

Institute of National Remembrance

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The 10th edition of the “Echos of Katyn” film review- Warsaw, 11-15 April 2019

The Institute of National Remembrance would like to invite you to participate in the 10th edition of the “Echos of Katyn” film review. During the review, five feature and documentary films are planned to be screened. Among the films there are productions referring us back to the events from 80 years ago, as well as those portraying the significance of those tragic events for contemporary Poland and the world. The repertoire includes works by Polish and foreign directors, reflecting both on the



In March 1940, the Soviet authorities decided to murder thousands of Polish citizens - officers, soldiers, clerks and priests. The following month, executions were begun in the Katyn forest. For years, the truth about the Katyn massacre was falsified by the apparatus of the communist state, with censorship playing a key role. Officials of this institution made sure that information about the Soviet crime would not appear in the public media. The truth about what happened in 1940 was passed on through family members, informal groups, in works published abroad, or in the form of underground publications. Censors paid particular attention to ensuring that the truth about the Katyn Massacre should not appear in films. It is for this reason that the first document about the Katyn Massacre was filmed in Poland as late as 1990 by Marcel Łoziński (Katyn Forest).

Almost exactly 30 years ago, censorship ceased to exist. Since then, many films devoted to the Katyn massacre have been made. Interestingly, they are being produced not only in Poland, but also abroad.

The “Echos of Katyn” films :

The “Echos of Katyn” film review is an initiative of the Institute of National Remembrance which has been organized since 2010. The repertoire includes films by Polish and foreign directors which reflect not only on the Katyn Massacre, but also on other crimes associated with totalitarian systems. Some of the foreign films shown during the

“Echos of Katyn” review have not yet been screened by any Polish television station. During the jubilee edition of the review, the audience will have the opportunity to see a number of very interesting productions, for example last year’s UK-Polish co-production **“Katyn. The Last Witness”** (*“Katyń. Ostatni świadek”*), directed by Piotr Szkopiak. The film illustrates the details of one of the most horrific stories of World War II – the long concealed truth about the Katyn massacre. Inspired by the biography of its eyewitness – Ivan Kriwoziercew aka Michał Łoboda – the director tries to find the cause of the suspicious premature death of this man in Great Britain in 1947.

The audience will also see last year’s production by the Bulgarian director Asen Vladimirov, entitled **“A Victim of Pawns”**, which shows the story of Dr. Marko Markov, a Bulgarian forensic doctor, a member of the International Medical Commission established by the Germans after the discovery of the bodies of thousands of Polish officers murdered by the NKVD near Katyń in 1940. Dr. Markov signed the Commission’s report in which it was claimed that the victims had been shot in 1940. He was arrested for his findings by the Bulgarian communist authorities and accused of collaborating with the Germans. Once acquitted, Markov participated in the Nuremberg Trial as a witness for the Soviet prosecution, declaring that the Katyn crime had been committed by the Germans. The film also presents the stories of other members of the Commission, dealing with forensic medicine and criminology at European universities. It also touches upon the mass murders committed in Katyn and the long and painful struggle to prove the truth about the Soviet Union’s involvement in these atrocities, little

known in Bulgaria.

A Danish production entitled "**The Skull from Katyn**" will also be presented. This is an extraordinary story began in 1943 by Professor Helge Tramsen from Denmark, who smuggled the skull of one of the Polish officers murdered in Katyn to Copenhagen. In 2005, the skull was found in one of the cabinets in the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Copenhagen. According to Tramsen's notes, the skull belonged to Ludwik Szymański, a reserve captain from Krakow. Unfortunately, this was not proven unequivocally. The film shows not only the history of the contentious exhibit but also the fates of the doctors working at the exhumation site in 1943, their horrific experiences associated with unveiling the truth about Katyn, which the USSR desperately tried to conceal after the war – through harassment, arrests, wiretaps and murders.

"**Once My Mother**" is yet another film to see during the event. The Australian filmmaker investigates why her mother abandoned her in an orphanage when she was a child. She uncovers the story of her mother born in pre-war Poland, who was also orphaned, deported from her home and sent to Siberia. The turbulent history of the 20th century made it difficult for the woman to adapt to post-war reality on a foreign continent.

Last but not least, we would like to recommend "**Dzieci kwatery 1**", directed by Arkadiusz Gołębiewski. This is a touching story about the tragic fate of the families of soldiers involved in the pro-independent underground or anti-communist opposition, who were murdered in the

prison on Rakowiecka str. in Warsaw in 1948-56. The story starts with the exhumation of victims of communist terror buried by the wall of the Powązki Military Cemetery, in the so-called lot "Ł".

The screenings in English, with Polish subtitles will be held at the Muranów cinema in Warsaw on:

14 April – 4:00 p.m. - **"Once My Mother" (Gerard room)**

– 5:30 p.m. - **"The Last Witness" (Gerard room)**

– 5:30 p.m. - **"The Skull from Katyn" (Pola room)**

After the **"The Skull from Katyn"** film, there will be a meeting with the film's director - Anna Elisabeth Jessen, also in English.

The culmination of the 10th "Echos of Katyn" film review will be the ceremonial Final Gala, which will take place on 15 April in the Chamber Hall of the Polish Theater. During the gala, the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Dr Jarosław Szarek, will award statuettes to filmmakers who greatly contributed to the popularization of the history of the Katyn Massacre.

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