



ENDRE HULES
writer/director/actor

Hungarians abroad – what a diverse group of people! Spread around the wide world we come from all backgrounds, creeds, convictions, and make no mistake, we all have strong opinions. But we have one thing in common. We are outside Hungary, tied to it with the umbilical cord of our cultural heritage.

Our position gives us a unique perspective – we are not blinded by Hungary’s everyday internal politics, and we have a keen sense of how the outside world perceives our country. We have a historical view of Hungary - and we can “translate” Hungarian thinking and culture to the world, where we live. We have the connections and the knowhow to be Hungary’s ambassadors.

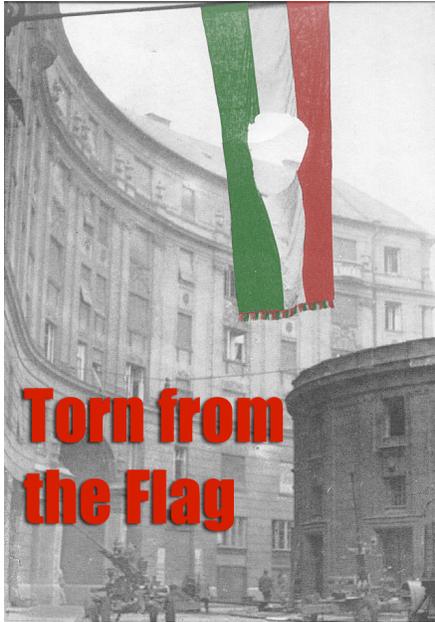
One obstacle in the way is the distrust, misinformation and miscommunication still left over from the Cold War. We had spent four decades calling each other names across the Iron Curtain, so it is no wonder that breaking through the ingrained suspicion and reflexive dismissal doesn’t come easy on either side.

The most important task we face is to establish and improve constructive two-way communication that allows us to work together.

The entertainment industry can play a pivotal role in this. We can not only deliver Hungarian entertainment to the first generation of immigrants, or keep the cultural line unbroken for future generations, but are also able to spread the recognition of our unique culture outside the Hungarian community to the general public, as well as to tackle issues within Hungary from a different point of view.

As a filmmaker, I find that the best way to open up to each other’s ideas and pave the way for cooperation is to get to know each other. Telling our stories and sharing our concerns we get away from the stereotypes, become more real in the others’ eyes, and have a better sense of how to relate to one another. And the most efficient way to tell stories is through visual media.

During the past decade, I was trying to bridge this communication gap with the help of films made both in the U.S. and Europe, including Hungary.



In the highly successful documentary, Torn From The Flag, financed entirely by the immigrant community and sponsored by the Hungarian American Coalition, we provided a global view of the 1956 uprising with a thoroughness none of the over 100 films made about the same subject came even close to. We examined the entire period from the 1945 Yalta Agreement that “gave” Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union until the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1990, to see both the causes and the consequences of those fateful weeks. We interviewed all parties involved, from the revolutionaries to the Soviet soldiers and AVO agents, the biographers of Khrushchev as well as Eisenhower, historians, UN experts, world dignitaries, including Henri Kissinger, Otto von Habsburg, or present and past Hungarian leaders.

The film was acclaimed around the world as a “historical thriller” and won numerous awards – but it has never been released in Hungary.

My latest feature film, a Hungarian-Canadian-Slovenian co-production, The Maiden Danced to Death (www.TheMaidenDancedToDeath.com), dealt with the aftermath of dismantling the Iron Curtain. The heroes are two brothers who had started a folk dance company during the Soviet era, one of them defected and made a life for himself as a dance impresario, the other stayed.



This is essentially the only difference between the two, their interests, talent and character are so

similar that their lives could be two possibilities for a single person (a German magazine called it “a Hungarian Cain and Abel story”). Twenty years after their breakup, the brothers meet up for the first time in the 90s. Their clash is channeled through a dance production they decide to produce together based on the ancient ballad, “The Maiden Danced to Death.” The film, photographed stunningly by Vilmos Zsigmond, not only tackles the still burning tensions between the “defectors” and those who “stayed,” but it is also a love poem to the beauty of Budapest, as well as to Hungarian dance and music. It has played on every continent, won many awards and rave reviews and audiences responded to different aspects of it at the farthest reaches of the world. Although it was one of the most popular films at the Hungarian Film Week in Budapest, it also created controversy in Hungary, where so far returning immigrants had been portrayed in films only as rogues or repentant prodigal sons. I think the dialogue it started up is quite timely and important. Hopefully, this is just the beginning.

Everywhere I go I stumble upon amazing stories of courage and achievement. What’s more, now people search me out with their stories. This is what happened, when a San Diego yoga instructor, Frank Iszak, handed me his memoirs at a screening – the story of an amazing escape. I spent the last year researching the background and writing the script, “Freedom Flight.” The film, an unabashed thriller, will be shot in English, with the intent to reach the widest possible audience worldwide. We are about to launch the fundraising campaign in the coming weeks (www.freedomplane.com), with a planned release next year.

Let’s tell our stories. Let’s make our presence, our history, our contribution to the world known and – most of all – let’s make a difference. It is our burden, our opportunity and our fate.

Wishing you all the best!

Endre Hules, writer/director of the award-winning feature films Torn From the Flag and The Maiden Danced to Death, and writer of Prima Primavera, graduated as a director from Hungary’s National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts, and as a producer from the American Film Institute. A recipient of 2 CINE Golden Eagles, 2 European Media Awards, and a Screen Actors Guild Award among others, his films were produced in a dozen different countries and shown around the world. He acted in close to a hundred Hollywood productions like Apollo 13, Seven, Angels and Demons, The Peacemaker, Zoolander, 24, Monk, Frasier, NYPD Blue, Masterpiece Theatre and many more. He taught acting, directing and writing at New York University, the University of Southern California, Bard College, Smith College, the Conservatoire Espace Acteur de Paris and workshops in Europe, North America and Japan. Currently, he has two films in development, Freedom Flight (www.freedomplane.com), about the first Hungarian hijacking, and The House of Pain about the life of Hungarian actor, Bela Lugosi.

For further information, go to www.endrehules.com.