

Nemtsov, Epitaph to the New Russia

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Boris Nemtsov and Ilya Yashin **Screenshot from “The Man Who Was Too Free”**

Two years after the murder of opposition politician Boris Nemtsov in central Moscow, a documentary film about his life titled “The Man Who Was Too Free” is set to shed new light on the controversial Kremlin critic. The film will be shown at select theaters in Moscow, as well as St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Yaroslavl — the cities most closely linked to Nemtsov’s life. The Moscow Times spoke to the film’s director Vera Krichevskaya about the “The Man Who Was Too Free.”

How did the idea of the movie come about?

[Screenwriter] Mikhail Fishman and [producer] Yevgeny Gindilis began collecting information and conducting interviews shortly after Nemtsov’s death for a different film project, but a lot of it was left unused. Fishman called me at the end of 2015, saying he had some brilliant footage and invited me to be a part of the project. Only then did we start looking for funding, getting more interviews, and the film started to take shape. On one hand, it was an easy film to work on. On the other, it was difficult: easy, because Nemtsov is

such a great character, a witness and participant of the new Russia's history; difficult, because there's simply too much archival footage, and there's no voiceover. We wanted to tell his story as fully as possible but leave ourselves outside of the frame.

Why is there no narrator in the movie?

Of course there's a narrator. It's Boris himself! His story holds the film together. Who can talk about Nemtsov's life better than the man himself? I assembled the narrative from fragments of dozens of Nemtsov's radio and TV interviews.

What does the film focus on?

We wanted to tell two stories: one of Nemtsov's life and the other of Russia as a new country, which began at the same time as Nemtsov's career and ended, symbolically, when its hero was shot on the bridge. Although the notion of Russia as a "country of hopes" disappeared around 2004, Nemtsov's murder for me was really the end of a whole epoch.

Why did you decide to leave the murder investigation out of it?

Firstly, none of us is an investigative reporter. Secondly, the trial isn't over and many of the key figures are practically inaccessible. As a Russian citizen, I'm eagerly awaiting the results of the trial, but as a professional I can't cover the topic of Nemtsov's murder investigation.

Why is Anatoly Chubais, one of Nemtsov's closest associates, not in the movie?

He refused to be interviewed.

The events of the 1996 elections are covered quite extensively in the film — what do you think of their significance?

As a nation, we still haven't processed the events of 1996. If we had, we might have questioned all the election results and the events that took place after 1996. Russia would have been better off if it shed the Communism and its heritage once and for all.

Disclaimer: Mikhail Fishman, the film's screenwriter, is editor-in-chief of The Moscow Times

Several screenings of the film with English subtitles will be held in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Details can be found on the websites of the theaters.

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