

Captain László Ocskay, the forgotten hero

documentary film

70 minutes

This powerful documentary film tells the story of a Hungarian army officer whose heroic deeds have been all but ignored. The forgotten hero, Captain László Ocskay, was responsible for one of history's most daring and unique rescue operations. In a remarkable humanitarian effort, he saved the lives of some 2,500 Jewish men, women and children from 1944 to 1945, the most dangerous period of the Second World War in Budapest.

As director of the Clothing Collection Labour Service Company, Ocskay was able to protect members and their families from the German Nazis and the Hungarian Arrow Cross in the buildings of the Abonyi Street Jewish School (known today as the Miklós Radnóti Secondary School). Unbelievably, Ocskay was able to secure protection from the constant threat posed by the vicious Arrow Cross (Hungary's Nazi party) by using his contacts to arrange for armed SS officers to permanently stand guard outside the building. The people Ocskay delivered from the Holocaust included Kossuth Prize-winning author Gábor Goda, musician Pál Kadosa, composer Ede Kabos, fencing world champion Dezső Kellér and actor Imre Ráday. Ocskay worked closely with legendary Jewish community leader Miksa Domonkos and Raoul Wallenberg, even offering him shelter in his own house.

This is a pioneering film about a man whose incredible personal sacrifice is rarely acknowledged. He is an example and inspiration to all people and should rightly be remembered as one of the greatest Hungarians of the twentieth century.

The film has already received invitations from Israel to the United States and was screened in the European Parliament building in Brussels on January 9. It has been nominated for an award at the 39th Hungarian Film Festival.

Credits

- Gergely Fonyó – Director
- Rudolf Ocskay, Tamás Kollarik – Film Concept, Script
- Sándor Kiss – Camera Operator
- Bence Márton Gyulai – Camera Operator, Photographer
- Rudolf Ocskay – Consultant, Ocskay family representative
- Gábor Kádár, Szabolcs Szita, Baruch Chava - Historians
- Viktor Rakonczay – Music
- M. Ádám Csillag – Film Editor

- Tamás Novák - Co-producer
- Tamás Kollarik – Producer

Brief Q&A with Director Gergely Fonyó:

1.) How did you come across this story and what interested you about László Ocskay?

Gergely Fonyó: "I was told about this story by my friend and producer Tamás Kollarik, to whom I am very thankful. All directors are constantly on the look-out for original and inspiring ideas - they are very hard to come by. Ocskay's story is one of these unique ideas. It is exciting, original and deeply humanitarian. In addition to my professional enthusiasm, I have a personal involvement with the story as five members of my family died in the Holocaust. I have wanted to make a film about this period for many years. I sifted through material but never found 'the real thing'. Then Tamás Kollarik and Rudolf Ocskay introduced me to the Ocskay story. I knew at once that this was what I had been looking for."

2.) What was the director's concept for the film?

Gergely Fonyó: "For a film like this, the director's job is to resist the temptation to 'direct', manipulate or interfere with the story in any way. My task was to treat the memories of the survivors with sensitivity and compassion. The accounts and voices of these people are what make the film. The authenticity of their words gives the story power. It is like working with top actors.

We conducted extremely thorough research before - and during - filming. We used Dan Danieli's superb study, Rudolf Ocskay's letters and all the other sources we could lay our hands on. We created what we called the script, but which was really a filming plan. In this detailed document, we made a strict agreement with my friends working on the film that we would not sensationalize the many urban legends associated with the story.

Only those elements that we could prove beyond doubt were included in the film - we didn't want to use fictitious accounts to fill in the gaps. That is something for a feature film, which is actually a project we have already started work on."

3.) What do you think the significance of your film is in Hungary?

Gergely Fonyó: "The story of László Ocskay is a classic Hungarian 'success story' - complete with heroism, yet full of bitter and contradictory twists. In this respect, it is perhaps more relevant today than ever. We are introduced to a real hero, a genuine, brave and honest man without any hint of pathos. People like this are very rare. I think Ocskay's actions are relevant to all Hungarians, because this period in history effected everyone, regardless of religious or political background. László Ocskay proved the ancient, but oft neglected truth that there are good people, and there are bad people .

The good must prevail for the good of humankind.

Please let me finish by thanking all those people who helped this film become a reality for the years of selfless work they put in - the survivors, the financial backers, the crew members and everyone who did as little as answer the phone or put in a good word to move the film forward."

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