

Video: Looming Geopolitical and Environmental Disasters. Documentary Reveals

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Thirty Seconds to Midnight explores the fallout of U.S. foreign policy

Documentary filmmaker [Regis Tremblay](#) is trying to get the word out about the dangers of nuclear war, nuclear power, and climate change.

In 2016, he traveled to Odessa, Ukraine, Moscow, St. Petersburg and Crimea to complete filming for his new film, *Thirty Seconds to Midnight*. It's not a romantic comedy, in case you were wondering.

This is not Tremblay's first rodeo, though. In 2012, he went to Jeju Island in South Korea to document a six-year continuous protest against the construction of a massive naval base to accommodate America's "pivot to Asia." What he learned there about America's complicity in horrendous massacres before and during the Korean conflict motivated him to make *The Ghosts of Jeju*, a film about the indigenous people of the island.



Tremblay's documentary argues that we are perilously close to midnight

We asked Tremblay about his new film in a series of e-exchanges.

Russia Insider: Your documentary has a very important message. But spreading important messages to the general public isn't always easy. There's a lot to compete with, such as funny viral cat photographs, etc. As we're sure you're well aware, all important political and social statements must be tweeted at and endorsed by at least one important person. So let's roleplay. We're Michael Moore. Tell us why we should retweet your documentary, in 140 characters or less. Please remember that proper grammar is strictly prohibited.

Regis Tremblay: Can I not?

RI: Fine. Then just tell us in normal, civilized English, please.

Tremblay: My documentary is an urgent message for people everywhere because of the triple threats to life on the planet: nuclear war, nuclear power, and climate change. It is a message few others dare to say, humanity and all life on the planet are on the brink of extinction. Of course, Local media as well as the distribution establishment, including film festivals refuse to include it. Spreading controversial, and important topics to the general

public is difficult, especially for an independent filmmaker like myself. Since the publication of my other feature documentary, *The Ghosts of Jeju*, I have worked tirelessly promoting it via Facebook, my websites and blogs.

I was fortunate to have made many influential contacts who have participated in my films and they have, in turn, shared the films with their extensive networks. Oliver Stone, Charles Hanley, Professor Bruce Cummings, Bruce Gagnon, Ray McGovern, Dr. Helen Caldicott, Chris Hedges, Peter Kuznick, and others.

RI: We consider ourselves fairly well-versed in all the awful things that the United States has done to various peoples all over the world since 1776. But your documentary taught us about many new horrible thing that we never learned about in AP History class. What inspired you to seek out the rancid underbelly of American foreign and domestic policy? It's a dark place where most people choose not to go.

Tremblay: My film presents a counter narrative to the version of U.S. history learned in school and passed down to us since the founding of the country. In a real sense, it presents the untold history of the United States since the white, colonial, Europeans came her in the 15th Century. America was founded on genocide, slavery, and the stealing of land and resources that continues to this very day.

As a U.S. History major, I never learned about the real history of America, so when I traveled to Jeju Island, an independent province of South Korea in 2012, I discovered the ugly truth about US atrocities there after WWII. I went there thinking I was going to document a long, peaceful, non-violent struggle against the construction of a massive naval base to accommodate America's "Pivot to Asia."

My research for this film opened my eyes to the ugly truth about U.S. foreign policy, militarism, and imperialism. Once *The Ghosts of Jeju* was completed, I knew there was more to the story and began to reconstruct the real history of the United States of America from the 15th Century to the present day.

Re-telling the narrative this way is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for most Americans to accept because it creates an understanding of America, the world, and themselves that they cannot accept. It is a classic case of cognitive dissonance. To accept that America is not the exceptional, indispensable nation, approved by god, and that America has never been about spreading freedom and Democracy around the world, would destroy their world personal views.

I have been told so many times by film festivals, newspaper editors, and the film industry that "it isn't a good fit for our audiences."

RI: You interviewed quite a few A-list activists and intellectuals. Can you describe the process of hunting these busy, important people down? We imagine it was no easy task. Did you have to badger anyone non-stop for an interview until they finally agreed to sit down for a talk? This is the aspect of documentary-making that makes us most anxious. Maybe you can provide some insight.

Tremblay: To interview the well-know and influential experts I mentioned before was actually the easiest part of the entire process. In most cases it was a matter of someone I

knew who knew, for example, Oliver Stone or Helen Caldicott. From there it was just a matter of sending an email explaining the concept of the film and explaining why it would be important for them to participate.

Once *The Ghosts of Jeju* spread around the world and was translated into seven languages, I had acquired a reputation as a serious documentary filmmaker. So, when I made *Thirty Seconds to Midnight*, it was much easier to involve the likes of Chris Hedges, Ray McGovern, Peter Kuznick, and Dr. Helen Caldicott.

The most difficult part was traveling in order to film their interviews, which I also published, in their entirety on YouTube and in my blogs. Not only did this help promote the film in advance of its completion, but it served to give examples of the quality and professionalism of my work to others.

RI: You came to Russia not so long ago. Tell us about your experience. It was your first trip to the country, if we recall correctly. Why did you come here? What parts of Russia did you travel to? What surprised you most about the country and its people?

Tremblay: Prior to coming to Russia, I had traveled extensively, on two occasions, to the Asia Pacific from Hawaii, Kyoto, Okinawa, Hiroshima, S. Korea and down to the Marshall Islands. On these trips I documented the effects of US militarism on the people, the culture, and the environment. It was on these trips that I began to understand the scope of US militarism and war around the world.

I had become an observer and critic of U.S. foreign policy that simultaneously provoked China in the Asia Pacific and Russia in Eastern Europe, while at the same time waging devastating wars and destroying entire civilizations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere.

Since WWII, it became clear that America needed a boogey man to frighten the American people and to increase military spending in order to reach full-spectrum dominance of the planet. Russia became that new enemy and threat to everything American. Since President Putin became president of the Russian Federation in 2001, the U.S. found the perfect, personification of evil. Because I had never believed everything we were taught about Russia and President Putin, I had to come to Russia to see for myself what Russia and the Russian people were like.



So, I traveled first to Moscow where I spent ten days before traveling by high speed train to St. Petersburg. After five days in St. Petersburg, I traveled to Crimea for five days before returning to America. I learned that Russian people are just like anybody else. They all loved their families and wanted nothing more than peace, security and prosperity for themselves and their children. Nobody wanted war with NATO or America, and to a person, everyone believed that nuclear war was madness and a game politicians played.

It also surprised me to learn that Russia, post the Soviet Era, was no longer Communist or Socialist, but a unique version of Democracy and Capitalism. I was amazed at the beauty, scale and magnificence of Moscow, that arguably is the most amazing city in the world. Moscow's Metro, adorned with great artwork, has no equal anywhere. Most Russians I met spoke English, were well versed in American literature and popular culture, much more so

than Americans.

And I learned a great deal about Russian history, past and present. In fact, Russians know their history and are proud of themselves as a people and a country that is diverse and multicultural.



What surprised me, perhaps most of all, was to learn that Russia has a Constitution that is remarkably similar to the United States Constitution, and I learned that many longed for some aspects of the Soviet Era.

Most Russians I met had a favorable opinion of President Putin and most credited him with restoring a sense of pride and patriotism in the country. They also approved of his foreign policy, though several disagreed with his economic policies. Nobody believe he was an evil dictator who eliminated his opponents. My impressions of Russia and the Russian people were so positive and favorable that I made a short video entitled, "Je Suis Russia", that served as a counter-narrative to the lies, distortions and propaganda of the United States about Russia, the Russian people, and President Putin.



RI: How do you see things playing out, going forward? Has your opinion concerning dangers to world peace and stability changed at all since making your documentary? Are things getting worse or better or staying the same?

Tremblay: With the election of a new administration in Washington, I do not see any signs that the threats to world peace, the protection of the environment, and stability will improve. In fact, the hysteria about all things Russian have only intensified with accusations that Russia and President Putin interfered in the national elections last year. President Putin continues to be vilified and compared to Hitler and Stalin.

The ruling elite, who own and control the entire American government, continue to make foreign policy and to expand the military industrial complex. They also own most of the world banks, the multi-national corporations, the media and the governments of Europe, Australia, Canada, Japan and South Korea to name just a few. So, I believe the danger of direct confrontation with Russia and China, two nuclear-armed countries, could result in nuclear war. Because nuclear power is not safe and it is virtually impossible to store nuclear waste which has a life-cycle of 10,000 years, humans, animals and plants will continue to die from cancers and thousands of diseases caused by radioactivity.

There are many who believe that climate change and global warming are a hoax, but if average global temperatures continue to rise and chaotic weather events increase in frequency and intensity, the ecosystem and entire cities will continue to be threatened.

RI: What's next for you? And when are you coming back to Russia?

Tremblay: The next part of the journey is to present screenings of the film. Several tours around the country have been planned, and more will follow. In September/October I will embark on a European tour to Ireland, England, France, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and hopefully end with a return to Russia.

Thirty Seconds to Midnight, by Regis Tremblay (full film)

Je Suis Russia

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