaded that behind the foreign attacks to their leader there was actually a threat to the independence of their country. The few who aligned with the Cominform were wiped out by a fierce Soviet-modelled repression, by which any opposition to Tito was annihilated and the leader's control on the country further strengthened.

After this hard confrontation Tito's and consequentially Yugoslavia's stay in the Eastern Bloc became manifestly impossible, at least as long as Stalin was alive. In the framework of the Cold War, when the only two possible options seemed to be alignment with either the Eastern or Western Bloc, many wondered what Tito, the Communist celebrity, would do. Tito's move to the West was so substantial that in 1951 Yugoslavia signed a Military Assistance Agreement with the United States of America⁴⁰. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia had withdrawn its support of Greek Communists, bringing the civil war in that country to an end in 1949. Interestingly, it would be with none other than Greece, in addition to Turkey, that in 1953 Yugoslavia would sign the Balkan Pact, a treaty that would militarily bind Tito's Socialist Federal Republic with two NATO powers, strengthening its ties with the Western Bloc⁴¹. Nonetheless, Tito's internal policies and management of power were still the closest the world had to Stalin's USSR model⁴². However, since he had jumped to the West, Tito was not portrayed by the Western press as the dictator he was, but as an asset for the West (which he actually was too). The public confirmation of this new role was his 1953 visit to London, where Tito, the Communist leader of a Socialist country, was received by the British prime minister Winston Churchill⁴³.

⁴⁰ *Military Assistance Agreement Between the United States and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia*, signed on the 14th of November 1951, 15 October 2018, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/yugo001.asp.

⁴¹ *Treaty of Alliance, Political Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance Between the Turkish Republic, the Kingdom of Greece, and the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia* (Balkan Pact), Signed on the 9th of August 1954, 15 October 2018, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eu002.asp.

⁴² Cfr. Jozo Tomasevich, Wayne Vucinich, *Contemporary Yugoslavia*, cit.; Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment, 1948-1975*, University of California Press, 1977.

⁴³ For a description of the 1953 visit to London see Katarina Spehnik, 'Josip Broz

Although the political and celebrity management of his 1948 split with Moscow was definitely Tito's most important masterwork, it would not be his last. Soon after the death of Stalin, the Soviet Union's Nikita Khrushchev rehabilitated him, marking Tito's final victory against the late Soviet leader within the Communist world. Despite his public rehabilitation Tito had no intention in any case of re-aligning with the Eastern Soviet-led Bloc. By this time, the Yugoslav leader had other plans indeed. In 1956, soon after his rehabilitation by the Soviet bloc and one year after the Bandung Conference, Tito met with Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of India; Sukarno, the president of Indonesia; Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt; and Kwame Nkrumah, the president of Ghana. The outcome of the meeting was the "Declaration of Brioni" (after the villa of Tito where the meeting was held). The document was signed by Tito, Nehru and Nasser, and started the process that would eventually lead to the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, whose first meeting was held in September 1961 in Belgrade⁴⁴. Tito, after having successfully seceded from the Eastern Bloc, had now left the Western one too, clearly aiming to lead, in plain Cold War, a new, "Non-Aligned" Bloc.

After his involvement in the Non-Alignment Movement, Tito's celebrity reached its peak. The Eastern press had rehabilitated his public image within the Communist world. Despite having left the Western Bloc he had not re-aligned with the USSR, so that the West had no reason to attack him and desecrate his public image. The hero of the antifascist war, the only leader that had freed his own country without foreign help, the only man that had overcome a successful confrontation with Stalin, the only leader welcomed and celebrated by Western, Eastern and Non-Aligned countries, Josip Broz Tito was a global superstar. This public image would be strengthened further by Tito's lifestyle and Yugoslav propaganda. Indeed, Yugoslav authorities began sponsoring films on Tito and the Partisan War, the most famous case being *Battle of*

Tito's Visit To Great Britain In 1953', in *Review of Croatian history*, Vol. I, No. 1, December 2005.

⁴⁴ For an updated work on Yugoslavia and the non-alignment movement see Alvin Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, Princeton University Press, 2015.

Sutjeska (1973), where the role of Tito was played by the Welsh superstar Richard Burton⁴⁵. These movies substantially contributed to the stardom of Tito, who in the meantime had been fostering his celebrity through a superstar-like lifestyle⁴⁶. Tito lived in luxury villas with exotic animals, wore extravagant clothes he himself had designed, and often appeared in public with other global superstars of the time such as Elizabeth Taylor, Orson Welles, Sophia Loren, Yul Brynner, Gina Lollobrigida, or his fictional counterpart Richard Burton⁴⁷.

At the end of his life, Tito was a celebrity, a star, an icon, and the indisputable leader of his country. This would be well exemplified in 1968, when Yugoslav students, as well as their western counterparts, protested the system they lived in with rallies and mass demonstrations. By this time Tito had been the head of the Yugoslav Communist Party, the President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the chief of the Armed Forces for more than twenty years. He was, in other words, the ultimate reliable person for all the issues Yugoslav students were complaining about and demonstrating against. Tito was, however, the living symbol of Yugoslavia. It would therefore happen that in 1968, in the streets and universities of Belgrade, students demonstrating against the Yugoslav system displayed among their symbols... the portrait of Tito⁴⁸. Specifically, not Tito's portrait of the time, of the man that ruled the system they criticised, but the portrait of the Second World War era leader of the partisan war⁴⁹. In any case, his portrait: the 1968 Yugoslav students testified that despite their opposition to the Yugoslav system of the time and to the most updated public image of Tito, the latter was the undisputed living symbol of their homeland. Without him and his leadership, the future of Yugoslavia could not be conceived, not even by the youth. It was the last, definitive victory of Tito's lifelong successful management of his public image.

⁴⁵ *Battle of Sutjeska* (also known as *The Fifth Offensive*) (1973), directed by Stipe Delić.

⁴⁶ For Tito's political use of cinematography see also the movie *Battle of Neretva* (1969), directed by Veljko Bulajić.

⁴⁷ Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit., pp. 144-149.

⁴⁸ Ivi, pp. 346-347.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

However, Tito's personal complete success in the management of his celebrity would eventually prove to be even excessive, since after his death Yugoslavia did not overcome his political leader and living symbol more than a decade. The fate of Yugoslavia after Tito's death had been a key question for decades indeed. Understandably, Tito claimed publicly that he was confident he was going to leave behind a solid country, but many wondered what the future held for a unite Yugoslavia without him, including Tito himself⁵⁰. The nineties' breakup of Yugoslavia, in addition to reply this key question, led many Yugoslavs to think that Tito had not been only their unifier, but ultimately also the last and only reason for Yugoslavia to remain united⁵¹. Therefore, despite Josip Broz's unquestionable complete personal success in the struggle for power, after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the following bloody Yugoslav Wars, the history of Tito's celebrity should give pause for thought, and lead to reflect on that tight interrelation between celebrity and power that was established during the Cold War era and has been a key issue in the political game ever since.

⁵⁰ Jože Smole, *Pripoved komunista novinarja 1945–1980*, ČZP Enotnost, 1994, p. 10.

⁵¹ Cfr. the Serb Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Tito*, cit.; the Croats Ivo and Slavko Goldstein, *Tito*, cit.; the Slovene Jože Pirjevec, *Tito*, cit.