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## Torn from the Flag

(Documentary -- U.S.-Hungary) An Homage to 1956 production. (International sales: Homage to 1956, Los Angeles.) Produced by Klaudia Kovacs. Directed, written by Klaudia Kovacs, Endre Hules.

**With:** George Mismas, Otto von Hapsburg, Gyorgy Lassan, Ivan T. Berend, William Taubman, Henry Kissinger, Imre Poszgay, Csaba Bekes.

By DENNIS HARVEY

**Depicting what one observer calls "the decisive battle of the Cold War" -- Hungary's unprecedented, brutally suppressed 1956 revolution against Soviet rule -- "Torn from the Flag" arrives just as Russian-Western relations again appear headed toward deep freeze. Klaudia Kovacs' straightforward docu mixes latterday interviews and archival material, including vault-sprung footage unseen for decades. Though the presentation could be more stirring, the content engrosses nonetheless, positioning the pic as a solid broadcast/educational item with an outside chance at arthouse exposure. It's already played Oscar-qualifying gigs in New York and Los Angeles.**

Some citizens' initial enthusiasm about "building the socialist dream" post-WWII soured within the paranoid, abusive atmosphere wrought by Stalin and Hungarian Prime Minister Matyas Rakosi. When Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev, revealed and apologized for Stalin's heinous crimes, disillusioned Hungarians clamored for free elections and the removal of Russian troops. At first, their success was stunning, but weak-willed U.S. and U.N. support did little to stop the eventual carnage wrought by Soviet reinforcements. Insightful, sometimes emotional talking-head subjects and a variety of vintage clips (some you-are-there footage shot by the helmer's late dad, Laszlo Kovacs) add up to a compelling living-history chapter.

Camera (color/B&W, HD-and-16mm-to-DigiBeta), Laszlo Kovacs, Zoltan Honti; editor, Stephanie Hubbard; music, Chris Horvath. Reviewed at Montreal World Film Festival (Documentaries of the World), Aug. 30, 2008. Running time: 95 MIN.

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