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## **Dreams and Reality in Contemporary Russian Cinema Trends and outstanding recent films**

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Russian cinema twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet regime still passes through a transitional period and looks for a strategy of development. In search of its identity post-Soviet cinema went through several stages. It was settling with the myths of the communist past, then imitating American genre structures, and now comes back to religious Orthodox traditions and roots of pre-revolutionary Russian culture. Old communist mythology does not work anymore but new (or, more precisely, "new old") dreams come to the stage instead. Sometimes this come-back looks artificial but in many cases it discloses deeper meaning and background.

Famous Russian film directors, such as Aleksej German, Aleksander Sokurov, Nikita Mikhalkov, Andrei Konchalovski, or Kira Muratova, still create the international image of Russian cinema. Though there are many other talents of different generations who try to save their artistic identity in the new economical and media-cultural conditions. A huge artistic and commercial success was *"Island"* by Pavel Lungin - the story of atonement of a priest who committed a crime in the past. This film became a signal of spiritual thirst in Russian society corrupted with a "wild capitalist" market. Lately we saw bright new film directors coming: Andrej Zvjagincev with his extremely successful *"Vozvrascenie"* (The Return), Aleksej Popogrebskij and Boris Chlebnikov (*"Koktebel"*), Aleksej German-junior (*"Poslednij Pojezd"* /The Last Train), and Ilja Chrzhanovskij (*"4"*).

There is even a suggestion of a Renaissance of Russian cinema. Today there is a possibility for a radicalism in its form and content, especially in alternative "free" cinema that is made with the modern digital cameras at independent studios. The time could not have been better to create a new image of the Russian cinema. The country is at a threshold to rehabilitate state orders and censorship either by imposing political ban, or because of the demands of the wild market, or both.

I am going to illustrate the clash of dreams and harsh reality in Russian cinema with a few recent movies.

SILENT SOULS by Alexei Fedorchenko included into the Venice competition programme 2010 is a striking example of "new spirituality". The film deepens in the pagan, pre-Christian roots of Russian mentality.

HOW I ENDED THIS SUMMER by Alexei Popogrebsky (film awarded at the Berlinale; Ecumenical Commendation in Yerevan 2010) is a Northern dream of Chukotka, a country of natural and psychological extremes.

THE TRUCE by Svetlana Proskurina (winner of the national festival Kinotavr) shows a young provincial man on his way to spiritual values in a corrupted society.

ANOTHER SKY by Dmitri Mamulia (Ecumenical Award in Karlovy Vary) reflects an existential experience of a Farsi speaking shepherd in the inhuman and monstrous Moscow megapolis.

BUBEN, BARABAN by Alexei Mizgirev (Special jury award and award for best director in Locarno 2009; Ecumenical Award in Cottbus 2009) describes the hopeless situation of provincial intellectuals in post-Soviet Russia. A new version of CRIME AND PUNISHMENT with a female librarian as protagonist.