

FILM REVIEWS

***Non-Aligned: Scenes from the Labudović Reels* and  
*Ciné-Guerrillas: Scenes from the Labudović Reels*.  
Dir. Mila Turajlić.**

**Poppy Pictures & Survivance in collaboration with Filmske Novosti,  
Belgrade, a co-production with Restart & Kino, 2022. 100+94  
minutes. Color/Black and White, Serbian; English; French; Arabic/  
English subtitles.**

Bojan Aleksov

University College London  
Email: [b.aleksov@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:b.aleksov@ucl.ac.uk)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.449

**Double Feature**

One of the finest documentary filmmakers to come out of former Yugoslavia, Mila Turajlić made a breakthrough with *Cinema Komunisto* (2011), depicting the glory and collapse of Avala Film, Yugoslavia's major production house and Josip Broz Tito's ideological mouthpiece. In the more intimate and personal *The Other Side of Everything* (2017), Turajlić dwelled on the short-lived existence of Yugoslavia by talking to her activist mother in their oddly partitioned apartment, a metaphor for country's polarization during the troubled twentieth century. In her two latest films, which came out together as a diptych, Turajlić tackles Yugoslavia's multifaceted anti-colonial and anti-imperialist activism, globally best known via the Non-Aligned Movement, of which it was one of the founders and trailblazers for decades. *Non-Aligned* and *Ciné-Guerrillas* appear at a perfect time when colonialism, issues of race and color, and global socio-economic (in)justice are once more at the forefront of public debate. In both films Turajlić relies on previously mostly unseen documentary film footage and on one of its most prolific creators, Non-Aligned unsung hero Stevan Labudović. Having discovered the camera as a teenager in the Yugoslavia's Partisan antifascist resistance movement during the Second World War, Labudović became Tito's personal cameraman in the 1950s and 60s, and then an anti-Colonialist activist. Labudović sadly died in 2017, aged ninety-one, before being able to see these films, where he was at last on the other side of camera lens.

Reviving the idea of the Third World as a third way, as opposed to western imperialism and the Soviet failure to bring about global justice, *Non-Aligned* is at its best when tackling key events such as the United Nations' General Assembly in 1960, when sixteen African countries and seventeen overall were recognized as independent, in contrast with the UN's current role in global affairs, wittily made banal in its souvenir shop. The Belgrade summit of Non-Aligned countries the following year is shown through contrasting Yugoslav (mostly Labudović's), French, and American coverage, the former celebratory and the latter clearly underwhelming or openly racist. Through footage, discussion, and participant memories,

Turajlić's films demonstrate how Yugoslavia became the Cinematheque of the post-colonial world, with its newsreels (*Filmske Novosti*) not only holding the largest film archive from the global anti-colonialism struggle, but also acting as the key institution in establishing film productions in several newly liberated African countries. Yet Turajlić also openly and subversively questions the whole enterprise with lengthy shots of Tito's "voyages of peace" on his trademark Galeb ship, slyly reminiscent of BBC coverage of British royals' travels to the same parts of the world in the role of colonial masters rather than liberators. The shots have the same questionable nostalgic allure, even as Tito and his entourage, despite their communist background, excel sartorially over the Windsors.

The second film, *Ciné-Guerrillas*, might be seen as a follow up or a case study of Non-Alignment in practice. We follow Labudović during his stint in Algeria's anti-colonial struggle, embedded with the Algerian National Liberation Front as Tito's cinematographic (or propagandistic) loan. Shot in Algeria, where Labudović and Yugoslavia are still revered, and interspersed with Labudović's personal recollections, it unearths even lesser known subjects but fails to dig deeper into his operations and their outcome. Labudović was not simply reporting facts, but constructing propaganda material against the mighty French state, as he proudly asserts. It is not clear if and how it worked: where was the footage shown, and to what reactions? What were the power dynamics between Yugoslavia and Algeria? This film assumes more background knowledge about the Algerian struggle than the first. Seen together, the two films are a glimpse into a forgotten era, if not always convincingly relevant. And yet no contemporary discussion of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism should be considered complete without the historical episodes brought to our renewed attention by Mila Turajlić.

Dragana Obradović

University of Toronto

Email: [dragana.obradovic@utoronto.ca](mailto:dragana.obradovic@utoronto.ca)

*Non-Aligned* and *Ciné-Guerrillas*, directed by Mila Turajlić, make up a documentary pair, converging thematically through a broader story of global resistance and solidarity. The films detail the role of socialist Yugoslavia's news and filmmaking machinery in supporting political projects and struggles—specifically the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Algerian revolution against French rule (1954–62).

The two films are connected by the figure of Stevan Labudović (1926–2017), a cameraman who worked for President Tito and for *Filmske novosti*, the Yugoslav newsreels. The footage he recorded—as well as interviews Turajlić conducted with Labudović himself—form the basis of these two documentaries. *Non-Aligned* covers the Yugoslav perspective of the seminal 1960 UN General Assembly when seventeen newly independent states (following decolonization struggles in Africa and Asia) joined the organization. The film then depicts the first summit of the non-aligned movement in Belgrade in 1961. *Ciné-guerrillas* follows Labudović's remarkable career as an embedded cameraman and photographer with various battalions of the Algerian National Liberation Army (*Armée de Liberation Nationale* [ALN]) from 1959 to 1962. His time with the ALN, on the official order of Tito, is presented in the film as an explicit expression of Yugoslav political support for the Algerian revolution.

Both films dive deeply into the archival material of *Filmske novosti*, the Yugoslav newsreels (established in 1945) that were shown before all cinema screenings in the republic until 1989. The reels were also placed into news broadcasts sent out to Yugoslav embassies to be used in advancing the country's diplomatic missions. Turajlić discovers a mountain of forgotten and previously unseen footage that she stitches together with other historical and personal sources, including Labudović's diaries from his years in Algeria. Turajlić also conducts some interviews herself—most notably with former Algerian revolutionaries, as well as Budimir Lončar, the last Yugoslav Minister of Foreign Affairs. Both films include a voiceover from

Turajlić herself, a commentary that conveys the central theme of these documentaries: her melancholia for extinguished political projects of global kinship.

That the NAM was one such project is clear. Less clear from the documentaries is a sense of what the NAM was, in terms of its scope, or specific goals and achievements. Instead, the project of non-alignment and the Algerian revolution are explored in the documentaries as “political struggles” that “become validated in a performance projected for the eyes of the world,” as Turajlić says in the voiceover. In this performance, Yugoslavia had an important part to play. Yugoslavia, Turajlić outlines, had the material resources and a cadre of cameramen that were instrumental in helping newly independent states develop their own media and broadcasting. Yet by focusing on the image as a means of establishing political credibility, the documentaries arguably give Yugoslavia an outsized role in the NAM.

While the documentaries overtly lament the loss of global kinship that the NAM represented, the lament seems even louder for the loss of prestige that Yugoslavia once possessed in the world. The end of Yugoslavia was concomitant with the decline of the region’s visibility, politically and culturally. As such, Turajlić seems less nostalgic for the socialist project of Yugoslavia than for the former country’s diplomatic and global standing.

In *Non-Aligned*, the symbol of that lost prestige is Tito’s ship *Galeb*. The *Galeb*, once the opulent home for Tito’s many international visits, is now in complete ruin. It would be an expensive endeavor to revive its past grandeur indeed, yet one gets the sense through these films that what stands in the way is not infrastructural investment. Rather, the real problem—these documentaries suggest—is the absence of a broader collective vision, whatever political form that might take (Yugoslavia, the NAM). Moreover, perhaps the problem is not just the absence of a vision, but the impossibility of its return.

## **Gasoline Radio. Gasolineradio.com. Online radio station. Kyiv, Ukraine.**

Ieva Gudaitytė

Doctoral Research Fellow, University of Oslo

Email: [ieva.gudaityte@imv.uio.no](mailto:ieva.gudaityte@imv.uio.no)

doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.448

“Music will abstract and bring [an] end to this terrible war.”  
—from Air Raid Siren podcast, episode *Podil*

What good can auditory abstraction do? For the online radio station Gasoline Radio in Kyiv, this hypothetical question has turned into practical and symbolic work: how to empower the listener and use the equivocality of sonic formats to promote Ukrainian voices across physical and symbolic borders; and how to broadcast—and respond to—a plurality of human experiences.

A non-commercial media platform, Gasoline Radio aims “to expand [their] listeners’ musical knowledge, build a community, and put Ukrainian musicians in a global context” (Gasolineradio.com, 2023). Launched just a few weeks before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Gasoline has since become a household name in alternative electronic music culture. With a variety of sonic content, worldwide collaborations, and storytelling formats, it has showcased famous electronic scene names, hosted podcasts and talk shows, and organized live events before having to close their physical studio in 2023. Now available exclusively online through their website, or SoundCloud platform, Gasoline guests continue to archive and explore various music traditions: from “A thousand and one