

SZEGÉNYLEGÉNYEK/ LES SANS-ESPOIR / THE ROUND-UP

1965, Hungary, 95 min. black& white, cinemascope

a film by **Miklós Jancsó** (1921-2014)

Original format: 35mm

International premiere: 1966 Festival de Cannes – in Official Selection – Competition

Restored format: DCP

World premiere: 2015 Festival de Cannes – in Official Selection – Cannes Classics

Restored and digitized by the Filmlab Division of the Hungarian National Film Fund in co-operation with MaNDA - Hungarian National Digital Film Archive and Film Institute, financed by the Hungarian National Film Fund.

Directed by Miklós Jancsó

Screenplay: Gyula Hernádi

Director of photography: Tamás Somló

Editor: Zoltán Farkas

Sound: Zoltán Toldy

Set decorator: Tamás Banovich

Producer: István Nemeskürty / Production company: MAFILM Studio 4

Cast: János Görbe, Zoltán Latinovits, Tibor Molnár, András Kozák, Gábor Agárdy, József Madaras

Awards

FIPRESCI Prize, Locarno Film Festival, 1966

Grand Prix, Best Director Prize, Hungarian Film Week, 1966

Main Prize, Best Cinematography, Best Actor, Hungarian Film Critics' Prizes, 1966

Best Foreign Film of the Year, London Film Festival, 1967

selected as one of the "Budapest Twelve" films, 1967

Lifetime Achievement Award for Miklós Jancsó, Festival de Cannes, 1979

*At the 1966 Cannes film festival, a movie whose title sounded like a western – but was actually Hungarian – caused a sensation and launched its director into the international cinematic scene, where he was to remain for a decade. The film of hypnotic beauty and daring technique was *The Round-Up* (*Szegénylegények*, literally translated as *The Outlaws*) and the director was Miklós Jancsó... (The Guardian, Ronald Bergan: Miklós Jancsó Obituary, 2014)*

*On many writers, critics and filmmakers Best Film lists, and widely acknowledged as Jancsó's supreme masterpiece, *The Round-Up* is set in a detention camp, at a time of guerrilla campaigns against the ruling Austrians in 1869. Jancsó avoids conventional heroics to focus on the persecution and dehumanization manifest in a time of conflict and creates a terrifying picture of war that continues to resonate today. (Second Run DVD)*

English

Synopsis

The film which tells the capture of Sándor Rózsa's outlaws gives a picture of the techniques used by a despotic power. In 1869, count Gedeon Ráday is appointed to be a government commissioner. His task is to ensure general security of property and to capture the outlaws following the 1848-49 War of Independence. Ráday does not prove to be fastidious and gentle about the tools he uses. The outlaws are taken to a castle prison called "The Trench" in Nagyalföld (Great Plain), and with cruel psychological methods, they are tried to be forced to betray their fellows. The former soldiers of Kossuth, leader of the Hungarian freedom fight, get trapped because of their pride and dignity. (Source: Hungarian Film Institute)

Reviews & Appreciations

István Szabó

"Jancsó occupies a unique place in Hungarian culture. If he hadn't made such films as *The Round-Up*, *My Way Home*, *The Red and the White*, and others, there would have been a void. Just like Bartók in music and Attila József in poetry, Jancsó expressed the spirit of his nation and its historical destiny in cinema".

Béla Tarr

"People need to see Jancsó's really beautiful three or four first movies."

David Robinson

In few auteurs' work do structure, style, and theme mesh so precisely as in Jancsó's. His narrative construction and cinematic technique present a spectacle of power that is at once abstractly symbolic and concretely historical. He became the principal example of the artistic originality and seriousness that could be achieved in an eastern European film industry."

„A promising renaissance in the Hungarian cinema was cut short by the Revolution of 1956; and we have had to wait ten years for the emergence of a film-maker of real individuality. Miklós Jancsó's *The Round-up* was first shown earlier this year at Cannes, where against the competition of louder-spoken films, it failed to get the attention it deserved." (*The Financial Times*, 4/11/66)

Derek Malcolm

Those who have never seen a film by Miklós Jancsó from the 1960s, when this Hungarian director was at his peak, are usually astonished by the experience. When *The Round-Up*, his third film, came to London in 1965, the broadsheet critics almost dropped their pens in surprise. Here was a deeply serious, decidedly uncamp and certainly not musically-minded middle European Busby Berkeley, who made formal patterns on the screen with humans and horses in order to illustrate the betrayals of his country's history. I joke, but not much. To watch *The Round-Up* or 1967's *The Red and the White* for the first time is to witness a kind of film ballet entering the realms of political drama.

In *The Round-Up*, Austrian soldiers representing the triumphant Habsburg Empire trap and interrogate the Hungarian partisans whose revolt against the Empire's rule has petered out. The period is the mid-19th century and only the legendary Sándor Rózsa's fighters stand in the way, succoured by the peasants. The drama is virtually divested of characters we can either sympathise with or hate. Instead, it deals largely in formal, abstract generalities. It is as if Jancsó is merely watching, regretfully conscious that there are those who will be killed and those whose job it is to kill them. A man running on the horizon is calmly shot down. Another is taken away to be tortured. Short words of command seem to be the apotheosis of dialogue. The film achieves, in one critic's accurate view, "a total absorption of content into form".

All this takes place on a very particular landscape: the vast, summer-scorched Hungarian plains where whitewashed buildings, cloaked men and their horses appear to be the only occupants. It seems like a world apart, but one able to illustrate both a specific vision of Hungarian history and part of the story of mankind, where the powerful slowly but surely triumph over the weak.

The film is so precisely choreographed that the patterns play on the mind until they become clear and obvious in their meanings. The camera style is beautiful but almost merciless. If the film can be criticised for its lack of emotion, it can't be for its absence of power or for its cold appreciation of the situation it illustrates.

Later, with films such as *The Confrontation* and *Red Psalm*, Jancsó's work begins to lose something through familiarity, and his obsession with half-naked girls and patterns becomes enervating. When he left Hungary for Italy in the 1970s, making erotic films such as *Private Vices* and *Public Virtues* (based on the Mayerling story), it seemed he had little more of value to say, or no way of saying it without repeating himself or exaggerating his weaknesses.

But the first few films were astonishing, whether dealing with Kossuth's rebels of the 1860s or the aftermath of the 1919 Hungarian revolution. They bitterly analysed the history of his persecuted country and commented, too, on the nature of violence in more general terms. No one has tried quite the same thing in the same way, and that is his most formidable legacy. (*The Guardian*, 2000)

<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2000/oct/19/derekmalcolmscenturyoffilm.derekmalcolm>

András Bálint Kovács

„It was his first film in which his abstract style could be associated with abstract concept such as „power”, „manipulation”, „humiliation”, and „historical violence”. This film was a milestone in the history of Hungarian

modern cinema, as it started a long and lasting series of all kinds of political and historical parables, but most important it created the most general and comprehensive visual and narrative model of the Kafkaesque atmosphere of central European history, which would be Jancsó's central subject matter for the following thirty years. Jancsó's style and his conception of history and power have been subject matter of following thirty years... The only thing I want to highlight here is the extent to which the success of Jancsó's model was due to the idea of superficial order masking fundamental chaos, which became more apparent as this style became increasingly symbolic and ornamental." (*Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, 1950-1980, 332*)

Christin Tompson-David Bordwell

„Jancsó follows Soviet Montage cinema in creating drama out of collective action and historical movements. In Jancsó films, individuals have little psychological identity...The drama emerges out of the ways in which they caught in a historical process... Before suffering torture or execution, victims must march in file, form circles, strip or lie down or swim a river – that is, undergo absurd ceremonies that merely display their subjection to the will of authority...(Film History, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009, 465-466)

Français

Synopsis

En 1869 en Hongrie. Les «Sans Espoir», sortes de bandits de grands chemins, encore redoutés pour leur rôle dans l'insurrection de 1848, se sont depuis lors fondus dans le peuple des paysans. Le gouverneur Ráday, désireux de raffermir son pouvoir vacillant, a réuni nombre de gens du peuple dans un fortin. Il espère démasquer parmi eux des «Sans Espoir», et ainsi remonter à leur ancien chef, Sándor. Mais les hors-la-loi sont difficiles à identifier. Rusé, Ráday propose aux paysans rassemblés de s'engager dans l'armée. Ráday espère ainsi reconnaître facilement à leurs capacités à l'entraînement les anciens combattants de l'armée rebelle de Sándor... (Source: *Télérama*)

Livre sur Miklós Jancsó

Miklos Jancso: Une histoire hongroise

Essai broché d'Émile Breton, paru le 20 avril 2015 (Édition Yellow Now, Collection Côté Cinéma, 140 pages)

Il existe peu d'ouvrages en français sur Miklós Jancsó (1921-2014), à qui pourtant tant d'essais et d'articles critiques ont été consacrés dans les années 70. Il paraissait d'autant plus nécessaire de rompre le silence sur son oeuvre qu'elle s'est poursuivie de 1990 à 2010, avec des films qui n'ont pour la plupart pas été vus hors de Hongrie. La connaissance de ces films est indispensable à qui veut aujourd'hui remettre à sa place, une des premières, ce cinéaste. Émile Breton s'attache dans son essai à dégager la cohérence profonde qui, de *Cantate* (1963) à *Screen Test* (2011), fait de Jancsó, à tout moment, le catalyseur d'une équipe qui a rendu compte au mieux du trouble d'une génération, celle qui a vécu un demi-siècle de bouleversements dans cette « Europe du milieu » à laquelle appartient la Hongrie.

Presse française

« Rondes humiliantes, danses macabres, *Les Sans Espoir* est une « glaçante parabole sur les mécanismes du pouvoir et de la délation » (*La chronique cinéma d'Emile Breton dans L'Humanité - Mercredi 5 septembre 2001*)

« Film clef, révélé en France en 1965, *Les Sans-Espoir*, domine toujours, comme le fortin qui s'élève dans la fameuse plaine hongroise, une filmographie d'une accablante beauté. » (*Cahiers du Cinéma 2006 n°617, Thierry Méranger*)

« Si je parviens à raconter une histoire contemporaine, je n'ai pas besoin du recours à la métaphore, c'est le cas dans mon film *Cantate*. Cela dire-en règle générale, un film, fut-il historique, vise une certaine universalité. *Les Sans-espoir* peut donc, dans cette perspective, avoir une signification contemporaine. Mais pour moi, tel que je l'ai conçu, c'est un film réaliste, qui respecte autant que possible la vérité historique, même s'il s'en écarte parfois un petit peu, ce qui est inévitable. » (*Philippe Haudiquet, Les Lettres Françaises, 15/12/66*)

« Si je rejette le montage, c'est parce qu'il postule une tension vers le public, qu'il agresse le public. Alors que les plans longs sont beaucoup plus respectueux du public, lui laissant le temps de réfléchir tandis que l'action se déroule. » *Miklós Jancsó (Ecran 72 n°10, cité dans le dictionnaire des cinéastes de George Sadoul)*

« Tant de visages impassibles, de phrases à double sens, d'énigmes ne ménageant guère le confort du spectateur. Mais ce refus de la psychologie, cette somme d'étrangetés, sur quoi plane le souvenir de Kafka, Buzzatti et autres peintres de l'inquiétude, entretient en nous un malaise fécond. » *Le Nouvel Observateur, Michel Mardore, 28/12/1966*

« Nous ne connaissons presque rien des êtres que nous côtoyons dans ce fortin, rien de leurs geôliers. A la terreur qui règne répond l'impassibilité des victimes. A l'impassibilité des visages, la froideur de la mise en scène, la distance du regard. Et cette distance nous touche justement parce qu'elle ne cherche pas à nous émouvoir, parce qu'elle nous communique mieux que tout autre artifice le sentiment d'une plongée aux enfers. Nous entrevoyons les coordonnées d'un ordre monstrueux dont les verticales et les horizontales de l'image tissent la traduction plastique, la toile d'araignée implacable. » *Télérama, Jean Collet, 8/1/1967*

« Dans le fort de la plaine hongroise où sont emprisonnés les suspects nationalistes, il s'agit de distinguer les vrais militants de la masse des incarcérés par erreur. Jancsó nous conte l'implacable machination qui incite les premiers à se démasquer peu à peu - nouveaux volontaires d'une nouvelle lutte qu'ils approuvent. De fait, cette lutte ne va être que boucherie, c'est eux qui seront abattus par ceux-là même qui les avaient recrutés. Il n'y a donc pas ici réponse des prisonniers aux soldats-geôliers. Les uns maîtrisent toujours la situation, les autres la subissent.

Avec *Les Sans Espoir* s'affirme surtout la maîtrise de Jancsó qui invente tout de suite la dimension des paysages convenables (...) Toute émotion est bannie de ce film, tout pathétique dont l'évidente signification détournerait en quelque sorte le spectateur du simple constat des faits suffisamment évocateurs, Jancsó refuse bien tout lyrisme. Plus exactement, le lyrisme qu'il utilise, comme la beauté flagrante des images qu'il emploie, participent de cette compréhension toute lointaine et authentique des personnages qu'il met en scène... »
Positif, Frédéric Vitoux, 105/1969

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