

NOČNÍ JAZDCI (NIGHT RIDERS, dir. Martin Hollý, 1981, 91 min)

„If they catch him, his myth will fall. If he escapes, he becomes a legend.“



They fought for the same ideals of freedom in the Great War. After the war, Edo Halva joined the service of newly established republic to protect its laws and maintain the order. Marek Orban returned to his village to secure better life for his people. He became a horse smuggler. During the day, the two men respect each other. At night they shoot to kill without blinking an eye. One wears a uniform, the other is an outlaw. Each of them fights in the name of his own truth.

"The western genre tropes, on which the script is based at first glance, is not unfamiliar to Martin Hollý: genre elements can be traced in his previous work such as Copper Tower and Eagle Feather. Martin Hollý revels in practicing his skills to play out action scenes - that's why the customs fire or the tragically culminating return of the procession, and especially all the motifs of galloping horses are among the best scenes in the film where he also counts on the emotional effect of the inhospitable mountain terrain captured by the cinematographer František Uldrich.

However, the very focus of the story is on a psychological level: clash between Halva and Orban. Both characters are individuals sharing similar personality traits - pride, courage bordering on self-love, intransigence, admiration for strength and natural human feelings. However, their destinies and social attitudes divided them into two opposing camps. The classic western model of the good and the bad is dissolved here." Eva Zaoralová (Svobodné slovo, 26 June 1981)

Martin Hollý made *Night Riders*, a western set in a northern borderland of Slovakia in 1981. Although made in socialist Czechoslovakia 22 years after Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, the two films share similar DNA. Protagonists of the film – a horse smuggler and a border guard – stand on the opposite sides of the law. Mutual respect makes them friends, law turns them into enemies. All that matters for smuggler Orban is that one last job before he retires. For guard Halva, maintaining order is a matter of professional honour. The world is changing and the wheels of history turn regardless of the fate of ordinary folk. However, none of them would ever change their past. The words of Pike Bishop, "I wouldn't have it any other way", could easily have been uttered by Marek Orban himself.



The film has been digitally restored and is available on 2K DCP in Slovak (OV) with English and French subtitles.