Synopsis

“Our sole purpose was to follow the rules of the work camp and then die. People on the outside call this place the ‘Total Control Zone.’ We knew nothing about the outside. All we knew was that our parents and our forefathers were guilty and that we had to work hard in order to make up for it. Sometimes new people entered the camp but I never saw anyone pardoned for their crime and allowed to leave. So none of us thought we would ever leave this place. Sometimes people tried to escape, driven by fear of starving or being beaten, but they were publicly executed and became the object of hate for those of us who were left behind.”

Shin Dong Huyk

Shin Dong-Huyk was born on 19 November 1983 as a political prisoner in a North-Korean re-education camp. He was the child of two prisoners who were forced to marry by order of the wardens. He spent his entire childhood and youth in Camp 14, which was actually a death camp. From the age of six, he was subjected to forced labor, hunger, beatings and torture. He was always at the mercy of the wardens, and knew nothing of the world outside the barbed-wire fences. He thought everybody lived that way. With the help of an older prisoner, he succeeded in escaping at the age of 23. For months he journeyed through North Korea and China and finally to South Korea, where he encountered a world completely strange to him.

Camp 14 – Total Control Zone portrays Shin’s dramatic life, with CGI animation also helping to bring Shin’s memories to life. Director Marc Wiese was able to get on camera the testimony of two former high-ranking North-Korean officers who were involved in the prison-camp system.

Hyuk Kwon commanded the guards in Camp 22, where he abused, tortured and killed. The prisoners were enemies of the state in his eyes; they could be killed like animals. He got an extra ration of meat and two bottles of alcohol for every execution. Kwon filmed exclusive footage inside the camp.

Oh Yangnam worked for the North-Korean Secret Police, where he arrested hundreds of people und deported them to the camps. The deportations were followed by interrogations and torture. Oh now lives in South Korea and the thought of reunification scares him. He fears that the former victims of his torture might come and find him.

Today Shin lives in South Korea. He collaborates with the human rights organization LINK and occasionally travels to international conferences. Yet he still does not feel at home in the free world; his soul is still imprisoned. Sometimes, when Shin is lonely, he wishes he could go back to North Korea and to the structured life inside the camp.
Production Notes:
This is the incredible story of Shin Dong-Huyk, one of the very few people to escape from a North Korean prison camp. With patience and intelligence, filmmaker Marc Wiese gets him to open up about his life in captivity, torture and the deaths of his mother and brother. Socially engaged filmmaker Wiese had already filmed in many regions around the globe where human life and human rights have no value.

Shin decided to tell his story to Wiese instead of the many other journalists after him, some offering a lot of money for his heartbreaking story. Wiese also managed to track down two former guards in these camps and get them to talk about their crimes. The results are a riveting film about three people who have been formed – and deformed – by a totalitarian regime.
Camp 14 is a “Total Control Zone” as large as a city: 40,000 prisoners on 500 square kilometers (200 square miles). The camp is located in Oedong-ri in the city of Kaechon in the province South Pyongan, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of the capital Pyongyang. Within the labor camp there are coal mines, cement factories, a ceramic, rubber, and textile mill as well as agricultural farms. Food rations are meager: 700 grams of corn for adults, 300 grams for children per day. Plus a bit of Napa cabbage and salt. This maximum-security level “Total Control Zone” means: whoever lives in this camp will never be released. She or he will remain confined there until death.
THE RULES OF CAMP LIFE AS SHIN REMEMBERS THEM:

1. YOU MAY NOT FLEE.
   . Anyone who attempts to flee will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who sees an escape plan or does not report it will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who sees someone fleeing must report it to National Security Authority teachers.

2. MORE THAN THREE PERSONS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO ASSEMBLE.
   . Anyone who enters another zone without the permission of a National Security Authority teacher will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who enters the village of the National Security Authority and destroys equipment will be shot immediately.
   . Excepting the number of persons determined by the National Security Authority teacher, people may not assemble.
   . People may not assemble outside of work without permission.
   . At night, no more than three people may walk together without permission of a National Security Authority teacher.
   . No more than three people may converse with one another outside of working relationships.

3. YOU MAY NOT STEAL.
   . Anyone who steals any sort of weapon or is in possession of a weapon will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who does not report or conspires with someone who has stolen or is in possession of weapons will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who steals or hides any type of food in the labor camp will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who intentionally damages or steals machines, equipment, or material will be shot immediately.

4. YOU MUST COMPLETELY OBEY OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY AUTHORITY.
   . Anyone who harbors discontent or does violence against a National Security Authority teacher will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who acts insincerely or disobeys orders from a National Security Authority teacher will be shot immediately.
   . National Security Authority teachers may not be contradicted nor defied.
   . When encountering a National Security Authority teacher you must politely greet him.

5. IF YOU SEE A PERSON FROM OUTSIDE OR SOMEONE SUSPICIOUS YOU MUST REPORT IT IMMEDIATELY.
   . Anyone who hides or protects someone from outside will be shot immediately.
   . Anyone who possesses or hides an item from outside, is complicit with or does not report such will be shot immediately.
   . The possession or hiding of all sorts of items from outside is prohibited.
6. **YOU MUST MONITOR ONE ANOTHER AND IMMEDIATELY REPORT IF YOU DISCOVER STRANGE BEHAVIOR.**
   - You must monitor one another and remain watchful and vigilant.
   - You must pay close attention to the words and actions of others and if you notice anything peculiar you must immediately report it to the National Security Authority teacher in charge.
   - You must conscientiously take part in the ideological discussion assemblies as well as the self-critique sessions and sincerely criticize both yourself and others.
   - You may not miss or not show up to the ideological discussion assemblies and self-critique sessions without cause.

7. **YOU MUST FULLY DEDICATE YOURSELF TO YOUR ASSIGNED DUTIES.**
   - Anyone who neglects or does not perform their assigned duties will be accused of discontent with regards to the rules and will be shot immediately.
   - Everyone bears responsibility for their assigned duties.
   - The execution of your assigned duties is the only way to expurgate your guilt and to show thanks to the laws that are merciful.
   - You may not arbitrarily change the duties assigned by the National Security Authority teachers.

8. **MEN AND WOMEN MAY NOT CONTACT ONE ANOTHER PRIVATELY OUTSIDE OF WORK.**

   - If physical contact occurs between men and women without permission they will be shot immediately.
   - Men and women may not speak with one another outside of work without permission.
   - You may not enter or exit the men's and women's bathrooms without permission.
   - Men and women may not hold hands or share the same bed without special cause.
   - You may not enter or exit the rooms of men and women without permission.

9. **YOU MUST DEEPLY REGRET YOUR OWN FAULTS.**
   - Anyone who does not recognize their guilt and does not accept this guilt, or forms their own opinion about it, will be shot immediately.
   - You must reflect upon the errors you committed against the country and society and must strive to correct these errors.
   - Only those who accept their guilt and reflect upon it can make a new start.

10. **ANYONE WHO VIOLATES THE LABOR CAMP'S RULES AND REGULATIONS WILL BE SHOT IMMEDIATELY.**
    - All camp occupants expurgate their past faults by respecting National Security Authority teachers as their true teachers and by strictly following the ten rules and regulations. Diligent work and the rules will contribute to this.
Marc, how did you become aware of this topic?

I was in the US filming something else and read about Shin in The Washington Post. From that moment on I found the idea fascinating, that this man lived in that camp for 23 years, was born there and had no idea that the world beyond the fence was different. That was basically my main motivation.

How did you research this? Did you do it completely on your own, or did you seek assistance?

I initially contacted producer Axel Engstfeld. He was immediately taken with the material and financed the research. I flew to Seoul in April 2009, had someone find Shin beforehand. When I met him, he was a profoundly traumatized person. He could barely speak for more than half an hour, got headaches after 40 minutes, and could barely answer my questions.

It was a bizarre situation. He was being hunted down by the media around the world, Americans and Australians, everybody wanted to get at him, and then I told him that the last thing he needed was to be hunted down by a media mob. I had basically already dropped the idea and said, okay, we'll meet, go for a coffee and I'll fly back home – and then at our third meeting he suddenly said: “If my life story is going to be filmed I want you to do it.”

It sounds like you had a good rapport with him?

I think a good rapport would be saying too much at that time, but I didn't pressure him, that alone made the difference. The others went at it very aggressively, were throwing large amounts of money at him, and didn't notice that he couldn't relate to it. Money doesn't mean a thing to him, it still doesn't to this day.

How did you communicate? You were using interpreters, wasn't that difficult for such a film?

Of course that's inhibiting. At the start he didn't say anything, I mean nothing that spoke to the film's contents. Clearly we could talk about the weather and everyday things, but as soon as I started digging deeper into his story he clammed up.
I can remember calling the producer and saying, listen, we can’t even film him for eight minutes, let alone for a 100-minute film. Then we also thought about bringing a therapist on board.

And then one day he said to me: Marc, I can’t do this twice, it’s too difficult for me. I can’t tell you this during the research and then again in front of the camera. I’ll only do it once and you’ll have to trust me on this.

I said from the beginning that I can shoot 2–2.5 hours of interview with him at the most, which means we did the interviews 6 days in a row and we really didn’t film with him more than 2 hours per day. And sometimes he said, “Please stop, I can’t continue, I can’t go on.”

After he told us about how he was tortured for 7 months, at the age of 14, he disappeared for two or three days. He just disappeared, I had no idea where he was.

**Were there other things, were there other special procedures? How long was the shoot?**

At the beginning we had discussed putting him in a studio, with remote cameras around him, a lot of cameras for better editing. After I experienced him in person we discarded that idea.

Everyone who got the script and read the story said, “What an unbelievable story.”

A man who was born in a North Korean gulag/concentration camp, who grows up there like Kasper Hauser in a cellar, has no idea about the outside world, ends up in unbelievably dramatic situations, for example when he feels compelled to betray his own mother. Who then manages to flee from a maximum-security camp. The approval for our project came very strong very quickly, but of course people asked: how in god's name do you want to visualize this?

The North Koreans deny that this camp even exists. There aren’t any photos and naturally no permission to film. And then we thought of the drawn images that were originally planned purely as stills. It wasn’t until later that we decided to animate the scenes and not just show them as tableaus. It’s much more impressive that way.

**And then there are two other characters who appear in the film, a commander – the camp guard – and a former high-ranking secret service agent. How did you find them?**

I had heard that there was a perpetrator, a former guard who lives in Seoul. My assistant on the project, a reputable female journalist in South Korea, found him. He arrived wearing a jacket and tie as if he was just coming from a bank, like a bank
employee. He sat down and told how he massacred people. Without any sense of guilt. I didn't want to portray him as a monster, which is why we did our utmost to also show his private life as a very normal family father.

He is a perpetrator who is fairly simple. I don't want to say that he's dumb, but just straightforward. And without batting an eye he talks about how he tortured people to death – waterboarding and the like – he tells his story in the first person, how he raped women and, if they became pregnant, murdered them. Normally perpetrators describe it with more distance. Say “it was customary” or “one did...”. He doesn't consider that necessary. He tells his story in the first person.

And then my assistant told me there was another, high-ranking perpetrator who was considerably more intelligent. He kept the filming conditions very restrictive, said very clearly: you don't visit me at home, you don't visit anywhere. You can have one sitting, take it or leave it. And that was a very, very fascinating interview.

I no longer think that Camp 14 is a film solely about a concentration camp prisoner. Rather, it is a film about three people who were formed by a totalitarian system.

It was extremely stressful for Shin to tell his story. What was it like for you? You're the one stirring up his trauma with your questions.

Naturally you're under a lot of pressure making a film about a single individual. There's no one to fall back on if the person isn't functioning. Then I saw how difficult it was for him to speak, but on the other hand I knew I needed results. You're naturally in a bit of jam there. I can't say I'm only going to be considerate to him and return home with nothing to show for it.

We had decided together that we wanted to share his story, but there were moments when I consciously spoke about other things for an hour. That is the advantage of having a lot of time. I really very carefully thought out on which day and at what moment I would ask him about the torture he endured as well as his mother's and brother's execution. I really made a great effort to think it through and examined things very closely. I originally wanted to get to the execution sooner, but noticed on that day that he was emotionally very unstable and then postponed it. And then he suddenly disappeared for three days. Those sorts of things just happened.

Anyhow, when you meet Shin, at the beginning you think: “Oh, he's really very normal.” Even his assistant thought it. I hired a special assistant who was responsible just for him and interpreted only for him, who was hired specially for this. He was the same age so that they would have a good rapport with each other outside of filming and who could
help him. After a few days of research the assistant said: “I don’t see the story at all.” And then I said to him, wait a few days, you’ll get to see the dark side. When you dig deeper then you really do see it. On the surface Shin is a person who can fit in extremely well. Better than I do, but he learned to do that, he’s been conditioned for it: I have to fit into this life situation, otherwise I’ll die. I once asked him if his mother taught him that. His answer was that she didn’t have to, he saw it in everyday life.

But if you go deeper you see how broken he is. He doesn’t have a home, he travels around the world and tells his story to politicians and human rights activists, but he never arrives anywhere. He doesn’t know how to establish personal relationships and how to keep them, so he is still severely traumatized.

Is he receiving therapy?

No, he isn’t. It was offered to him and he received some therapy from a specialist for these defectors, as the North Korean refugees are called in South Korea.

He discontinued the treatment. He told me it wasn’t doing anything for him – perhaps it was too exhausting for him, I don’t know. He hasn’t had any therapy since then. He has nightmares, sleeping disorders, problems sitting still, which I saw often enough during the filming. Then he simply runs outside, races through Seoul, and drifts around. He never went into a café, instead he just wandered aimlessly. At the end of the film he says he wants to go back. He wants to go back to the camp. I asked the interpreter three or four times because I couldn’t believe it. Someone who has escaped from that hell says I want to go back to that hell. He naturally doesn’t want to go back and experience the torture, but he hasn’t found a foothold in his new life. He is completely unable to cope.

Marc Wiese – Director

Marc Wiese, 45, is shooting documentaries for TV and cinema for a worldwide market since more than 15 years. He has worked in war zones like Bosnia, Palestine, Belfast and many others. He has received numerous international awards for his films.

Films by Marc Wiese (selection)
2009/2010: „The Picture of the napalm girl“ – 52 minutes ARTE/ARD, Vietnam 1972. A little girl is attacked by a napalm bomb. A photo is shot, one of the famous pictures of the war. It saved the little girl and made the photographer a Pulitzer award winner. A film about the story behind the photo.

Gold Magnolia Award 16th Shanghai TV Festival
Winner AIB Gold Award 2010 - International Media Excellence Award London 2010
Cinema for Peace 2010: Most valuable documentary of the year AWARD
Winner Guangzhou International Documentary Festival 2010
Silver World Medal New York Festivals TV and Film Award 2011
Chicago International Film Festival – Hugo TV Award - Certificate of Merit 2011
Winner FAMAFEST – Festival Audvisuell et cinema 2010 Portugal
Nominated for best documentary film 23. FIPA Biarritz 2010
Winner World Media Award Hamburg 2010
Competition festival FIFA Montreal 2011
Competition Human Rights Filmfestival Genf 2010
Competition International TRT Filmfestival Istanbul 2010
Competition Prix Italia 2010
Competition Festival Camera Obskura, Polen 2010
Competition Al Dschasira International Documentary Festival Katar 2011

2007: „KANUN – Blood for honour“ – 92 minutes DOC
In Northern Albanian thousands of people are threatened by blood revenge. They can’t leave their homes. One nun is fighting against the bloody revenge and the old law of honour: the KANUN.

Best Documentary film – Prix D´Or Winner - FIPA Film Festival Biarritz, France 2009

2005: „Warkids – Youth in Palestine“, 60 minutes DOC
A soccer team in a refugee camp in Palestine. The young players are hunted by the own militant groups. But they are still playing.

Official competition International Australian Filmfestival 2006
International Film Festival Amsterdam 2007

2004: “Radovan Karadzic: Most Wanted?” 45 minutes DOC
The investigative film shows proofs that there is no search for war criminal Karadzic. The reason is a secret deal between Karadzic and the American government. First time witnesses and Karadzic´ mother are giving TV Interviews.

Official competition Chicago International Documentary Festival 2005
Broadcasted in Austria, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Slovenia and Middle East.

2002: “Escape into death” - 45 minutes DOC
Nearly 300 refugees loose their life’s as they try to reach Europe. Nobody took any notice of the tragedy. Until Sicilian fishermen found dead bodies in their net.

Official Selection Hot Docs Montreal 2005
European Television award CIVIS 2003
Human rights film award by Amnesty International 2002
Official competition Hot Docs Documentary Festival Montreal 2005
Officiale competition FIPA Film Festival Biarritz, France 2003
Official competition for Prix Europa 2002
Official competition Prix International du Documentaire Méditerranéen 2003
2001: “Death by delivery” - 45 minutes DOC
Social film award for best social documentary Germany 2001
Rolf Sigg had helped about 400 people to find an easy way to die. In front of the camera he forces old women, to commit suicide, although they are not ill. A film about euthanasia and about the other side: an extreme ill human, who wants to live.

2000: “Hunt for serial offender” - 45 minutes DOC
Profiler in their work.

1998: “… and there will be war” - 90 minutes DOC
Bosnian refugees return in their country. A film about their new life and Bosnia one year after the war.

1997: “Cut in the brain” - 45 minutes DOC
The “cut in the brain” last the last chance for the people, who suffer under extreme epilepsy. Their last hope.

1996: “Forlorn, Forgotten, For sale” - 45 minutes DOC
ARD CIVIS Award for best documentary Germany 1996
About fifty Vietnamese people killed in Berlin. The film shows their live between police, mafia and destroyed illusions.

1996: “The last chance” - 45 minutes DOC
In official competition for Grimme Award Germany
Second part of a ninety minutes documentary about the live of children between drugs and weapons in Germany.

1995: “Between prison and palace” - 45 minutes DOC
In official competition for Grimme Award Germany
First part of a ninety minutes documentary about the live of children between drugs and weapons in Germany.