

1945

Hungary (2017) 91 minutes

Director: Ferenc Török

Cast: Péter Rudolf (István)
Bence Tasnádi (Árpád)
Tamás Szabó Kimmel (Jancsi)
Dóra Sztarenki (Kisrózsi)



Screening 23 February 2022 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

It's 11AM on 12 August 1945, in a small rural Hungarian village. The Nazis have now lost the war and Soviet troops are in occupation of Hungary. Two mysterious strangers dressed in black disembark at the village railway station, bearing some boxes of goods. Within a few hours, everything changes...

A wonderfully understated but very moving and powerful story of a small society's guilty conscience over their venal betrayal of their former neighbours, with clear echoes of the classic Spencer Tracy film *Bad Day At Black Rock*.

Reviews



Two men amble off a train and a ripple of panic spreads through their surroundings. They load two crates onto a horse-drawn cart and head in to town. We could be in a classic Western: who are these strangers, and what do they want?

The answers come slowly in *1945* as the tension ratchets up amid a carefully structured narrative. By the time this taut morality tale has run its course, all of the suspicious villagers will be damaged in one way or another. But it seems that they've been damaged from the start – the bill has merely come due.

The camera sweeps from room to room, around corners and through doors and windows, furtively glimpsing the quiet dread.

Set in a specific time and place, *1945* also resonates as a story of people doing terrible things to others in the name of opportunity and getting ahead. It hits home at a time when the idea of loving thy neighbour feels sadly passé.

Chris Vognar, Dallas Morning News

From Hungary, *1945* takes place at the end of the war and asks the question, "Now what?" Specifically, for the residents of a small village, how are they to deal with their involvement in crimes that were committed in the name of the war?

Taking place over a few hours on an August day, the movie opens with István, the prosperous town clerk, preparing for what he assumes will be a consolidation of his authority here. His son Árpád is marrying a local girl selected by papa. The whole town is invited to the celebration: what could go wrong?

Plenty: The morning train brings the unexpected arrival of two strangers. The strangers are Jews, a father and his adult son. They hire a cart to carry the boxes they brought with them, and proceed with it on foot – to where?

As the locals speculate on the strangers' mission, it becomes clear that many of them are party to a secret that they would prefer to forget.

As an exploration of the corrosiveness of collective guilt, *1945* benefits from its leanness. Shot in luminous black and white, a look for which Hungarian filmmakers seem to have a particular affinity, the film's 90 minutes are unhurried but inexorable.

Michael Faust, The Public

Film Facts

- As in the classic Western *High Noon*, the running time of the story largely parallels the running time of the film.
- One of the overheard radio news bulletins announces the bombing of Nagasaki.
- The actor Iván Angelusz, who plays the elder of the two Jewish strangers, is also a co-producer of the film.