

Film Review: ‘No Place on Earth’ Puts Human Peril Underground

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 20, 2013 - 8:14pm

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CHICAGO – The human face of the Holocaust – the Jewish genocide by Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party – has been reflected through many incredible accounts of horror and survival. A new film focuses on another amazing story, set in a cave in the Ukraine, where five Jewish families hid underground from German soldiers in 1942. The survivors give their witness in “No Place on Earth.”



Rating: **3.5/5.0**

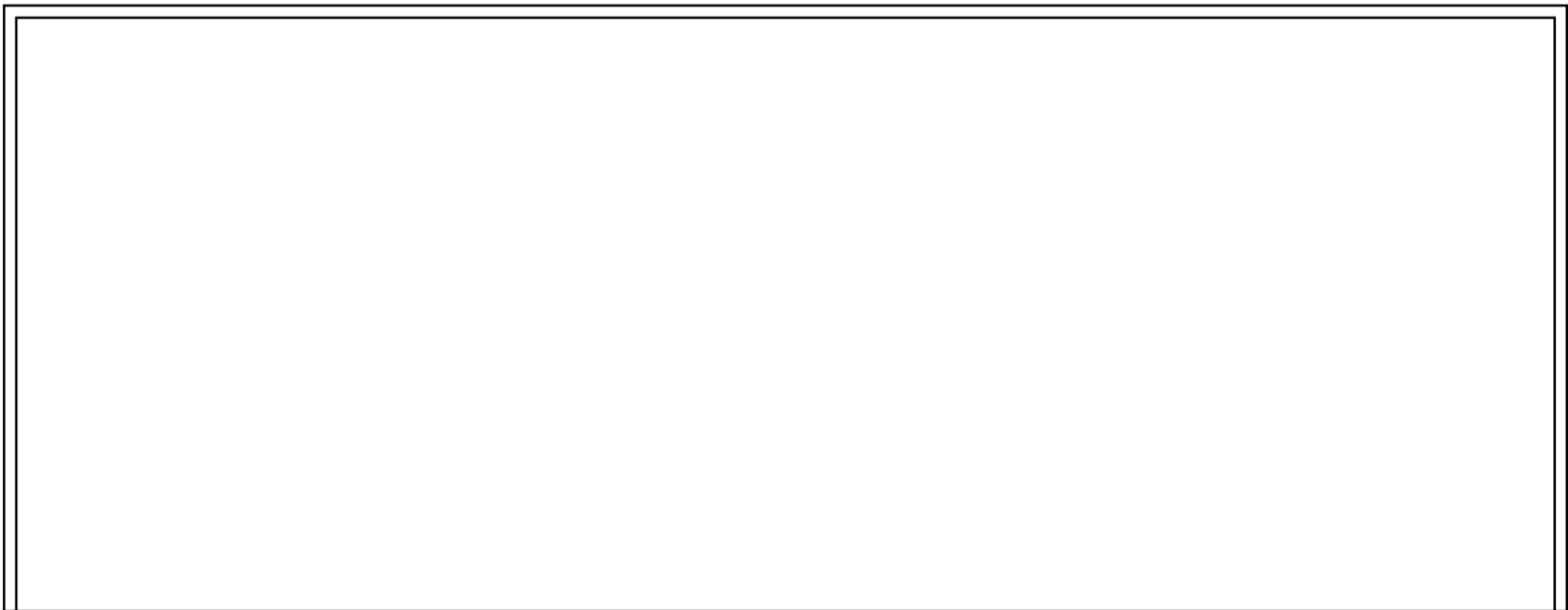
The story of these survivors – children and teenagers then, old men and women now – adds another chapter of inhumanity to the desperate times of the Holocaust era. Through the accounts of the participants, and the precise re-creation of the events by director Janet Tobias, this unusual scenario comes to life from a faraway time, in a faraway land. And beyond the event itself, it is about the gutsy discovery of a cave explorer and his curiosity, the initial telling of the tale in National Geographic magazine, and the driving interest from the director of the documentary to track down the survivors and have them relive the time. It is another lesson of the torture that genocide can inflict on humanity.

Chris Nicola is a amateur cave explorer from New York City. In the 1990s, he decided to explore a chain of caves in the Ukraine, now an independent country but a battle zone during World War II. While in “Popowa Yama,” a grotto space deep in the cavern, Nicola discovered evidence that people had lived there – clothing, bottles and sewing items – and the items are all from the recent past. Curious, he does some research when he got back to the States.

He found out that five Jewish families hid in that cave during the German occupation in 1942, to escape the fate of the concentration camps. He tracks down one of the survivors, Saul Stermer, and publishes the account in National Geographic magazine. Janet Tobias, an documentary director, finds the story and expands it with stories from the Stermers and the Dodyks, representatives from two of the five families that spent a record number of days underground.

“No Place on Earth” continues its limited release in Chicago on April 19th. See local listings for show times and theaters. Featuring interviews with Sonia Dodyk Hochman, Sima Dodyk Blitzer, Saul Stermer and Sam Stermer. Written and directed by Janet Tobias. Rated “PG-13”

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Cave Explorer Chris Nicola Discovers History in ‘No Place on Earth’
Photo credit: Magnolia Pictures



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