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Werner Herzog & Jerry Weintraub Present

# RED ARMY

*A Film by Gabe Polsky*

*Official Selection*

Cannes Film Festival 2014

Telluride Film Festival 2014

Toronto International Film Festival 2014

New York Film Festival 2014

85 Mins

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## **SYNOPSIS**

From Oscar® nominated and Emmy award-winning filmmakers, RED ARMY is a feature documentary about the Soviet Union and the most successful dynasty in sports history: the Red Army hockey team. Told from the perspective of its captain Slava Fetisov, the story portrays his transformation from national hero to political enemy. From the USSR to Russia, the film examines how sport mirrors social and cultural movements and parallels the rise and fall of the Red Army team with the Soviet Union.

RED ARMY is an inspiring story about the Cold War played out on the ice rink, and a man who stood up to a powerful system and paved the way for change for generations of Russians.

## CREDITS

### CAST

Slava Fetisov  
Vladislav Tretiak  
Scotty Bowman  
Vladimir Pozner

## FILMMAKERS

**Director, Screenplay, Producer** Gabe Polsky  
**Executive Producers** Werner Herzog, Jerry Weintraub, Liam Satre-Meloy  
**Directors of Photography** Peter Zeitlinger, Svetlana Cvetko  
**Editors** Eli Despres, Kurt Engfehr  
**Original Music** Christophe Beck, Leo Birenberg  
**Sound Editor** E.J. Holowicki

## Director's Statement

Making Red Army provided an opportunity both to explore my heritage and to examine the impact hockey had on the culture, politics and legacy of the Soviet Union.

I was born and raised in the United States by Soviet immigrants who seldom spoke about their past. I got my first pair of skates at age six, and played competitively throughout my youth, ultimately for Yale University. Training in the U.S. was focused on winning rather than player development. Practice was often basic and redundant. Coaches only paid attention to the standout players who scored the most goals.

When I was 13, I moved to a team that hired a new coach from the Soviet Union. Like most American kids, all I knew about Soviet hockey was the country's storied loss to the U.S. in the 1980 Olympics. The coach's philosophy and training methods were rigorous and unusual: we were forced to walk on our hands and do somersaults on the ice; we carried tires and skated with teammates on our backs. Perhaps the biggest difference was that he encouraged creativity and taught us to think as a unit. Many in the Chicago hockey community didn't take him seriously. But he transformed my entire concept of the sport. I tracked down old Soviet hockey footage and what I saw was eye-opening. Soviet hockey was amazingly creative and improvisational. The Soviets moved fluidly, like one body, and it looked more like an art form than a game. That's how I wanted to play.

When I was at Yale, I studied politics and history and learned about the unusual role sport played in the Soviet Union. The Red Army team was designed as an instrument of propaganda to prove the superiority of the Soviet system. The country's investment in the team's success was massive. The demanding lifestyle and oppressive circumstances under which the players trained were a reflection of broader Soviet society. It became clear to me that the Red Army's style of play, too, was significantly informed by the country's ideology. Much like Communism, there was little emphasis on the individual. Those who became heroes earned as much money as teachers. Priority was placed on serving your teammates and your country, and expressing individuality or questioning authority was forbidden.

Today's Russian leadership is comprised both of devoted fans of the Red Army team and of the players themselves. To understand the history of the team and the era is to understand much about who makes decisions in Russia today.

Red Army is about how an incredibly oppressive system produced one of the greatest teams in history. That success came with tremendous personal costs. My intention in making this film is to honor the Soviet struggle and to celebrate the art that emerged from such a charged and unique time in history.

- *Gabe Polsky*

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Gabe Polsky co-directed and produced the award winning and critically acclaimed *The Motel Life*, starring Emile Hirsch, Dakota Fanning, and Stephen Dorff. Additional producing credits include: Werner Herzog's *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans*, which was named in over 40 top-ten lists of the Best Films in 2009; *His Way*, an Emmy-nominated documentary released by HBO in 2011; and *Little Birds*, which was named among the top ten independent films of 2012 by the National Board of Review.

Polsky is adapting the novels *Butcher's Crossing* by John Williams, and National Book Award winning *Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien. Other notable projects in development include critically acclaimed novels *Flowers For Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, to be produced at Sony as a starring vehicle for Will Smith; and *The Master and Margarita* by Mikhail Bulgakov. Polsky has also secured the life rights to Albert Einstein as well as to surfing legend Dorian *Doc* Paskowitz and his family.

## ABOUT SLAVA FETISOV

Viachaslav Fetisov - aka Slava Fetisov - is among the Soviet Union's most-decorated athletes, and is considered one the best hockey players of all time. He was the long-time captain of the Soviet Union's Red Army team, won seven world championships, two Olympic gold medals, and three Stanley Cups. He was a two-time NHL All Star and played for the USSR First All-Star Team nine times. He was one of six players voted onto to the International Ice Hockey Federation's Centennial All-Star Team and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001.

In the 1980s, Fetisov was instrumental in breaking the barrier that prevented Soviets from playing abroad. He was the first Soviet citizen to be granted a visa that allowed him to play hockey in the west. Fetisov's efforts paved the way for thousands of Soviet and European players to play hockey in America.

After retiring as a player, Fetisov embarked on a political and executive career. He is currently a member of the upper house of the Federal Assembly of Russia, and was instrumental in bringing the XXII Olympic Winter Games to Sochi, Russia. Fetisov is president of the professional Russian hockey Club HC CSKA Moscow, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Kontinental Hockey League, and chair of the World Anti-Doping Agency Athletes Committee. He was also Minister of Sport in Russia from 2002 to 2008.

### **Notable Achievements and Awards:**

- Member of the Organizing Committee for 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics.
- Hockey Hall of Fame Inductee
- IIHF Hall of Fame
- USSR Hall of Fame
- 14 Soviet Hockey Championships
- 9 Time Soviet League All-Star
- 9-time IIHF All-Star
- 5-time IIHF best defenseman
- 7 Hockey World Championship Gold Medals
- 1 World Championship Silver
- 2 Olympic Gold Medals
- 1 Olympic Silver Medal
- 1 Canada Cup Championship
- 3 World Junior Championships
- 2 World Championship Bronze Medals
- 2 Time CCCP Player of the Year
- 2-time Soviet MVP
- 9 Years Soviet National Team Captain

- 3 Golden Stick Awards
- Order of the Red Banner of Labour
- Soviet Order of Honor
- Soviet Order of Friendship
- Silver Olympic Order
- Order of Service to the Fatherland 4th Class
- Order of Service to the Fatherland 3rd Class
- 2 Orders of the Badge of Honor
- IIHF International Centennial All-Star
- Honored Master of Sports
- UNESCO Champion for Sport
- Russian Diamond Award
- Order of Lenin Award
- 2-time Stanley Cup Champion as a player
- 3-time Stanley Cup Finalist as a player
- Stanley Cup champion as an assistant coach
- 2-time NHL all-star
- Asteroid 8806 was renamed “Fetisov”