



A SLOVAK FILM

A dramatic story about an
escape from menace

SLOVENSKÝ
FILMOVÝ ÚSTAV

A Path across the Danube

Made in the cooperation of the Slovak Film Studios and the Czechoslovak Television in Slovakia



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Cast: Roman Luknár, Vladimír Hajdu, Györgyi Tarján, Eva Horká, Jiří Schwarz, Ondřej Vetchý

Breclav – a part of the Great German Empire – is submerged in the darkness of the occupation when Viktor Lesa, an employee of the Slovak railway post, carries out another of his tours de force: he expedites the Wehrmacht's mail instead of to Vienna to some destination in the Balkan. The joke in which he is reluctantly assisted by an employee of the Breclav post and his colleague Jarunka ends up in a catastrophe. The half-Jew Ticháček and Lesa become escapees. They witness the slaughtering of a fleeing Jewish family killed up by nazi border patrol on a frozen river. The two outcasts receive some help from an unknown railwayman – member of the resistance movement. Ticháček and Lesa reach Slovakia, a country of seeming peace, happiness and abundance. A misfortunate episode in a forgotten waiting room during which Ticháček kills an aggressive plain-clothes policeman causes that the two outcasts become killers as well. Viktor realises that his only refuge can be only his home. That is why he calls upon his father, the head waiter in a provincial restaurant. However he comes later than the fatal news. Lesa's father unexpected-

ly dies when learning about his son being chased by the police as a murderer. Viktor, the former member of the Czechoslovak army post, makes an attempt – together with Ticháček – to steal an army airplane. This attempt fails but Lesa meets at the airport a former colleague of his Vinco who made a career in the Slovak army. The air officer brings the two escapees to a winepress which is the gathering point of officers and pilots of the former Czechoslovak army before their illegal departure abroad. Here Lesa and Ti-

cháček meet Zuzka, a widow of a late patriot killed by Hungarian nationalists. The widow lives in a solitary cottage near the border. The country is unfriendly and there are severe frosts. Ticháček falls seriously ill and is not able to continue in the journey. Lesa takes the

path across the Danube alone. The safe passage assures Zuzka's son Stefan. On the train Lesa meets Hasil, the pilot, and Valášek, the provocateur, who causes an annoying incident with the Hungarian railwaymen. They interned the escapees and then they send them back to Slovakia. The second border crossing does not finish any better: Lesa and Zuzka break into a huntsman's pavilion. In an intimate moment the two young people are caught by the owner who punishes Viktor by whip-

ping him. Zuzka saves Lesa's life by giving herself to the brutal old man. Something breaks in the show-off-kind Viktor; the whipping has trampled down his human dignity. The humiliating sacrifice of Zuzka is something he cannot bear and he rejects the woman rudely. The world of the widow collapses and she takes the justice into her hands: she kills the aggressive old man.

The wretched Viktor reaches the railway station and hides in a freight van together with a Polish Jewish family. Ticháček appears and Lesa pulls him inside while the train is moving already. However a last problem arises on their way to freedom. The train stops on the bridge over the Danube. The Hungarian gendarmes ask that man who jump on the train gets off. Viktor Lesa puts on Ticháček's coat, jumps down on the trackage and walks towards his death. He recovered his lost self-confidence and human dignity. The first shots are fired and the projectiles tear the jumper taht Lesa received from Jarunka. The train brings to safety the people for the sake of whom Lesa sacrificed himself.

