

Translation of:

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Saulius Bartkus: I'm Proud No One Supported the Film I Made

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by Inga Labutyte



Photo: organizers

Yesterday the premiere of the film Uprising of the Enslaved took place at the Pasaka movie theater. Entering the plush cinema decorated with drawings of characters from folktales, the first glimpse was rather surprising, and some even felt shivers run through their bodies, because right next to the door there were soldiers armed with automatic weapons dressed in old-fashioned Russian military outfits greeting filmgoers.

They gave orders in Russian to some people looking for a seat in the theater. Those who so desired could also be photographed next to a wounded soldier.

“Yes, This Is a Propaganda Film”

Director Algis Kuzmickas and famous television entertainment producer Saulius Bartkus made the documentary film Uprising of the Enslaved. When

he presented his film for the first time, he [Saulius Bartkus presumably] immediately spoke about criticism which had already begun to circulate about the film.

“There was talk here that this film is propaganda. Yes, I completely agree. But this is Lithuanian propaganda. We have a strange understanding of patriots today. We call them ‘skinheads’ or nationalists. [An eyewitness told the translator of this article that he actually expressed minor outrage that patriots were being called skinheads and neo-Nazis “by some,” and did not say that “We call them skinheads or nationalists” as if engaged in some sort of disinterested critique of the state of Lithuanian society.]

“We collected real material for the film, we spoke to real participants in the uprising of 1941. We must admit we only used one point five percent of the material we collected. The testimony of each witness is worth a separate film, because all of their stories are shocking,” Bartkus said.

The Film Group Couldn’t Wait for Spring

Journalist Vidmantas Valiusaitis [a vocal supporter of the double-genocide rewrite of history] suggested the idea of the film to Bartkus. The producer admitted they only began shooting the film at the end of October last year. The reconstructions of scenes [from witness testimonies] wherein the Grenadieriai military history club played the part of marching Russian soldiers burning down farmsteads, were filmed in May. The film group had to wait for the first signs of spring to portray June, the month the uprising took place.

“The Lithuania state is propagandized in the film. We are citizens of the state of Lithuania and that needs to be talked about. That desire not to speak about this event is incomprehensible to me. If, unarmed, we allowed in the Red Army in 1940, then the uprising in 1941 showed the idea of Lithuanian statehood was alive, and that, I believe, was the most important thing, the thing which needed stressing,” Bartkus said convincingly.

“In no way did we interpret historical facts. As President Valdas Adamkus said, if someone who wasn’t there and didn’t see them interprets those events, it’s not worth arguing with them. Sometimes the uprising is equated with the Holocaust. A dirty mix is created which is useful to someone. As to

who this might be, I don't even want to comment upon," the producer of Uprising of the Enslaved said.

Representatives of Nationalist Organizations Invited to Premiere

Bartkus called for a minute of silence to honor the witnesses, one member of the military history club and others who contributed to the making of the film but didn't live to see its premiere.

Different representatives from nationalist organizations attended the premiere, including those who took part in the March 11 march [of neo-Nazis, report here] and in [violent — Transl.] protests against the gay pride parade. "I invited them intentionally," Bartkus said. "So what? Are they not Lithuanian citizens? To whom have they done any harm? If patriotism has to go underground and is punished, I don't understand this. If you look into the situation more deeply, you may discover there were provocateurs at the March 11th march, and their surnames for some reason aren't Lithuanian. So anyway this opens onto another, separate theme."

The producer admits that the scandalous entertainment programs he makes have become a unique source of financing for serious documentary films. "We didn't get much support from the state, which should be really involved with this. Such a policy seems very strange to me. The wish to create this film was a unique civic initiative, just as the uprising of 1941 was. If not for my [television] entertainment programs, this film wouldn't exist either. But I am very glad that no one supported this film, because [that meant] that there was no way to exert influence over its creative process. Although there was a desire to do that, to review the film before showing it at the movie theater," Bartkus revealed.

President Valdas Adamkus Also Took Part in the Uprising

His Excellency [former] President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus also attended the premiere. In his speech he imparted that he supports the idea of the film and congratulates its makers.

[What follows is actually a paraphrase in Lithuanian, presumably by the reporter, of what Adamkus actually said in Lithuanian at the premiere, although she presents it as a direct quote – Trans.]

“I myself took part in this uprising and those events are still alive in my memory. So it is very strange for me to hear that they are interpreted otherwise by famous university academics. I remember how in 1941 I heard over Kaunas Radio the Lithuanian anthem, and intuitively I opened the windows, turned the radio to the street and turned the volume all the way up I longed to go out, although my mama tried to keep me in, in every way possible. So I truly know that the uprising arose on initiative of young people, of university students, secondary school students and military officers. I came to watch a collection of facts,” President Valdas Adamkus said and shook the hand of film producer Bartkus.

Mindaugas Sejunas, a television program host and producer and a colleague of Bartkus, also came to see the film, as did participants of the uprising of 1941 who appeared in the film telling their recollections of the uprising.

Bartkus said the film will be shown for free initially [but] later [people] will have to buy tickets. He said he’s certain the film will be shown on television, but wouldn’t reveal for now which Lithuanian television channel is interested in his new work.