

THE SPIRIT OF '45, 15/03/2013



PRESENTS

A FILM DIRECTED BY KEN LOACH

THE SPIRIT OF '45



U.K. |2013|HD

UK THEATRICAL RELEASE: 15 MARCH, 2013

RUNNING TIME: 94 MINUTES

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

1945 was a pivotal year in British history. The unity that carried Britain through the war allied to the bitter memories of the inter-war years led to a vision of a better society. The spirit of the age was to be our brother's and our sister's keeper. Director Ken Loach has used film from Britain's regional and national archives, alongside sound recordings and contemporary interviews to create a rich political and social narrative. The Spirit of '45 hopes to illuminate and celebrate a period of unprecedented community spirit in the UK, the impact of which endured for many years and which may yet be rediscovered today.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"The Second World War was a struggle, perhaps the most considerable collective struggle this country has ever experienced. While others made greater sacrifices, the people of Russia for example, the determination to build a better world was as strong here as anywhere. Never again, it was believed, would we allow poverty, unemployment and the rise of fascism to disfigure our lives.

We had won the war together; together we could win the peace. If we could plan to wage military campaigns, could we not plan to build houses, create a health service, transport system and to make goods that we needed for reconstruction?

The central idea was common ownership, where production and services were to benefit all. The few should not get rich to the detriment of everyone else. It was a noble idea, popular and acclaimed by the majority. It was the Spirit of 1945. Maybe it is time to remember it today."

-Ken Loach

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DIRECTOR'S BIO

Ken Loach was born in 1936 in Nuneaton. He attended King Edward VI Grammar School and went on to study law at St. Peter's Hall, Oxford. After a brief spell in the theatre, Loach was recruited by the BBC in 1963 as a television director. This launched a long career directing films for television and the cinema, from *Cathy Come Home* and *Kes* in the sixties to *Land And Freedom*, *Sweet Sixteen* and *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* in recent years.



Interviewees

Dr Julian Tudor Hart and Dai Walters (South Wales)

Two impressive octogenarians - the pioneering GP Dr. Julian Tudor-Hart and Welsh miner Dai Walters (one of Dr. Hart's former patients) - recall the spirit of '45 and the changes it brought about in their own lives. They remember the poverty of the 30s, the war, their hopes for a new world at the war's end, and the reality of what followed. Dai remembers the changes in the mining industry, and the flaws in its nationalization, whilst Julian celebrates the NHS as an example of a nationalized industry that has really worked.

Ray Davies (South Wales)

82 year old Ray Davis, former miner and steel-worker and lifelong political activist, talks with Keri Curtis, a community project worker from the Welsh Valleys. Ray recalls the death of his mother in the days before the NHS and his hopes and dreams for a better world after the war, where the dream went wrong as well as where it went right, and why he's still fighting for change.

Tony Mulhearn, Doreen McNally and John Farrell (Liverpool)

Tony Mulhearn of the 1984-87 militant Liverpool council talks with retired docker John Farrell and activist Doreen McNally. They discuss what the vision of 1945 meant and still means to them, and how their own lives improved as a result of the reforms. And they recall the ways they've tried to defend the vision and the changes: the programme of council house building Tony pursued whilst in office, for example, which provided homes and work at a time of supposed recession; or **Doreen's**

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fight against the re-casualisation of dock work and a return to the insecurity and indignity of the 1930s.

Eileen Thompson (Liverpool)

90 year old Eileen Thomson recalls growing up in “poverty park” in the slums of Liverpool in the 1930s. She describes the suffering caused by the snaking dole queues of the 30s, and then the bombs that rained down on the city in the 40s, destroying her home and the hospital she worked in as a young nurse. She remembers the celebrations marking the end of the war and then the election of a Labour government, and the new world she hoped it would bring.

Sam Watts, Tony Nelson and Terry Teague (Liverpool)

Sam Watts shares the extremely moving story of his childhood in Liverpool’s slums, growing up in a family destroyed by the First World War, battling the poverty and hunger that claimed two of his siblings. The Second World War killed another. Sam survived, returning from the navy to poverty and homelessness - but also a political awakening - in Atlee’s New Britain. Dockers Tony Nelson and Terry Teague talk about the impact of that time on their own lives: the job security, decent housing, free healthcare and awareness of collective strength they owe to '45 - and the piece-by-piece destruction of that vision since the 1980s.

Karen Reissmann, Dena Murphy and Margaret Battin (Manchester)

Dena Murphy and Margaret Britton, now in their 80s, were young nurses at Park Hospital in Manchester when Nye Bevan visited on the 5th July 1948 to hand over the keys to the NHS. Karen Reissmann is a mental health nurse who has witnessed the erosion of Bevan’s creation over the past 20 years (she was fired for speaking out about the impact of NHS “reforms.”) The three nurses discuss the importance of a national health service as Bevan intended it.

Dot Gibson and Deborah Garvie (London)

Vice president of the National Pensioners’ Convention Dot Gibson and housing worker Deborah Garvie discuss the importance of council housing – and how the Atlee government’s commitment to the construction of high-quality homes transformed their own families’ lives. Deborah describes the contrastingly bleak housing situation today. Council housing is just one of the pieces of the post-war vision that Dot has witnessed the destruction of, and she explains why she is still committed to defending the changes she saw introduced in 1945.

James Meadway and John Rees (London)

James Meadway, senior economist at the New Economic Foundation and John Rees, political activist and writer, explore the new economic structure created for Britain in 1945, and the reasons behind its destruction from the 80s onwards. They debate the logic of and flaws in the post-war nationalisations of industries, the transport system, and the utilities; and the ideology and reality of their re-privatisation. Ultimately, they grapple with the idea of common ownership, the political failure to defend it – and argue for its continued relevance today.

June Hautot (London)

June Hautot remembers the hardships endured by poor families in the days before the NHS: as a young girl she nursed her dying mother at home without support other than hand-outs from

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charities. It explains why she is fighting hard to save the NHS today (recently grabbing headlines when she accosted Andrew Lansley at Downing Street.)

Tony Benn (London)

Tony Benn was part of the generation that went away to war and vowed to come home to a new world. He recalls the discussions about the post-war utopia onboard the troop ship he served on and, on his return home, his own part in campaigning for the Labour government that he believed would make that utopia a reality. He reflects on the importance of their historic victory and their remarkable project, and of his own, later attempts to preserve it; defending the idea of common ownership that was the heart of the spirit of '45.

Raphie de Santos, Alan Thornett, Anthony Richardson (London)

Scottish economist Raphie de Santos used to work for merchant bank Goldman Sachs. He dissects the free-market capitalist economic system that he has seen from the inside, and puts forward the case for the alternative: a planned economy. Alan Thornett and Tony Richardson are both retired car factory workers, and they discuss the nationalization of their own industry, and along with Raphie, of the post-war nationalizations as a whole. They explore when and why things went wrong, and the relevance economic planning and common ownership have today.

Harry Keen, Jacky Davis and Jonathon Tomlinson (London)

Professor Harry Keen recalls the day the NHS came into being. He was working as a junior GP in North London, and he remembers how it transformed his profession and the lives of his patients. Jonathon Tomlinson is a young GP working in East London today, and he describes how 20 years of gradual dismantling of the system created in 1948 is beginning to affect his ability to treat his patients today. Together with Jacky Davis, chair of the hospital consultants' association and BMA council member, they make a moving case for the vital importance of a free, universal healthcare service, what it symbolizes in our society, and why the attack on it by successive governments has been a purely ideological one.

Ray Thorne, Alex Gordon (London)

Three generations of railwaymen discuss 70 years of change on the railways. 81 year-old Ray Thorne started work as a carriage cleaner for the Southern railway at Exeter Central during the war, and recalls how a haphazard, under-invested privatized railway system gave way to a more efficient one after nationalization in 1948. Alex Gordon, current president of the RMT, talks about the form that nationalization took, and his own experience of British Rail - how the culture of safety and pride he knew was lost with privatization.

Bill Ronksley and Ray Jackson (Sheffield)

Former president of the train drivers' union ASLEF, Bill Ronksley started work in Sheffield railway yard in 1939 and worked as a train driver from 1941 to the 1990s, witnessing both nationalization and re-privatisation of the railways. Ray Jackson, now retired, was also a train driver, and he ended his career negotiating the new deals for workers after privatization.

David Hopper, Stan Pearce and Inky Thomson (Sheffield)

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Stan Pearce was the youngest miner at his pit outside Durham on the 1st January 1947, the day the mines passed from private ownership to the National Coal Board, and Stan laid the plaque commemorating it. Inky Thompson was the National Union of Mineworkers official in South Yorkshire during the strike in the 80s. David Hopper is the current area official of the NUM in the North-east, where there are no longer any mines operating today.

Simon Midgley, Adrian Dilworth (Sheffield)

Simon Midgley has worked for Royal Mail for almost 20 years, and is currently the Bradford area representative of the Communication Workers' Union. Former Unison president Adrian Dilworth worked for Midlands Electricity Board for 20 years, and experienced the transition from public to private ownership.

SPECIAL EVENTS and AWARDS

Official Selection Berlin Film Festival 2013

17 MARCH 2013 – LIVE UK SIMULCAST WITH DIRECTOR Q&A

PRODUCTION

FILM CREDITS

Director

Ken Loach

Film Archivist

Jim Anderson

Producers

Rebecca O'Brien

Kate Ogborn

Lisa Marie Russo

Original Music

George Fenton

Photography

Stephen Standen

Production Manager

Eimhear McMahon

Sound

Paul Parsons

Kevin Brazier

Ian Tapp

Editor

Jonathan Morris

Research

Izzy Charman

Colourist

Gareth Spensley

The Spirit of '45 is produced by **Sixteen Films** and **Fly Film**.

Sixteen Films is the production company formed by director **Ken Loach** and producer **Rebecca O'Brien** with writer **Paul Laverty** as the associate director.

Fly Film was formed in 2009 by producers **Kate Ogborn** and **Lisa Marie Russo**. Productions include SELF MADE by Turner Prize winner Gillian Wearing, THE DEEP BLUE SEA, directed by Terence Davies and SWANDOWN by Andrew Kotting and author Iain Sinclair.

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