



OPERATION WEDDING

Directed by
Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov

*My parents and the plane hijacking
"Heroes" in the free world,
"Terrorists" in Russia*



Produced by
**Sasha Klein,
Guntis Trekteris**



Edited by **Bracha Zisman-Cohen** Original music by **Karlis Auzans, Didi Erez** Graphic Design by **Armands Blumbergs**
Sound Design by **Rotem Dror** Cinematographers **Andrejs Verhoustinskis, Franz Koch, David Stragmeister,**
Scott Sinkler Daniel Miller, Sergei Freedman, Itzik Portal, Mike Bogatyrev, Rami Katzav, Emmanuelle Mayer



Sasha Klein Productions



Documentary Dept.
IBA Programs Division



Documentary, 63 minutes

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Website (English, Hebrew, Russian) www.operation-wedding-documentary.com

World distribution/Sales: hedva@go2films.com

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Leningrad, 1970. A group of young Jewish dissidents plots to hijack an empty plane and escape the USSR. Caught by the KGB a few steps from boarding, they were sentenced to years in the gulag and two were sentenced to death; they never got on a plane. 45 years later, filmmaker Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov reveals the compelling story of her parents, leaders of the group, "heroes" in the West but "terrorists" in Russia, even today.

FULL SYNOPSIS

Leningrad, 1970. A group of young Jewish dissidents plots to hijack an empty plane and escape the USSR. 45 years later, filmmaker Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov, reveals the compelling story of her parents, leaders of the group, "heroes" in the West but "terrorists" in Russia, even today.

It started as a fantasy, *Operation Wedding*, as outrageous as it was simple: Under the guise of a trip to a local family wedding, the hijackers would buy every ticket on a small 12-seater plane, so there would be no passengers but them, no innocents in harm's way. The group's pilot, who once flew for the Red Army, would take over the controls and fly the 16 runaways into the sky, over the Soviet border, on to Sweden, bound for Israel.

They were caught in the airport, a few steps from boarding the plane, and tried for high treason. Among those arrested remained one woman to be on trial: Sylva Zalmanson, who receives 10 years in Gulag. Sylva's newlywed husband Edward Kuznetsov, receives death sentence.

While the Soviet press writes "the criminals received their punishment", tens of thousands of people in the free world demand "Let My People Go!" As the Iron Curtain opens a crack for 300,000 Soviets Jews wanting to flee, the group members are held back to pay the price of freedom for everyone else.

"Your parents are heroes," Anat had been told ever since she was a child. Every year at school, she was asked to stand up in class and share their story. Nevertheless, the saga of the family was gradually forgotten. At age 29, Anat decided to do what she had been asked since the first grade. She would tell her parents' story to the world.

Anat travels with her mother Sylva, to retrace the group's journey from the day of the arrest at the small Soviet airport to KGB prison where 25 year-old Sylva was kept before the trial. Anat's research grows for years and she finds rare archives and interview former key members of KGB trying to understand their point of view.

Through a collage of interviews, discussions over vodka and cigarette smoke, rare archives and reenactment made both in Israel 1980 and in Russia 2010, Anat reveals for the first time the full story of her parents and a group of civilians that changed history and cracked the Iron Curtain.

Anat Zalmanson-Kuznetsov DIRECTOR & PRODUCER

Anat was born in Israel to Sylva Zalmanson and Edward Kuznetsov, leaders of the Dymshits–Kuznetsov hijacking affair.

She studied filmmaking at the London Film School and Sapir Collage (Israel) and has been commercially successful in popular media and promotional productions with companies such as L'oreal and Clinique. She has also directed music videos for well known Israeli musicians such as Yermi Kaplan and Julietta.

It's been a long-standing ambition for her to tell the story of her parents in the medium of film.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I carry both my parents' names.

Ever since my days in film school, I always knew that one of the most important films that I'll someday do, my life's project – would be the film about my parents attempt to escape the Soviet Union. A personal family story that belongs to world's history. Growing up, everybody knew about this event, but over the years it started to fade away from the public's collective memory. Though there are many films trying to describe this fascinating story, they only give a short 5 minute description and the only full length films about this event were made in Russia 2010. Those films are calling the group members "terrorists" and they re-write history – false imaginary history. Or as my father calls it "A documentary fairytale". Only when I started working on this film, I began to fully understand the meaning of what this group had done, and the sacrifice they had taken upon themselves. I found rare archives, interviewed former KGB key members that claimed that: "...There was no problem, of immigration in the USSR. Only about 20 people in the whole USSR were denied exit visa." (Philipp Boblov, former KGB deputy chairmen). I discovered details and political secrets and are still not known and realized that the faith of public memory is on my shoulders. This is an inspiring story that remind us all that civilians have power and even one person can change history, but would have to be willing to pay the price...

