The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Film 'Leviathan' Gets Oscar Nomination for Best Foreign Film

January 15, 2015



Andrei Zvyagintsev, the director of "Leviathan"

BEVERLY HILLS, California — The dark Russian movie "Leviathan" came a step closer to capturing the best foreign-language film Oscar when it was nominated Thursday by the Motion Picture Academy as one of the five finalists.

Director Andrei Zvyagintsev's depiction of a poor village family's struggle to keep their property from the claws of a corrupt Russian politician continues to collect recognitions for the filmmaker and his cast in every competition it has entered.

"The gods of Oscar really smiled upon us," said an excited Alexander Rodnyansky, the film's producer.

"We are incredibly grateful to the members of the Academy for this nomination, and we are honored to represent Russia and Russian culture at this most important of global film competitions," Rodnyansky told The Moscow Times.

Acknowledging "backlash faced by 'Leviathan' at home," Zvyagintsev referred to "the amazing reviews" from publications including The New York Times and Los Angeles Times.

"They encourage us and give us strength in these uncertain times," the director told The Moscow Times.

"Leviathan" has been surrounded by controversy from its beginning. Its release date has been delayed and the version due to be shown in Russian theaters next month has had frequent swearing edited out of it to conform to a new law banning obscene words in films and other media.

Zvyagintsev commented that he "probably couldn't even get funded through the Russian Ministry of Culture today" as he did two years ago. Upon the film's selection to represent Russia in the Oscar race, Minister Vladimir Medinsky's comment was "I don't like it."

On Thursday, Medinsky showed no sign of having softened his stance toward Russia's first Golden Globe winner since 1969. In an interview with the Izvestia newspaper, he described it as "extremely opportunistic in its pursuit of international success."

The minister complained there were no positive characters in the film. "It's more or less clear what and whom Zvyagintsev hates. But what does he love? Glory, red carpets and statuettes, that's clear," Medinsky told the newspaper.

The governor of the Murmansk region where the movie was filmed denied rumors Thursday that "Leviathan" had been banned in local cinemas, though she said local people were not happy with the movie.

In the United States, "Leviathan" started on a limited engagement at two theaters in New York and Los Angeles and in two weeks' time grossed in excess of $120,000. With its recent Golden Globe win and Oscar prospects, Sony Classics is expected to widen its showings, giving it a boost at the box office.

"We have had an amazing ride since the film's global launch in Cannes. It's been a fantastic month, and I'm both humbled and excited about what lies ahead," Rodnyansky told The Moscow Times.

Motion pictures from 83 countries had entered the Oscar competition. Nine of them made the so-called "short list."

For the top honor "Leviathan" will be competing with "Ida" from Poland/Denmark, "Tangerines" from Estonia, "Timbuktu" from Mauritania and "Wild Tales" from Argentina. The Oscars will be presented on Feb. 22.

Contact the author at newsreporter@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2015/01/15/russian-film-leviathan-gets-oscar-nomination-for-best-foreign-film-a42924