



PRESS KIT

DIVORCE ALBANIAN STYLE

European Film Academy Award Nominee – 2007

This is a story about love and separation, about families forcibly separated by the totalitarian regime of Enver Hodja – the longest-serving European dictator of the 20th century. Only because their wives were foreigners ...

A film by Adela Peeva

Documentary feature, 59/66 min - Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Finland - 2007

Format: Digital Beta cam

Filmed: in Albania, Russia and Poland.

Languages: Albanian, Russian, Polish / English subtitles and narrator

THE STORY

This story of love and separation takes place in the surreal world of 1960s communist Albania. As told by survivors of this extraordinary period, **Divorce Albanian Style** reveals the experience of the many thousands of families that were forcibly separated by the totalitarian regime of Enver Hodja, the longest-serving European dictator of the 20th century.

Near the height of his mania, in 1961 Enver Hodja broke off Albania's relations with the Soviet Union. Albanian men married to foreign women were forced by the state to split from their wives – women from all over Eastern Europe - who were subsequently expelled. The official reason was alleged espionage. Hojda quickly created a mechanism to deal with those who refused to leave. KGB-trained secret police collected “evidence”, minor clerks became “investigators”, and carpenters were made into prosecutors and labor camps expanded.

The women who stayed – and their husbands - spent years in prisons, the last released in 1987. **Divorce Albanian Style** tells the stories of three of these couples, and of the apparatchiks and officers of the secret police who changed their lives forever.

FILMMAKER'S CV

Adela Peeva holds a degree from the Academy for Film, Theatre and TV in Belgrade. From 1973 till 1990 she worked at the Documentary Film Studio in Sofia. The films of Adela Peeva are always dealing with controversial subjects. Some of her films ("*In the name of sport*", "*Mothers*") were prohibited by the communist regime. Later on, after the democratic changes the films were screened both in Bulgaria and abroad and awarded.

In 1991 she established her own production company „ADELA MEDIA”.

From that time dated also her interest about the Balkans. She made the following award winning films on Balkan subjects "*Born from the Ashes*", "*Right to chose*" "*The Unwanted*", "*Whose is this Song?*" - Nominated for European Film Academy "Best Documentary - Prix ARTE" 2003 award, participated at over 50 International film festivals all over the World and was awarded 16 prizes, "*Divorce Albanian style*" - Nominated for European Film Academy "Best Documentary - Prix ARTE" 2007

Other activities:

- Member of the European Film Academy,
- Member of the Board of European Documentary Network (till the end of 2004),
- Member of the Unions of the Bulgarian filmmakers and Bulgarian Producers
- National Coordinator of INPUT for Bulgaria
- Expert at the EAVE Workshops in Oulu, Finland -2004
- Expert at the EAVE forum "West meets East" in Utrecht, The Netherlands - 2004
- Guest-panelist at the World Congress of History Producers, Toronto - 2004
- Guest-panelist at the INPUT 2005 Conference, San Francisco -2005
- Member of the Jury of the European Film Academy for best documentary 2006
- Tutor at the "Training course for filmmakers" Dublin, Ireland - 2007
- President of the Jury for documentary films and EDN Talent Award at SIFF - Sarajevo International Film Festival - 2007

FILM CREDITS

Director/ Script: Adela Peeva

Narrator: Ben Cross

Editing Jelio Jelev, Diana Zaharieva

Sound Ivaylo Yanev, Michal Pruski,
Cvetelina Cvetkova

Produced by: Adela Peeva
Slobodan Milovanovic

For **ADELA MEDIA**
Film & TV Production

In a co-production with: Westdeutcher Rundfunk
Bulgarian National Television
Film Studio "Kalejdoskop"

In association with: YLE FST

With the support of the: Bulgarian National Film Center
Jan Vrijman Fund

In collaboration with: Albanian National Film Center

“Divorce Albanian Style”

Awards and Prizes (as at 1st of July 2010)

- Nomination of the European Film Academy
for **“The Best Documentary 2007 - Prix Arte”**

- **Special award of the Jury**
National Non - Fiction Film Festival "Golden Rython" 2007

- Grand Prix **“Golden Chest”** for the Best Documentary
International TV Festival "Golden Chest" 2007

- **“Best Bulgarian Documentary 2007”** Award
of the Bulgarian National Film Centre

- **“Best Documentary 2006 - 2007”** Award
of the Union of Bulgarian Film makers

- **SRG SSR Idée Suisse 2008**
Prize of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation

- **Human Rights Award**
XIV Sarajevo International Film festival 2008

- **“Special Commendation”** Award
Prix Europe 2008

- **“The Best Documentary”** and **“Audience Award”**
SEE Film Festival, Los Angeles – 2009

- **“The Golden Knight”**
XIX Film Forum, Moscow – 2010

- **“Special Award of the Jury”**
VIII International Film Festival “CRONOGRAF”, Moldova – 2010

Prize of the Swiss Broadcast Corporation

Basel - Karlsruhe Forum 2008

Jury Motivation

„Divorce Albanian Style” reveals an extraordinary insight of 1960s Communist Albania. The audience embarks on the journey of three couples who have struggled and still pay the cruel cost for the painful decade of the Totalitarian regime of Enver Hodja.

We follow the story lines of Albanian men married to foreign women – this being the only reason for accusing them to be the spies, betrayers and “enemies of the Nation.”

The film is accompanied by a careful historical back up and research. The audience is pleased to enjoy 66 minutes of highly professional documentary filmmaking taking a concise, thought-through and analytical path, which sets up a deeply emotional environment, yet never sentimental for even a second.

The main characters and their lives are presented with respect and understanding. More over, even protagonists of the totalitarian system are introduced in the most natural and transparent way – making the audience reflect about the set up and think of bridges between the past, present and future.

The cruel history of the period is shown without any judgement by the director, which she adds up value to her professional approach. The only judgment of the film is highest esteem for the victims of a totalitarian system. The biggest achievement of the director is the combination of cruel historical reality and the outstanding theme of love. The last uniting people irrespective of country borders, and demanding sensibility and understanding.



LA Film Examiner

Jim Luksic

The title “**Divorce Albanian Style**” may appear to be an overseas spin on the television series “*Love, American Style*”. But the movie - a documentary set to unspool in Los Angeles during the annual South East Europe Film Festival slated for April 30-May 4 - is all business. Poignant and disturbing, to boot.



A 66-minute true chronicle, “*Divorce*” follows the modern-day path of three couples whose lives were thrown into disarray in post-World War II Albania. The long and short of it: A stalemate between the USSR and Albanian dictator Enver Hodja triggered an evacuation of foreign women in the 1950s and 60s.

How could that be? The president believed any married pairs wherein the man's spouse wasn't Albanian must be spies -- in a word, undependable. Subsequently, as the film's dulcet narrator Ben Cross surmises, "Hard days came for the couples with foreign wives."

The wed locked trios highlighted here found the experience particularly painful: These folks weren't only separated from their loves ones, but ordered behind bars in the process.

At once profound and compelling, the movie conveys the lingering pain in their weary eyes. (Most touching: One wife who was escorted past her house en route to prison recalls seeing her laundry hanging out to dry; while recalling the anecdote, she laughs so as not to cry.)

In what proves to be an economical but sweeping history lesson, “*Divorce*” contains token flashbacks replete with stark and scratchy archival footage. When meshed with talking heads, such sequences tend to stall the production. But the primary participants' interviews are shrewdly offset by two ominous figures: A former member of Albania's secret police and a prosecutor who never studied law.

Clearly, Bulgarian director Adela Peeva knows precisely what she's doing.

The spare, soft interludes by Fatos Qerimaj are neither manipulative nor intrusive. And the immaculate present-day cinematography is rife with vivid imagery. “*Divorce Albanian Style*” may not be the most inviting name, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a more worthwhile selection at the upcoming SEE Festival.

CONTACT

ADELA MEDIA

Film &TV Production

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