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## POV's "My Perestroika" Tracks Classmates From Soviet Childhoods To Putin's Russia, Tuesday, June 28, 2011, on PBS

An Era of Dramatic Historical Change Is Rendered in Vivid Detail as Five Muscovites Recount  
Their Personal Stories and Old Ideals Shift to New Realities

*A co-production of Red Square Productions/Bungalow Town Productions and ITVS International  
In association with American Documentary / POV*

"Astoundingly timely." — Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

### **MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET**

National Air

Date: **My Perestroika** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, June 28, 2011**, at 10 p.m. on the **POV (Point of View)** documentary series on PBS. (Check local listings.) **My Perestroika** will also stream in its entirety from **June 29 – Aug. 28** on the POV website, [www.pbs.org/pov/video](http://www.pbs.org/pov/video). Now in its 24th year, POV is American television's longest-running independent documentary series and is the winner of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, the IDA Award for Best Continuing Series and NALIP's 2011 Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity

The Film:

**My Perestroika** is an intimate look at the last generation of Soviet children. Five classmates go from living sheltered childhoods to experiencing the hopes of Gorbachev's reforms and the confusion of the USSR's dissolution to searching for their places in today's Moscow. With candor and humor, the punk rocker, single mother, entrepreneur and married teachers paint a picture of the challenges, dreams and disappointments of those raised behind the Iron Curtain. Through first-person testimony, vérité footage and vintage home movies, this beautifully crafted documentary reveals a Russia rarely seen on film.

**My Perestroika** has the distinction of being selected for *The Economist Film Project*. The films chosen for the Project are jointly curated by *The Economist* and PBS NEWSHOUR. An excerpt of **My Perestroika** and an interview with Hessman aired in a special segment on PBS NEWSHOUR: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2011/06/preview-director-robin-hessman-explores-last-soviet-generation-in-my-perestroika.html>.

**My Perestroika** is a co-production of Red Square Productions, Bungalow Town Productions and ITVS International in association with American Documentary | POV and YLE. Watch the trailer and learn more at [www.pbs.org/pov/myperestroika/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/myperestroika/).

Related News: *The Washington Post*: "The year 2011 marks the 20th anniversary of the Soviet Union's collapse. Here's a look back on the chaos that surrounded the USSR's final months." [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/final-days-of-the-soviet-union/2011/06/09/AG3mCcNH\\_gallery.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/final-days-of-the-soviet-union/2011/06/09/AG3mCcNH_gallery.html)

*Foreign Policy Magazine*: “Everything You Think You Know About the Collapse of the Soviet Union Is Wrong, (And why it matters today in a new age of revolution),” by Leon Aron, June 28, 2011.

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/20/everything\\_you\\_think\\_you\\_know\\_about\\_the\\_collapse\\_of\\_the\\_soviet\\_union\\_is\\_wrong](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/20/everything_you_think_you_know_about_the_collapse_of_the_soviet_union_is_wrong) “In the years leading up to 1991, virtually no Western expert, scholar, official, or politician foresaw the impending collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it one-party dictatorship, the state-owned economy, and the Kremlin’s control over its domestic and Eastern European empires.”

*The Wall Street Journal*: “Russia’s Rigged Election” by Vladimir Kara-Murza, Jr., June 28, 2011.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304569504576407814050641614.html> “Russian President Dmitry Medvedev’s recent statements about freedom and political competition have led many Western observers to hope for a new wave of democratic reforms in Russia. The Justice Ministry’s denial of the Popular Freedom Party’s registration papers last week shows that these statements are a fraud.”

*Los Angeles Times*: “Q & A: Robin Hessman on ‘My Perestroika,’” by Carol J. Williams, April 16, 2011 <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/apr/16/entertainment/la-et-my-perestroika-20110416> “Pulling at the loose threads of the communist-ruled monolith caused the Soviet empire to unravel, leaving Russians facing a future they never imagined. That . . . piqued the curiosity of Boston-area teenager Robin Hessman, inspiring her to witness and chronicle the transition of Russians of her age group, the last generation of Soviet youth.”

Filmmaker’s  
Statement:

“My generation of Russians is a key transition generation — from Soviet childhoods to adolescence during *Perestroika* to becoming adults in the newly democratic Russia,” says Robin Hessman, director/producer/cinematographer of **My Perestroika**. “They straddle such different worlds. My hope is that the film brings the audience into the homes, the kitchens and the memories of these five people — to share the complexities of their experiences, their triumphs, their dreams and their disillusionment.”

Bio:

**Robin Hessman (Director, Producer, Cinematographer)**

A graduate of Brown University with a dual degree in Russian and film, Robin Hessman received her graduate degree in film directing from the All-Russian State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow (with a “red diploma” of honors). She received a Student Academy Award in 1994, with co-director James Longley, for their film, “Portrait of Boy with Dog.” During eight years in Russia, Hessman worked for the Children’s Television Workshop (now Sesame Workshop) as the on-site producer of *Ulitsa Sezam*, the Russian-language *Sesame Street*.

In the United States, Hessman co-produced the Peabody Award-winning documentary “Tupperware!” She also co-produced the PBS biography of Julia Child, “Julia! America’s Favorite Chef.” In 2004, Hessman founded Red Square Productions and was granted the position of filmmaker in residence at PBS station WGBH Boston to develop **My Perestroika**.

Hessman is an associate of Harvard University’s Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Since 2006, she has served as the director of documentary programming for Amfest, the American Film Festival in Moscow. She currently divides her time between Brooklyn, Boston and Moscow.

Credits: Director/ Cinematographer: Robin Hessman  
Producers: Robin Hessman, Rachel Wexler  
Editors: Alla Kovgan, Garret Savage

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry  
Co-Executive Producer: Cynthia López  
Director of Production and Programming: Chris White  
Series Producer: Yance Ford

Running Time: 86:46

Awards and Festivals:

Winner, Filmmaker Award, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival 2010  
Winner, Special Jury Award, Silverdocs 2010  
Official Selection, Sundance Film Festival 2010, U.S. Documentary Competition  
Official Selection, International Film Festival Rotterdam 2011, Audience Top 20  
Official Selection, New Directors/New Films, MoMA and Lincoln Center, 2010

(For a complete list of awards and festivals, go to <http://myperestroika.com/>.)

POV Website: POV's **My Perestroika** companion website, [www.pbs.org/pov/myperestroika/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/myperestroika/), offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with the filmmakers, a list of related websites, organizations and books, a lesson plan, discussion guide and the following special features:

- Photo gallery of film stills;
- Multimedia timeline;
- Additional video: Meyerson family update;
- Background and glossary on the USSR;
- Quiz: Are you a Cold War Kid?
- Live chat with Robin Hessman on **Wednesday, June 29** at 2 PM ET

Outreach: POV works with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in the films. For a list of upcoming screenings and screening events for **My Perestroika**, go to: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/outreach>

POV also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop discussion guides with background information to help event organizers. The discussion guide for **My Perestroika** provides an opportunity to go beyond sound-bite news coverage or political propaganda to look at what happens to ordinary people when their society is turned upside down. Cari Ladd, M.Ed., has created the lesson plan *Experiencing Perestroika*, which asks students to consider what it was like to live in Moscow when Mikhail Gorbachev led the Soviet Union, including how the policies of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* changed everyday life and what it was like to demonstrate against the August 1991 coup attempt by Communist hardliners. What role would the Internet might have played during this time? Gina Blume of the Monroe Township Public Library has compiled a multimedia resource list of related books and videos that invite audiences to further explore the issues in the film. The materials are available free of charge at: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/myperestroika/>

DVD: **My Perestroika** is available on DVD through [New Day Films](#).

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom), for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 24th season on PBS, the award-winning **POV** series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September, with primetime specials during the year, **POV** has brought more than 300 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

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