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RIDERS OF THE SKY

FILM BY JINDŘICH POLÁK

BACK ON SCREENS

Jindřich Polák's filmography mainly comprises films of various genre, whether it be the adventure *Death in the Saddle*, the sci-fi *Ikarie XB 1*, the crime drama *Death of Hitchhikers* or the war drama *Riders in the Sky*. Nevertheless, he does not usually resort to straightforwardly fulfilling genre conventions. In particular, *Riders in the Sky* tells the story of the heroism of RAF pilots in an unusually unspectacular way, without the pathos of propagandistic Czech films from the period of the Second World War. This adaptation of Filip Janský's strongly autobiographical novel of the same name also avoids other clichés of war stories with their idealised heroes. At its core, the very intimate film depicts the fate of the international crew of a Wellington bomber, who selflessly fight the German Nazis. For the trio of Czechoslovakians, two Englishmen and one Canadian, raids on enemy territory are a daily routine. They make no claim to glory or medals. But in risky manoeuvres, they are often inches away from death. What adds to the credibility of the aerial scenes is the interspersing of archive footage. In order to incorporate these into the film in an unobtrusive manner, cinematographer Jan Němeček chose not a widescreen but rather an academic black-and-white format. Polák himself saw his understated drama as a partial repayment of a debt to the people whom the communist regime tried to make traitors to the nation.

Czechoslovakia 1968 • 95 min. • war • DCP, MP4, Blu-ray • accessible

Director	Jindřich Polák
Screenplay	Filip Janský, Zdeněk Mahler, Jindřich Polák
Photography	Jan Němeček
Set designer	Karel Černý
Editing	Josef Dobřichovský
Cast	Jiří Bednář, Jiří Hrzán, Svatopluk Matyáš, Jana Nováková and others

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