

1945

A Film by Ferenc Török



North American Distribution:

Menemsha Films

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Synopsis

On a summer day in 1945, an Orthodox man and his grown son return to a village in Hungary while the villagers prepare for the wedding of the town clerk's son. The townspeople – suspicious, remorseful, fearful, and cunning – expect the worst and behave accordingly. The town clerk fears the men may be heirs of the village's deported Jews and expects them to demand their illegally acquired property back.

Director Ferenc Török paints a complex picture of a society trying to come to terms with the recent horrors they've experienced, perpetrated, or just tolerated for personal gain. A superb ensemble cast, lustrous black and white cinematography, and historically detailed art direction contribute to an eloquent drama that reiterates Thomas Wolfe's famed sentiment: you can't go home again.



Technical Details

Country of Origin:	Hungary
Language:	Hungarian (with English subtitles)
Running Time:	91 minutes
Aspect Ratio:	2.00:1 Flat
Format:	Black & White

Credits

Directed by	Ferenc Török
Based on the short story 'Homecoming' by	Gábor T. Szántó
Screenplay by	Gábor T. Szántó & Ferenc Török
Director of Photography:	Elemér Ragályi, HSC
Editor:	Béla Barsi, HSE
Music:	Tibor Szemző
Production Designer:	László Rajk
Sound:	Tamás Zányi, HAES
Produced by	Iván Angelusz, Péter Reich, Ferenc Török



Cast

Péter Rudolf	István Szentes
Bence Tasnádi	Árpád Szentes
Tamás Szabó Kimmel	Jancsi
Dóra Sztarenki	Kisrózsi
Agi Szirtes	Mrs. Kustár
József Szarvas	Mr. Kustár
Eszter Nagy-Kálózy	Anna Szentes
Iván Angelus	Hermann Sámuel
Marcell Nagy	Son of Hermann Sámuel
István Znamenák	Stationmaster
Sándor Terhes	József Iharos

Awards

Winner of Two Awards!
- SF Film Critics Circle Award
- Audience Award for Best Narrative
San Francisco Jewish Film Festival
2017

Winner
Audience Award for Best Narrative
Miami Jewish Film Festival 2017

Jury Statement: *"We are proud of our audiences' selection of 1945 as this year's Audience Award Winner for Narrative Film. There is not a frame in this astonishing spiritual journey that isn't a thing of heartfelt, breathtaking beauty."*

Winner - Audience Award
Washington Jewish Film Festival 2017

Winner - Audience Award
Chattanooga Jewish Film Series 2017

Winner
Yad Vashem Chairman's Award
Jerusalem Film Festival 2017

Winner - Audience Award
Berlin Jewish Film Festival 2017

Winner - Best Film
Der Neue Heimatfilm Festival
Austria 2017

Official Selection
Berlin International Film Festival 2017



Ferenc Török / writer-director



46 year-old Hungarian writer-director Ferenc Török was born in Budapest, where he studied at the Academy of Drama and Film.

His final graduation film, *Moscow Square*, won the Best First Film Award at the 2000 Hungarian Film Festival. Since then, he has directed for the screen and the stage. "*1945*" is his sixth feature film.

- Honored with Pro Cultura Urbis awarded by the City of Budapest, 2005.
- Member of the European Film Academy since 2007.
- Honored with Balázs Béla Award, a state recognition for outstanding achievement in filmmaking, 2008.

Filmography

1945, 91 min, feature, director, script, producer (2017)
No Man's Island / Senki szigete, 99 min, feature, director (2014)
Istanbul / Isztambul, 96 min, feature, director, script (2011)
Apaches / Apacsok, 70 min, TV drama, director (2010)
Pile-Up / Koccanás, 71 min, TV drama, director (2009)
Overnight, 93 min, feature, director, script (2007)
Eastern Sugar / Szezon, 91 min, feature, director, script (2004)
Moscow Square / Moszkva tér, feature, director, script (2001)

Theatre

Apaches / Apacsok, Radnóti Miklós Theatre, director, 2009
Textura 2014, Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts, director, 2014

Iván Angelusz / producer (1967 – 2016)



"The story is exciting from two perspectives. On the one hand because it is set in 1945 when the German troops had left and Soviet "liberators" found themselves stationed in a country preparing for democratic elections. The village in which the film is set suffered the evils of the Holocaust in 1944. So it is one year later that two orthodox Jewish men return home and in so doing disrupt the established rhythm of life in the village. Their reappearance forces the local residents to confront and come to terms with the horrific events of the previous year: the forced

deportations, what they did and what they did not do, what happened to the belongings left behind, and who made which decisions. Beyond perhaps, *Valahol Európában* (Somewhere in Europe, 1947, dir. Géza Radványi) and *Budapesti tavasz* (Springtime in Budapest, 1955, dir. Félix Máriássy), this is one of the few works to explore the events of 1944 in Hungary. The former of the two did not deal with the topic from sufficient historical distance while the latter only focused on events in the nation's capital. This movie attempts to do very much more. It is set in an era when it appears that there is still a chance of setting forth on a sunny path to the future at the same time as exploring a year the dark memory of which still lives on among us. It is not our aim to point the finger. The lesson that we learn, however, is that those living in fear find it very difficult to help their fellow men. In fact, the inhabitants of a village can hardly be expected to defend their fellow citizens at the risk of restricting their own freedom. At the same time, they are unable to deny certain unethical deeds that worked in their favour. One of the aims of this piece is to provoke greater discussion of this topic.

This is not a Holocaust film but rather a drama that "dissects" life in a provincial village. It investigates the effect events had on the Hungarian population, not restricting itself to the Jewish population."

(excerpt from a 2014 interview published during the shooting, Haon.hu)

Gábor T. Szántó / screenwriter



Novelist and screenwriter, born in Budapest in 1966. He studied law and political science and graduated from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. He has been a participant of the Iowa International Writing Program Residency in the United States. Szántó is the editor-in-chief of the Hungarian Jewish monthly Szombat. His additional field of interest is researching and teaching Modern Jewish Literature.

His writings include novels Keleti pályaudvar, végállomás (Eastern Station, Last Stop), 2002, Edeshármas (Threesome), 2012 and Kafka macskáí

(Kafka's Cats), 2014, as well as volumes of short stories and novellas.

Szántó's writings have been published in German, Russian and English, and a Turkish publication of Kafka's Cats is in the works.

His short story Hazatérés (Homecoming, 2004) serves as the basis of the film 1945. The short story came out in German (Heimkehr) in the periodical Wespennest 166/2014 and in Russian in his volume Obratnij Bilet (Moscow, 2008). It has also been translated into English and Spanish.

"Homecoming" / a short story by Gábor T. Szántó

"Szántó proposes that the burden of memory tramples following generations into the ground, lowering them to a level that prevents them from moving on or living their own lives. Until we are able to talk about the past, we will continue to pass on our fears formed from unprocessed thoughts." (2004, Hungarian weekly HVG)

"The situations and dilemmas faced by Szántó's heroes bear great resemblance to those explored by Imre Kertész (...): how it was possible, if at all, to discuss Auschwitz during the Kádár regime; how the majority of society reacted to survivors; how their own Jewish identity was and continues to be experienced by survivors, their children, and their children's children; what tension existed between the moral norms of recollection and discussion and the essential necessity to forget in order to carry on; and whether or not the situation has altered to any significant degree in Hungary after the regime change." (2005, Hungarian weekly Elet és Irodalom)

Interview with Ferenc Török

Hungary's past is replete with unprocessed trauma. Ferenc Török, the director of 'Moscow Square' (Moszkva tér, 2001), the cult film about the historical events of 1989, guides the audience back to 1945 with his new film. In the presence of Soviet soldiers, the people of a little village are getting prepared for the wedding of the notary's son, all the while trying to ignore the fact that they deported a significant part of the town's Jewish community the previous year.



The film is set in '1945' in a little village in the foothills. How did you choose this topic?

I've been interested in this topic for 10 years now, ever since I read Gábor T. Szántó's short story. I was really interested in the time just after the war and just before the introduction of nationalization and Communism, when for a moment there was an inkling of the possibility of democratic transition. Things could even have taken a turn for the better. Fascism was over but Communism had not yet begun; we tried to capture the atmosphere of those few years in this film.

This is a period in Hungarian history that is not overly represented either in literature or in film. Instead, people focus on the Second World War itself or on the dictatorship of the 1950s, with these few intermediate years earlier. I wanted to present a social tableau that would portray life in Hungary just after the war.

How did the screenplay come about?

Gábor T. Szántó's story is originally a 10-page novella. Together we first developed a dramaturgy similar to the Greek tragedies, which are built on the unities of action, time and place. We created new characters and strengthened it with dry dialogue. This is how the text became a screenplay over the years. What I like most about the novella is how the plot, in the relatively short amount of time – three or four hours –, presents situations with no dialogue and in a balladic way, which is something that we definitely wanted to keep.



Creators are also usually personally connected with their topics. What's your story?

This is a tragic time in history with which everyone is connected in some way or another. I wasn't led by a personal, family story though; this is rather fiction, unlike 'Moscow Square'. If I had to say something about my connection it would be what grasped me. Szántó's novella took a completely different take on the given historical situation than anything I had ever read before. I think about the motive of new beginnings and how society must overcome trauma, start a new journey, confront the past and undertake a new life.

Could you tell us a little bit about the shooting?

We had a fantastic cast and a relatively smooth shooting. It was the first time I worked with Elemér Ragályi, the cameraman, whom I deeply respect. I have known him personally for a while now and consider him to be my maestro. I asked him to work on the film, among other things because he went through of all this when he was five and living in a little village. That's the kind of personal motive

that I was talking about before; it is real for him. He doesn't only remember what an old soccer ball used to look like, for example, but he also remembers the atmosphere that people lived in in rural Hungary. It's about that summer, when the war ended. We used to be taught that that was the liberation itself, and we even celebrated it on the fourth of April each year.



How can young people these days, 15-20 year olds, connect with this topic through your film? What kind of reception are you expecting from them?

I usually say that we should trust youth. '1945' is not necessarily about adolescents, but about the more mature and nuanced-thinking audience. They're likely to feel more empathy for the film itself. Together with that, I think that the period of history in my film will be more easily understandable than, let's say, in dry textbooks. This is a drama that confronts the audience with real-life situations. Based on the invitations to various festivals, I'm hoping that it will attract a lot of people and that they will be touched by it. I trust that the Hungarian and international audience will be mature enough for the critical interpretation of this era. This moment in history hasn't yet been shown from this approach.

VARIETY

Berlin Film Review: '1945'

Alissa Simon, Film Critic
February 11, 2017



A fresh, intelligent cinematic approach to a difficult topic that takes on a transitional time in Hungarian history with subtlety and nuance.

Featuring striking black-and-white lensing that imbues potent compositions with foreboding, Magyar multihyphenate Ferenc Török's finely performed "1945" takes on a transitional time in Hungarian history with subtlety and nuance: It's a sweltering day in August, and two Orthodox Jews' arrival in a remote Hungarian village catalyzes an unwelcome reckoning with the recent past for the local inhabitants. Like compatriot director László Nemes' "Son Of Saul," the gripping period drama offers a fresh, intelligent cinematic approach to a difficult topic, and should appeal to niche art house audiences in most territories. Menemsha Films has already snapped up North American rights.

The sober-looking strangers, white-bearded Hermann Sámuel (played by the film's now-deceased producer, Iván Angelus), and his son (Marcell Nagy) arrive on a day already filled with tensions. Reedy young pharmacy manager Arpad (Bence Tasnádi), the son of

domineering village notary István (Péter Rudolf, impressively alternating between the unctuous and the pugilistic) is due to marry pretty peasant girl Kisrózsi (Dóra Sztarenki).

Although Kisrózsi dumped her previous fiancé Jancsi (Tamás Szabó Kimmel) for the chance to join the bourgeoisie, she is still clearly attracted to Jancsi's cocky masculinity and muscular good looks. Kisrózsi's true feelings are all too clear to Arpad's scornful, drug-addicted mother, Anna (Eszter Nagy-Kálózy), who is not happy that her future daughter-in-law is more attracted by the earnings potential of the drugstore than by love for her milquetoast son. Meanwhile, Soviet soldiers not yet tired of claiming the spoils of war lurk on the sidelines, wondering how they can enrich themselves in the village through the daily business of Occupation.

The Sámuels procession resembles a funeral cortege as the dignified family walks silently behind the horse-drawn cart driven by Suba (Miklós B. Szekely, a familiar face from Béla Tarr's "Satantango") that carries their mysterious, wooden-crated goods from the train station. Their cavalcade draws all eyes, from those of the station master (István Znamenák), under orders from István to follow them, to the workers harvesting in the fields; from the men drinking in the pubs to the women preparing the wedding feast. Eventually, the reasons that the Sámuels' appearance creates so much consternation are compellingly revealed.

For those who know their European history, it's no spoiler to say that many provincial villagers in Hungary and elsewhere profited from the deportation of their Jewish neighbors. Director Török and co-writer Gábor T. Szántó, upon whose acclaimed short story "Homecoming" this screenplay is based, concentrate on the point-of-view of the locals, almost all of whom, including the priest (Béla Gados), share guilty secrets about ill-gotten gains. For some, such as the drunkard Bandi (József Szarvas), remorse becomes overwhelming. While for others, such as Bandi's wife (Ági Szirtes), the determination to keep her comfortable new home and fine furnishings, including traditional Jewish candelabra and Hebraic art, overrides any compunction. But it's the increasingly embattled István who has the most to lose.

Nothing in helmer Török's previous filmography would predict his virtuosity here. In a film with surprisingly little dialogue, a fine ensemble cast, including real-life married couple Rudolph and Nagy-Kálózy, convincingly enables this dissection of village life and matters of conscience to be more shown than told. Key to the impact is the superb lensing of veteran DP Elemér Ragályi. The mirrored opening shot, a close-up of István shaving with a straight razor, establishes a sustained tone of impending doom, while his beautifully composed images, frequently framed through gauzy linen curtains, windows, doors, and fences, heighten visual interest.

Also deserving of praise are the spare, melancholy score that at times recalls forgotten Jewish melodies from Tibor Szemző ("The Tree of Life"), the spot-on period production design by Dorka Kiss, and the believably lived-in costume work of Sosa Juristovszky.

<http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/1945-review-1201985200/>