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A Hatarozat

The decision (THE RESOLUTION)

HUNGARY, 1972/82

Directors: GYULA GAZDAG, JUDIT EMBER

Production companies: Mafilm/Objektiv/Bela Balasz-Studio. *Photography:* Peter Jankura. *Editor:* Gyula Gazdag. *Sound:* Istvan Sipos. 102 minutes.

Language: Hungarian, with English subtitles.

Appearing: Gyula Estelyi (secretary, Party district committee), Gyorgy Farkas (member, Party district committee), Istvan Grof (president, Bicsé Cooperative), Istvan Boka (director, Bicsé cooperative).

Festivals: Budapest, Berlin.

Foreign sales: Hungarofilm, Budapest 1054, Bathori u 10, Hungary.

In the late sixties the Hungarian government introduced a change in the regulations controlling the operation of rural cooperatives, permitting their engaging in small manufacturing. These enterprises were also permitted to provide material incentives – based on output – to their workers. This measure very rapidly contributed to an exodus of city workers lured by the prospect of earning often double their customary wage. Towards the end of 1971 the government decided to halt this exodus by banning the operation of small industries in the cooperatives. Local Party leaders were charged with the unsavoury task of purging a number of cooperative administrators who had managed to establish very successful enterprises, as examples. Gazdag and Ember got wind of one such move and, miraculously, obtained permission to *actually film* the Party sessions where the purge strategy was discussed. Their camera thus follows the purgers through a giddy series of behind-closed-doors dirty dealings, leading up to the point where the Party, having done its very best to smear the unfortunate victim in the preceding period, finally moves the formal motion for dismissal at a packed, tense meeting of the members of the cooperative. More miraculously, *all* of the film's protagonists signed waivers consenting to the release of this devastating documentary after they had seen it. Presumably, the defendants wanted the story to be told, and the bureaucrats apparently felt it should be used as an instructional film for Party cadres! When Gazdag sought to enter the film in the next Hungarian Festival for Young Cinema he was told by the authorities that it would not be released. There were rumours that a print had in fact been shown on a number of occasions in Party cadre schools, and an un-subtitled print appears to have been released for exhibition in a film festival in Italy in about 1982, but that was all. The directors were denied access to the negative (they wanted to improve the sound and have it blown up to 35mm), and were never given a reason for its disappearance. Gazdag was finally permitted in 1983 to have the print blown up. From that time on, there have been no official restrictions on the film's release, although its circulation is very limited in Hungary. In fact, the film's seal of approval came when it appeared in the official Hungarian Film Week in Budapest in early 1984. It was invited to the 31st Sydney Film Festival, but no English subtitled print was available. An un-subtitled version was shown at the 1985 Berlin Film Festival, but the print shown here was expressly subtitled for this occasion by the Hungarian film authorities.

Lawyers and laypersons alike will marvel at the fact that this film was ever made, and its subsequent banning wouldn't surprise anyone familiar with British and Australian defamation laws. It's more than likely that such a film would never have a chance of being made or released in the West (for instance, Ken Loach's stunning documentary on the right-wing heads of the British Trades Union Council, *Questions of leadership*, has been banned from broadcast or exhibition in Britain, and was refused participation in this festival). For these reasons alone, *The decision* is a major cinematic achievement.