

**For viewers irreconcilable with the crimes of Socialism and
those who still believe in the idea...
THE BEAST IS STILL ALIVE**



THE BEAST IS STILL ALIVE

Using animated sequences and a semi-mystical dialogue between a young woman and her dead grandfather, The Beast Is Still Alive shows how young generations need to study and question the communist ideology

Creative documentary | directed by Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova | 90 min |
HD | Bulgaria UK | 2016

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/195047196>

Activist38: www.activist38.com

Film's website: www.beast-film.com

IMDB: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt5333956/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/beast.is.still.alive>

IDFA FORUM AWARD 2015 at EDP pitch in Prague

Festivals: IDFA, Sarajevo Film Festival, Warsaw Film Festival, Trieste Film Festival, Goteborg Film Festival, ZagrebDox, Beldocs, Tirana IFF

Pitched at La Rochelle – Best Project Showcase - History, Zagreb Dox, Baltic Sea Forum, Robert Bosh Foundation, East European Forum, East Doc Platform - IDFA Forum Award 2015, EDN Docs Thessaloniki

Developed at:

Rough Cut Service – Iikka Vehkalahti

Supported by:

CE's programme MEDIA for Development; Bulgarian National Film Centre for production; Co-production with the Bulgarian National Television and Nova Film

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Synopsis:

This political documentary is about the search for an ideal communism and how it has never been found in practice. The film begins with the secret police file on the grandfather of a young Bulgarian woman. He sympathized with the Bulgarian Socialists in 1920s, but after seeing the damage the Communist Party caused during World War II, he joined the Goryani anti-communist resistance movement in the Bulgarian mountains. Using animated sequences and a semi-mystical dialogue in voice-over between the young woman and her dead grandfather, *The Beast Is Still Alive* shows how young generations keep rediscovering communist ideology against the backdrop of discredited politicians and former agents of the secret police. The young woman's attitude towards the political alternatives to capitalism grows increasingly complex.

Directors' note:



The film "The Beast is still alive" hits at the core of contemporary European politics and why the left idea based on the works of Carl Marx is so trendy nowadays. Bulgaria is this part of Europe, which is currently so behind exactly because it hasn't dealt with consequences of Communism and the collapse of the left idea. Bulgarian population vanishes in emigration and the lack of faith in normality is ever so present.

This state of affairs is largely caused by the criminal and corrupt totalitarian system from our recent past that is, unfortunately, closely associated with the idea of Socialism. To quote the popular left philosopher Slavoj Žižek: "Critical intellectual should demonstrate how the distortion of a noble idea, its falsification, its misinterpretation is grounded in the idea itself."

A young Bulgarian sets on a journey of fresh discovery and re-discovery of the idea on philosophical, emotional and personal level. As a main base of knowledge and a starting point she uses the written archives of her diseased grandfather who fought against the regime in an unprecedented anti-Communist movement that lasted for nearly ten years in Bulgarian mountains.

The exchange between her and him is constructed on a semi-mystic dialogue, which enhances the narration and gives interactivity and connection to younger audiences.

The Granddad was a philosopher himself. He was an Orthodox priest who embraced Socialism in the 1930's but stood up against the Bolshevik invasion of Bulgaria after the World War II. He was forcefully assigned as an agent for the discredited totalitarian machine and thus he could have caused harm to many lives. As it turns out, he was hired to write economical analyses that sound as contemporary as something read in the Guardian or Financial Times nowadays. He was kept in jail as he spoke sharply against Stalin while the monstrous dictator was still alive and commanding politics in the entire East European block.

Thousands of nameless heroes such as the Granddad who gave their lives for the freedom from Communist slavery should replace the cold Communist monuments of our countries. On a recent visit in Bulgaria the Hungarian president Janos Ader

declared: "We were not the first against the communist regime in Budapest in 1956. Bulgarian "Goryani" movement was the first one."

We realized that the post-communist hangover of our society is much deeper than we initially thought. This process is very complex and it needs to be traced at least three generations back thus the grandfather's file provides an invaluable access to information.

Former agents for the badly discredited Secret Services who used to torture and torment people during totalitarian times are still in key government positions in Bulgaria at present. This is what caused the unrest that resulted in lengthy demonstrations throughout the main cities of Bulgaria in 2013.

Our film has created a furore after a single TV broadcast. The PR department for the Bulgarian Socialist Party has reacted strongly against it, issuing statements in their media and sending letters and legal threats to the TV channel. Wide media reaction and debates ensued as the film portrays active politicians and current issues.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6wbo3LQjSI>

We had our International premiere in the documentary competition at the 22d Sarajevo Film Festival (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqsWaLWWPao>) followed by the prestigious competition selection at the 32th Warsaw Film Festival where the film was amongst the 15 titles from awarded directors from all over the world. The film was part of Panorama section at IDFA, Goteborg, ZagrebDox, Beldocs, Tirrana IFF and other festivals. As a project it gathered IDFA FORUM AWARD 2015 at the East Doc Platform's pitch and it was selected amongst 4 upcoming work-in-progress from Eastern Europe in LAST STOP TRIESTE'16. Developed at Rough Cut Service (Iikka Vehkalahti), financed by the Bulgarian National Film Centre and coproduced by the Bulgarian National Television and Nova Film.

Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova





About the authors: The dynamic director&producer duo Mina Mileva and Vesela Kazakova has created a strong wave of political activism with their films. In 2014 their documentary **“Uncle Tony, Three Fools, and the Secret Service”** caused an unlikely controversy with regards the lack of political lustration in Bulgaria and the influence of the former Communist Secret Service in current Bulgarian society. The authors were subjected to harsh and lengthy institutional and personal attacks until EDN, EAVE and Cineuropa published support articles and sent personal letters to Bulgarian institutions. The film has acquired eleven international awards, many nominations including A-list festivals. Reviewed by Variety, which also covered the topic of controversy, it was part of AFI’s “Best of European Cinema”. It was sold to Al Jazeera Balkans and is about to be VoD released by “Under the Milky Way”. Bulgarian art-house cinemas screened it for over 7 months.

Their newest political documentary **“The Beast is still alive”** dealing with consequences of Communism has created a furore after a single TV broadcast. The PR department for the Bulgarian Socialist Party has reacted strongly against it, issuing statements in their media and sending letters and legal threats to the TV channel. Wide media reaction and debates ensued as the film portrays active politicians and current issues. Abroad, the film enjoyed good selections at IDFA, Sarajevo IFF, WARSAW FF, Goteborg, ZagrebDox, Beldocs and other festivals. As a project it gathered IDFA FORUM AWARD 2015 at the East Doc Platform’s pitch and it was selected amongst 4 upcoming work-in-progress from Eastern Europe in LAST STOP TRIESTE’16. Developed at Rough Cut Service (Iikka Vehkalahti),

financed by the Bulgarian National Film Centre and coproduced by the Bulgarian National Television and Nova Film.

Mina graduated animated film directing in “LA CAMBRE” Brussels and Sofia’s Film Academy. She entered the British animation industry in 1996 working as animation director/animator and line producer. Vesela is a multiple award-winning actress and has produced theatre plays and short films and in 2008 she set up the company “Activist 38” together with Mina. They also have produced an awarded animated short sold to ARTE G.E.I.E, CE’s MEDIA supported documentaries and various awarded live action projects awaiting completion. They are an EDN member and EAVE’13 graduates.



Links:

Sarajevo Film Festival:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cqsWaLWWPao>

<http://www.bitelevision.com/vesela-kazakova-i-mina-mileva-za-patya-na-pomirenieto-s-minaloto/>

Tue Steen Muller’s review:

<http://www.filmkommentaren.dk/blog/blogpost/3672/>

Pablo García Márquez’s review:

<http://www.cinemaldito.com/the-beast-is-still-alive-vesela-kazakova-mina-mileva/#comment-153179>

Cineuropa:

<http://cineuropa.org/f.aspx?t=film&did=307071>

<http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=320037&bid=1>

IDFA FORUM AWARD 2015

<https://www.idfa.nl/industry/latest-news/idfa-award-given-out-at-east-doc-platform.aspx>

LAST STOP TRIESTE 2016

<http://www.wemw.it/2010/09/15/last-stop-trieste/>

Film new Europe about Last Stop Trieste

<http://www.filmneweurope.com/festivals/item/112074-wemw-kicks-off-and-reveals-last-stop-trieste-and-first-cut-lab-selected-projects>

Haber Listesi

<http://bianet.org/bianet/sanat/182771-canavar-halen-hayatta>

Bulgarian Socialist Party PR representative 's reaction:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6wbo3LQjSI>