

A Hungarian Motion Picture Ltd. / Magic Media Ltd. / EuroArts Medien GmbH /
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Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Co-Production

An Andras Hamori Production
A Film By Lajos Koltai

FATELESS

Starring:

Marcell Nagy
Áron Dimény
András M. Kecskés
József Gyabronka
Endre Harkányi
and
Daniel Craig

Editor: Hajnal Sellő H.S.E. Sound: Simon Kaye AMPS, CAS
Costume Designer: Györgyi Szakács Production Designer: Tibor Lázár
Cinematographer: Gyula Pados H.S.C. Music: Ennio Morricone
Executive Producers: László Vincze, Bernd Hellthaler, Robert Buckler
Supervising Producer: Lajos Szakácsi Producer: Péter Barbalics
Producer (UK): Ildiko Kemeny Producer (Germany): Jonathan Olsberg
Associate Producers: Tibor Krskó, Endre Sik, Jonathan Haren, Michael Reuter,
Károly Varga, András Benyó, Miriam Zachar

Produced by Andras Hamori
Screenplay by Imre Kertész, based on his novel Sorstalanság
Directed by Lajos Koltai

EUREKA! – DETAILS FROM IMRE KERTESZ'S NOBEL LECTURE

[...]

It is often said of me - some intend it as a compliment, others as a complaint - that I write about a single subject: the Holocaust. I have no quarrel with that. Why shouldn't I accept, with certain qualifications, the place assigned to me on the shelves of libraries? Which writer today is not a writer of the Holocaust? One does not have to choose the Holocaust as one's subject to detect the broken voice that has dominated modern European art for decades. I will go so far as to say that I know of no genuine work of art that does not reflect this break. It is as if, after a night of terrible dreams, one looked around the world, defeated, helpless. I have never tried to see the complex of problems referred to as the Holocaust merely as the insolvable conflict between Germans and Jews. I never believed that it was the latest chapter in the history of Jewish suffering, which followed logically from their earlier trials and tribulations. I never saw it as a one-time aberration, a large-scale pogrom, a precondition for the creation of Israel. What I discovered in Auschwitz is the human condition, the end point of a great adventure, where the European traveler arrived after his two-thousand-year-old moral and cultural history.



Now the only thing to reflect on is where we go from here. The problem of Auschwitz is not whether to draw a line under it, as it were; whether to preserve its memory or slip it into the appropriate pigeonhole of history; whether to erect a monument to the murdered millions, and if so, what kind. The real problem with Auschwitz is that it happened, and this cannot be altered - not with the best, or worst, will in the world. This gravest of situations was characterized most accurately by the Hungarian Catholic poet János Pilinszky when he called it a "scandal". What he meant by it, clearly, is that Auschwitz occurred in a Christian cultural environment, so for those with a metaphysical turn of mind it can never be overcome.

GYÖRGYI SZAKÁCS (costume designer). His previous films include *A Hídember* (The Bridgeman), *Csocsó, avagy éljen május elseje!* (May Day Mayhem!), *Szembesítés* (Taking Sides), *Jadviga párnája* (Jadviga's Pillow), *A Napfény íze* (Sunshine), *Bűvös vadász* (Magic Hunter), *Melodráma* (Melodrama (Love and Freedom)), *Eszterkönyv* (Book of Esther), *Szerencsés Dániel* (Daniel Takes a Train), *Elveszett illúziók* (Lost Illusions).

LISA GERRARD (song), born 2 April 1961 in Australia. In 1981, she and Brendan Perry formed one of the most popular world music bands, *Dead Can Dance*. As the band – rounded out by Paul Erikson and Simon Monroe – rarely performs in concert, it was considered an important event when it appeared in Hungary in May 1995.

After her first and last film role (*El niño de la luna*), Gerrard began to write film music. In 1992, she sang one of the interludes in *Baraka*, after which she worked on such productions as *The Affair of the Necklace*, *Ali*, *Whale Rider*, *Tears of the Sun*, *King Arthur*, *Nadro*, *The 13th Warrior*, *The Insider*, *Gladiator*, *Mission: Impossible II*, and *Coil*.

Lisa Gerrard sang *Hymn for Solitude*, one of the wordless interludes in *Sorstalanság* (Fateless), at Hungarian Radio in Budapest.

CAST BIOS

MARCELL NAGY (Gyuri Köves) *Fateless* is the second film for 15-year-old actor Marcell Nagy, an 8th grade, elementary school student who was picked by director Lajos Koltai as a result of a small part he played in the Hungarian-Italian TV movie *Boys from Pal Street* in 2003.

During the 3 month unscheduled hiatus of *Fateless*, Marcell grew 8 centimeters, and as a result, the script needed to be changed.

Marcell would like to remain involved with filmmaking but on the other side of the camera – he wants to be a cinematographer.



Gorris, starring John Torturro and Emily Watson) and is the UK Producer of *Fateless* directed by Academy Award nominee Lajos Koltai based on Imre Kertész' Nobel prize winning book. She is Co-producer of *Best Man* (directed by Stefan Schwartz, starring Stuart Townsend, Amy Smart and Seth Green).

ENNIO MORRICONE (composer) Legendary composer Ennio Morricone began studying music at Rome's Conservatory of Santa Cecilia at the age of 12. Urged to concentrate on composition by his instructors, he supported himself by playing trumpet in jazz bands, and then worked for Italy's national radio network after graduating from the conservatory. He didn't begin scoring films until the early '60s, and didn't begin attracting international notice until he began collaborating with director Sergio Leone, starting with *A Fistful of Dollars* in the mid-'60s.

Although busy with collaborations with Leone, Morricone found time for various other film projects, such as the agitprop classic *Battle of Algiers* and *Burn!* By the 1970s, Morricone was winding down his involvement with both Leone and the spaghetti Western, working with numerous other directors all over the world. Although his name will always be synonymous with the spaghetti Western, Morricone has also contributed to a huge range of other film genres, including comedies, dramas, thrillers, horror films, romances, art movies, and exploitation movies. Having written nearly 400 film scores, Morricone is one of the film world's most versatile artists.

The 1980s, '90s, and 2000s saw Morricone's commercial success and widespread recognition at an all-time peak. To date, he's garnered five Academy Award nominations for his work on the films *The Mission* in 1986, *The Untouchable* in 1987, and *Bugsy* in 1991, among others. Since then, he's worked for such top directors as Pedro Almodovar, Brian DePalma, Roman Polanski, Mike Nichols, Oliver Stone, and Barry Levinson on memorable films including *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), *Malena* (2000), and most recently *Kill Bill: Vol 1 & 2* (2003/2004).

GYULA PADOS (cinematographer), born 2 April 1969. In 1996, he graduated as a cinematographer from the Academy of Drama and Film, where he made the short film *Dawn*, which won several international prizes. He then photographed several short subjects and commercials. He worked in England, where he filmed two feature films: *Hotel Splendide* (2000), directed by Terence Gross and starring Toni Collette, Daniel Craig, and Katrin Cartlidge and *The Heart of Me* (2002), directed by Thaddeus O'Sullivan and starring Helena Bonham Carter, Olivia Williams and Paul Bettany. He is again working in Hungary. He photographed Nimród Antal's multiple prize-winning *Kontrol* (*Control*) and *Állítsátok meg Terézanyut!* (*Stop Mother Teresa!*).

TIBOR LÁZÁR (set designer). His previous work includes *Je suis vivante et je vous aime* (*I'm Alive and I Love You*). *Jakob the Liar* and *Roncsfilm* (*Junk Movie*) are some of the films on which Lázár worked as art director.

Old prophecies speak of the death of God. Since Auschwitz we are more alone, that much is certain. We must create our values ourselves, day by day, with that persistent though invisible ethical work that will give them life, and perhaps turn them into the foundation of a new European culture. I consider the prize with which the Swedish Academy has seen fit to honor my work as an indication that Europe again needs the experience that witnesses to Auschwitz, to the Holocaust were forced to acquire. The decision - permit me to say this - bespeaks courage, firm resolve even - for those who made it wished me to come here, though they could have easily guessed what they would hear from me. What was revealed in the Final Solution, in l'univers concentrationnaire, cannot be misunderstood, and the only way survival is possible, and the preservation of creative power, is if we recognize the zero point that is Auschwitz. Why couldn't this clarity of vision be fruitful? At the bottom of all great realizations, even if they are born of unsurpassed tragedies, there lies the greatest European value of all, the longing for liberty, which suffuses our lives with something more, a richness, making us aware of the positive fact of our existence, and the responsibility we all bear for it.

It makes me especially happy to be expressing these thoughts in my native language: Hungarian. I was born in Budapest, in a Jewish family, whose maternal branch hailed from the Transylvanian city of Kolozsvár (Cluj) and the paternal side from the southwestern corner of the Lake Balaton region. My grandparents still lit the Sabbath candles every Friday night, but they changed their name to a Hungarian one, and it was natural for them to consider Judaism their religion and Hungary their homeland. My maternal grandparents perished in the Holocaust; my paternal grandparents' lives were destroyed by Mátyás Rákosi's Communist rule, when Budapest's Jewish old age home was relocated to the northern border region of the country. I think this brief family history encapsulates and symbolizes this country's modern-day travails. What it teaches me, though, is that there is not only bitterness in grief, but also extraordinary moral potential. Being a Jew to me is once again, first and foremost, a moral challenge. If the Holocaust has by now created a culture, as it undeniably has, its aim must be that an irredeemable reality give rise by way of the spirit to restoration - a catharsis. This desire has inspired me in all my creative endeavors.

[...]

In short, I died once, so I could live. Perhaps that is my real story. If it is, I dedicate this work, born of a child's death, to the millions who died and to those who still remember them. But, since we are talking about literature, after all, the kind of literature that, in the view of your Academy, is also a testimony, my work may yet serve a useful purpose in the future, and - this is my heart's desire - may even speak to the future. Whenever I think of the traumatic impact of Auschwitz, I end up dwelling on the vitality and creativity of those living today. Thus, in thinking about Auschwitz, I reflect, paradoxically, not on the past but the future.

Translated by Ivan Sanders.

"WE FOLLOWED THE SOUL OF A BOY"
 – CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR LAJOS KOLTAI –

How did you first come across Imre Kertész's novel?

Just before shooting *Malena*, someone gave me the book obviously with the intention that I would photograph the film based on it. I was hardly able to begin reading it during the shooting because I was easily distracted by the daily pressures of making a film. I nevertheless began to read *Fateless* and fell in love with it within a few moments because I had never known this kind of Hungarian literature. I didn't know Imre Kertész's work, which can be attributed in part to the fact that when *Fateless* first appeared in 1975, it was shrouded in complete obscurity. Later György Spiró wrote a review of the book, thanks to which a lot more people took notice of it. I would like to emphasize that at first I fell in love with the book as literature and not as a potential film adaptation. It's true that I'm an extraordinarily visual reader since this is what I do in life.

When I first read it, I visualized the film, and this was a good sign because the most important moments in my life appear to me as films rich in detail. *Time Stands Still*, for example, was like this. I knew beforehand how it would look. I wanted to meet Kertész personally so that I could tell him how much I liked his writing. Fortunately, he was curious about me and he wanted to know what I thought about the book. Zsuzsa Radnóti, the senior literary adviser at the Comedy Theater of Budapest (*Vígyszínház*), arranged for us to meet. I told Imre everything I thought about the book, and he asked me not to praise it so much because I would embarrass him. After this, he pulled out the first screenplay version of *Fateless*, and in the header it read "Written by Imre Kertész in cooperation with György Spiró." He asked me to contact him as soon as I'd read it and we would meet. He was primarily curious about whether the book could be filmed. We soon agreed that the characteristic feature of the book was that it is linear and not discursive since there are no climaxes in it and the catharses are in the soul of the main character and not on the surface.

There is no attractive key scene in the story that the entire film could build up to. Instead, things happen quietly, step by step – pure and simple. In film it is a hard thing to give up the emotional big scenes and scan the story by sitting quietly and following a soul. There aren't many people who would take up this challenge. After I expressed my thoughts in connection with the linearity, Imre said, "I wrote what you just said. I would like you to direct the film." I said yes of course, and he immediately called up the film's producer, the production office, and the publisher holding the rights and informed them of the new lineup. Since the emotional excess that makes a story work was missing in several places in the first version of the screenplay, Imre and I started in on a new version in which beginning with the first teardrop, it leads beautifully up an emotional stairway. Since Imre is perfectly aware of the difference between literature and film, he sent me 10-15 pages at a time as he wrote them and from there on he left the actualization up to my own director's vision and never interfered with the work.

liance Pictures. His productions include David Cronenberg's *Crash* and *Existenz*, and Atom Egoyan's *The Sweet Hereafter*, which won the Grand Prix at Cannes in 1997, and earned two Academy Award nominations for Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay.

In 1999, Hamori produced Academy Award-winner Istvan Szabo's *Sunshine*, starring Ralph Fiennes, which was nominated for three Golden Globes in 2001, including Best Picture, and won Best Picture at the Canadian Academy Awards. *Sunshine*, released in the U.S. by Paramount Classics became one of the top grossing independent films of 2000.

In June 2000, Hamori formed H2O Motion Pictures and produced *The 51st State*, starring Samuel L. Jackson, Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar*, starring Samantha Morton, and *Max* directed by Menno Meyjes and starring John Cusack.

PÉTER BARBALICS (producer) Hungarian born and educated graduate of the Universe of Szeged Media and Communication School, Barbalics has produced Felix award-winning *Woyzeck*. He was also producer of *Vaska Easoff* – a film by Peter Gothar.

Barbalics co-produced *The Luzhin Defense*, directed by Marleen Gorris, starring John Torturro and Emily Watson.

He is currently co-producing "*Pesti Harlem*" directed by Akos Takács.

ILDIKO KEMENY (producer) Hungarian born and educated graduate of the UK's National Film and Television School, has produced award-winning co-productions through Renegade Films (UK) such as *Hotel Splendide* (starring Toni Colette and Daniel Craig) and *Room To Rent* (starring Juliette Lewis and Said Tagmaoui). She was Production Associate on *The Luzhin Defense* (directed by Marleen



FILMMAKERS

IMRE KERTÉSZ (author, scriptwriter) was born on Nov. 9, 1929 in Budapest, Hungary. On June 30th, 1944, at the age of 14, Kertész was deported to Auschwitz and was subsequently imprisoned in several concentration camps. After the liberation of the camps in 1945, Kertész returned to Hungary where he supported himself doing physical labor as well as the occasional journalism and playwright job.

In 1975, Kertész published *Fateless*, his first novel. Since then, he has written several more novels, including *Looking for a Clue*, *Detective Story*, *The British Flag*, *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, and *Gallery-Diary* 1961-1991.

Kertész is also very successful in Germany. His collected works were published by Rowohlt Publishers in 1999 and by Suhrkamp Publishers in 2002.

Also working as a translator, Kertész has translated the works of Elias Canetti, Sigmund Freud, Hugo von Hoffmannstahl, Friedrich Nietzsche, Joseph Roth, Arthur Schnitzler, and Ludwig Wittgenstein among others, including several contemporary German and Austrian authors. He has been a member of the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung since 1988.

Imre Kertész won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2002.

LAJOS KOLTAI, A.S.C. (director) is one of the best known contemporary cinematographers of our times, working both in Europe and the United States. In 2001, Koltai was nominated for an Academy Award for Giuseppe Tornatore's *Malena*.

For the past 23 years, Koltai has been a constant collaborator of director Istvan Szabo, making 14 films together. Koltai was the cinematographer of the 1981 Oscar winning film *Mephisto*, as well as 3 other Oscar nominated films by Szabo, *Confidence* in 1979, *Colonel Redl* in 1986, and *Hanussen* in 1988.

In 1987, Koltai shot his first American movie, *Gabi – A True Story*. This was followed by a series of other American films including *Out to Sea*, *Mother, Home for the Holidays*, *Just Cause*, *When a Man Loves a Women*, and *Mobsters*. At the same time, Koltai continued his work in Europe as cinematographer for Istvan Szabo on *Meeting Venus*, *Sunshine*, *Taking Sides*, and *Being Julia*, and for Giuseppe Tornatore on *The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean*, and *Malena*. He also recently shot *Menno Meyjes' Max* starring John Cusack.

ANDRAS HAMORI (producer) Films produced or executive produced by Andras Hamori have been nominated for two Academy Awards, three Golden Globe Awards and won several major awards at the Cannes Film Festival, as well as the Berlin, Venice and Toronto Film Festivals. His films also won a number of European Film Awards and Canadian Academy Awards including Best Picture for *Sunshine*.

Andras Hamori was born in Hungary, moving to Toronto in 1981. In 1985 he became a founding partner of Alliance Entertainment and in 1995, President of Al-

Did you only talk about your own visions in connection with preparing the screenplay or did you also discuss other films and genres?

We mostly tried to avoid the mistakes that other depictions of the Holocaust have made. It was important to us that everything we show from this world be exceptionally accurate and adequate. There aren't many survivors around today, unfortunately, but we don't want their descendants to get a false impression about the stories. If we don't know enough about something, we would rather not depict it because there might be a danger of coming into conflict with reality.

As Kertész's descriptions were, fortunately, very precise, we were always safe in starting with them. Curiously, there are people who lived in a tent with Kertész at that time who have survived, and yet they recollect certain things differently. One of them insisted that something happened differently, but two weeks later he called me up and told me that Imre was right. Everything that we actually know comes from photo archives since there were never any film cameras in the camp, there isn't any film documentation of the life of the detainees. Nevertheless, the scholars who deal with the subject are convinced that reels existed. That is, there was filming in the barracks, but these films have disappeared somewhere.

So, only black and white photographs were available to us, the experience of the eye, and we wanted to stick to these as closely as possible throughout the story. We could not show another world that exists only in the memory. The image fades as the action moves forward since, for viewers throughout the world, the Holocaust experience is black and white – or at least not very colorful. After liberation, of course, the Russians and the Americans made many color films, but that was already another world. They depict life after the camps.



Beyond painting a color world and rendering a precise image of the setting, we considered it our most important task to depict the personal, physical and mental change. In most Holocaust films, a minimum of one year, on the average, passes between the beginning and end of the story, but practically no changes are observed in the actors. *Fateless* is a mood film: at one and the same time, a story of emaciation and suffering. The film primarily follows the emaciation of the main character, Gyuri Köves, but of course the parallel fates of the supporting characters who accompany him, then disappear one by one and some of whom perish are also emphasized. We sought the opinion of many doctors about whether this process could be genuinely depicted, and at their suggestion we put Marcell on a "starvation diet" that his parents agreed to. One of my first conditions was that the canteen buses should be set up as far as possible from the camp in order to avoid having people wandering around the sets with food in their hands.

How did you manage to get not only the actors but all of the many extras to play their roles so convincingly?

In the film, the crowds are as important as the individual faces. The extras were great, and they gave their all to the story, over and above the call of duty, owing to the fact that they were always given a precise description of the given situation. I took the people and told them where we were, why we were there, how we got there, and why we were working there. The people needed personal contact, and knowing the sensitivity of the subject, they were open to me. At the end of the day, after 12-15 hours of hard work, the extras came to me and thanked me for being able to work.





19 March 1944: The troops of Nazi Germany occupy Hungary.

29 March 1944: Government decrees 1200, 1210, 1220, 1230 and 1240/1944 are issued. These forbid people of Jewish origin from hiring people of Jewish origin in their households; terminate the membership of people of Jewish origin in the press, theater, and film chambers; and prohibit people of Jewish origin from holding state office. Citizens of Jewish origin are singled out by being forced to wear yellow stars.

15 May 1944: Throughout all of Hungary, people registered as Jews begin to be gathered into ghettos and transported to concentration camps (primarily Auschwitz). Regent Miklós Horthy, orders the deportation of Budapest's Jewry in June.

15 June 1944: The official destruction of the books, the so-called "Jewish books," of artists and scholars of Jewish origin begins.

16 October 1944: The Arrow Cross-led government is formed by Ferenc Szálasi, titling himself "Leader of the Nation." After the Arrow Cross assumes power, the reign of terror against the remaining Jews in Hungary intensifies and goes to extremes.

26 October 1944: The Arrow Cross government sets up the National Inquisition Office, whose task is to persecute opponents of the Arrow Cross regime.

3 November 1944: The Szálasi government issues Decree 3840/1944, which declares that the property of Jews is to be turned over to the state.

4 December 1944: Arrow Cross Minister of Internal Affairs Gábor Vajna orders Budapest's Jews moved into the ghetto. Great numbers of people continue to be loaded onto trains. In the final year of the Second World War, 600,000 Hungarian Jews are killed in concentration camps and in Hungary.

13 February 1945: Troops from the Second Ukrainian Front drive the Nazis and the Arrow Cross from Budapest. Thanks to these troops, a large part of the Jews in Budapest escape.

of a new Jewish revival. See the experience of history." (Heydrich's words according to the Wannsee Protocol)

End of January 1942: Hitler's remarkable statement: "The result of the war will be the extermination of the Jews." Hitler, as his actions clearly demonstrate, does his best to carry out his plans in the strictest secrecy. This is partially the reason why at the time of the war there were only estimates of the number of people of Jewish origin who died in the concentration camps. Historians speak of four to eight million victims.

(Based on Mária Ormos's Hitler [Budapest, Polgár kiadó, 1997])

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: HUNGARIAN JEWRY AT THE TIME OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

29 May 1938: Act XV of 1938 on the Equilibrium of Social and Economic Life is passed into law. The so-called "First Jewish Law" stipulates that no more than 20% of the members of the press, legal, medical and engineering chambers (professional associations) may be of the Jewish faith.

5 May 1939: Act IV of 1939 "on the Restriction of Jews in Public Life and the Economy" is passed into law. The so-called "Second Jewish Law" makes a racial rather than religious distinction between Hungarian citizens. Anyone who has at least one parent or at least two grandparents of Jewish origin is considered Jewish. People of Jewish origin are no longer able to get citizenship. In fact, the Minister of Internal Affairs is entitled to strip the citizenship from Hungarian citizens if they acquired their citizenship after 1 July 1914. People of Jewish origin may not be employed in state agencies or public institutions and may not constitute more than 12% of the employees in private companies. People of Jewish origin may not be editors or publishers, and no more than 6% of the members of the press, legal, medical, engineering, theater, and film chambers may be of Jewish origin. People of Jewish origin may not manage theaters or cinemas. This law declares that the indicated percentages must be achieved by 31 December 1942.



Did the final version correspond to what you visualized when you first read the book?

Yes. The film's greatest virtue is that it speaks with clear-cut, lucid scenes. It clearly answers the question for which there is really no answer: "How could all this have happened?" It tells a story that suggests a kind of impossibility, namely that in today's world anything can happen to people at any time: anyone can be taken off a bus at any time; anyone can, at anytime, be forced to fear someone else – this is the film's message. *Fateless* doesn't want to say more. It simply prepares you for the bad since what can happen in this world might not be good.

We did not make a Holocaust film; we simply told the story of a boy. We began to follow Gyuri Köves because he is an interesting person whom you can relate to. He makes us curious about his fate. We followed the soul of a boy, as if in a documentary, as he enters into a world he doesn't want to be part of. It is not our purpose to move the viewer to tears with an interpretation of a heartrending story, but if someone feels like crying, do it. We are not prodding the audience with a needle, we are not milking them for tears, but if in their souls they relate so strongly to the boy that they become emotionally involved with the story, the viewer will break into tears. Interestingly enough, every time I see *Fateless* again, I don't distance myself from it as I do with my other films, but I feel closer and closer to it.

Was directing the televised theater production Imre Kertész: Fateless a kind of warm-up for the film?

Iván Darvas recited the drastically pared down text in the József Attila Theater. When the recording of the performance was being discussed, Kertész thought that I should do it. The text Darvas spoke is not the same as the text of the film, but it helped me study and analyze the impact of the text on people. Darvas has a great face, and the camera can linger on it, but I was also curious about something else. I took Marcell, who had not yet been chosen for the part, to the performance. Sometimes I spliced the boy's face into the film as if he was confronting the story of his own life, and I showed the faces of several survivors.

The story of Gyuri Köves, which is reflected in their common opinion, is the fate of that character, who was created by the written and spoken word. I looked for bright, beautiful faces, but I very rarely spliced them into the film because they didn't fit into the film's dark subject matter. While quietly directing the cameras, I was always sneaking peaks at Marcell's face, and I discovered he has a piercing gaze in dark, black spaces. This was the most important thing for me. I knew that Marcell has the ability to tell a story with the expression on his face and express a wide range of emotions. I was right. At the end of the film somebody else is looking back at us. Gyuri Köves, despite his youth, turns into a wise old man who, at that moment, knows more about life than anybody else around him.

„CHAMELEON PROFESSION“

– CONVERSATION WITH CINEMATOGRAPHER GYULA PADOS –

How did you get involved with the production?

Lajos Koltai first contacted me in August 2003, and I had to say no because I had already promised to photograph another Hungarian film, and shooting for the two films would have overlapped. Owing to a fortunate accident, however, work on the other film was delayed and so I was able to give a definite yes to *Fateless* in October.

Were you the director's first choice?

As far as I know, an English cinematographer was – for co-production and financing reasons – initially supposed to have photographed the film. Later, however, the financial plan changed and the producer thought about it and decided that since this is a Hungarian story – so it is very important for the filmmakers to have personal contact with the subject – a Hungarian cinematographer would, after all, be better.

Had you ever worked with a director whose thinking was as visual as Lajos Koltai's?

Since directors who think strictly in images are not very common in Hungary, there is, in this regard, generally much more work for the cinematographer. In other countries, however, a large part of the directors are visual, and this is really helpful for me. It is a primary consideration while working that you make the director's film and not your own. Being a cinematographer, therefore, is a kind of chameleon profession. You have to figure out what the director really wants. It's really helpful if the director sketches the outlines of the work precisely, and the cinematographer must think within these outlines. In this regard, working with Sutyi (Lajos Koltai's nickname in film circles – ed.) was ideal since he's one of the best cameramen in the world, and naturally he knows exactly what he wants to see on the screen. It was easy and fun to identify with the images in his head, to help actualize them, and to light up the scenes.

Hungarian film has not yet dealt with the Holocaust with such truthfulness and in such depth. Was this a stumbling block or a challenge for you?

We talked a lot about this with the director before we began shooting. Like him, I like original locations more than a studio because in a studio all of the illusion vanishes beyond the walls of the set. Thanks to the director's fantastic persistence – despite the fact that he could have used special effects to save money on set construction – the camps in the story were almost as big as the real one, and so the feeling that they were locked in a labor camp from which they couldn't escape had an enormous impact on the director and all of the actors. The fundamental impact of the environment could not have been replaced with special effects, particularly if you consider that the film's lead role is an amateur and not

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE ROAD TO THE FINAL SOLUTION

30 January 1933: President Hindenburg appoints Adolf Hitler, the head of the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei [National Socialist German Workers' Party]), chancellor. Hitler forms the first government in Europe in which Nazis hold cabinet positions.

15 September 1936: The Nuremberg Laws are issued in Germany. They stipulate who in the Nazi state is to be considered Jewish and deprive these people of their civil rights.

30 January 1939: In the thirties, Hitler treats the Jews as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the West and refrains from physically mistreating them. In a 30 January radio speech, however, Hitler openly threatens them for the first time and from then on regularly repeats his threats. Plans to completely exterminate European Jewry replace the plan to relocate them to Madagascar, which had previously been considered a realistic alternative.

1 September 1939: Nazi Germany invades Poland, unleashing the Second World War. There were eight concentration camps in Europe at the beginning of the war. By the end of the war, there were 22. In addition to those in Germany (Dachau, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück), camps are set up in some of the occupied countries (mostly in Austria and Poland). The largest of these is Auschwitz, which is ordered to be set up in April of 1940. Approximately four million people die there by the time it is liberated by the Red Army on 27 January 1945. The greater part of the victims are Jewish.

8-9 November 1939: Kristallwoche (the night of the broken glass). The nationwide pogrom targets Jews throughout Germany. More than 100 synagogues are burned down during the pogrom, which lasts until the 14th, and 7,500 shops are destroyed.

30 January 1941: Hitler speaks on the radio about exterminating the Jews. During the year, the expression Endlösung (Final Solution) becomes increasingly more common in official, top secret German documents. The plan for a solution to the "Jewish question" is outlined by the middle of 1941 at the latest. The Nazis' objective is the extermination of Europe's entire Jewish population along with the other "worthless" elements (Gypsies, homosexuals and the mentally ill), who, according to the Nazis' racial theory, are similar to them.

20 January 1942: With Hitler's prior approval, Reinhardt Heydrich convenes a conference of Reichsprotektors at a villa near Berlin's Wannsee in order to discuss the Final Solution. "Approximately 11 million Jews will be involved in the final solution of the European Jewish question.... In the course of the final solution, the Jews are to be allocated for appropriate labor in the East. Able-bodied Jews, separated according to sex, will be taken in large work columns to these areas for work on roads, in the course of which action doubtless a large portion will be eliminated by natural causes. The possible final remnant will, since it will undoubtedly consist of the most resistant portion, have to be treated accordingly because it is the product of natural selection and would, if released, act as a seed

FACTS AND FIGURES

Title:

FATELESS

Title in Hungarian:

SORSTALANSÁG

Pre-production:

2 years: 2002-2003

Principal Photography:

Phase 1: December 15, 2003 – December 21, 2003

Phase 2: January 19, 2004 – February 8, 2004

Phase 3: May 10, 2004 - June 27, 2004

Post Production:

July 1, 2004 – February 7, 2005

Length of shoot:

11 weeks (59 days).

10 weeks were spent in six Hungarian cities, and 1 week in Germany, Erfurt

Cast:

145 actors and approximately 10,000 extras were used

Crew:

(including Germany and UK) approximately 500 crew members

Film Stock:

70,000 meters of Kodak 35mm Film (250 D 500 T)

Sound stock:

203 Roles of Nagra

Script:

119 pages, 146 scenes, 653 setups and 2501 slates

Fateless is a co-production between Hungary, Germany and the United Kingdom.



a professional actor. Of course, the size of the set presented all kinds of technical problems for me as well as for others since I had never worked in conditions like these before, but despite this I left the location with a terrible feeling at the end of filming. We shot for a total of approximately four weeks at the two camps, and, because of the fullness and totality of it all, we felt as if we actually lived there.

Were there any problems with the four-month break in shooting?

It was a horrible experience. Almost all of the people working on the film took a break. I, for one, was worried about Sutyi. The uncertainty was total. Nevertheless, I now think that it was good for the film. It helped the story a lot that during this period Marci (Marcell Nagy, the lead role – ed.) grew eight centimeters, his face changed, and, I think, he changed inside. He was visibly embittered by the break in shooting. It was fantastic to see him age first through the camera and then on the screen.

There are many close-ups on Marcell Nagy's face in the film. How quickly did he begin to feel the camera?

Marci is an unbelievably talented young man, who has an astonishingly powerful on-screen presence. Naturally there were a few difficulties at first since the first day was hard for everyone, but by the end of shooting he had become a completely different person. You can even see the changes in Marci in the film. At the beginning of the action, we see someone as he starts off, but at the end he becomes a completely different person. I have never seen such a disciplined child in my life. I was astonished by his unbelievable concentration, stamina, precision, and awareness. He was able to repeat his performance in certain scenes with great precision.





How was work divided between you and the director?

It was like a foreign shoot. At first we discussed where Sutyi wanted which scenes. He was used to “directing actors for the camera.” He stood next to the camera and pushed the actors. Meanwhile I was busy with the lights – that is, lighting and colors. I really enjoyed this stage of the work, and I was absolutely flabbergasted that he never changed a thing. He really respected my work, and he was immensely supportive. I think this method is a tradition in the Szabó school. The cinematographer always has to give the director as much help as he needs, but the cinematographer’s very independent within his own sphere.

It’s hard to compare the visual style of Control and Stop Mother Teresa!, which you photographed, with Fateless, but Dawn, your 1993 film-school project, has a strong resemblance to the Kertész adaptation: forbidding, cloudy outdoor exposures and broken, withdrawn people.

The comparison is interesting and I’m a bit taken aback since I haven’t seen Dawn in at least ten years, but the two films actually do have something in common. This is probably something instinctual. Nevertheless, I think that my stamp is on every film I’ve photographed. What I enjoy about cinematography is the fact that the job is different every time. A completely different visual style has to be worked out for each film, and you have to work within this context since every story requires its own composition and its own lighting. The chief virtue of a good cinematographer, therefore, is variety and diversity.

Marcell soon develops friendships with the other child actors and still maintains the relationships. The parents always accompanied the kids to the shoot, and they were very concerned that the children did not catch cold. The bus that Marcell was taken off of in the film does not exist anymore. It was specially built from odds and ends, and it even worked. Small posters from the period were put in it.

Filming was done in the old town section of Újpest, and the district provided the site for free. Traffic stopped in the area, while people – in today's clothes – thronged about. The curious but not intrusive onlookers had to be kept back by a police cordon.

When asked, Morricone immediately said yes. He had read the book and had already worked with Lajos Koltai on Tornatore's films *Malena* and *La Leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*. When he was shown the first scenes in Rome, he immediately sat down at his piano and started to try out tunes. He immediately discovered a tune as simple and gripping as a folksong. When he saw the finished film, he burst into tears and shut himself in his room. He later said that he wrote a song too – *Hymn for Solitude* (sung by Lisa Gerrard).

Morricone was always the first to arrive in the studio, putting out the sheet music, and getting things ready. As he said, it is all about his music and respecting his colleagues. The last two days of the five-day recording session in Budapest were devoted to mixing. He sat with closed eyes at the mixing console and every now and then he would ask to emphasize a C sharp. Meanwhile, his wife and his manager were in the corner looking at a Budapest guidebook.





TRIVIA ABOUT THE FILMING

First day of filming: Wesselényi Street, last December. The staff hid Marcell from the press because everyone was curious about him. The scene in the basement in which the father says goodbye before going to the labor camp was being filmed. A photographer managed to take a picture, but he was only able to get a shot of Marcell's stand-in. Eszter Fazekas, the cast coordinator, and Marcell's mother were keeping an eye on Marcell in the makeup bus and agreed that he could only go out if the coast was clear and there were no members of the press in the area.

Imre Kertész visited the set on the second day of shooting in the studio. His wife, Magda, was with him. The writer made an emotional tour of the set and praised Lajos Koltai for finding such fantastic objects. The room captured the period perfectly. Kertész sat in the director's chair and looked at the footage in the monitor. He later looked at it in an armchair off the set. He didn't want to go home.

When Magda said that he ought to go home, he told her to go, as she was surely tired, but he would remain longer. During a break, Marcell, with his father in the background and with Sutyi's assistance, dared, ever so shyly, to go up to the Nobel laureate writer with a copy of *Fateless*, which Kertész signed for him.

When the film was shooting in the Rákospuszta train station, a lot of extras in Nazi uniforms made a chilling impact on most of the people there. Costume designer Györgyi Szakács got the uniforms from a German warehouse.

"THE ONLY WAY I COULD HAVE DONE IT WAS IN SECRECY"
– CONVERSATION WITH MARCELL NAGY –

How did you come to be involved in the film?

In November 2002, the director came to the set where the Hungarian-Italian TV film *The Pál Street Boys* was being filmed in order to invite children to audition for *Fateless*. I was the third boy they auditioned, but after our first meeting I went to various rounds in the selection process for an entire year. Supposedly, the director picked me at the second audition, but he always wanted to see me again to be really sure about his decision. Since he usually called me in with other children, I thought that I was taking part in a new round of auditions each time. I had already begun to read the book during the auditions, and later I downloaded the screenplay from the Internet and read that too. I found out that I got the lead role three weeks before shooting began, but I didn't believe it when I first heard the news. After a lot of thought, I decided that, despite all of the difficulties, I could play the role and personify the character of Gyuri Köves.

The fact that you were in the lead role was kept a production secret during filming. Did this make the work easier or more difficult for you?

It was good that it was kept secret because I would not have wanted to have been in the public eye and also because the only way I could have done it was in secrecy. The filming of *The Pál Street Boys* was an adventure. We felt really good, and we were loose. *Fateless*, however, was a great, serious work that



required concentration. At first, it was strange that I was at the center of it all with lots of people around me, but this wasn't the case later on. The presence of my parents and certain members of the staff helped a lot.

What kinds of difficulties were caused by the break in shooting?

I was worried about the film because I wasn't sure that I could have got back into my role if filming began again. My solution was that outwardly I wasn't aware of it and I didn't think about it. I tried to spend my free time as well as possible so I would not think about the film. The first days after the break were a little difficult, but fortunately I soon managed to get back into it. On the whole, we made the best of it, and you could say that it all turned out for the best because we really knew how to take advantage of the time that passed because of the break in



filming. Many people have said that I became more serious and more mature by the end of the film. I feel the same way. My way of thinking changed, as did my approach to most things.

How much stress did the story and the work put on you?

Most of the stress came when filming ended. It took one or two months to get over the emotions, but I soon realized that a completely new chapter was opening in my life in which, fortunately, the people I was close to during the film are getting roles. I have developed a special relationship with Lajos Koltai and a close friendship with Áron Dimény, who plays Bandi Citrom in the film and lives and acts in Kolozsvár. I only met Imre Kertész once, on the first day of filming, and unfortunately I couldn't talk to him for long. There was only enough time for him to sign my book.

