

RUSSIAN

SYMPOSIUM
2019

Holiday

[Праздник]

Russia, 2018

Color, 73 minutes

In Russian with English subtitles

Director: Aleksei Krasovskii

Screenplay: Aleksei Krasovskii

Camera: Sergei Astakhov

Producer: Iuliia Krishtofovich

Art direction: Evdokiia Zamakhina

Sound: Nelli Ivanova, Anastasiia Anosova

Montage: Vladimir Zimin, Aleksei Krasovskii

Cast: Alena Babenko, Ian Tsapnik, Timofei Tribuntsev, Anfisa Chernykh, Pavel Tabakov, Asia Chistiakova.

Holiday shows the audience a single night during the Great Patriotic War. The family of Georgii Aleksandrovich Voskresenskii, a researcher developing technology for chemical weapons in a secret institute, is celebrating the New Year in their house near besieged Leningrad. Obviously, the family belongs to the Soviet intellectual elite and for this reason, lives in a separate spacious house, in which every member including an old grandmother has their own room. The family is very well supplied even during the famine. Because the daughter, Lisa, and son, Denis, brought unexpected guests, Voskresenskii's wife, Margarita, keeps trying to hide their privileges and attempts to present the whole family as ordinary and normal. However, the Voskresenskii's guests, Masha, a hungry and weak girl from a bomb shelter, and a one-legged former soldier do not buy into her attempts and ask many questions.

Almost all of the actors are well known to Russian film audiences: Ian Tsapnik (who starred in *Gor'ko* [2013], *Elki 1914*

[2014] and their sequels) plays the professor-father focused only on research, while being indifferent to everything else. Alena Babenko (*A Driver for Vera* [2004], *Aircrew* [2016]) plays the professor's wife, obsessed with her appearance and "how they [the family] look in the eyes of other people." Pavel Tabakov, who starred in *The Star* (2014) and *Duelist* (2016), plays a son provoking his parents to accept the situation that they live an abnormal and highly privileged life, that costs other people their lives. Timofei Tribuntsev (*The Monk and the Demon* (2016) and *Last Bogatyr* (2017) appears in the role of an adventurous and somewhat rude soldier. Anfisa Chistiakova, who plays the daughter Liza, appeared before in *The Geographer Drank His Globe Away* (2013), *Elki* (2017), *Kitchen* (2017), and other films. Only for Anfisa Chistiakova is *Holiday* her film debut, although before it she appeared in more than a dozen television series. Such strong actors constitute the most attractive features of the film: different styles of performance, brilliant dialogues, omnipresent irony, and self-reflection. *Holiday* is an actor-centered film and attracts its audience with its focus on human relationships, the hierarchy of those relationships, and their conflict-resolution. The film's viewers are included in the film as voyeurs (as the film's poster suggests), or as witnesses, present in the house, almost as family members. For that reason, they are almost directly asked to form their attitude toward every film character (including a never seen legendary grandmother, a veteran of the October revolution) and to choose a side in the developing conflicts.

The film depicts the life of the Soviet elite and it is very easy to imagine the same power structures in contemporary Russia. The plot focuses on the huge difference between the norms and habits of the elite and the poor: the problems with the absent cook versus the value of bread crumbs; the desire to look beautiful and stylish versus an opportunity to sleep an hour and stay warm during the freezing winter; Denis' teenage uprising against his parents' will and Masha's wish to survive. Closed space brings an atmosphere of intimacy and does not allow state-imposed affects, such as pride for the Motherland or the desire for the Soviet sublime, to interfere in

everyday life and human relationships. In this private coziness, superficial emotions have gone, and nothing whitens or justifies the elite's privileges any more. The ubiquitous irony of the dialogues helps in deconstructing all of the state's justifications and reveals a picture, in which the price of the elite's life is the life of ordinary people. In other words, in this film, deprived of state rhetoric, man eats man. Of course, this type of cannibalism is not limited by the time and space of Leningrad's siege. With the director's and actors' attention drawn to the details of the life of the elite, the latest mythology that "Soviet times were the Golden Age" quickly disappears.

However, Aleksei Krasovskii's *Holiday* has provoked Russian society into a heated discussion not by its self-reflection, or the focus on the relationships between the elite and the ruled, but first of all, by its historical context. The mass media generated scandal started even before the film was ready for distribution and exhibition. The Russian Federation's Civic Chamber, Aleksei Turchak, United Russia's central committee secretary, the newspapers *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* and *Moskovskii Komsomolets*, and the Russian Society for Military History with its head Vladimir Medinskii, who also serves as the Minister of Culture, have criticized Krasovskii for inappropriate irony in relation to Russian war history. The head of research of the Russian Society for Military History, Mikhail Miagkov, claims that Krasovskii's film is "an insult to our history. This is a personal offense to every person who is not indifferent to the history of Russia and honors our heroes, honors the memory of all victims of the Great Patriotic War." Because of all these accusations, it became almost impossible to obtain a film distribution certificate and the director decided to show his film on YouTube for free. Everyone can donate any amount of money, if they so choose. As of the middle of March, the film had collected about four million rubles and this amount has covered all of the production expenses (3.5 million rubles). The film has had 1,641,617 views,

probably much more than if the film had been distributed in theaters.

Olga Mukhortova

Aleksei Krasovskii was born in Nizhnii Novgorod (formerly Gor'kii). He graduated from a medical university with a diploma in dental surgery. He was also involved in journalism. After he moved to Moscow, he started writing scripts for television productions. Since the beginning of the 2000s, Krasovskii has been working as a screenwriter. He wrote scripts for several television series, such as *Petrovka 38*, *Petrovskii's Team* (2009), *Freud's Method* (2012), *Military Hospital* (2012), *Price of Life* (2013), and others. As a director, Krasovskii debuted with the television series *Confessions* (2011). In 2016, Krasovskii released his full feature film *The Collector*, in which Konstantin Khabenskii played the main and singular character. For *The Collector*, Krasovskii was nominated for the *Kinotavr Grand Prix*. The film received the White Elephant award for Best film debut and the *Nika* award in the same category in 2017. On 3 January 2019, Krasovskii released his latest film *Holiday* on YouTube.

Filmography:

2019 *Holiday*
2019 *Queen*
2018 *Elephant*
2018 *Amnesia* (short)
2016 *The Collector*
2014 *Hold your Breath* (short)
2011 *Confessions*