

goEast Competition 2014: Documentaries**OJCIEC I SYN W PODRÓŻY/ VATER UND SOHN MACHEN EINE REISE / FATHER AND SON ON A JOURNEY** (Poland 2013, Director: Marcel Łoziński, 75 min)

In biographies I'm always the son of Marcel Łoziński (the son says). One day they'll write that I was the father of Paweł Łoziński (the father replies). Father and son, both renowned filmmakers, are touring Europe in a camper van. The journey from Warsaw to Paris, the father's birthplace, takes two weeks. Several fitted cameras record their conversations inside the vehicle, and when they stop at service stations or camping sites they film each other. It's a journey full of laughter and jokes, but one fraught with tension and conflict as well. Certain subjects come up that were more or less taboo beforehand. Paweł would like to know, at last, why his father left his mother. Marcel is not responsive: he'd prefer to keep up the pretence of familial harmony. But the son is looking for cracks in the facade, wants to build a closer, more candid relationship. All the same, Paweł grows increasingly sceptical in the course of the journey: Is their project ultimately artificial – a construct from which it would be foolish to expect any personal benefit except for their art? A road movie and making-of documentary – about a film and a father-and-son relationship as well.

German premiere

Caligari: April 10 / 4:00 p.m.

Alpha: April 11 / 4:00 p.m.

ISKUSHENIE / VERSUCHUNG / TEMPTATION (Belarus 2013, Director: Viktor Dashuk, 83 min)

Artist versus man of state – the antagonism is as old as the ages. Except now we're in Belarus, where many things are different, including the history of official policies relating to images. The head of state is Alexander Lukashenko, the artist is Viktor Dashuk, one of the two great Belorussian political documentary filmmakers (the repressive climate has forced the other one, Yuri Khashchevatski, into working from Poland). The opponents are two vain, proud men with overlapping biographies who stand in each other's way. Ever since Lukashenko came to power (receiving invariably 90% of the votes at every subsequent election), Dashuk, who was once a cosmopolite (especially of the communist-minded world) has been deprived of access to production facilities and institutions and obliged to rely on the film images of his own making. Banished into exile inside Europe's most despotic state, he has built himself a house, a sanctuary in which he is attempting to give his life purpose and meaning after overcoming an illness. The route he follows is to scrutinize himself and his family (and he makes no attempt to hide the fact that they are at the mercy of his paternalistic and authoritarian moods), as well as a review of his (cinematic) works within an unjust political system. A film about immortality: about those things which will survive.

German premiere

Caligari: April 11 / 4:00 p.m.

Festival Centre: April 12 / 6:00 p.m.

VALEA PLÂNGERII / TAL DER TRÄNEN / VALLEY OF SIGHS (Romania 2013, Director: Mihai Andrei Leaha, Andrei Crișan, Iulia Hossu, 57 min)

Transnistria, the territory on the Dnister that has now broken away from the Republic of Moldavia, was still part of the Soviet Union when German and Romanian troops invaded in 1941. Along with many Jewish deportees, some 25,000 Roma were transported there from Romania. The prisoners were interred in appalling conditions, for the most part lacking food and winter clothing. It was a massacre perpetrated in slow motion: half of the deportees starved or froze to death if not killed by typhoid or acts of arbitrary violence first.

Something of the unimaginable scale of this atrocity is conveyed by VALLEY OF SIGHS, a documentary that is cautious and tenacious in equal measure. It shows interviews with survivors (who

were children at the time) and eye-witnesses from surrounding villages, unearths military and police documents that plot the “progress” of the on-going genocide, juxtaposes this material with images of idyllic countryside in which the horrors of the past are barely conceivable. The result is a multi-layered filmic monument to the victims of a little-known chapter of the holocaust – and one that continues, in Romania, to be a taboo subject.

German premiere

Caligari: April 12 / 2:00 p.m.

Festival Centre: April 13 / 6:30 p.m.

JUDGMENT IN HUNGARY / URTEIL IN UNGARN / JUDGMENT IN HUNGARY (Hungary, Germany 2013, Director: Eszter Hajdú)

In 2008 and 2009 several Roma villages in Hungary were attacked by far-right extremists. Six people died, among them a five-year-old child. The film documents the two-and-a-half-year trial of four suspects against whom a case was brought. Because the camera rarely ventures outside the small courtroom in which the defendants sit opposite the victims’ relatives, the mounting intensity is reminiscent of a chamber play. We learn a lot about the widespread resentment against Roma and Jews in Hungary. In the course of the hearings gaping forensic errors come to light – shoddy detective work or deliberate manipulation? Insisting on the authority of the court, issuing frequent warnings and reprimands, the irascible judge presents himself as an impartial champion of law and order. His ire is roused by the emotions displayed by Roma witnesses – and equally by the cold-bloodedness displayed by the other side. However, the longer the trial drags on, the fewer spectators turn up day for day. The defendants’ self-confidence grows: they talk about the alleged support for their cause among the population, articulate barely veiled threats. The judge is increasingly forced into the defensive. Must the Roma fear for justice?

German premiere

Caligari: April 12 / 3.30 p.m.

Festival Centre: April 13 / 4.00 p.m.

ZELIM’S CONFESSION / ZELIMS BEKENNTNIS / ZELIM’S CONFESSION (Germany 2013, Director: Natalia Mikhaylova, 60 min)

“Actually, I want to forget these things,” says Zelim at the start of the film. But then the young man begins to talk. For a Chechen refugee in Ingushetia, waiting at a bus-stop proved to be a bad idea: he was spotted by a passing police patrol. They hauled him in, recorded his details, let him go. Shortly afterwards his family’s apartment was stormed by special police, and Zelim was arrested. He endured several days of humiliation and torture while his interrogators tried to make him confess to crimes he’d never committed. Although Zelim feared for his life, he stood his ground and refused to sign a statement.

Natalia Mikhaylova’s documentary shows Zelim in the safety of Oslo, recounting his ordeal with astonishing composure one minute, bristling with curiosity as he explores his new world the next. But he remains nervous, restive, still in the grip of his ordeal. It is a portrait of somebody who refused to break under unimaginable pressure, and also a damning indictment of the officially sanctioned arbitrariness and brutality that prevails in the North Caucasus.

German premiere

Caligari: April 13 / 2:30 p.m.

Festival Centre: April 13 / 8:00 p.m.

NEPAL FOREVER / NEPAL FOREVER / NEPAL FOREVER (Russia 2013, Director: Aliona Polunina, 90 min)

Global revolution is coming – sooner than we think if Sergey and his assistant get their way. The two men are members of a small party, based in St. Petersburg, that broke away from the old Communist Party. The new splinter party might be described as radically red, backwards-looking, and daft. To the existing left-wing theories of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism, Sergey and his comrades have added the doctrine of Dadaism. With outlandish actions and outfits they spare no effort to rouse the attention their cause deserves. Sergey, the head and mind of the group, likes to give long lectures. Viktor sees himself as the belly, heart and soul, and sings with gusto. The two Comintern clowns from Petersburg – the Don Quixote and Sancho Panza of the Internationale – set off on a crazy trip to Nepal, where a historic mission awaits. It is not just Sergey's weakness for online-dating sites and Viktor's more than healthy appetite for foot that is hampering the revolutionary process: a fraternal dispute has broken out between Nepal's two main communist parties. Will the Russian emissaries succeed in reconciling the embittered rivals? Perhaps one fact about NEPAL FOREVER, a highly amusing documentary, is more stunning than any of the others: nothing, not even the tiniest detail, was made up.

German premiere

Caligari: April 14 / 4:00 p.m.

Festival Centre: April 14 / 8:00 p.m.

OUT OF COMPETITION

UKRAINE_VOICES / UKRAINE_STIMMEN / UKRAINE_VOICES (Ukraine 2014, Director: Nadia Parfan, Maria Stoyanova, Anastasiya Khonyakina, Andrei Litvinenko, Maksim Dondyuk, Kristina Liulchenko, Slavik Bihun, Jeanne Dovhych, Oksana Shornik, 78 min)

Things are happening so fast in Ukraine that it's hard to keep up, all that can be said with certainty is that no historical event is conceivable without human agency. This omnibus documentary from the Indie Lab project initiated by Dmytro Tiashlov and Ella Shtyka brings together people with practical ambitions combining vision with civil courage. One Orthodox bishop, unable to bear the hypocrisy of his church, becomes a LGBT activist-priest – hard to imagine in view of church banners with slogans like "The EU represents the greatest threat to the Holy Rus and healthy family life". One animal protectionist from Askania Nova, the legendary UNESCO nature reserve, marches to Maidan square in Kiev. A woman protesting in the same location persuades the heavily armed and armoured policeman standing opposite her that steely determination and character are spiritual values, and they too can lead to a proposal of marriage... One man lives as an urban nomad with no ID documents, another goes to the European Court of Justice to fight for his rights. Things turn grisly in the Orthodox Cossack camp Crimea-Sich, where youngsters receive training in military homeland defence and in erecting moral barriers against Europe and Islam. Ukraine 2013/14: a documentary that sweeps across a kaleidoscopic spectrum of ideological disunity.

World premiere

Caligari: April 10 / 10:00 p.m.

Kino DFM, Ffm: April 11 / 6:00 p.m.