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# Orient Express (1944)

**Orient Express** is a 1944 German crime film directed by Viktor Tourjansky . The leading roles are played by Rudolf Prack , Gusti Wolf , Siegfried Breuer and Paul Dahlke .

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## Storyline

During the legendary Orient Express just passed the Balkans, a bloodcurdling scream sounds and someone pulls the emergency brake while crossing a tunnel. The train comes to a stop and the conductor looks into each compartment to find out who pulled the brakes. He discovers a dead man who was obviously murdered. It's a lawyer named Branko. The criminal police of the country on whose territory you are currently located will be involved immediately. Detective Inspector Ivanovich and the detective candidate Costa Balaban from the nearby small town of Tarna take up the investigation after you have reached the town's train station. Each of the passengers questioned seems suspicious, and quite a few passengers actually have something on their books or are at least hiding something.

First of all, it becomes clear that the servant of the noble Baron Hübner, Franz Schulz, pulled the emergency brake. The reason for this was extremely banal: Franz wanted to impress the

	Movie
original title	<u>Orient express</u>
production country	<u>Deutsches Reich</u>
original language	<u>German</u>
Publishing year	<u>1944</u>
length	80 minutes
	<u>Rod</u>
directing	<u>Viktor Touriansky</u>
script	<u>Emil Burry</u> <u>Viktor Tourjansky</u>
production	<u>George Witt</u>
Music	<u>Lothar Brühne</u>
camera	<u>Franz Koch</u>
cut	<u>Werner Jacobs</u>
	occupation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Siegfried Breuer</u> : Baron Erich Huebner</li> <li>▪ <u>Rudolf Prack</u> : Franz Schulz, his servant</li> <li>▪ <u>Lisa Siebel</u> Dr. Inge Geldern, Hübner's ex-wife</li> <li>▪ <u>Gusti Wolf</u> : Sonja Tonschek</li> <li>▪ <u>Paul Dahlke</u> : Criminal Inspector Ivanovich</li> <li>▪ <u>Joseph Offenbach</u> : Costa Balaban, criminal aspirant</li> <li>▪ <u>Oskar Sima</u> : Mischa Kober, reporter</li> <li>▪ <u>Hilde Sessak</u> : Vera Panaid</li> <li>▪ <u>Nikolai Kolin</u> : sleeping car conductor</li> <li>▪ <u>Heini Handschumacher</u> : private detective Karl Holzer</li> <li>▪ <u>Albert Lippert</u> : Attorney Branko</li> <li>▪ <u>Lotte Lang</u> : Mizzi Treff, Soubrette</li> </ul>

pretty young fellow traveler Sonja Tonschek. But he is out of the question as a murderer. Franzen's employer, the smooth-looking and cosmopolitan baron, seems a lot more suspicious. He has a head injury which he claims was sustained when the train came to a sudden stop. Or did the murdered man put up a strong fight against the culprit shortly before he passed away? Ivanovich's suspicions about the nobleman seem to be hardened at first, as it soon turns out that the baron's divorced wife, Frau Dr. Inge Geldern, who was the dead man's new fiancé. So is it a bloody act of jealousy?

- Viktor Afritsch : Radlinsky, hairdresser
- Walther Jung : Your Excellency
- Tibor von Halmay : Jarov Hanek, a jockey
- Georg Vogelsang : Anton Kruckenhauser, butcher
- Karl Hanft : officer of the station guard
- Georg Hurdalek : reporter and Mischa's associate

His Excellency, a high-ranking politician, also on board as a passenger, is already staying far too long, and so the elderly man offers an amount of 10,000 Reichsmarks if the perpetrator is caught within the next two hours. The two police officers then step up their game. Documents found at Branko's prove that the dead man was still married to the actress Vera Panaid despite his engagement to Inge. Ivanovich and Balaban suspect that this could be the key to solving the case. There also seems to be a connection between the hurriedly fetched lady and the detective Holzer, who is traveling on the train – even if the latter claims that he inconspicuously accompanied the lawyer at Branko's request.

Passenger Kruckenhauser, on the other hand, a butcher, recognizes in Vera a woman who was involved in an inheritance scam. Her partner at the time was that Mr. Holzer. Soon the picture is complete: Holzer and Vera are a couple of swindlers. While the self-appointed detective was always on the lookout for terminally ill men who might be dying and leaving an inheritance, the two subsequently forged the moribund's papers and presented Vera as the respective wife (and thus also heiress). But in the case of Branko, something went wrong: The terminally ill had pulled himself together and got well again. When Branko finally wanted to marry his Inge, the registry office certified that he was already married to Vera Panaid.

Eventually, Holzer and his accomplice Vera, who accuses Holzer of having committed the murders, are arrested. The baron can get closer to his ex again, and servant Franz can devote himself entirely to his lady of hearts, Sonja. And the bloodcurdling scream at the beginning of the story? Several violinists caused this out of anger when they drove into the dark tunnel while recording. Ivanovich generously hands over the promised reward of 10,000 marks to Balaban, who was the first to get the right nose about Holzer. He can use the money very well, as he became a father of three children a few hours earlier.

## Production Notes

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*Orient-Express* <sup>[1]</sup> was shot completely in the Bavaria studios in Geiseltal from December 4, 1943, shooting was completed in mid-February 1944. <sup>[2]</sup> The premiere took place on December 1, 1944 in Nuremberg, the Berlin premiere in the Taueztienpalast was not until March 8, 1945.

Ludwig Reiber and Rudolf Pfenninger designed the film sets, Ursula Maes designed the costumes. The Hungarian Tibor von Halmay played his last film role here.

The film received the state film award "artistically valuable".

The exterior shots of the train cut into the film show different express trains, some of which are pulled by a class 18 . Some of these are also equipped with normal (German) wagons. Some recordings are also from Willy Zielke's film Das Stahltier . In the platform scenes, which were created entirely in the studio, you can see replica CIWL teak carriages , some of which have had their name lettering removed. However, it should only be a backdrop building. <sup>[3]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>

## Reception

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Chief censor Arnold Bacmeister was still raving about the film in a letter to his boss Joseph Goebbels on March 23, 1945, stating: "The audience is very impressed by this lively crime film, which is not lacking in pace, excitement and humor." Nevertheless, reviews were held of the film in the press publications 1944/45 not allowed in view of the seriousness of the war situation. *Orient Express* was "regarded as the best crime film of recent times" by Bacmeister himself, the head of the censorship board . <sup>[5]</sup>

"Cheerful, relaxed, conservative crime entertainment for German wartime distraction cinema."

– Lexicon of International Film <sup>[6]</sup>

## See also

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- List of German feature films premiered in the German Reich during the Nazi era

## Web Links

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- *Orient Express* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0037155/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- *Orient Express* (<https://www.filmportal.de/2593c531453e42d49452a5b7e1390d14>) at filmportal.de

## Itemizations

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1. Spelling according to the film opening credits and Film-Kurier
2. Ulrich J. Klaus: German sound films 13th year 1944/45. p. 92 (049.44), Berlin 2002
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuMlgK5Dm0Q>
4. *Railway in Film - Rail Movies: Table*. (<https://www.eisenbahn-im-film.de/eif1.htm>) Retrieved March 1, 2023 .
5. quoted by Boguslaw Drewniak: *The German Film 1938-1945* . A general overview. Düsseldorf 1987, p. 430
6. *Orient Express* (<https://www.filmdienst.de/film/details/40491>) in the encyclopedia of international film, accessed April 1, 2019

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