

Red Terror on the Amber Coast

Completion and Release of Documentary

Film-maker Ken Gumbert and producer David O'Rourke have announced that their documentary film, Red Terror on the Amber Coast, has been completed and released for distribution, and has been accepted for broadcast on Rhode Island Public Television, at a time yet to be set. The film, in the works for five years, describes the Soviet occupation of the Baltics following the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the fifty year reign of terror the Soviets imposed on the once free and democratic republics, and the resistance to the illegal takeover. The film's focus is principally on Lithuania. But the film-makers know that the story they present is the story of all three countries.

Almost by accident in 2001, the team of editor and writer David O'Rourke and documentary film-maker Ken Gumbert came upon photographs of prison and torture abandoned by the KGB when they fled their headquarters in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. Startled by the blunt cruelty of what they saw, they decided that the terrible story the pictures revealed had to be told.

In June of 2006 they were able to film interviews with a cross section of people, from President Adamkus and Vytautas Landsbergis to the wives of captured partizanai who had to fight just to survive while their husbands were in Soviet prisons. And with the full support of the National Genocide and Resistance Center in Vilnius and the Occupation Museum and Film Archives in Riga they have been able to illustrate the personal narratives with rare archival films and photographs.

At present the film-makers, both Dominican priests, are working with Lithuanian-American groups and others to promote the scheduling of the film on public television, in film festivals, and in local communities. They may be contacted directly by interested people. kgumbert@providence.edu
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Background Information on Film-makers

Film-maker Ken Gumbert, the director of Red Terror, has had two films describing the Ute struggle for religious and cultural survival broadcast on Utah Public Television. Saving Grace, about the repression of civil and religious rights in Czechoslovakia after the Communist putsch of 1948, first broadcast on Rhode Island Public Television, was given the Gabriel Award in 2005. He directs the film and video program at Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, where he is an Associate Professor.
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David O'Rourke, an award winning editor, is the writer and producer of the Red Terror on the Amber Coast, and has published extensively in the area of cultural history. His articles have appeared widely, including in Commonweal, Newsday, and The San Jose Mercury News. His most recent books, each on different aspects of the destructive power of social idealism, have been published in the series 'Berkeley Insights in Linguistics and Semiotics'. He is Director of The Tatra Project, a California non-profit supporting education about life in the former Soviet Union. He lives in California. www.tatraproject.org dkorop@sbcglobal.net

Background Information on Film

For over fifty years, from 1940 until the fall of the Soviet Empire, Stalin and the Soviet KGB imposed a regime of police terror, prison, slave labor, Siberian exile, on millions of men, women and children in Eastern Europe. Just before the start of World War II Hitler and Stalin divided Eastern Europe between them. Hitler got Poland, and Stalin occupied the Baltic Republics – Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Red Terror on the Amber Coast focuses principally on the Soviet occupation in Lithuania. During their rule the Soviets raised state sponsored terror and fear of the secret police to a cruel fact of daily life. Arbitrary arrests, seizure of all private property, forced labor in collective industry and agriculture, mock trials, deportations, torture, summary executions, slave labor in the Gulag, cold and hunger in Siberia and along the Arctic Sea became facts of life for millions of people.

The team was able to film interviews with former prisoners, slave-laborers, and deportees who managed to survive, and with family members and ordinary people who faced the deprivations and fear of daily life under Stalin. Interviews with national leaders and historians of the Soviet years place the individual stories in context. And the film footage and photographs provided by the national archives provides a graphic visual background to illustrate the personal stories. Given Stalin's iron control of all film resources as well as the press, the effort of the archivists to preserve film accounts of their national stories merits great praise.

Ken Gumbert, film-maker

David O'Rourke, producer

www.domediaproductions.org