

TEMNI POKROV SVETA

EARTH BENEATH A DARK LID

aviator, photographer,
mountaineer and environmentalist
MATEVŽ LENARČIČ
flies around the the globe

director | screenwriter | editor AMIR MURATOVIĆ
director of photography | executive producer RADO LIKON ZFS
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producer CEBRAM | in coproduction with RADIOTELEVIZIJA SLOVENIJA
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CEBRAM



Matevž Lenarčič, an outstanding aviator, photographer, mountaineer and environmentalist flies around the globe with his ultralight plane and collects particles of black carbon, the second largest cause of global warming.

Matevž is a solitary adventurer who often brushes with the point-of-no-return while flying his fragile small aircraft. Matevž has already flown over the North Pole and Mt. Everest;

he has landed in Antarctica; has flown non-stop over the ocean for sixteen hours and around the world three times. These feats have earned him the best pilot title in 2013. He used to be a paraglider before. And he still is a mountaineer. He has visited Patagonia twice, and together with a group of friends attempted to scale the mythical and for a long-time unconquered Mts. Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre. Matevž Lenarčič, Bogdan Biščak and Rado Fabjan were the first Yugoslavs who successfully climbed both mountains. Matevž has also climbed the eight-thousander, Mt. Broad Peak.



Matevž's travels have gained a deeper meaning after he had met Griša Močnik, a physicist researching the impact of black carbon on the climate and our lives. Griša has compacted the instrument for measuring the presence of particulates in the air and thus enabled its installation in an ultralight aircraft. Matevž chooses the most vulnerable spots of our planet for his flights. With his team at the Green Light World Flight project, he creates an incredible database allowing us to understand where these particulates linger.



Black carbon is soot. It is created when the carbon-based fuel combustion is incomplete. Large amounts of black carbon are released through the burning of biomass in wood burners, wildfires and through vehicles exhausts. Tiny black particulates remain in the atmosphere for several weeks. They enter our respiratory system, blood and even the brain. Black carbon pollution causes the premature death of seven million people each year.

In Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital, numerous studies in connection with particulate emissions have been carried out, since strong winter inversions create excessive pollution with black carbon. The great majority of particulates enters the atmosphere in unventilated towns and cities due to the heating of buildings and homes using biomass and traffic emissions. Smoke from one burner with a poor combustion process can release as many particulates into the air as fifty efficient burners do and can spread to the nearby areas.

Matevž visits Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is often on the list of the most polluted cities in the world. Outdated thermoelectric powerplants still operating in the Balkans create more emissions than the rest of Europe importing this environmentally unfriendly produced energy. In big cities, such as Milan, Italy, a black carbon layer heats up the city by an extra degree or two.





The Alps see more incursions of desert sand, which includes soot from Africa, descends onto the glaciers and speeds up their melting. Matevž and Griša fly between the belts of sand over the Cape Verde Islands in the mid-Atlantic in order to help improve climate models.

Later, Matevž visits the south of the American Continents, Patagonia. Peter Skvarča, a glaciologist who has witnessed the break-up of the ice sheets in Antarctica, traversed the Southern Patagonian Ice Field and has been performing measurements on the glaciers for thirty years, guides Matevž over the glaciers, where the impact of climate change can be witnessed in real time.

Matevž flies the vast Pacific Ocean to reach India. Black carbon crystals absorb a lot of light, and the atmosphere over this huge country is dimmed: less sunlight reaches the ground and crop yields are smaller. The winds drive this belt of dirty air to the Himalayas where the particulates descend onto the glaciers. The intensified melt of the glaciers creates devastating floods and endangers numerous sources of drinking water over the entire subcontinent.

For Matevž, the most important stop on this journey is the Kingdom of Bhutan, a tiny Himalayan country where they perceive the Gross National Happiness (GNH) to be more important than the Gross Domestic Product as a measure of their well-being. The Bhutanese check the impact on the environment and the happiness of the inhabitants for every governmental decision and they have written their environmental commitment in their Constitution. Matevž meets the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Mr Lotay Tshering, who still volunteers as a hospital surgeon on Saturdays.



With his unusual, sometimes even extreme views on the world, Matevž Lenarčič wishes to convey the following message: We urgently need a change in our current economic order, which is environmentally and socially utterly untenable. Instead of economic growth, we need an economic degrowth and distribution of goods which is based on global equality. We have allowed ourselves to be allured by the neoliberal idea which forces us to work more to earn more and buy toys we do not need. We put pressure on the soil, abuse natural resources and pollute the environment. We are close to the tipping point, after



which humanity will not be able to avert the more and more frequent catastrophic natural disasters. If we do not change our civilisation values, our planet will establish a different balance and create millions of climate, economic and war refugees. We can believe Matevž - he has experienced the Earth from a very special perspective, seen a multitude of different images and presented them through his enigmatic photographs.

Rado Likon: I met Matevž after his first flight around the world. As a stubborn Capricorn, I decided to make a film about such an interesting pilot. I have followed his flights on my computer for many years, and every time I registered a sudden change of his aircraft's altitude, I was overcome with fear. The making of this movie was joyful and at times strenuous. In those difficult moments, Amir and I started wondering why did we need all this anguish, and then blamed each other. What I resented Amir for was that he often demanded low angles where I had to kneel with my camera and then attempt to get up with great difficulty. But I cannot see many of those shots in the movie!



Flights with Matevž's ultralight plane were rather interesting. I felt like a gymnast on parallel bars every time I needed to get in or out. Matevž knew I would have difficulties with that and watched my every move, making sure I didn't break anything. During landings, he often advised me to stay in the plane until the next take-off. Amir and I were always looking forward to shooting at Matevž's home, partly because of the excellent Bhutanese whiskey, a gift by Lotay Tshering, the Prime Minister of Bhutan. We didn't want it to go off, so we kept rescuing it from such an ill fate and succeeded in doing so.



Amir Muratović: When I joined Rado in following Matevž's feats, I tried to transform a movie about an adventurous pilot into an environmental film. Matevž is an incredibly humble human being and has continuously tried to direct us away from his personal story. We all needed time to realise that he should be the one leading us from the first to the last scene. Matevž is like a Superman, saving the planet. He is a movie hero, who has circled the Earth several times by himself in a fragile aircraft, stood

at the top of an eight-thousander, and was amongst the first who scaled the defying Mt. Cerro Torre successfully. To top it all, he is also a great photographer and writer. So, there was no other way, really.

Matevž Lenarčič: I'm a person who doesn't want to see or hear himself on a screen, but I really enjoyed working on the documentary 'Earth Beneath a Dark Lid'. The making took almost ten years. We all had a fear in the back of our minds whether we would still be alive when the movie was going to be premiered: polluted air doesn't discriminate in picking its victims and our creed to work as a way of life doesn't do any favours to the health of the planet, nor us. However, in the right company of these two emphatic artists and filmmakers, Rado and Amir, life can be beautiful, both above and below the dark lid of human greed.

