



presents a film by Jaro Vojtek



## PRESS KIT

/Basic information, Synopsis, Brief story outline,  
Director s note, Interviews with the film-makers and their profiles,  
Film credits/

**The film *The Border* awarded as  
„The best East European documentary film of 2009“  
on the 13th International festival of documentary films in Jihlava 2009**

[www.border.sk](http://www.border.sk)

[www.leonproductions.sk](http://www.leonproductions.sk)



## **BASIC INFORMATION**

**Film title:** Hranica

**English title:** The Border

**Country of origin and year of production:** Slovenská republika, 2009

**Production Company:** LEON Productions, spol. s r.o.,

Jadranská 41, 841 01 Bratislava, Slovakia

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**Film was made with the financial support of:**

Ministry of Culture of the Slovak republic

Government Office of the Slovak Republic

Open Society Foundation

**World premiere:** 28.10.2009, IFDF Jihlava 2009, Czech Republic

**Slovak premiere:** 11.11.2009, Bratislava, Slovakia

**Story theme:** A Film about a meaningless border which divided the village of Slemence as well as the fates of its people.

**Webpage:** [www.border.sk](http://www.border.sk)

**Running time:** 72 min.

**Format:** 35 mm, 1:1,66, 2398 m

**Sound:** Dolby Stereo

**Film copies:** 5 /3 with Slovak subtitles, 2 with English subtitles, 1 with Hungarian subtitles/

**Directed by:** Jaroslav Vojtek

**Producer:** Mario Homolka, David Čorba

**Story:** Jaroslav Vojtek

**Written by:** Jaroslav Vojtek, Marek Leščák

**Director of photography:** Tomáš Stanek, Jaroslav Vojtek,

**Edited by:** Maroš Šlapeta, Zuzana Cséplő



**Sound:** Jaro Vojtek, Tobiáš Potočný

**Sound mix:** Marek Lacena

**Music:** Peter Groll

**Executive Producer:** David Čorba

**Appearing in the film:**

Peter Lizák

Tibor Tóth

Štefan Tóth

Pál Bocsárszky ako Vince Tóth

Rebeka Kuiková

Alexander Gilányi

Rebeka Gilányiová

Elena Hornyáková with her son, inhabitants of the towns Malé Slemence and Velké Slemence

## SYNOPSIS

Following WW II the Sub Carpathian Russia (i.e. Eastern part of Czechoslovakia) was allocated to the then Soviet Union and the new state border drawn by politicians in Moscow was, uncompromisingly, staked by the Red Army. The Czechoslovak village Slemence had the bad luck to stand in the new borderline's way. Its inhabitants suddenly found themselves divided into two parts – while one remained in Czechoslovakia, and the other one fell to the Soviets. This led to the violent separation of not only families, parents and children, lovers and friends, but also land and even those buried in the cemetery ...

The history of Velké and Malé Slemence, divided by a forced border of barbed wire, with watchtowers and without a crossing point, had begun. An iron curtain in the middle of the communist camp...

The free opening of a small checkpoint after 60 years has come late. Close relatives died shortly before the opening, and the young people see the "natural" border as an opportunity to make easy money by smuggling in goods and people. On 21 December 2007, this border became the Eastern border of the Schengen area...

The border has, in time, created two totally different worlds from the same community.



## **BRIEF STORY OUTLINE**

After the Soviet army got to Sub-Carpathian Ukraine – the most eastern part of the former Czechoslovakia – in november 1944 it had already been decided about this part being annexed to the Soviet Union. This had been voted at the communist congress in Uzhorod and shortly after that Sub-Carpathian Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union. On the 29th of June, 1945 pro forma agreement confirming this status was made between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

Despite the fact that Moscow was obliged to respect the inner orders of Czechoslovakia the Soviet soldiers on the Slovak territory acted like violent conquerors.

**This political act was a real disaster for the citizens of Velke Slemence.** During the night of August 30, 1946, the village was divided by the Red Army into two parts. One part remained in the former Czechoslovakia; the other one became a part of Ukraine (former Soviet Union) and got a new name: Male Slemence.

**Barbed wire – mercilessly stretched between houses – has divided cemetery and land, as well as families for several decades. There were even cases when parents were left on one side, and their children on the other.** Cultivated land was divided and then confiscated by the relevant states.

In 1949, the three meter high fence was even charged with electric power. Watchtowers were equipped with machine guns and signalling devices. Despite all these measures, families had a vivid communication. Most of them spoke and understood Hungarian, while border police did not. People used to sing while working in the fields divided by the barbed wire, and announce all important information in this way. And thus both sides knew who died, who had a new baby, who got married. Yet they were not allowed to visit each other...

**Mrs Kujikova** was only a girl at the time of division. She was on holiday at her granny's, and was not allowed to return to her parents in Ukraine after the border barriers were raised.

She was not able to attend her mother's funeral. Mother only saw her daughter from distance on the day of her wedding. The parents could only see their daughter's first-born son over the tall fence. „You've got a beautiful son“ they said.

**Mr Toth** used to live on the Slovak side of the village. Here is his story:

While we were little children, soldiers lured us to come closer to the border offering us candies. Then they reported us to the authorities and received vacation passes for a successful action on the border. Everybody wanted to get away from this mad house. I travelled to Bratislava to study, but my friends who stayed back here, are drinking heavily. Some of them became gasoline smugglers, selling gasoline for

seventeen crowns, or joined traffickers to earn more money... One of my friends got arrested by the police.

Another Tibor Toth's story:

In the late eighties, when we went back from parties, we always went to the border. First we had to find out whether there was a real soldier in the watchtower, or a dummy wearing uniform. Ukrainian border soldiers used the dummy to mislead us when they left their posts and went drinking. If we found only dummy in the tower, we would walk backwards to the border leaving footprints in the smooth sand. It seemed as if someone ran from Ukraine into Slovakia. Then we climbed onto the roofs and started alarm signal... We were laughing like hell while those drunken Russians were running here and there...

**Mrs Hornyakova** lives in Slovakia as well. Her native house used to be right where the border line is. In deference to her family and the piece of land she put a cross on this place. She used to come here and pray and remember... After 10 years there was a long journey to the other side of the border .... Waiting in line on the border seemed neverending. To get to the place 6 meters away she had to walk 250 kilometers. Searching for the cross she had placed here was useless. There were now toilets for the customs officers instead. Neither she could find her father's chestnut tree. She always used to take home a few chestnuts as a reminder. The border has ruined the symbols of the past as well as the faith in the future.

**Peter Gilanyi**, the oldest citizen of the village used to be a communist. The communist periodicals have an honourable place in his house, right below the picture of Jesus Christ. He is the village chronicler. Everything that happens on the border he has to tell his blind wife. Although she has been waiting for the border opening like all the other citizens she will never be able to see the other side.

**Mr Lizak** lives only few metres from the border, in the last house of Velke Slemence. He spent all of his life there. As the border line moved, he was a citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic, Slovak state, then Hungarian Republic, then for five weeks a citizen of the Soviet Union, later a citizen of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, then Czechoslovak Federative Republic, and currently he is a citizen of the Slovak Republic. **He was a citizen of seven different states while living all of his life in the same house, yard, garden...**

**Citizens of Male Slemence confirmed that the accession to the Soviet Union was the worst thing that had ever happened to them.** In line with Stalin's policy, many of them were sent to labour camps, or transported to other regions of the Soviet Union. Russian families were then moved into their houses. The idea beyond this act was to weaken the local community, break family ties between both sides of the border, and deport former Czechoslovak citizens "affected by democracy" away from the region.



Towards late fifties, the border protection was less radical. Religious citizens of Velke Slemence were allowed to cross the border and attend masses in the Orthodox Church in Male Slemence. People walked by watchtowers and soldiers carefully counted and reported their numbers.

After Slovakia's independence and in line with Shengen Treaty, Slovak border was strengthened by soldiers again, and visa regime was introduced for Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine answered the same... Citizens of Slemence now have to travel few hundreds of kilometres either to Bratislava or Kiev to apply for expensive visa.

To fight illegal migrants, a new fence was built, and watchtowers are once again occupied by border guards. Illegal border crossing is organized mainly by Ukrainian mafia. Mafia traffickers have already bought a couple of houses in the surroundings, using them for refugees as their first shelters in the Slovak territory. Due to unpleasant economic situation, more and more young people leave Velke Slemence. There are no jobs in the village or its surroundings. Moreover, some entrepreneurs prefer Ukrainian employees – they give them lower salaries and pay no payroll taxes.



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The film tells the story of Slemence – a village situated on the Slovak-Ukrainian border - which was, in 1945, violently divided into two parts. One part fell within the then Soviet Union and the other within Czechoslovakia. This situation has remained unchanged to these days.

In 1945, following the end of WW II, the Soviet army integrated the territory of the then Czechoslovakia into the Soviet Bloc. This act was a disaster for the inhabitants of the village. The barbed wire, relentlessly stretched between the houses, not only divided the cemetery and land, but also the closest families for several decades, in some cases even forever. There were cases, when parents found themselves on one side and their children on the other... The borders were guarded by soldiers with automatic guns; the wire was electrified...

Dividing the village did not only mean the division of houses, but also that of the land cultivated by the villagers. The lands became property of the respective state.

The theme of the film can be characterized by four paradoxes: The strictly watched border was not a border between enemy states, but between shields belonging to a “friendly” socialist camp.

In 2008, when European states were uniting, this border becomes even more guarded, since it became a Schengen border.

Even though after 60 years the border was finally open, the family relations may never recover, as it appears they have been severed for good.

The border through the village is comparable to the Berlin Wall; the difference, however, is that the Berlin Wall eventually fell, while the border between the two Slemence's still exists.

This difficult fate has affected thousands of people, but the story of the divided village has finally been told through the live-stories of its individual inhabitants.

Mrs. Kujíková was a young girl when the village was divided. She was spending her holidays at her grandmother's on the then Slovak side, and, all of a sudden, she was not allowed to return home to her parents. Her mother watched the wedding of her daughter and her grandparents from behind the barbed wire. Mrs. Kujíková was not allowed to go to the funeral of her father; she could only watch it from a distance, looking through to the Soviet side.

The film was shot applying a time lapse method from 2001 to 2008. It records significant event of this time period, such as the referendum on the accession to EU, accession to EU, opening a border checkpoint, and construction of the Schengen checkpoint. Individual stories of the local people have also been incorporated into this time frame.



The house of Mrs. Hornyáková stood right on the borderline. As a memorial to her parents, she erected a cross on its place ... When the checkpoint was open, the cross was destroyed, and in its place they built lavatories for soldiers. The border destroyed the symbols of the past as well as hope for the future.

Mr. Gillányi, a 60-year-old man, had, for three years, been taking care of his sightless wife. He died shortly before the opening of the checkpoint and his wife was moved to a retirement home. But she fulfilled a promise she had made to her husband that she, even blind, would touch the new crossing-point on the other side... There are seven characters in the film capturing the tragedy of this borderline.

The message of the film is that any border created between people only brings pain and suffering ...



## **INTERVIEWS WITH THE FILM-MAKERS AND THEIR PROFILES**



### **INTERVIEW WITH JARO VOJTEK,**

**The film's scriptwriter, director  
and director of photography**

#### **How did you find the village Slemence and the sad story of its people?**

While I was studying at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts, I also made friends with actors, because at that time we were all together at Ventúrska Street. Well, one day I was drinking with Tibor Tóth, an acting student, in the well-known café Depreso, and he started to tell me the story of the small village he lived in, which, 60 years ago, had been divided into two parts; half in Ukraine and half in Slovakia. As a young boy, he had always dreamed of driving through the whole village on his bicycle, but it wasn't possible. I thought that maybe we had drunk too much, but when I later visited Slemence, I found out, that, unfortunately, he was right ....So I became strongly interested in this village, and concurrently with the shooting of "We Are Here", in 2001 I also started shooting The Border.

#### **At the beginning of the shooting, what was your concept of the film? Did it change in any way during the shooting?**

Initially, it was a major challenge for me – how to capture the theme, how to look at the border. For a long time I kept going to Slemence, just to talk to the people, trying to find something that could be the starting point. The stories I collected about the border were already part of the past, and the film still seemed too static to me. I did not want to tell the story of the border through different, artificial and visually constructed situations. I found it very made-up, and, to me, what's most important are films built upon authentic situations, which "breathe" by being lifelike and human. I think I have chosen the more difficult and complicated path, but to seize something, which touched you with the power of a non-repeatable, authentic feeling and to feel as though you had lived through all that together with those people, makes it a unique challenge for me. So I succeeded in finding characters, whose lives have been strongly influenced by the artificially constructed border. And I started capturing their destinies. And my concept of the film changed along with the changes in their destinies over the course of the shooting. I took a risk by recording their stories along with the changing situation at the border. My concept has been fulfilled, and I hope that viewers will also find something in it for themselves. Because I believe that the more intimate and personal my concept of the film is, the more universal and open I



am. The question, however, is, how broad will the range of viewers I reach be, because during the shooting I do not think about the viewers, but I am rather “resolving myself”. Then it makes me even happier, if my films appeal to someone. I am not saying that I did not apply the essential communication elements in the film. My point is to draw in and surprise the viewers, I do not want them to suspect or anticipate the ending. I want them to be stunned, not to remain indifferent. I want the cathartic feeling last event when they leave the theatre... I don't only want to give them what they ask for, I want to give them something in addition, which they did not anticipate ... To let them learn a lot about me through my film, to learn how I see the world and things surrounding me.

### **What message did you want to send to the viewers with The Border?**

I wanted to reflect on the absurdity of creating any borders, and about how helpless man alone is, even now, against the power decisions made by the state or pursuing higher interests. Where is the man – the identity, with unrepeatable and unique stories of his life today? What is an individual, in today's world that embodies the mass? A lonely man against the environment he lives in. Decisions about his life may be made somewhere else and he has no influence. I also wanted to reflect on the absurdity of our deeds and actions. To offer a look at ourselves in order to make us capable of self-reflection and realizing the loss of our simple values, which are extremely important to our lives – otherwise we feel lost. Values such as love, submission, tolerance, attentiveness to each other, modesty, fairness, openness, straightness, friendship, virtue ... It is a kind of a self-portrait of issues, which I am concerned about, and through shooting I endeavor to learn as much as possible about these issues. In fact this is the reason for my filmmaking – because unrepeatable, authentic people marked by the irony of life are books you cannot buy anywhere ...

### **How long did it take to make the film?**

The shooting started in 2001. At that time I captured the first happenings at the border and in the village. I waited for different events in the village, and after I had the baseline of the individual stories established, I only continued following the real daily occurrences in their lives. In this way I recorded the village life as well as the destinies of its people for seven years.

### **You finished recording the destinies of the people of Slemence in 2007. Has your interest in the village continued? Are you in any contact with the main characters of the film?**

Unfortunately, only with some of them... This little village is on the Ukrainian border, and that is about a 1,000 km roundtrip. So traveling there is very time-demanding. But sometimes I call Tibor Tóth... and, in particular, now I am involved with other film characters, which requires me to kind of fine-tune myself to a different feeling.

### **Why do you prefer the time-collecting method of shooting?**

The long-term collection of material, for me, means to be as close to the truth as possible. However, sometimes it can also be a great risk, which actually was the case with “Here We Are” and the “Border”, because I did not know how the story would end. It cost me a lot of nerves, and now I prefer going into more certain things. For example, I recently started shooting the Roma Sendrei, who is going into politics,



and will run in the elections. Well, it will turn out somehow... But it is also related to the fact, that when you observe a certain environment for a long time, or a person, it will show you different forms, more plastic, more dramatic, you become familiar with it and see it more personally, just like you see your friends and other people around you in your real life. This means more intimately, and that is what I really enjoy.

### **JAROSLAV VOJTEK (1968, Žilina)**

Graduate of Film and TV Faculty of University of Performing Arts in Bratislava, department of documentary film direction. His short feature film **Rojkovia / Dreamers (1999)** is a part of a full-length project of short stories **Šesť statočných / The Magnificent Six**, presented in 2000 at the International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary.

#### **Documentary filmography:**

**Slepá viera / Blind belief (1993)** – a portrayal of a gravedigger with socialistic ideas  
**Keby bol hlas zvonu čarovný / If the bell's toll were magic (1994)** - a portrayal of the last living bell ringer

**Vlasy II / Hair II (1995)** – a portrayal of a priest with new ideals; Literary Fund Award, VSMU Award

**Strom / The tree (1995)** – about a man and the tree that was donated to Vatikan

**Nepozná ona mňa, ani ja ju... / She Does Not Know Me, I Don't Know Her... (1996)** – a film about antagonistic relationship of two people even after 30 years; VSMU Award, Igric Award

**Kameň po kameni / Stone by Stone (1996)** – a film about an enthusiastic man reconstructing ruins of a castle and believing in communist ideals; Honourable Recognition Award Etnofilm Cadca

**Vtedy na Východe / Once upon a time in the East (2000)** – about one village where Saint Mary appeared; Igric Award, Literary Fund Award

**Nechcené deti / Unwanted children (2001)** – a documentary cycle about children from foster homes

**Akvárium / Fish Tank (2001)** – a film about Kosovo refugees who live in gymnasium in Beograd; Honourable Recognition Award Etnofilm Cadca

**Blázonko / Crazy Man (2003)** – about a man with mental and psychic condition; Igric Award

**My zdes / Here we are (2005)** – film about looking for home and long journey to happiness The main award for the best film – International human rights documentary film festival One World, Prague 2006, Slovak film critics' award 2006 in category Other film production, Rudo Sloboda's award 2006, The Great Prize of AFO – IFF Academia film Olomouc 2006, Best European film award – IFF Astra Film Fest Sibiu 2006, Jury award – Silver turon – IFF Etnofilm Cadca 2006, Grand prix for the best film – International days of documentary film "Crossroads of Europe", Lublin 2007, Main award – IFF Shaken's Star, Alma Ata 2007

**Cesta za snom / A Journey for a Dream (2006)** – a documentary essay about searching for a Slovak dream in 2004–2006

**Malá domov / The Back Passing (2008)** – a story of a Roma boy who wanted to participate in an international football tournament in Kragujevac, Serbia  
Main Prize of the One World Festival 2008 for the Best Slovak Documentary

**Hranica / The Border (2009)** - film about a meaningless border which divided the village of Slemence as well as the fates of its people.

Prize „Between the seas“ for the best documentary film of middle and eastern Europe, IFDF Jihlava 2009



**INTERVIEW WITH  
MAREK LEŠČÁK,  
the film s scriptwriter and script editor**

**What made you a “child of feature films” interested in a documentary?**

In fact I have been making them since I graduated, concurrently with feature films. What fascinates me in this work is the active contact with reality, which helps me also in my work on feature films. Paradoxically, the last two films I made (Here We Are and Blind Loves), move within a border zone between a documentary and a feature. Anyway, in principle I think that regardless of whether it is a documentary or a feature, what's most important, is the theme of the film. The choice between a feature, a documentary or something in between is only about choosing a suitable method for sizing the theme...

**What was the most interesting for you as script editor and co-author during the production of The Border?**

The mere fact that there is a village in our territory artificially divided by a border reminiscent, in its own way, of the Eastern and Western Berlin, was fascinating for me. The most important task was to find a balance between the historical facts, i.e. drawing a map of almost 50 years from the time the village was divided, and the living present, namely the efforts of the local people to open the gates, associated with other themes such as unemployment, smuggling etc. which are represented in the film in the stories of real people.

**Why the time-collecting method?**

The time collecting method came up naturally from the process of becoming familiar with the environment on both the Slovak and Ukrainian side of the border and the endeavors of the people to open a border checkpoint. The individual characters gradually unfolded and we tried to capture their stories in such a way that led to a natural end, stemming from their real lives. That actually happened after opening the border crossing point between the two parts of the divided village. Paradoxically, till the time the border crossing was opened, all old relations between the families were broken, and smugglers and marketeers were more delighted by the opening of the border checkpoint than the local people.



## **MAREK LEŠČÁK (1971, Bratislava)**

A graduate of the Master Program of the Department of Dramaturgy and Scriptwriting at the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (FTF VŠMU) accomplished under the pedagogic guidance of Associate Professor Leo Štefankovič.

At present he works at the Faculty of Television Faculty of the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (FTF VŠMU) as a lecturer in the studio of script editing and scriptwriting. He is a member of the Slovak Film and Television Academy and member of the Czech Film and Television Academy.

### **Scriptwriting - Features:**

**Bratia / Brothers (1995)** TV; script with Martin Šulík – 3<sup>rd</sup> prize of the scriptwriters' competition Le Manuscript de Vercorin 1995 (Switzerland)

**Záhřada (Garden) (1995)** – (with Martin Šulík and Ondrej Šulaj) - Spectator prize – 44<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival – Mannheim-Heidelberg 1995, 1<sup>st</sup> prize in the main category – 5<sup>th</sup> Young Eastern European Film Festival Cottbus 1995, Special jury prize – 13<sup>th</sup> Young film festival – Cinema GIOVANNI Torino 1995, Special jury prize – 30<sup>th</sup> IFF Karlove Vary 1995, Special jury prize - International Federation of the Film Clubs (FICC); International Jury of the Film Press (FIPRESCI) – main prize Ecumenical jury main prize – 30<sup>th</sup> IFF Karlove Vary 1995, 1<sup>st</sup> prize – Prix Italia – MTF Prix Italia Bologna 1995, Czech Film Critics Prize 1995

**Orbis Pictus (1997)** (with Martin Šulík and Ondrej Šulaj)- Peace Prize – Mid and Eastern European Film Festival Alpe Adria Cinema Terst 1998, Special jury prize – IFF in Mannheim 1997 (together with an Iranian film), Slovak Film Critics Prize for moving picture

**Praha očami..... (1998)** – epizode from the film - Pictures from the trip ( with Martin Šulík and Ondrej Šulaj) - Best directory prize – **IFF Cairo 1999**

**Zázrak (Miracle) (2004)** – epizode from the film Vision of Europe (with Martin Šulík), One of the film stories in which 25 european filmmakers present their visions of Europe

**Slečný štát, alebo hrdinovia robotníckej triedy (City of the Sun) (2005)** ( with Martin Šulík) - Main prize **Zlatý Lednacek** – Czech film showing **Finale Plzen 2005** (the best Czech film)

### **Documentary film screenplay:**

**Vtedy na Východe (Once upon a time in the East) (2002)** (with Jaro Vojtek) - about a miracle that divided the village Litmanová in the east of Slovakia, Slovak Literary Fund Award for documentary film 2002, Igric Award

**My zdes /Here we are (2005)** – film about looking for home and long journey to happiness The main award for the best film – International human rights documentary film festival One World, Prague 2006, Slovak film critics' award 2006 in category Other film production, Rudo Sloboda's award 2006, The Great Prize of AFO – IFF Academia film Olomouc 2006, Best European film award – IFF Astra Film Fest Sibiu 2006, Jury award – Silver turon – IFF Etnofilm Cadca 2006, Grand prix for the best film – International days of documentary film "Crossroads of Europe", Lublin 2007, Main award – IFF Shaken's Star, Alma Ata 2007

**Cesta za snom / A Journey for a Dream (2006)**; documentary, 50 min. d. J. Vojtek, a documentary essay about searching for a Slovak dream in 2004–2006, The Premium of the Literary Fund

**Slepé lásky / Blind Loves (2008)**; full-length documentary, 77 min., d. J. Lehotský CICA Prize of Art Cinemas 40<sup>th</sup> Directors' Fortnight, Cannes 2008, National nomination for the American Film Academy Award in the category of Best Foreign Language Film 2008, Nomination for The Most Valuable Documentary of the Year Award Cinema for Peace, Berlinale 2009, Golden Taiga



7<sup>th</sup> Film Festival Spirit of Fire Chanty-Mansijsk 2009, Golden Eye for the Best Documentary 4<sup>th</sup> Zurich Film Festival 2008, FIPRESCI Prize 10<sup>th</sup> Film Festival Motovun 2008, "Discovery of the Year" Special Mention of the Jury, 5<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival Reykjavik 2008, Grand Prix Cinesonne, 10<sup>th</sup> Festival of European Film in Essonn 2008, Special Mention in the Category of Documentaries 6<sup>th</sup> FIICO IFF Mexico City, Prize for Originality and Innovative Directing – 3<sup>rd</sup> Emotion Pictures Festival, Athens 2009, Special Honorary Mention of the Jury 5<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of Documentaries Play-Doc Tui, Prize of the Mayor of Trenčianske Teplice Artfilm 2008, Prize of the Audiences for the Best Documentary, 20<sup>th</sup> Film Festival Terst 2009, Best Documentary, 9<sup>th</sup> Festival "Songes d'une nuit" Paris 2008, Award for the Best Romantic Document Fringe Report 2009, Slovak Film of the Year Cinema Film of Year 2008, Prize of the Festival Director – 15<sup>th</sup> Etnofilm Čadca 2008, Special Award for a Contribution to Slovak Cinematography ASFK 2009, Premium Prize for Documentaries, National Film Prize IGRIC 2009, Prize of Film Critics IGRIC 2009.

**Malá domov / The Back Passing (2008)** – documentary, directed by J. Vojtek - a story of a Roma boy who wanted to participate in an international football tournament in Kragujevac, Serbia.

Main Prize of the One World Festival Bratislava 2008 for the Best Slovak Documentary

**Hranica / The Border (2009)** - film about a meaningless border which divided the village of Slemence as well as the fates of its people.

Prize „Between the seas“ for the best documentary film of middle and eastern Europe, IFDF Jihlava 2009

#### **Dramaturgy:**

**Nechcené deti / Unwanted Children (2002)** – a film series consisting of 10-episodes about children living in orphanages

**My Zdes / Here We Are (2005)** – a full-length documentary, d. J. Vojtek

**Standard Bastard (2006)** - audiofilm, d. M. Balog

**Slepé lásky / Blind Loves (2008)** – a full-length documentary, d. J. Lehotský

**Hranica / The Border (2009)** – a full-length documentary, d. J. Vojtek

#### **Book publications:**

**5 scenárov (2003)** (with Ondrej Šulaj, Dušan Dušek and Martin Šulík) - The book contains 5 screenplays of the films by Martin Šulík, **Literary Fund Prize**



**INTERVIEW WITH TOMÁŠ STANEK**  
The film's director of photography

**What do you enjoy about a documentary?**

I enjoy the continual change ... the theme develops, many times "on the run", new people, situations ... I also enjoy dealing with real-life situations, most likely I would never ever come across those people and their stories without shooting documentaries. Being the director of photography, working on a documentary gives me a greater freedom, I like reacting to new stimuli, as well as to unforeseeable situations, many times I have to react quickly, and this was even more difficult during the shooting of the Border, as I don't speak the language (Hungarian). I doubtlessly enjoy working on a documentary also because I can cooperate with great directors - strong personalities.

**Do you mind the longwinded way of working?**

No, quite the opposite is true. I enjoy going back to the same places and following the changes. It is always good to return to the same place after a long time and to see everything from a distance.

**What was the difference between working on the Border and on a feature film?**

A great difference – just the mere fact, that we worked on the Border for several years, and a feature can be produced in a month or two...or three.

**Have you already learned Hungarian?**

Not yet, the only word I learned was "*borzasztó*" – which means "terrible"....

**TOMÁŠ STANEK (1980, Bratislava)**

Studied Photography at the Secondary School of Applied Arts (SUPŠ) and film photography at the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (VŠMU) in Bratislava; for one year he studied photography at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU) in Prague. As a photographer he focuses primarily on documentaries, commercials and video-clips.

**Documentaries:**

***A documentary about the situation in post-war Kosovo (2000)***

(d. Juraj Johanides)

***Čačipen (2001)*** Pravda – Policemen Project of short documentaries (d. Marián Blecha)

***Záchranáři / Rescuers Making of... (2001)*** (d. Vladimír Michálek)

***Pravdivá história o Jurovi Jánošíkovi / The True History of Juraj Jánošík***

***Making of... (2002)*** (d. Agnieszka Holland)

***Ztracená dovolená / Lost Holiday (2006)*** – a documentary about 6 Asian people and their 756 lost pictures (d. Lucie Králová)

***Légia Patria Nostra / Legion Patria Nostra (2007)*** – a documentary about Czech volunteers serving in the foreign legion (d. Lucie Králová)

***Cesta Magdalény Robinsonovej / The Journey of Magdaléna Robinson (2008)*** – a documentary about a renowned Slovak photographer (d. Marek Šulík)

**Feature films and television:**

***Supperman (2003)***, (d. Albert Vlček) – mid-length feature film

***Okno / The Window (2003)*** (d. Karel Coma) short film

***Místo v životě / The place in Life (2006-2007)*** (d. Jiří Chlumský) TV series for TV NOVA, 2<sup>nd</sup> camera

***Eden (2006-2007)*** (d. Jiří Chlumský) TV series for Czech Television, 2<sup>nd</sup> camera

***Tričko / T-Shirt (2006)*** (d. Martin Fazeli) short film

***Mesto tieňov / City of Shadows (2007)*** (d. R. Šveda, P. Bebjak) TV series for TV Markíza – 2<sup>nd</sup> unite

**Awards:**

2000: Prize for Photography, Student Film Festival Áčko

2002: Film Chat Student Film Festival Munich, Germany

2007: Award for Best Documentary Film 42nd KVIFF Karlovy Vary – Lost Holiday  
Dandelion Award – Best Documentary - Banja Luka International Film Festival, Lost Holiday



**INTERVIEW WITH MAROŠ ŠLAPETA**  
The film's editor

**What is the basic difference in the approach to a feature and to a documentary theme?**

From the editor's point of view, there is in fact no particular difference between editing a feature film or a documentary. The editor has to do his best to make, from the entire material available, a story that works. And this applies equally to documentaries as well as features. Perhaps, documentaries require even more work than feature films.





### **Why did you agree to work on a documentary and what does a documentary mean to you?**

What is interesting in working on a documentary is that the editor's satisfaction from the final result can be even greater. As well as his freedom ... There is almost nothing at the beginning, but the idea ... the story, which finally results in a film! Editing a documentary, the editor often finds himself in the position of a co-scriptwriter, in consideration of the fact, that no script in the real sense of the word exists. But this is certainly compensated by a huge quantity of work. Many times it is also related to the quantity of the shot material. And there are really huge quantities shot, in most cases using the time-collecting method. And it always takes time. But I certainly would not want to focus solely on documentaries. Surely, real life is often too sad and cruel. And, one day I would also like to produce a joyful film... most likely not a documentary. And besides: people love illusions, people even need them. But if a documentary is good, it should make no difference in the movie, whether you watch a documentary or a feature, the point is that it must be good.

### **What made your work on the Border interesting or difficult?**

I don't even remember exactly, when we started working on this project. Over those years we became overwhelmed by huge quantities of shot material. Hours and hours of interviews made with people living in Slemence. Of course most of them in Hungarian... And we – I and Jaro Vojtek with Marek Leščák, we only sat sadly in the editing room and did not understand a word... until Zuzana Cséplő, an editor, joined us. I suppose we would never have been able to complete it without her... I think the language barrier was really the most difficult part of working on this film.

This film is also interesting for the fact, that its main character is the environment – the village itself. I tried to include as much as possible of that atmosphere into the film. And I managed - also thanks to our excellent photographer Tomáš Stanek The time-collecting was also very exciting. We ourselves followed with excitement, how the situation developed in Slemence. Will they open a border crossing or not ... In addition to the historical developments, the time also offered us the possibility to follow the development of the private stories of our film characters. I think that also for this reason we succeeded in producing a film, which captures a certain period in history, but at the same time it is timeless in that it tells the story of human destinies. For me, personally, this film is a very strong story which carries a universal message. While working on this film, several times I experienced my own personal catharsis - first when I completed the editing of the service version, when the entire story unfolded in front of my eyes, and later after the final color corrections, when I almost physically realized the visual quality of the film. The next catharsis arrived after mixing the film with the composed music. I am very glad that the atmosphere and the life within this film's environment are as close to real as can be. Thus, there is nothing else left for me but to compliment all our colleagues: in addition to Jaro Vojtek, scriptwriter Marek Leščák also those, who are sometimes forgotten: director of photography Tomáš Stanek, film-editor Zuzana Cséplő, composer Peter Groll and sound engineer Marek Lacena.

### **Have you learned Hungarian yet? :-)**

I haven't learned Hungarian yet, despite the fact, that since our cooperation on the Border, I have participated in the production of another film with Hungarian



dialogues. But this time it was a feature film. But at least I've slowly been building up my vocabulary. I can say: *munkás* (a worker) and *kedves gyerekek* (dear children)!

## **MAROŠ ŠLAPETA (1972, Bratislava)**

Graduated from the Department of Editing, Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (VŠMU) in Bratislava, 2004.

**Quartetto (2001)** – editing of a full-length feature film (production – Charlie's, director: Laura Siváková), Audience Prize at the 4<sup>th</sup> IFF Bratislava, Igric 2003 in the category of television and drama works, Bronze Grapes at the Lubuskie Film Summer 2003 in Lagow.

**Cez prah / Over the Threshold (2001)** - editing of a short feature film; part of a fiction film, director Róbert Šveda, production ARS Media, Gold Medal at the "Brněnská šestnáctka", Brno 2003

**Spáč / The Sleeper (2001)** – 16 mm short feature film; scriptwriter, director, editor

**Akvárium / The Aquarium (2001)** – editing a documentary; director Jaro Vojtek, production Leon; Honorary Mention at Etnofilm Čadca 2002

**Nechcené deti / The Unwanted Children (2001)** - editing of documentaries; director Jaro Vojtek, Peter Filo, Milan Balog; production Media 3

**Zmenšenina / The Miniature (2002)** – short feature film; scriptwriter, director, editor; Illumination, Film Festival Helsinki 2003; Mediawave, International Festival of Visual Art 2003, Győr, Summer Film School Uherské Hradište 2002, festival Áčko 2003; Project Little Cultural Festival 2003, Ústí nad Labem, ČR, 22<sup>nd</sup> Festival of Short Films "Tous courts" – Aix-en-Provence

**Tolerancia cudzie slovo? / Tolerance – A Foreign Word? (2002)** - editor of documentaries, directed by Jozef Banyák, Tomáš Kaminský; production Monarch, Barok

**Občan a demokracia: Sloboda prejavu / Citizen and Democracy: Freedom of Expression (2002)** – editing the series of documentaries; directed by Róbert Šveda; production Media 3

**Nie je nám to jedno / We are not Indifferent (2002)** - editing; pre-election campaign; directed by Jaro Vojtek; production Leon

**Blázonko / Crazy Man (2003)** - editing a documentary; directed by Jaro Vojtek; production Media 3

Premium for the humanistic message and untraditional view Igric 2003

**Hlad / Hunger (2003)** - short feature film; scriptwriter, director

**Ilja (2003)** - editing a documentary; directed by Ivan Ostrochovský

**Európa / Europe (2003)** (editing the series of documentaries – part of the pre-referendum campaign about the accession to the EU, directed by Ján Stračina; production Monarch

**Cesty do stanice / Journeys to the Station (2004)** - editing of a documentary; directed by Róbert Šveda

**Čas mesta – mesto v čase / The Time of the City – The City in the Time (2004)** - directed a film about Bratislava; production Protos production; in production

**My zdes / Here We Are (2005)** - editing the full-length documentary directed by Jaro Vojtek, production LEON Productions;

**Malí bojovníci / The Small Warriors (2005)** - editing the documentary; directed by Martina Saková; Honorary Mention for the Documentary at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Television Festival of Programs for Children and Juveniles Prix Danube Bratislava 2005

**Menšie zlo / Lesser Evil (2005)** - editing the documentary; directed by Ivan Ostrochovský Premium of SFZ, ÚSTT and of the Literary Fund in the category of Film and Television Documentary Works – Ivan Ostrochovský “for the original approach to the representation of a significant social event in the film “Lesser Evil” (the prize awarded in 2005 for the audiovisual work of year 2004)

**Nebo, peklo, zem... / Heaven, Hell, Earth (2005)** - editing a full-length feature film (directed by Laura Siváková; production Trigon productions, in production

**Sluneční stát, aneb hrdinové robotnické třídy / The Sunny State, or the Heroes of the Working Class (2005)** -assistant editor, directed by Martin Šulík, editing Jiří Brožek, production První veřejnoprávní and Titanic

**Konečná stanica / The Final Station (2005)** - assistant editor, directed by Jiří Chlumský, editing Peter Kordáč, production JMB film productions

**Cesta za snom / The Journey for a Dream (2006)** - editing, co-scriptwriter and production of the documentary; directed by Jaro Vojtek; Art Film, Trenčianske Teplice, 2006; International Festival of Documentaries, Jihlava, 2006

**Návrat bocianov / Return of the Storks (2006)** - editing the full-length feature film, directed by: Martin Repka, production: Sen film /SR/, Stoked film /Germany/, Hoodoo production /ČR/)

**Ďalšie dejstvo / The Next Act (2007)** - editing a mid-length feature film; directed by Mátyás Prikler, Prize Igric 2007 for television productions, Award of the Literary Fund

**E.F.K.O. (2007)** - editing the series of short documentaries on dependencies; directed by Filip Fabián, production Uptown production

**Ladislav Chudík (2008)** - editing the documentary; directed by Patrik Lančarič, production Maya, STV)

**Sneženky a machři po 25 letech / Snowdrops and Aces after 25 Years (2008)** - editing a feature film; 90 min.; directed by Viktor Tauš, production Pragofilm, STV)

**Juraj Kubánka (2008)** - editing of a documentary; 50 min.; directed by Mátyás Prikler, production Civil Association Kubánkov sen, STV

**Sestry / The Sisters (2008)** - editing a feature film; directed by Martin Repka, production Czech Television

**Identity Petržalky / Identities of Petržalka (2009)** - editing a documentary; directed by Juraj Chlpík)

**Malý zúrivý Robinson / Little Violent Robinson (2009)** - editing a documentary; directed by Tina Diosi, production Furia Film



INTERVIEW WITH ZUZANA CSÉPLÖ  
The Film's Editor



**What do you think about the fact that a Slovak made a film about Hungarians living on the Slovak-Ukrainian border? :-)**

Well, did that Slovak know at all about those Hungarians, or did he learn about them only on site, and, as a true documentary maker, he “found a trace”, forgot about the nationality and the human stories grabbed hold of him and didn’t let him go :-)

**What do you prefer editing a feature film or a documentary?**

A feature or a documentary? Well...I prefer “a good film” most :-) the one with a strong story. The most exciting for me is the process of “creation” – how the pile of shot material turns into a story. The bonus to this magic is the wishing, wise and receptive fellow-fighters! / And, let’s have a beer after useful “arguments” :-)

**What was the reason for making this film?**

Unfortunately it turned out that meaningless borders (and not only those made of barbed wire) are being created even today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, although it looked so promising at the beginning of the shooting.

**What was most difficult and most humorous during work on the Border?**

Laborious but necessary: to select the material. Difficult but necessary: to shorten the story, say goodbye to some characters. Bizarre: to edit the Hungarian text through a telephone, as the guys in the editing room did not speak a word in Hungarian☺. Phenomenal: a four-hand editing... it really works! /but only with such an amazing co-player!!!/ Witty, but unbelievable: how the director and the director of photography disputed, during the shooting, with the respondent whether he had said what they wanted him to say, they wanted him to explain, even though they did not speak Hungarian /?/ and the respondent did not speak Slovak. /Well, Jarko, how was it with the fast-track course of Hungarian? ...*katicabogárka*? (Ladybird/ :-)

By the way, thank you for the scarce opportunity to work with you! It was enriching!

**ZUZANA CSÉPLÖ (1962, Bratislava)**

Graduate of Electro-technical Faculty of the Slovak Technical University (EF SVŠT), and Department of Editing and the Film and Television Faculty of the Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (VŠMU) in Bratislava.

**Feature works:**

***Smutný valčík / A Sad Waltz (1996)*** /d. J.Rihák, 16 mm/, film awarded by Igric

***Súkromný striptíz / A private Striptease (1996)*** /d. J.Rihák, 16 mm/

***Opojenie z premeny / A Flush from the Change (1998)*** /d. J.Zeman/

***Ja nič neviem / I Don't Know Anything (1998)*** /d. P.Haspra/

***Pohreb / Funeral (1998)*** /d. P.Haspra/

***Prstene pre dámu / Rings for the Lady (1999)*** /d. Y.Vavrová / film awarded by Igric

***Zločin 1.,2. / The Crime 1.,2. (1999)*** /d. J.Zeman/

***Zabíjačka / Slaughter (1999)*** /d. M.Šulík /



**Zbohom Judáš / Goodbye Judas (1999)** /d. M.Porubjak /  
**Mučivé tajomstvá / Agonizing Secrets (1999)** /d. E.Horváth /  
**Zámok na juhu / A Castle in the South (2000)** /d. M.Luther / Prize of SFZ, ÚSTT,  
LF SR – for director , IFF Art Film  
**Vyhnanci / Outcasts (2000)** /d. A.Ditrich/  
**Čarovala ryba 1.,2.,3. / The Magic Fish 1.,2.,3. (2000)** /d. Y.Vavrová/ Grand Prix in  
Chicago  
**Okamih pravdy / The Moment of Truth (2000)** /d .E.Horváth/  
**Voľnomyšlienkar / The Free Spirit (2001)** /d. P.Mikulík / awarded by Igric  
**Zlatý chlieb / Golden Bread (2001)** /d. J.Zeman /  
**Emigranti / Emigrants (2001)** /d. M.Porubjak/  
**Na konci hry / At the End of the Game (2002)** /d.P.Mikulík/  
**Večer plný secesie / An Evening Full of Secession (2002)** /d. J.Bednárík /  
**Tak dávno som ti nenapísala / I Haven't Written to You for Such a Long Time  
(2003)** /d. A.Horečná/ dance film, /35 mm/  
**Dlhá, krátká noc / Long Short Night(2003)** /d. P.Krištúfek / awarded by Igric,  
Premium at the Artfilm 2004  
**Ďalšie dejstvo - Következő felvonás / The Next Act (2006)** /d. M.Prikler/ awarded  
by Igric  
**Cinka Panna / Gypsy Virgin (2008)** /d. D.Rapoš/ a version for cinemas

#### **Documentaries:**

**1994-2004:** a cycle of music documentaries: **Vlastnými slovami / In Own Words,  
Metamorfózy / Metamorphoses**

A cycle of documentaries:

**Variácie /Variations** /d.Y.Vavrová/, **Prelúdia života / Prelude of Life** /d. J.Fajnor,  
M.Chudovský/, **O čom je život / What is Life About** /d. J.Mančušková, J.Rihák/,  
**Profil / The Profile** /d. M.Ježík, T.Paštéka / **Slovenské obrazy / Slovak Pictures**  
/d. M.Slivka, D.Hudec, M.Ježík T.Paštéka/, **Človek uprostred / The Man in the  
Middle** /d.J.Rihák, P.Hledík, J.Mančušková et al. /, **Živé duše /Living Souls** /d.  
K.Ďurovičová/

Documentaries: **B. Warchal** /d. T.Paštéka/, **J.Filip** /d. A.Ditrich/, **M. Lasica,  
J.Satinský** /d. P.Hledík/ **Nenápadný gigant J.Bednárík/ Unnoticeable Giant J.  
Bednárík** /d.Y.Vavrová/, **Beethoven (2005)** /d. B.Hončariová/, **Mednyánszky (2005)**  
/d. V.Štric/; **Mesto lietajúcich slov / Flying Words Town (2005)** /d. M.Diossi/  
awarded by Igric, **Budmerice-tajomný ostrov spisovateľ'ov /Budmerice – A  
Mysterious Island of Writers (2005)** /d. P.Krištúfek/, **Slovenský bigbít – 10-dielny  
dokumentárny serial/Slovak Big Beat – A Series of 10 Documentaries (2007)**  
/d. D.Rapoš/, **Posledná Maringotka / The Last Caravan (2008)** /d. P.Beňovský/ a  
version for cinemas, **Ilja Zeljenka (2009)** /d. I.Ostrochovský/  
and many other stagings, fairy-tales, children, music and literary programs, as well  
as documentaries portrays, clips, concerts, travelogues etc.



## **LIST OF CREDITS**

Appearing in the film:

Peter Lizák

Tibor Tóth

Štefan Tóth

Pál Bocsárszky as Vince Tóth

Rebeka Kuiková

Alexander Gilányi

Rebeka Gilányiová

Elena Hornyáková with her son

Inhabitants of the towns Malé Slemence and Veľké Slemence

Theme

Jaro Vojtek

Screenplay

Marek Leščák

Jaro Vojtek

Script Editor

Marek Leščák

Graphic Art

Juraj Demovič

Marcel Janovský

Picture Color Corrections

Peter Csordás, Studio 727

Production of the 35mm copy

Nordisk Film Post Production

VIV Media, s.r.o.

Dialogue Translation

Anna Antal

Assistant Film Editor

Jakub Fišer



Assistant Director  
Mátyás Prikler

Production  
Dávid Čorba

Sound  
Jaro Vojtek  
Tobiáš Potočný

Sound Mix  
Marek Lacena

Mix of Dolby  
Robert Barčák  
Marek Lacena

Music  
Peter Groll

Film Editor  
Zuzana Cséplő  
Maroš Šlapeta

Photography  
Tomáš Stanek  
Jaro Vojtek

Directed by  
Jaro Vojtek

Producer  
Mario Homolka  
Dávid Čorba  
LEON Productions

The film included and made use of:  
Amateur shots by Peter Gilányi  
Archive video of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic



Archive materials from the archive of the Slovak Film Institute in Bratislava

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Open Society Foundation

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Tomáš Hučko

Silvia Dydňanská

Civic Association ARTILERIA

Studio 727

Office of Border and Alien Police of the Ministry of Interior of SR

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