

## Film Synopsis

### **TWO REGIMES: A MOTHER'S MEMOIR OF THE HOLOMODOR AND THE HOLOCAUST**

#### **Film Synopsis** by Diane Whitney

Viewing the film version of the memoir of Teodora Verbitskaya, it is almost impossible to conceive of the situation she describes to us. Filling the screen as she speaks are vivid images painted by her daughter, Nadia. The bright colors contrast with the intensely sad developments that she is describing. I am simultaneously intrigued and mystified. How could a place so beautiful and a people so strong be victimized in such a way?

The report of Stalin's malicious campaign against what Stalin and his cohorts perceived as the remnants of the bourgeoisie is shown through historical photos as well as through Nadia's paintings. In the midst of the chaos and disorganization filling their world, Teodora and Dimitri, along with their two children, survived the harsh winter in an abandoned hut, burning horse dung for heat. As the doctrine of Collectivism permeated the economy, farmers were forced to surrender their livestock to the government and the land became unusable for private agriculture. Dimitri could not find work and was eventually sent to prison for six years for anti government comments he had made earlier.

Teodora was left to fend for herself and her two young daughters. Her strength and adaptability were shown in her finding abandoned homes to live in and the occasional odd job, which was necessary for their survival. It is her calm recounting of what she had to do to keep them together that is repeatedly moving.

Teodora takes us on a journey from the snow-covered steppes of Mankoka to the towns of Pereprava and Mariupol. Stalinist measures became crueler as Stalin took total control of the animals and land needed by the people for their survival. Citizens of varied nationalities were arrested without warning and forced into trucks and taken to work camps. Dimitri was with them for a short time but was included among those many people who were swept up and taken away. Teodora and the girls would not see him again.

The German takeover of Poland forced all citizens, including Ukrainians such as Teodora and her daughters, to work digging ditches. Those same ditches would later be used to hold the bodies of thousands of Jews executed by the Nazis. The life of Teodora, Nadia and Lyucia became a series of camp settings for four years.

After the battle of Stalingrad, the Allies succeeded in defeating the Third Reich. Liberation would come as a welcome surprise to those waiting for liberation.

**TWO REGIMES: A MOTHER'S MEMOIR OF THE HOLOMODOR AND THE HOLOCAUST** is a narrative of a woman's courage, persistence, and survival. Moreover, it is a tribute to the human spirit.