

DOK Leipzig Retrospective focuses on resistance to communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc

Press Release
22 August 2023

DEFA Matinee and Saxon State Archives Matinee tie in to this theme



DOK Leipzig 2023 | Undefeated (director: Marek Drążewski)

This year's DOK Leipzig **Retrospective** titled "**Film and Protest – Popular Uprisings in the Cold War**" will explore the past by turning a spotlight on the cinematic testimony to resistance against Soviet regimes – a testimony that existed outside of the propagandistic self-portrayal of those in power. This programme, curated by Katharina Franck (Cinémathèque Leipzig) and Andreas Kötzing (Hannah Arendt Institute Dresden), focuses on films that documented the uprisings in various Eastern Bloc countries as they were happening, while bypassing the censors and defying political persecution.

These uprisings range from the East German protests of 17 June 1953 to the uprising in Budapest in 1956, to the Prague Spring, to the bloody struggles for independence in the Baltic states after 1990. At the same time, the retrospective also takes a look at lesser-known conflicts, including the mass protests in Poznan (1956) and the Polish workers' uprising of December 1970.

"The popular uprisings and quashed attempts at reform are a recurring theme throughout the Cold War period," Andreas Kötzing points out. "When viewed as a whole, these films demonstrate that the protest movements were an enduring phenomenon in the Eastern Bloc – and that there were a wide variety of ways for filmmakers to portray them in film."

The contents of the Retrospective range from subversive animated films to footage smuggled into Western countries to unusually candid films that could only be made as a result of a brief relaxation of censorship in Poland. "The courage of the filmmakers who took substantial risks, sometimes even risking their lives, with their covert footage or subversive productions resonates throughout the programme," comments Katharina Franck. The programme also looks at the Western perspective on these developments in the Eastern Bloc, as reflected in the media at the time.

By staging this Retrospective, DOK Leipzig is also reflecting on its own

66th International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animated Film

8 October to 15 October

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controversial history. The growing influence of ideological guidelines on its programming meant that until the late 1980s, critical approaches to Soviet regimes were largely absent from the festival. This year's programme includes some of the films that fell victim to (self-)censorship at the time, such as a Cuban newsreel by Santiago Álvarez (1968), in which Fidel Castro spoke critically of the Soviet invasion of Prague, and Bohdan Kosiński's film about the "Birth of Solidarity" (1981), which was shown at Western festivals when it came out but was not invited to Leipzig.

The Retrospective at the 66th edition of DOK Leipzig will kick off with three short films from the period of upheaval from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. They will be shown free of charge at the main station on 9 October as part of the Leipzig Festival of Lights.

Two matinees tie in to the theme of the Retrospective. With the film "Woe to the Vanquished – The Workers' Uprising, 17 June 1953" (1990) by Andrea Ritterbusch in the **DEFA Matinee**, DOK Leipzig is screening an impressive cinematic recreation of the popular uprising in the GDR which uses original footage from Western archives and interviews with eyewitnesses filmed directly after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

The **Matinee Saxon State Archive** will contribute to this multifaceted topic by reflecting critically on so-called "German-Soviet friendship" and its chequered history, which involved both fraternisation and glorification.

This year, the FilmFestival Cottbus (7–12 November) is also taking up the theme of resistance to communist regimes in the Eastern Bloc. A section titled "What Remains of History" is offering screenings of feature and documentary films on uprisings and opposition in the socialist GDR, Poland and Hungary. The programme includes films by Andrzej Wajda, Márta Mészáros, Andrea Ritterbusch and Volker Schlöndorff.

The Retrospective was produced in cooperation with the Cinémathèque Leipzig and the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies in Dresden.

DOK Leipzig would like to thank the Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Eastern Germany, the DEFA Foundation and the Saxon State Archive for their funding and support of the film programmes.

The entire film selection of the programmes can be found in the following film lists.

Logos, this year's poster design, festival impressions, and portraits of the programme directors can be found here: [Press Download](#)
If you need film stills for your coverage of DOK Leipzig 2023, please contact us.

The 66th edition of DOK Leipzig will take place on site from 8 to 15 October, 2023. Each day during the week of the festival, a different film will be available online throughout Germany for 24 hours in the DOK Stream. Accredited participants worldwide can also view the majority of the films in competition online. You can apply for press accreditation via [this form](#).

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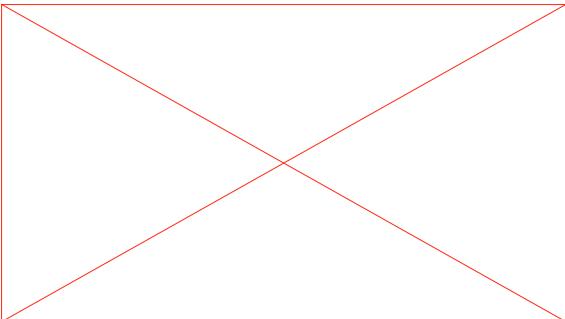
Retrospektive: Film und Protest – Volksaufstände im Kalten Krieg

Retrospective: Film and Protest – Popular Uprisings in the Cold War

DOX Leipzig

66. Internationales Leipziger
Festival für Dokumentar- und
Animationsfilm

8.10.– 15.10.2023



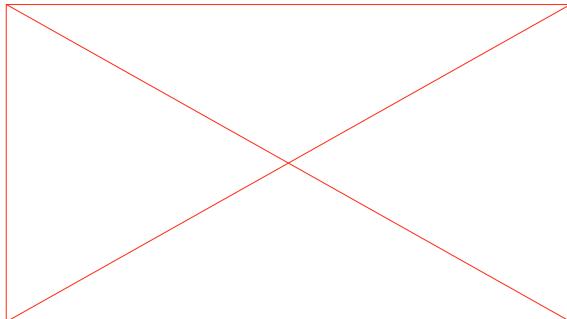
Der 17. Juni im Saarland

Documentary Film

Sven Trittelvitz
FRG 1964 | 9 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None



Aufstände im sowjetischen Machtbereich

Documentary Film

Ralph Giordano, Hans-Ulrich Barth
FRG 1961 | 24 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None



The Baltic Way

Documentary Film

Arūnas Matelis, Audrius Stonys
Lithuania 1990 | 10 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language Lithuanian
Subtitles English



Birth of Solidarity

Documentary Film

Bohdan Kosiński
Poland 1981 | 29 min, -
No Premiere

–

Language Polish
Subtitles English

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Black Days

Documentary Film

Ladislav Kudelka, Milan Černák, Ctibor Kováč, Štefan Kamenický
Czechoslovakia 1968 | 30 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language Slovak
Subtitles English



The Cathedral

Documentary Film

Laila Pakalnina
Latvia 1990 | 19 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language Latvian
Subtitles English

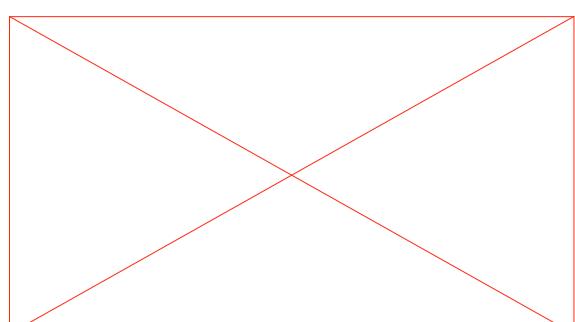


Confusion

Documentary Film

Ewald Schorm
Czechoslovakia 1969 | 36 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language Czech
Subtitles English



Deadlock

Animated Film

Ferenc Rófusz
Hungary 1982 | 4 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language without dialogue
Subtitles None

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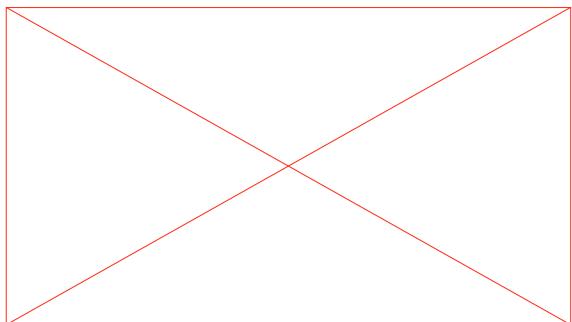


Downhill

Animated Film

Marian Cholerek
Poland 1979 | 6 min, Colour
No Premiere

Language without dialogue
Subtitles None



Ein Mittwoch im Juni – Vor 20 Jahren: Volksaufstand, Arbeiterrevolte oder Agentenputsch?

Documentary Film

Lutz Lehmann
FRG 1973 | 60 min, Colour & B&W
No Premiere

Language German
Subtitles None



Exit

Documentary Film

Małgorzata Bieńkowska-Buehlmann
Poland 1990 | 29 min, Colour
No Premiere

Language Polish, German
Subtitles



Mind the Steps!

Animated Film

István Orosz
Hungary 1989 | 6 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language without dialogue
Subtitles None

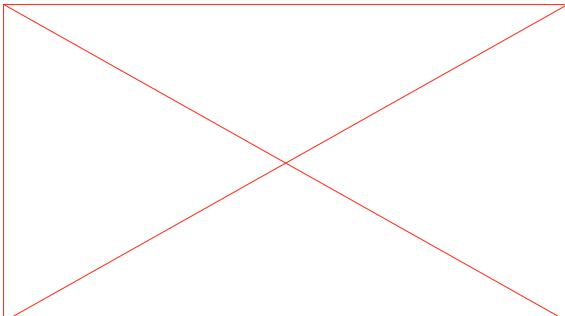
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Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano, No. 422

Documentary Film

Santiago Álvarez
Cuba 1968 | 14 min, B&W
No Premiere

–
Language Spanish
Subtitles English

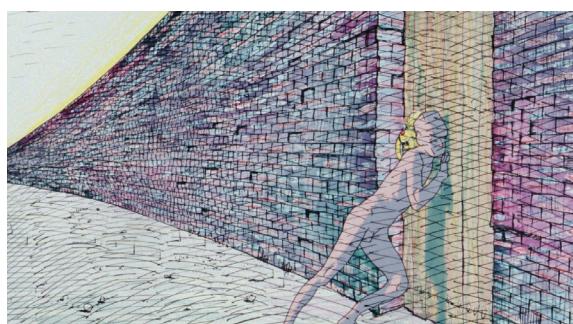


The Orange Alternative

Documentary Film

Mirosław Dembiński
Poland 1988 | 24 min, Colour & B&W
No Premiere

–
Language Polish
Subtitles English

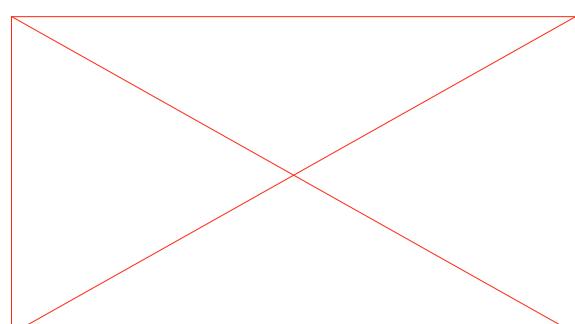


Sitis

Animated Film

Rainer Schade
GDR 1989 | 11 min, Colour
No Premiere

–
Language German
Subtitles None



Sowjetische Truppen in Prag und Budapest (Panorama, 29.7.1968)

Documentary Film

FRG 1968 | 15 min, -
No Premiere

–
Language German
Subtitles None

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Die Streichholzballade

Animated Film

Johannes Hempel
GDR 1953 | 16 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language German
Subtitles None

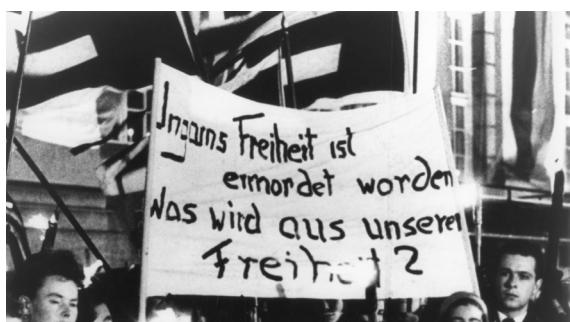


Undefeated

Documentary Film

Marek Drążewski
Poland 1984 | 75 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language Polish
Subtitles English



Ungarn in Flammen

Documentary Film

Ferdinand Khittl, Stefan Erdélyi
FRG 1957 | 83 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language German
Subtitles None



The Wall

Documentary Film

Anatolijs Pjatkins
Latvia 1991 | 10 min, Colour
No Premiere

Language without dialogue
Subtitles None

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We Summon You

Documentary Film

Bohdan Kosiński
Poland 1981 | 8 min. -
No Premiere

Language Polish
Subtitles



Year of the Dragon

Documentary Film

Andres Sööt
USSR 1988 | 59 min, B&W
No Premiere

Language Estonian, Russian
Subtitles English

DEFA Matinee



Wehe den Besiegten – Der 17. Juni 1953

Documentary Film

Andrea Ritterbusch
GDR 1990 | 87 min, Colour & B&W
No Premiere

—
Language German
Subtitles

Matinee Sächsisches Staatsarchiv: Deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft – Verbrüderung und Verklärung

Matinee Saxon State Archive:
German-Soviet Friendship

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[Kurt Biedenkopf besucht ein sowjetisches Panzerregiment]

Documentary Film

Klaus Wilhelm
Germany 1991 | 8 min, Colour
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None

Begegnungen

Documentary Film

Alfred Dorn
GDR 1970 | 15 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None

Doroga Zhizni – Straße des Lebens

Documentary Film

M. Markosov
USSR 1965 | 9 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None

Drei Jahrzehnte später

Documentary Film

Volker Kastius
GDR 1977 | 15 min, Colour
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None

Paskutinis

Fictional Film

Vladislovas Algimantas Blinstrubas
USSR 1970 | 9 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles

Rückgabe der Kunstschatze an das Grüne Gewölbe

Documentary Film

anonym
GDR 1958 | 5 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language without dialogue
Subtitles

SSSR. 50 Let – 50 Jahre UdSSR [Fragment]

Documentary Film

anonym
USSR 1972 | 10 min, Colour
No Premiere

–

Language German
Subtitles None

Stranicy Moego Kinoalboma – Seiten meines Filmalbums

Documentary Film

V. Shendrik, V. Vajda, F. Krevnev
USSR 1969 | 9 min, B&W
No Premiere

–

Language German Voiceover
Subtitles None

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