

From 2003 to 2007, we followed four players on the women's football team of DPR Korea in our film "Hana, dul, sed ...".

우리는 《하나, 둘, 셋 ...》이라는 조선 여자축구선수들에 대한 기록영화촬영을 위해 2003년부터 2007년까지 4명의 선수들을 따라다녔다.

Now we're back to find out how they've been doing.

이번에는 그들이 그동안 어떻게 지냈는지 알게 되었다.



# ... ned, tassot, yossot ... ... 넷, 다섯, 여섯 ...



연출 및 제작: 브리기테 바이히  
Director and producer: Brigitte Weich

촬영: 유디트 베네딕트  
Director of photography: Judith Benedikt

쪽음: 코둘라 퐁  
Sound: Cordula Thym

편집: 바바라 사이들러, 모니카 윌리  
Editing: Barbara Seidler, Monika Willi

A Ri Filme production © 2023  
제작: 리필름 © 2023



nedtassotyossot.com

# ... ned, tassot, yossot ...

a film by BRIGITTE WEICH



director  
BRIGITTE WEICH

production  
BRIGITTE WEICH FOR RI FILME

cinematography  
JUDITH BENEDIKT

editing  
BARBARA SEIDLER,  
MONIKA WILLI

sound  
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## SHORT SYNOPSIS

About five years after her film, *Hana, dul, sed ...* (2009), filmmaker Brigitte Weich returns to North Korea to ask four women on the national football team how their lives have evolved. In a friendly and congenial co-operation between the filmmaker and her protagonists, a work arises that not only tells about the concrete life of a professional athlete in North Korea, but also poses the question of the images that we all make of ourselves to give meaning to our lives and the world.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

From 2003 to 2007, Brigitte Weich followed four members of the North Korean women's soccer team for her 2009 documentary «Hana, dul, sed....» In this sequel, the women reflect on their adventures in soccer, which took them to the quarterfinals of the World Cup, and on their subsequent lives. They are strikingly candid as they speak about their families, friendships and the unconditional love and commitment they feel for their country.

In addition to the former soccer players, the film brings in the female director of a television series about the team which was made around the same time as Weich's first documentary. The clips from this series, presenting a feminized and romanticized version of the team's successes, develops this film into a subtle examination of the key role played by image control in a dictatorship like North Korea—in the background of almost every shot there is either a portrait or a statue of "Eternal Leader" Kim Il-Sung.

The documentary quietly exposes the structures underlying the way history is presented, while also adding depth to the often somewhat grotesque image of North Korea.

## LINKS

[... NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT ...](#)

[EPK](#)

[SCREENER](#) on demand -> [info@ptd.lu](mailto:info@ptd.lu)

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interview  
**KARIN SCHIEFER**  
October 2023

translation  
**CHARLES OSBORNE**

Following her portrait of the North Korean women's football dream team in the early 2000s (*Hana, dul, sed...* 2009), filmmaker Brigitte Weich and her cinematographer Judith Benedikt felt the urge to find out how the lives of their extraordinary protagonists continued after the end of their active sports careers. Defying the impenetrable wall imposed by the dictatorship, ... *NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT ...* manages fleetingly to overcome the isolation in a tireless, multi-layered attempt to connect.

*We're not just talking about a film, we're talking about its twenty-year history, which is an inseparable part of it. The successes of North Korean women's football in the early 2000s were only one element in your two films *Hana, dul, sed ...* (2009) and now ... *NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT...* How did this artistically and humanly far-reaching encounter come about?*

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** It all happened by chance. Chance. Chance. I had never planned to make a film, I had no idea about North Korea, I didn't know that women's football existed as a sport. My first encounter with North Korea was at the 2002 Pyongyang Film Festival. I just wanted to take a look at the country, and the opportunity arose when Michael Glawogger's film *France, Here We Come!* was shown there. Football was a popular topic, and the talk turned to the fact that the North Korean women's team had just become Asian champions. As I was leaving, I said casually: A film should be made about them. Back in Vienna, a few days later, I got a fax asking how our project on women's football was going. It came from Ryom Mi Hwa, an employee of the state company Korfilm, who had taken my remark seriously. She saw the whole thing through with us, right from the start. At first, I tried to find possible directors and companies, and ... well (laughs) ... twenty years later, I guess that's still me.

*Judith Benedikt, how did you grow into this project as DoP?*

**JUDITH BENEDIKT:** I've been involved since the first footage shot at the 2003 Asian Cup in Bangkok. Brigitte and I met there. Ever since that first trip to Bangkok, I've been keen on the project, and we started to establish contact with the protagonists. The presence of the camera was very unusual for them. We got closer by taking small steps, and at some point we were allowed to get on their team bus. I also gave them the camera and let them film themselves. Since we couldn't communicate linguistically, we built up closeness through filming.

*"Pictures of Pyongyang  
nobody in the world had ever seen."*

*How did the idea for a second film develop from the afterlife of the first film?*

**JUDITH BENEDIKT:** We talked several times about the idea of a long-term documentary. And then, on the spur of the moment, we used the prize money from the Grand Diagonale Prize for another trip to North Korea, to show the film to the protagonists and to film bonus material for the DVD of *Hana, dul, sed...*

We had seven days of shooting, and since we didn't know whether we'd be able to shoot there again anytime soon, we used that time to capture the footage for ... *NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT ...* One new aspect was that our protagonists were very keen to tell their stories on camera. In the first movie it was so hard to get them to talk, but this time it just came bubbling out of them. They were probably also inspired by the showing of the first film, which they really liked. Our first film had a rather static camera, so for ... *NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT ...* part of our concept was to react more flexibly and spontaneously, to convey a feel for life there as well. The GoPro, which I attached to the front of our film bus every day, also shows in uncensored form what we saw when we drove through Pyongyang. The filming in 2012 was the only real shooting period. In 2016 we were at the film festival, and then I filmed a few „city trips“ unofficially with my iPhone.



**What freedoms and opportunities do you have if you want to shoot exterior footage in Pyongyang?**

**JUDITH BENEDIKT:** For the first film, there were very restrictive conditions: depictions of the leader always had to be symmetrical and frontal, no wires were allowed to run through the face on the leader's pictures, the slogans you see everywhere in the city couldn't be cut. During one shoot, we even had a cameraman with us who wanted to check every frame. For ... *NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT* ... everything was more relaxed; at first, for example, no one objected to the GoPro. Although at some point they did ban it. In the evening, we had to take the material to the censor. In 2012 it wasn't like *Hana, dul, sed ...*, where there was a room in the hotel with men sitting there in their undershirts, smoking, and where I always had to leave the whole camera, because we didn't have a standard cassette format. That was tense, because we were handing over the original. In 2012 we already had memory cards and I was able to take a hard drive to the censor without any material I thought might be a problem. A little pre-censorship censorship, so to speak. It was already clear to us then that we would show pictures of Pyongyang nobody in the world had ever seen.

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** The interesting thing was that they never took anything away from us, they just said what they didn't want. A „quaint“ kind of censorship. Nevertheless, it wasn't possible to ignore their objections, if only out of a sense of responsibility to the North Korean contributors.

**The film is framed and structured by sequences with children making music or dancing. Was it your aim to shed light on the topic of education in a totalitarian system: the early integration into the collective, where performance operates on a communal level and is in the service of the great leader?**

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** That observation is correct. It's one of the areas where I was struck by how differently we are socialized: for example, sometimes in the final credits it was difficult to name individual contributions. Ryom Mi Hwa, who organized everything for both films, and Jang Hyang Gi, who spent so many hours translating – these two women, who are so essential to the making of the films, said repeatedly that their names should not be mentioned. This discrepancy also arose in the narrative of the films; we were interested in the protagonists as individuals, while it seemed almost frowned upon for them to talk about themselves. The country, the people, the leader come first. A culture clash. But over time, that has changed. We have „culturally rubbed off on each other“.

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**The success of the players led to the production of a TV series about them, excerpts from which create an interesting clash between fantasy and the reality of competitive sports. How did the series slip into the film, in formal terms?**

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** The series originated at about the same time as *Hana, dul, sed...* . It is also interesting that Ms. Cha Suk, North Korea's only female director, directed the film. It's a melodramatic miniseries which provides an insight into everyday life in North Korea the like of which we have never seen before. It was fascinating to juxtapose these staged people with the real ones. It reminded me of the time when I first went to North Korea: I met these „stereotypical“ people who either constantly said something unctuous about the leaders or turned away in fright. I couldn't imagine that our footballers would be such „templates“ at home. The series raises an interesting issue about the contrasts between the image someone else has of you and the image you have of yourself. For me, it was about getting a core that fits in the sense that all sides feel represented. The series certainly also prompted self-reflection on the part of the players: Who am I? How do I want to appear? How am I portrayed? How am I perceived? What might I be used for?



### *What issues arose during the editing?*

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** The editing caused us quite a headache. In addition to the various thematic strands – old film/new film/TV series/long-term observation/making of ... – the material of our shoot became „historical“ over time, because the financing took so long. I had two editors who did a great job of bringing the material together: Mona Willi, who already had so much experience with a wide variety of directors, and Barbara Seidler, who was fresh out of film academy. A great mix. The epilogue was based on an idea of Mona's. When we were suddenly in lockdown, everything felt so „North Korean“: her first idea was to record a Zoom meeting with the protagonists. But the people there don't have the Internet in their private lives. However, that did provide ideas about using current images for an epilogue. Unfortunately, the first attempt to film footage in line with our requirements via Korfilm didn't work out. Ryom Mi Hwa then apparently succeeded in persuading North Korean television to make a small documentary featuring our protagonists. Just when I'd given up believing it would happen, a link to a documentary appeared, plastered with propaganda music and a speaker's voice – completely useless. But within a few hours, Barbara sent me the first draft of the epilogue. In the end we got the clean raw material, and Barbara worked with everything that was at all usable.

*... NED, TASSOT, YOSSOT ... has also become a touching record about the way time passes, like a large chunk of life.*

**BRIGITTE WEICH:** Judith and I always had the idea of filming them after the regime had collapsed. I didn't think it would survive Kim Jong Il's death, because the charisma of the founder of the state, Kim Il Sung, would not be enough for another generational change in this globalized world. Now I'm starting to think maybe that regime will outlive me. Then Judith will have to travel to North Korea by herself, as an old lady. Personally, I like long-term documentaries very much, and I find it exciting to see how societies change and how individuals have to cope with regimes and developments. Through the most varied (im)possibilities, our film has become a collection of images that I could not have planned in this way. Thanks to Judith's magic hand and that of our grader Simon Graf, with all the sharpening, stabilizing and color correcting in post-production, the images also hold up on the big screen and now cover this long period of time. I wouldn't have been able to stick with it for so long if I hadn't had this company in crime. The images and sounds only exist thanks to the great skill and hard work of Judith and Cordula Thym. In addition, there was this strange, strong emotion that mobilized us again and again. As the North Koreans say: *Over the mountains, there are mountains* – it was by following this principle that we worked on towards the finished film.