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A MEETING WITH "THE OTHER" - A REVIEW OF THE FILM "THE DYBBUK. A TALE OF WANDERING SOULS"

29.05.2015

Streets of the Ukrainian town of Uman fill up with Jews burdened by suitcases, who make a pilgrimage to the tomb of tzaddik Nachman - this is how one of the first shots in the film by Krzysztof Kopczyński looks like. They are intertwined with the cinematography taken in Bratslav, where Nachman spent a large portion of his life. In this town, which is 100 km away from Uman, our guide is a man who devotes most of his time to caring for Jewish graves.

In the film "The Dybbuk. A Tale Of Wandering Souls" we take a careful look both at the Ukrainians and the Jews, we listen to the former and to the latter. As the director himself confessed: *making documentary films is a job which demands the effort of understanding the essence of the place in which one shoots the film as well as the arguments of both sides of the conflict one presents.* The documentary film-maker is true to his words and is not in favour of any of the sides. And, unfortunately, conflicts do occur after the Jews come to Uman.

Judaism believers awaken in the inhabitants of Uman fear connected with the sense of insecurity. It is influenced by history, which showed that Jewish immigrants - "the others" for the Ukrainians - have great aspirations to gradually widen their sphere of influence. Besides, this was one of the reasons why Ivan Gonta and Maksym Zaluzniak slaughtered several thousands of Jews living in Ukraine. These two massacres took place in the 17th and the 18th century. Establishing their own businesses by the Jews, bribing the authorities - this is what the locals are afraid of at present. However, not all people in Ukraine perceive the pilgrims as a threat. Volodya and his wife, who live in Bratslav, are open to the contact with them.

When I saw the word "dybbuk" in the film's title, I hoped that the documentary film would tell us a bit about the Judaic faith. And this is what happens. We not only learn what a dybbuk is, but we also get to know the meaning of tashlikh. We also wonder about the fate of the soul after death and the essence of faith in our own life. The scenes which inspire to meditate on life, the photography of Bratslav are quite heart-rending. The landscape - rivers, fields, hills - brings peace and a kind of consolation. Thanks to music and cinematography, we can feel the mysticism of the places filmed by Kopczyński.

The making of the film took seven years, and the shooting ended two months before the protests in Maidan, known as Euromaidan. As the director says, it was the time in which *Ukraine reached more and more strongly to the sources of its national identity.* It is important to catch the breakthrough moments in the history of a given country, to record crucial changes which may result in even more essential changes. And this is exactly what Kopczyński did.

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JUNE 2015

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