

# The Gamma People [1955]

by

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A few thoughts on *The Gamma People*. In a one sentence summary of this very bizarre film is: Pursuing what he thinks may be an important story, an American reporter becomes stranded in an (unnamed) Iron Curtain country where the local autocrat uses atomic radiation (gamma rays) to transform children into mutated henchmen.

At the heart of the film is paranoia. No unusual for a film from the mid-1950s. However, this one combines the paranoia of Communism with Nazism. There are many examples. Communication with the outside world is against government policy. Normality is powerless – there are no consuls. One car, no telegraph, no telephone. Indoctrinating the youth to be fascists. Controlling the nature of art. The film sees no emotion in music. It is populated by soul-less, mindless goons. The country ruled by a turncoat scientist. Religion is rejected, in preference to paganism and myths of the future. Worship is of death and evil. The state takes over the family. It teaches children how to cheat and leads honest men into temptation.

A weapon against the state is the Freedom of the Press. In this way, people are led to revolt.

Perhaps unexpectedly for such a low-budget production, the film is rife with symbolism. The forest – the typical fairy tale forest to get lost in. It is also a symbol of the unconscious. In this case the Collective Unconscious. A chess game is used symbolically. When the knight moves to queen three, the hero approaches the feminine. But will it be a healing feminine or an evil one? The carnival, as in the case of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* [1920], is a place of chaos and madness.

There is even a bit of politics thrown in for good measure: The British need the Americans to get them out of trouble. I suspect were this a British film, I would not have written that sentence.