

**TELEVISION SLOVENIA** Kolodvorska 2, 1550 Ljubljana

**ARTS AND CULTURAL DEPARTMENT / DOCUMENTARY PROGRAM**

Tel.: ++386 1 475 31 87 / Fax: ++386 1 475 31 94 / E- mail: ziva.emersic@rtvslo.si

MEMORIAL SITES IV

SECRET PLACES

### ***GOTENICA: BETWEEN LOVE AND FEAR***

#### **The historical Background:**

The vast area of ancient woods in Kocevski Rog in south-east Slovenia is one of the most mysterious places in otherwise tiny state. From middle ages on was this place somehow remote and so it stayed until the Austrian Emperor sent German peasants to settle there in the mid 16th century. Until the break of WW2 it was a German island in Slavic country, but brutal German occupation and equally brutal partisan liberation turned this place into the hell hole that local people only whispered about.

The German originated locals were transported to Germany or slaughtered, labour camps and scaffolds were raised, the place was whipped from public memory.

In the middle of those dark woods, hidden from the eyes and conscious of public, the huge concrete buildings were raised at the beginning of fifties. The conspiracy was almost perfect, the workers on the site were later killed or forced to leave.

The underground facilities – the elaborated system of rooms, warehouses and corridors – were meant for the top leaders of Communist Party to hide in the case of emergency or nuclear war. This was only a year after the legendary leader of Yugoslav Party, Tito, said historical “no” to almighty Russian dictator Stalin.

However, that bunkers were never used as hideaway places for communist leaders.

Instead it became the storage of film archives. First for German archives, confiscated during and after WW2, then for growing Slovenian film production.

The feature films were, however, in the dangerous company, being kept together with thousands of potentially dangerous documents that were brought to this place after the end of the war.

The place was a mess, huge piles of documentary materials from all over Europe.

This is how The Slovenian Film Archives were born.

#### **The Story /Treatment/:**

The village of Gotenica is today a lonely place. Even in Democratic republic of Slovenia, the place is still kept as a half-closed area. The history still haunts this village of ghosts.

The main historical character of the story of Gotenica is IVAN MACEK MATIJA, the Commander of Communist Secret Police ( UDBA). He picked this then idyllic, remote village, abandoned by medieval German settlers, as the the location for secret bunker. The bunker was to serve as a safe place for Communist leaders to hide in the case of emergency, including nuclear war. Since the digging and construction was to

remain secret, the political prisoners were brought in to do the job. After this sad chapter of national history, the long corridors were turned into film archives. Finally, after so many tragic events in Gotenica, including the forced leave of original German settlers, the Italian bombing, the partisan violence, the atrocities of civil war, the secret after-war killings of anti-communist movement supporters and conspiracy paranoia that led to construction of bunkers, Gotenica is today an important place for young filmmakers. It is the place that keeps national history and consciousness mostly on celluloid for generations to come.

### **Appearing on the film:**

#### **THE WITNESSES OF HISTORY:**

**SLAVKO FUGINA**, the retired state official, once a close assistant to Ivan Macek Matija, speaks of the idea to build a shelter for the leaders.

**HENRIK DRALKA**; a former high ranking officer in the Yugoslav Army; speaks to justify the procedure with prisoners.

**SLAVKO ABRAM** and his wife **DANICA** were both working on the location. They speak in the camera for the first time ever about this horrible experience.

**TONE SEGA**, a retired professor, a pre-war inhabitant of Gotenica; speaks of his childhood in Gotenica and the atrocities during WW2 committed by Italians, Germans and partisans.

**PAVLA MIKULIC, STANE GABRIC**, the people from neighbouring villages; speak of their fear for life during the building of the bunkers.

#### **THE PEOPLE OF TODAY:**

**LOJZ TRSAN**, the director of Slovenian Film Archives

**IVAN NEDOH**, the top archivist of Slovenian Cinematheque

**TONI BERKOPEC**, the director of Gotenica State Centre;

The 3 of them speak about the beginnings of the Archive in Gotenica, how they saved the films from WW2, and how they managed to hide hundreds of films at the brink of the split of Yugoslavia, in time of "ten day war" with Yugoslav Army.

**DAMJAN ZAGAR**, the police officer in charge of Police Academy in Gotenica; speaks of the young generations of policemen, educated in Gotenica.

#### **THE NARRATOR:**

**MITJA FERENC**, the leading Slovenian historian of today. The specialist for Kocevje Region that includes Gotenica, he is known for his engagement in clarifying the historical facts of Slovenian civil war during WW2 followed by massive killings of political opponents in the woods of Kocevje Region between 1945-48. He is the author of important books, dealing also with the fate of the Germans in Kocevje Region (Das Verlorene Kulturerbe der Gottscheer Deutschen).

Mitja Ferenc gives a historical, social and political frame of the events and comments on highlights of their history and present times.

**THE ARCHIVE**

The Slovenian Historical Archive  
The Slovenian State Archive  
The Archive of TV Slovenia  
The Archive of Slovenian Cinemateque

**THE VISUAL STYLE:**

Talking heads, archive material, new footage on the spot, voice over.

**THE FILMMAKER:**

*SLAVKO HREN* is well known and experienced filmmaker, who has some 55 documentary films for TV on his CV. Among his most acclaimed yet controversial contributions is the mini-series documentary *On the dark side of the Moon*, dealing with the Slovenian civil war, one of the most tabooed subjects of national history.

**Production: TV Slovenia 2007**

**Commissioning Editor: Ziva Emersic**

**Duration: 30'**