



On animals and seas

Author(s): Tijana Vujošević

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On animals and seas: menageries as representations of Yugoslav global and local space in the Cold War era

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Tijana Vujosevic

University of Western Australia, Australia

Abstract

Socialist Yugoslavia, a small country in Southeast Europe, was unique in two ways. One was that it was not part of the Eastern Block and developed its own brand of socialism – ‘socialist self-governance’. The other was that it was a European country which, through the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement, associated itself with the recently decolonized countries of the so-called Third World and aspired to lead them. Interestingly, the worldliness of Yugoslavia and its uniqueness, respectively, were embodied in two menageries – the zoos of the Brioni archipelago in the Adriatic and Belje, a large hunting estate in the Pannonian Basin. Brioni, a veritable Yugoslav Noah’s Arc, was created by shipping animals from non-aligned countries as tokens of friendship and souvenirs of President Tito’s maritime expeditions to Asia and Africa. Belje was populated by what was understood as ‘autochthonous’ fauna and showcased Yugoslavia’s ecological and cultural uniqueness. This article examines how the two sites came to represent Yugoslavia’s global and local territory. It shows that the ways in which animals were collected, utilized and understood were closely connected to embodied political practices of the Cold War era. The menageries acquired a symbolic role, the article argues, because the relationships between animals and humans were deeply embedded in human political rituals and transactions of the age.

Keywords

animals, Cold War, ecosystems, environmental design, metaphor, nonalignment, representation, territory, Yugoslavia

Article

In September 1963, Berto Tićak, a member of the Yugoslav secret police (UDB), penned a confidential report for Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito. It went:

Corresponding author:

Tijana Vujosevic, Faculty of Arts, University of Western Australia, 35 Stirling Highway, Crawley, WA 6009, Australia.
Email: tijana.vujosevic@uwa.edu.au

'Dear Comrade President,

This morning I accidentally met comrade Soldatić [ambassador to Mexico] at the airport and am using this opportunity to inform you that:

- 1) Tigar is feeling great. He is merry and in a good mood and it seems as if had not been sick. His wounds are completely healed and new fur is beginning to grow in those spots where they were. The minks are also in good health, as well as other animals around your residence.
- 2) In Brioni things are not going well with [monkey?] Čombe. Three doctors had to see him, as he has lost a lot of weight. We ordered blood and tissue analyses, and we assume it is a malignant tumor somewhere in his internal organs (liver, lungs, or kidneys). He received all sorts of therapy. Professor Lapčević and other experts are doing everything they can but it will be very difficult to help if tissue analysis confirms the presence of a tumor. All other animals in Brioni are fine and some females are expecting.
- 3) The little Dalmatian puppies are extremely cute. They have grown bigger, are moving around and look good. We have never had the chance to see more Dalmatians in one place; the entire scene is fantastic and it is so wonderful to see them thrive and grow. By the time you come back they are going to be big dogs.
- 4) The hunt in Belje is over. Everything went very well. [. . .] At the end the hunters were merry and we are content that they shot good deer and that everyone is happy. I am seeing many wild boars, so the winter hunt will be good, and there are also many young and strong deer. [. . .]

So this is the news from our sector. Please allow me, Comrade President, to wish you well on the rest of your journey. Our entire country is watching your travels with great interest. Actually, with more interest than ever, since every person I meet and talk to asks: "Will comrade Tito be home soon?"

Safe travels and best wishes to you and your Female Comrade Jovanka'.¹

This letter dealing with what the secret agent considered 'internal affairs' is curious in several ways. It is entirely about an animal world. This animal world is under direct protection of the secret service. News concerning animals is apparently news for which the president cannot wait. The letter mentions three animal assemblages: that around the president's residence, that on the island on Brioni, and that at the Belje hunting estate. This article is about the role of the menageries in Brioni and Belje as political representations. I will examine how collections of 'exotic' and 'autochthonous' species reflected geographic imaginaries of global and local space and tied them to particular places in socialist Yugoslavia from the 1950s onwards. Can arranging, circulating and studying animals be a way to negotiate human relationships, establish political hierarchies and articulate worldviews? If so, how in particular did the Belje and Brioni menageries articulate Yugoslav Cold War political values and aspirations? What can be learned from these cases about the ways in which animals and, by extension, nature come to be invested with symbolic meaning?

At the time Tićak sent the confidential letter about Tito's menageries, the Yugoslav president and his diplomatic entourage were on one of their grand tours, the so-called 'journeys of peace'. The expedition started with Tito's meeting with Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev in Belgrade. It ended with talks with Khrushchev's Cold War adversary John Kennedy in Washington, DC. In between these meetings, Tito was on a tour to South America, where he paid visits to Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Peru and Mexico. In the United States, apart from meeting Kennedy, he gave a brief speech at the plenary session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York.

'Journeys of peace' were part of an effort to establish Yugoslavia, a small country in the Southeast of Europe, as an important actor on the global political stage and to safeguard its position as the only socialist country outside of the direct Soviet zone of influence: a country, as Tito envisioned it, not aligned with either the Eastern or the Western blocks. In this period, Yugoslavia also established an alternative form of socialism: 'labour self-management' (*radničko samoupravljanje*), an alternative to the centralized planned economies of the Eastern Block. This political enterprise started shortly after Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform² in 1948. Tito turned to the international community and the UN as his political platform and source of protection. This was essential to deterring Russian aggression towards Yugoslavia during post-break-up tensions and the very real military threat mounting on Yugoslav borders.³ It was within the UN that the Yugoslav president started his campaign to unite countries of the so-called 'Third World', including a large number of recently decolonized ones, under the umbrella of the 'Non-Aligned Movement', officially founded in Belgrade in 1961. Yugoslavia led and supported initiatives to provide aid to developing countries through the UN, pushing trade deals instead of loans.⁴ As a result, the country was even admitted into the Afro-Asian group of less developed countries in the UN as an Asian country, despite a much higher standard of living, life expectancy and the fact that it is actually in Europe.⁵

The Brioni islands off of Istria in the Adriatic was an important political stage in this period. A protected nature reserve and Tito's summer residence from 1951, it was also an epicentre of Yugoslav diplomacy. In the Yugoslav historical mythology of non-alignment, this was the place where the movement was founded in July 1956. The 2-day 'Brioni Summit' was the encounter between Tito, Egyptian President Gamal Nasser and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (Figure 1). There, they decided to adopt a common policy of strengthening ties between countries outside the blocks based on the principles of the Bandung Conference of decolonized African and Asian states in 1955. The Brioni Summit was actually wrought with problems, including Nehru's refusal to speak about it to the press, and the fact that Tito's idea of a global 'non-aligned' strategy was somewhat at odds with Afro-Asian regionalism which framed issues discussed in Bandung.⁶ Nevertheless, according to historians and popular culture, the summit paved the way to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement, christened at the First Conference of non-aligned countries in Belgrade in September 1961, right after the colossal decolonization of Africa in 1960 when as many as 17 countries gained independence.

Brioni islands were a key topos in Yugoslav radical global politics. They were frequented by foreign dignitaries and movie stars, such as Richard Burton, Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Lauren, with whom Tito associated as a histrionic ruler. It was also the home of a vast menagerie of exotic animals. According to an inventory compiled in July 1977, there were more than a thousand creatures on the islands, including tigers, orangutans, ostriches, giraffes, zebras, elephants, camels, ibex, antelopes, gazelles, llamas, seals, flamingos, grizzly bears, Tibetan bears, chinchillas and so on. In effect, the archipelago was close to being a Yugoslav Noah's Arc with samples of all the world's species. This information is available in the special fund of documents on animals in the collection of Tito's personal files in the Archive of Yugoslavia. They show which animals populated Brioni, how they were acquired, moved and managed. From these documents, one can get a glimpse of how the traffic in animals complemented Tito's diplomatic activity.

Tito's residence where he spent most of his time and conducted worldly business was not in Belgrade but on Brioni. This has much to do with a peculiar aspect of Tito's international political enterprise – that he crafted himself as a maritime ruler, the head of a naval power. The main political performance Tito engaged in during the time of the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement was the dislocation of the government into the high seas. In the 1950s, he chose a ship, *Galeb*, as

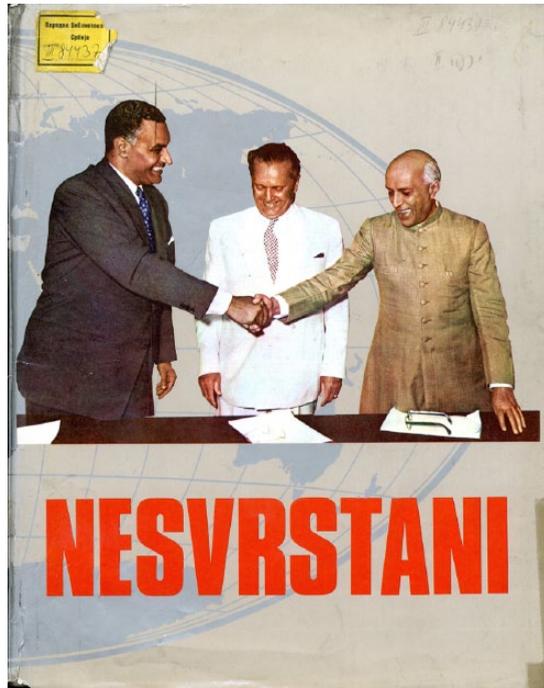


Figure 1. Tito, Nasser and Nehru on the cover of *Nesvrstani* (The Non-Aligned Movement), Zagreb, 1977.

his privileged vehicle and seat of power. The Yugoslav president's first expedition on *Galeb* was the visit to the United Kingdom on 16 March 1953, when he sailed to London up the River Thames as the first socialist leader to visit the British Queen. In the winter of 1954–1955, he sailed to India and Burma to express his support for the struggle against (British) colonialism and offer a global alternative to 'Asia to Asians' politics.⁷ In the 1950s, Tito and his entourage spent over 300 days aboard *Galeb*, traversing some 86,000 nautical miles.⁸ The trips were expensive and extremely theatrical. *Galeb* was usually accompanied by three destroyers (Split, Kotor and Pula) and a merchant ship (Lovćen). Two military planes (DC-6 and IL-15) flew above the fleet. In a typical expedition, around 1,000 officers and sailors and some 100 passengers sailed with Tito.⁹ The officer corps included a 42-person full musical ensemble prepared to dress up for different occasions. Tito would also receive foreign dignitaries aboard his ship for the 'informal' talks where politics were actually negotiated.¹⁰

Galeb's most impressive expedition, in terms of duration and territory covered, took place in winter of 1958–1959 and was the turning point in Yugoslav diplomacy. The journey prompted Tito's companion, Veljko Mićunović, to 'tell president Tito that it took Christopher Columbus less time to sail to America on *Santa Maria*'.¹¹ From early December 1958 to late February 1959, Tito sailed at the speed of merely 11 knots an hour to Indonesia, Burma, India, Ceylon, Ethiopia, Sudan, the United Arab Republic and Egypt. Just the first leg of the trip, from the Adriatic to Indonesia, took 23 days of constant sailing. This was followed by a 72-day sailing trip which started on 14 February 1961 (the day of assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the Congolese prime minister), the purpose of which was to establish ties with Africa. This was followed by a 10-day sail to Ghana; *Galeb* sailed to Guiney, Togo, Liberia, Morocco (Figure 2),



Figure 2. Tito disembarking in Morocco, April 1961.

Tunisia and Mali. This was the final journey leading to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade that summer.

The concrete, embodied practice of Tito's diplomacy was equally important, or even more so, than the principles and proclamations that accompanied it. Tito's performances can be understood in light of recent work on embodied politics and, most importantly, the writings of Merje Kuus. Kuus' work can provide an interesting lens for understanding Yugoslav political practice, especially in her description of power as 'contexts and processes that underpin [political] structures' and her notion that geographic categories are created through performance and interactions – that is, through the concrete, material practices of diplomacy.¹² Kuus writes about the 'spatialization of international politics', or the ties between geopolitical aspirations and geographical imaginaries and territories, by looking at 'geographical imaginaries as social practices'.¹³ Framework, collecting, transporting, assembling animals as tokens of international connections was part of practical diplomacy and a method of crafting a representation of Yugoslavia's international political territory and geopolitical ambitions.

Galeb's voyages as an element of concrete political practice that forged Yugoslav geopolitical ties and the understanding of the world charted global territory to which Yugoslavia belonged and which it established. Tito adopted the persona of a sailor, posing with the crew, studying maps, looking at the shore through binoculars (Figure 3). During the great diplomatic expeditions in the 1950s and the 1960s, Tito effectively deterritorialized his power to cast himself as a globetrotter, a 'citizen of the world', as Yugoslav propaganda would describe him.¹⁴ He occupied the ultimate borderless, supranational expanse. This deterritorialization symbolized Yugoslavia's 'inbetweenness': the projected role of Tito as an international mediator rather than ruler of a small country.¹⁵

Embedded in Tito's diplomatic practice and perhaps as symbolically laden as Tito's image as a maritime ruler was his practice of collecting animals as tokens of international friendship and souvenirs of his missions (Figure 4). Diplomacy and the enterprise of creating a replica of the non-aligned world in Brioni were part of the same geographic project in the sense of Kuus' 'social practice'; they were creating a geographic imaginary and the 'spatialization of international politics'. A typical propaganda book illustrates this. *Tito on Rab* (an entire volume dedicated to Tito's 3-hour visit to an island in the Adriatic), for example, relates the narrative that accompanied Tito's travels.¹⁶ Tito comes to an Adriatic island on Galeb, the ship he used to sail to Africa and Asia, and gives an official speech about distant lands, non-alignment and the export of Yugoslav experts to non-aligned countries. Then, according to the book, Tito turns to unofficial conversation, in which it is 'impossible not to talk about animals', as an extension of global politics.¹⁷ Tito talks about his



Figure 3. 'Tito on Galeb', from the book *Nesvrstani* (The Non-Aligned Movement).

intimate relationship to animals in Brioni (including stories about personally feeding meat to the Tiger, for example). He explains why he travels by ship, the *Galeb*, rather than by plane: his goal is to 'always bring some new animal to the island'.¹⁸

As a result, Tito created an immense menagerie, which included approximately 400 animals shipped from Asia and Africa. Tito developed intimate emotional relationships with the animals (Figure 5). The team of veterinarians employed to look after the animals sent reports about the animal kingdom directly to Tito who examined them, signed them and wrote comments. Tito was interested in the animals' nutrition, health, births and deaths. The number of these documents as well as the detail of some of his responses implies that the Yugoslav president devoted much time to animal affairs. These affairs are mainly 'family dramas', which involve emotional relationships between animals. Tito's signature and comments are found, for example, on a report about Snežana, a giraffe that died while coupling with her partner since he got carried away in 'the throws of passion' and hit her neck with his legs.¹⁹ There was report about a panther that rejects her young and a 'moody' giraffe refusing to nurse her young.²⁰ Then one on a 'gluttonous' leopard, who choked on a piece of venison, died and was subsequently stuffed.²¹ Tito personally mediated, according to archival records, in a case of sick female lion, deciding on her therapy.²² He was also involved in an 'affair' involving two bears, pregnant Miška and her partner. Miška hogged all the food and left Marjan hungry, so Tito instructed his crew in writing to separate the bears.²³ There is a plenty of documentation about everyday human-animal relations in this system of gift exchange. Animals are described as human-like beings with peculiar personalities. A 1965 letter from an Indonesian official describes two orangutans as 'semi-human in nature and very sensitive in their feelings' and recommends treating them 'tenderly because they are very sensitive to ill treatment; a little rough handling may easily ruin their health and spirits'.²⁴ The veterinarians on Brioni also describe animals as sentient, human-like beings. Tito commemorated his dead animals, albeit in peculiar ways. In case of a giraffe, this included skinning it to be hung on the wall.²⁵ When Tito's dog, Tigar, died,

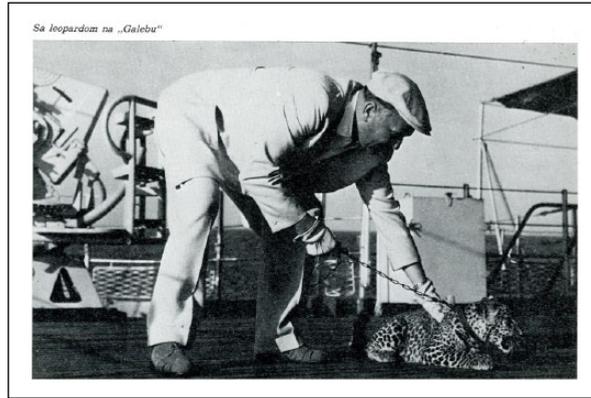


Figure 4. 'With a Leopard on Galeb', from the book *Tito u prirodi i lovu* (Tito in nature and hunt), Zagreb, 1980.

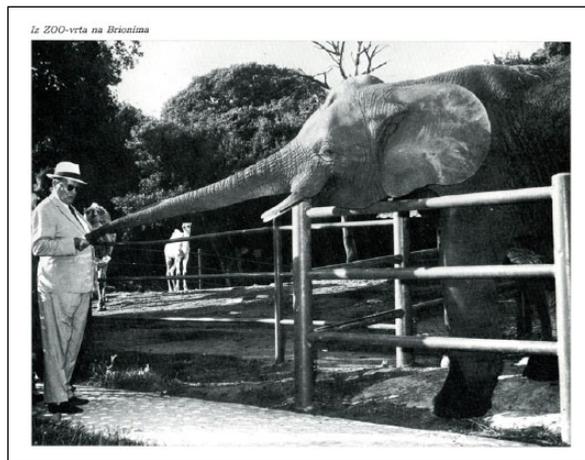


Figure 5. 'From the Brioni Zoo', from the book *Tito u prirodi i lovu* (Tito in nature and hunt).

Tito ordered a sculpture of Tigar, by one of Yugoslavia's most prominent sculptors, to be made and placed below his window.²⁶

The animals were objects of affection and creatures of symbolic import. Their significance was directly related to how the animals had been acquired. As part of the geopolitical practices that Yugoslavia was engaged in, transported from distant lands by Tito and his entourage or sent by boat as gifts, they were tokens of international relationships. Inventories taken in 1957, immediately after the trips to India and Burma, show that there were three leopards, three monkeys and a number of parrots from India; a serval, a lion and three antelopes from Ethiopia, a camel from Egypt, all acquired in 1955 and 1956.²⁷ As the Non-Aligned Movement was being formed in the 1950s and the 1960s, it was the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) that was in charge of trafficking animals. There are no documents about how exactly Tito brought the animals with him as he sailed the world, as he explained to Rab inhabitants, but it is most probable that the military ships which accompanied *Galeb* took on non-human passengers. The JNA was, in all known cases, in charge of

animal transportation and affairs in the early 1960s and managed animal gifts that African and Asian allies sent to Yugoslavia. Tito's passion for collecting animals was well known to his allies, as demonstrated by an interesting 1961 correspondence between the Defense Ministry of Indonesia and Yugoslavia that included a photograph of a tiger in the attachment.²⁸ The letter describes Tito's visit to Indonesia, during which there was a planned tiger hunt, which was cancelled. The Indonesian military, instead, sends a tiger as a 'souvenir' and a gift that expresses 'the friendly relationship between the countries and especially between their Armed Forces'. (The Indonesian officer also promises a female Tiger to form a couple and complete the 'souvenir'.) There is a letter sent in 1960 and kept in Tito's personal files about shipping bears from Khartoum in Sudan.²⁹ In 1965, Indonesians also gifted two orangutans, accompanied by a picture of the animals, and so on.

Throughout history, animals were used by rulers as symbols of worldliness and power. In the *Medici Giraffe*,³⁰ Beloyezerskaya elaborates on the privileged status of animals in Renaissance Florence, for example. The collection of lions in Via Leoni symbolized the extent of Republic's geographical reach and cultural sophistication. The famous giraffe of Lorenzo Medici, which he acquired in 1498 from the Sultan of Egypt, was a 'souvenir' of the agreement which effectively fended off the Ottoman threat and cemented the Medici hegemony in Florence. Annemarie Jordan Gschwend's *The Story of Suleiman*³¹ recounts the story of menageries on the court of Manuel I, which included rhinoceros and elephants shipped from far corners of the world as 16th-century symbols of the global outreach of the Portuguese colonial empire. Before modern times, animals were part of *pompae*, Roman processions down Via Sacra with the spoils of war, where they were paraded together with slaves and luxuries pillaged in distant lands. In her seminal book, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in 18th Century Paris*,³² Louise Robbins writes about the modern use of animals as beings 'entangled with political and social issues',³³ beings that were symbols because of the difficulty with which they were acquired and the colonial expansion their acquisition entailed. In modern France, menageries as tools of representation became important in mid-18th century primarily because of increased global trade and the parallel established between 'slave animals' and 'slave humans'.

In modern times, menageries, a traditional symbol of power and worldliness, also become a symbol of taste and, furthermore, a symbol of the capacity to rule the world. The ultimate symbol of colonialism becomes the zoo, which is not merely a showcase of global ties and power.³⁴ Nigel Rothfels' *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*,³⁵ shows that the modern zoo, in which animals are on display wandering in 'natural' spaces together with 'primitive' people from Africa, Asia, and the Americas, showed the capacity of Western civilization to dominate and manage. But there is also an additional dimension: the zoo has also been a symbol of the capacity to know and manage, of civilized 'know-how'. The first animal collections that were called 'menageries' were the zoos in Versailles. The name came from the noun *ménage*, household, and verb *ménager*, to keep the household.³⁶ In other words, they were symbols not merely of conquest and power but also the capacity to manage nature and, by extension, the human society to instil enlightened order.

How are the Brioni zoos to be interpreted in this context? In a certain sense, the animals were employed as symbols of partner countries in the Economic South. To acquire, arrange and control these symbols was to use the tropes of the colonial representational project. The capacity to assemble a mini-world out of animal specimens from Asia and Africa reflected Tito's capacity to reshuffle, reorder and conquer this territory. Despite the rhetoric about global progress, Asia and Africa were still presented using an exotic menagerie, which is, in the European context, a spatial form practically and symbolically related to colonization – the conquest and subjection of 'nature', non-human animals and 'primitive' humans.

What complicates this interpretation is that unlike Victorian England in Ritvo's history or 16th-century Portugal in Gschwend's, Yugoslavia was not a colonial power. Openly, Yugoslav

diplomats supported the economic interests of the 'Third World' and, from 1951, led the SUNFED campaign to establish a UN agency that would provide capital and technical assistance to Asian and African countries.³⁷ Yugoslav diplomats promoted the idea that the gap between the North and the South is much wider than the gap between the East and the West and is primarily based on economic inequality.

Despite the fact that the Federal Ministry of External Affairs tried to exploit relationships with the Third World by trying to sell products, it could not really place in the West,³⁸ and despite the fact that trade balances were in favour of Yugoslavia,³⁹ trade with the Third world was to great extent a utopian or, at least, a dysfunctional project. Yugoslavia was certainly in a privileged situation in trade with non-aligned countries and tried to use political alliances to its advantage. However, the trade deals were often completely impractical. Upon closer examination, exchange with the Third World was more a symbolic than a pragmatic enterprise. First, the countries of the Economic South could not pay with convertible currency, so trade was basically an exchange of goods. Yugoslav and Afro-Asian politicians were so carried away by trade as a kind of brotherly cooperation that they would export and import things they did not really need. For example, in 1955, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted enormous shipments of rice from Burma. The serious plan developed by the Ministry was to introduce rice loafs that would replace bread.⁴⁰ In exchange, Yugoslavia would ship police uniforms made of synthetic material, unusable in the Burmese climate, and so on. There was much propaganda about these 'successful' exchanges with the non-aligned countries, but the volume of Yugoslavia's trade with the West was up to 600 times larger.⁴¹

The process of collecting animals on Brioni reflected the complex political dynamics inherent in the Yugoslav relationship to the Third World. The animal collection in Brioni was essentially a zoo, a colonialist spatial genre. But if we look at the context in which it was created and the mechanisms of its creation that were deeply embedded in an ambitious and utopian diplomatic project, it is also an allegory for the global space that Yugoslavia dreamed to create, an ecumene that would be saved from colonialist aspirations of the Western and Eastern blocks alike. Transporting, collecting, and accumulating animals went hand in hand with the ambitious but unfinished project of adding countries to an alliance that would escape the domination of the Global North. In this context, the zoo was not merely a projection of power but a representation of a failed utopia in the making.

The representation of a local space, a 'domestic' menagerie that complemented the 'global' one, was equally complex and its symbolic meaning equally dependent on the 'embodied' politics that led to its creation. The penultimate 'domestic' ecosystem of symbolic importance was the Belje hunting ground, situated in the centre of the country. A counterpart to Brioni, it was emblematic of Yugoslavia's uniqueness and singularity rather than its global connections. Wild animals collected and kept there were supposed to be native to Yugoslavia and symbolic of an ecological uniqueness equal to its political uniqueness. The most important of state hunting grounds, with a history of 300 years as the most elite aristocratic estate, Belje spread across 55,000 ha located in the Pannonian Plain, extended around the rivers Danube and Drina, and occupied territories belonging to both Serbia and Croatia (Figure 6).

The company that managed the hunting ground, 'Jelen', was initially headed by the secret service agent who penned the letter at the beginning of this paper, Berto Tićak. He was aided by some 1,300 employees, including forestry engineers, many of whom had PhDs. The estate was located in a marshy plane with estuaries and canals, swamps and ponds and was populated by bogland deer, wild boar, fox, wild cats, a huge number of swamp birds, eagles, falcons, almost all species of crows, as well as around 10,000 game.⁴² As a discrete and diverse ecosystem with autochthonous fauna, it was under the protection of Yugoslav environmental agencies. Despite the fact that there was significant economic (and agricultural) activity on the site,⁴³ the main perception of Belje was that of a precious and isolated wildlife reserve under state protection.

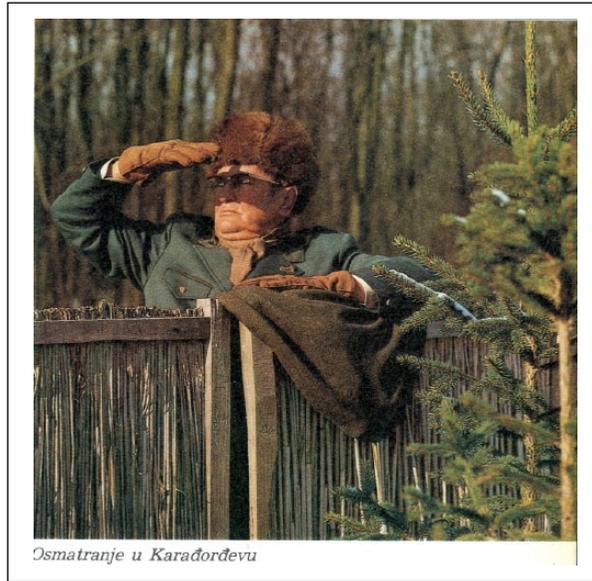


Figure 7. 'On the lookout', from *Tito u prirodi i lovu* (Tito in nature and hunt).

protection of wildlife, according to Tito, meant breeding it and returning 'new sorts that inhabited our forests and hills in the past'.⁴⁸ The fact that foreign dignitaries were invited to hunt with Tito was downplayed with explanations that 'it was because of Tito's initiative that we know that the biggest trophies cannot be the property of foreigners, because they are [...] works of art [...] created by our nature'.⁴⁹ Tito would be 'angered' when he would hear that trophies are sold abroad, since they were supposedly Yugoslav 'wealth, the culture of an entire people'.⁵⁰

Apart from being a symbol of national unity and a cultural treasure, the 'autochthonous' system was also a site of Yugoslav political rituals (Figure 7). The hunting ground was the main site where Yugoslav domestic political hierarchies were established and power relationships were negotiated. In Tito's absence, secret policemen managing Belje would compose detailed reports about the location of a hunt and its participants. The managers of the estate would plan which deer to assign to a particular hunter and the politicians would understand their place in the pecking order by how many 'hunting points' they were getting and by the quality of the deer they were allowed to shoot.⁵¹ Tito was informed about precise details of deer distribution. All the best game was, of course, left for him. In Tito's personal archive, there is a 1960 letter from Berto Tićak, the author of the report presented at the beginning of this article. It contains detailed information about hierarchy, listing hunters according to the number of 'points' and also relating information about the 'satisfaction' of the hunters and their emotional reactions to hierarchies established through hunt.⁵² The largest trophies would, of course, be reserved for the president.

There was an explicit symbolic link between the care for animals and the care for humans. The 'experts' in Belje were experts in breeding and they controlled 'the dynamics of the deer population, antler growth, diet, disease, fertility [...] extermination of sick and surplus deer, and procreation'.⁵³ This breeding of animals was symbolically linked to the 'breeding' of people. As the manager of the estate wrote in his memoirs, 'apart from being a breeding ground of wildlife, Jelen was also a breeding ground for cadres'.⁵⁴ The symbolic affinity between humans and animals was the main allure of blockbuster nature films about Belje – *The Last Oasis* and *The Disappearing World*,⁵⁵ directed by Petar Lalović. These films utilized the animal world at Belje as a metaphor for

Yugoslavia and, as in a contemporary fable, presented them as quasi-humans. After seeing the South African movie *Animals Are Beautiful People* of 1974, Tito stated, 'We have something to show the world, too' and hired an accomplished cinematographer, versed in animal documentaries, to produce a Yugoslav version of this movie. The making of the film on the territory of Belje took 3 years and was completed after Tito's death. It featured Belje animals, which are, as the narrator tells us at the beginning of the film, 'like humans but not quite'.

The Last Oasis (Poslednja oaza) features scenes from Belje which, as the narrator says, is a domain 'out of civilization's reach', 'untouched nature' where animals live like people, with passions, jealousies, rivalries, situations of love and death. The movie features an earth boring dung beetle pushing a ball of dung up the hill as an animal Sisyphus. Then the coupling of the mantis, in which the male, who is to be devoured after the coupling, shows that 'love is stronger than death', and so on. In an interview, Lalović explains that he understands his films as 'films with a metaphor', *The Last Oasis* being the pinnacle of his effort to show animals as human-like, as worthy of compassion and identification.⁵⁶ The film was extremely popular, won major national awards (both for film and hunt!) and tickets were sold out for months. One reason, probably, is that the tragi-comedy of human behaviour was related through a story of animals. The movie also showcased a natural treasure that the viewers were meant to be proud of as Yugoslav citizens. The title of the film, *The Last Oasis (Poslednja oaza)*, alludes to the status of the site as a protected and singular natural ecosystem of singular nature. And it also reflects, metaphorically, how the Yugoslavs wanted to be seen by the world – the 'last oasis' of true socialism, a singular society of economic fairness and social prosperity. In 1987, the moment when 'Jelen' as a symbol of national unity had already disintegrated, Lalović filmed a sequel to the film, suggestively titled *The Disappearing World*.

Apart from differences in political ritual and the entire mechanism of animal acquisition and care, as well as the symbolic import of two sites, it is especially interesting how various 'experts' on nature at each site produced different kinds of knowledge that categorized and presented the sites as 'global'(Brioni) and 'local'(Belje). In the case of Brioni, knowledge about animals was collected through extensive travel (primarily that of the chief veterinarian Emanuil Lapčević) and communication with animal experts worldwide, including zookeepers, veterinarians and circus owners. The knowledge about Belje was not only local but also localized. That is, expertise on the hunting ground was developed as a self-enclosed discourse produced in Belje and dealing with Belje. On the hunting ground, there was a group of young experts in forestry and veterinary science who started treating the management of Belje as a scientific discipline. At a certain point, at the initiative of Dr Ilija Djuričić, a professor of veterinary science at the University of Belgrade, a top Yugoslav academic institution, created a masters course in what can be loosely translated as 'hunting ground management and economics' (*lovstvo i lovna privreda*). The students in this course were almost exclusively employees of 'Jelen'. From 1964 to 1969, a group of 20 people, including three PhDs, contributed to a scientific journal, *Jelen*, produced and read by experts on site, dedicated to the scholarly collaboration between veterinarians, forestry engineers, and farmers.⁵⁷ The first issue featured the first five masters' theses in 'hunting ground management and economics' written by experts of Belje. These authors were creating a 'unique' – one can say 'autochthonous' – science about the ultimate 'local' site. The introduction to the volume was an introduction about the 'environmental conditions of Belje', written by a group of forestry engineers. Some of the topics were as follows: 'Reproduction of pheasants based on experience', 'Morphology of 350 deer trophies in Belje', 'Craniological study of 22 doe and 22 deer skulls', 'Principles of artificial selection of deer in Belje' and 'Microstructure and physio-chemical properties of venison'. The scientists gathered data from the bones of 'cleaned' deer, evaluated the relationship between the weight of antlers and the weight of deer flesh, drew the trophies, photographed sections of deer bones and antlers, tried to discern which kind of antlers got the most 'hunting points', provided microscopic

studies of skin in different parts of antlers, documented the number of deer according to age over the course of the year, calculated the amount of water, protein, fat and glycogen in different kinds of venison, and so on

The importance of the knowledge produced at ‘Jelen’ was perhaps not that it was of universal scientific importance but the opposite – it established Belje as a unique object of knowledge, accessible through on-site study, by a special group of in-home experts. The way the site was known corresponded to how it was managed and, more importantly, to what it represented. The production of knowledge actually constituted the site as a ‘local’ as opposed to Brioni, an allegory of global connections and flows, which was managed based on international know-how.

The case of two animal assemblages – Brioni as the Yugoslav Noah’s Arc in the Adriatic and its complement, and the ‘Jelen’ hunting estate as the national gem and symbol of political and ecological uniqueness – are poignant cases in which animals were used as means of geopolitical representation. What can we learn from these two intertwined histories about politics and about human–animal relationships? First, we can see that nature does not figure in human history only as object of representation but that nature, in this case assemblages of animals, can be a powerful means of articulating political values. In the context of Cold War Yugoslavia, Brioni and Belje menageries served this purpose. In Yugoslavia, menageries represented both actual politics and political aspiration. Yugoslavia’s reality of being a small Second-World country sandwiched between the East and the West was coupled with lofty ambitions – the ambition to be a completely unique, self-made political entity and the ambition to lead the united Third World. The two menageries reflected these ambitions and were their powerful embodiment. What is interesting about their symbolic meanings is that they came from the role they played in embodied politics, including Tito’s great diplomatic maritime expeditions and the hunts in which local political hierarchies were established. Yugoslav menageries became symbols not because of their abstract design and not as a reflection of abstract ideas but because of particular practices of human–animal interaction – ways in which animals were collected and assembled, ways in which they were utilized in political rituals and ways in which they were known. These practices were deeply embedded in Yugoslav political ritual of the Cold War era and were their product as well as a powerful instrument for charting and understanding the country and the world.

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Notes

1. Archive of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito’s personal documents, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a
2. Cominform stands for ‘Communist Information Bureau’. After the dissolution of the Comintern, it was founded to unite Communist countries of the Eastern Block under Soviet ideological tutelage.
3. A.Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) was the first monograph to examine and chronicle Yugoslavia’s political path and still a major resource on motivation behind Yugoslav political decisions in the 1950s and the 1960s.
4. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, p. 168.
5. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, p. 173.
6. V. Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija: studije i dokumentarni prilozi* [Tito’s Personal Diplomacy: Studies and Documentary Material] (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 2010).
7. D. Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956–1961* [The New Strategy of Yugoslavia’s International Politics 1956–1961] (Belgrade: Institute for Contemporary History, 2006), p. 45.
8. Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija*, p. 172.
9. Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija*, p. 172.

10. For example, during his visit to Burma, where Tito allegedly mesmerized Ne Win and his entourage at the party on board so much that that 'everyone stood on the shore for almost an hour until the ship started moving and left the port'. Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija*, p. 172.
11. V. Mićunović, *Moskovske godine 1969–71* [The Moscow years 1969–71] (Belgrade: Jugoslovenska revija, 1984), p. 2, cited in Petrović, *Titova lična diplomatija*, p. 165.
12. M. Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy* (Malden: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), p. 6.
13. Kuus, *Geopolitics and Expertise*, p. 16.
14. See volumes such as Z.Štaubinger, *Tito gradjanin sveta* [Tito, Citizen of the World] (Belgrade: Radnička štampa, 1974).
15. For example, Bogetić (Nova strategija) recounts how a year after he visited the Queen in 1953, Tito sailed to India and Burma to express his support for the struggle against (British) colonialism, establishing himself as a mediator between the First and the Third World.
16. M. Sobolevski, *Tito na Rabu* [Tito on the Island of Rab] (Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske, 1983).
17. Sobolevski, *Tito na Rabu*, p. 9.
18. Sobolevski, *Tito na Rabu*, p. 19.
19. M. Mišović, *Aleksandar-Šandor Šabadi 'Informacija o uginuću žirafe'* [Information on the Giraffe's Death], Archive of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito's Personal Documents, LF V, VI-I, box 11.
20. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
21. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
22. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
23. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
24. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
25. Archive of Yugoslavia, LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
26. D. Hrnjak, 'Lecili smo "Tigra"' [How We Nursed 'Tigar'], *Veterinarski glasnik*, 36(2), 1982, p. 179.
27. 'Vrsta životinja u zoološkom vrtu, kao i nacin prehrane', 20 August 1957, Archive of Yugoslavia LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
28. LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
29. LF V, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
30. M. Belozerskaya, *The Medici Giraffe: And other Tales of Exotic Animals and Power* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 2014).
31. A.J. Gschwend, *The Story of Suleiman: Celebrity Elephants and Other Exotica in Renaissance Portugal* (Philadelphia: Pachyderm, 2010).
32. L.E. Robins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
33. Robins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, p. 20.
34. In *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Harriet Ritvo claims that the zoo was the ultimate emblem of English colonial hegemony, a symbol of domination created for the British masses. In 'The Colonial Zoo' (L. Mackenzie et al., ed. *French Thinking about Animals*, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2015, pp. 31–48), Walter Putnam claims that zoos are fundamentally colonial, in terms of relationships between people and in terms of human–animal relationships as well.
35. N. Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
36. P. Sahlins, 'The Royal Menageries of Louis XIV and the Civilizing Process Revisited', *French Historical Studies*, 35(2), 2012, pp. 237–67.
37. According to Rubinstein, Yugoslavia, this was a watershed moment in Yugoslav diplomacy and the seed of non-aligned partnerships.
38. It sold agricultural machinery, arms, tobacco, textiles, processed food, chemicals, cement and electronics. See Bogetić, *Nova Strategija*.
39. Yugoslavia exported industrial products and imported raw materials. As a result, in 1956, right after Tito's expedition to India and Burma, Yugoslav exports increase to 3.8 million dollars, while imports

- (of coffee, tea, leather, spices) were worth 900,000 dollars. Yugoslav Exports to Egypt were 13 million dollars in 1957 and imports (mainly cotton) were worth 9 million dollars. D. Bogetić, ‘Jugoslovensko bekstvo iz Evrope’ – Novi ekonomski prioriteti nesvrstane Jugoslavije sredinom 50-ih godina’ [The Yugoslav Flight from Europe – New Economic Priorities of Nonaligned Yugoslavia in the mid-50s], *Istorija 20. Veka*, 1, 2012, pp. 170–3.
40. State Archive of the Federal Ministry of External Affairs, 1955, f-9, 19 043 Materials on Burma, cited in Bogetić, *Nova strategija*, p. 47.
 41. For example, the volume of trade with the United States between 1951 and 1957 was 692 million dollars. Exports to Germany were 283 million and imports 409 million dollars. This is to be compared to trade with the non-aligned countries, which ranged from 1 to 10 million per country. See discussion in Bogetić, *Nova strategija*.
 42. Z. Ristić, M. Stevančević, R. Čutuk, E. Šaljić and A. Čutuk, ‘Lovno-turistički značaj lovnog područja ‘Belje’” [The Importance of the Belje Hunting Estate for Tourism and Hunt], *Veterinaria*, 50(1–4), 2010, pp. 101–14.
 43. The estate produced sale of wheat, corn, hops, oat, sunflower, horses, cows, bulls, pigs and sheep, as well as pheasants. Also, the estate exported raw and processed wood. See Archive of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito’s Personal Documents, LF V, VI-I, box 11.
 44. Todorović was also highly educated, unlike Tićak, and held an MA in forestry (1967, University of Belgrade) and a PhD in economics (University of Zagreb, 1974), where he defended a thesis under the title *Integralno upravljanje šumskim područjem* [Comprehensive Management of a Forest Estate].
 45. D. Todorović, *Tito – lov – politika: Tito u lovu, lov u politici* [Tito – Hunt – Politics: Tito in Hunt, Hunt in Politics], 2nd ed. (Belgrade: Službeni glasnik, 2011), pp. 25–6.
 46. P. Trutin (ed.), *Tito u prirodi i lovu* [Tito in Nature and Hunt] (Zagreb: Izdavačko instruktivni biro, 1980), p. 10.
 47. Trutin, *Tito u prirodi i lovu*, p. 5.
 48. Trutin, *Tito u prirodi i lovu*, p. 5.
 49. Trutin, *Tito u prirodi i lovu*, p. 7.
 50. Trutin, *Tito u prirodi i lovu*, p. 7.
 51. Archive of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito’s Personal Documents, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
 52. Archive of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito’s Personal Documents, VI-I, box 11, p. n/a.
 53. Todorović, *Tito – lov – politika*, pp. 23–4.
 54. Todorović, *Tito – lov – politika*, p. 164.
 55. P. Lalović, *Poslednja oaza* [The Last Oasis] (Belgrade: Centar Film, 1983); P. Lalović, *Svet koji nestaje* [The Disappearing World] (Belgrade: Centar Film, 1987).
 56. S. Marković, ‘Čovek kao najbolja životinja’ [Man as the Best Animal] (interview with Petar Lalović), Reporter no. 894, April 1984.
 57. Jelen: bilten Lovno-šumskog gazdinstva Beograd. Posebno izdanje Operativno naučnog centra – Bilje [Jelen – Bulletin of the Hunting and Agricultural Estate Belgrade. Special Edition of the Operative-scientific Estate Belje] (Belje Scientific Institute ‘Dr Ilija Djuričić’, 1964–1969).

Author biography

Tijana Vujosevic is Assistant Professor of Architectural History and Theory at the University of Western Australia School of Design. She earned a professional architects’ degree from Yale University and a PhD in history of architecture from MIT. Her book, *“Modernism and the Making of the Soviet New Man”* came out with Manchester University Press in 2017.

