International Cross-Media Event
Commemorating the 20th Anniversary of the Collapse of the Soviet Union
presented by gebrueder beetz filmproduktion and Artline Films

TV SERIES · WEB FORMAT
BOOK · EXHIBITION
EVENTS · MOBILE
THE STORY

December 1991: The Soviet Head of State, Mikhail Gorbachev conducts long-distance calls with political leaders in the Western world. Shortly thereafter, Gorbachev speaks on television, stating: “Hereby I quit my position as President of the USSR.”

It is a quite unexpected finale for the grand communist vision of the “new era” that had kept the world busy since the October Revolution in 1917. As late as 1975, the utopia seemed closer than ever: the communist world was at the peak of its geographical expansion, controlling or influencing almost half of the planet’s population.

But why did the Soviet Empire collapse only 16 years later? Which forces were behind the creeping erosion and sudden disintegration? Why could no one foresee the inevitable?

For the first time, this story is being told from the viewpoint of the countries involved, and by the people who were there, who lived through it, who made it happen.

Produced in collaboration with Eastern European writers, directors and coproducers, this saga will be launched this year on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the USSR, the final act of the Cold War, an event still shaping our world order today.

The 6x52’ TV Series
The “Farewell Comrades!” TV series is dedicated to a particular period in 20th century history, specifically, the last 16 years before the final collapse of the global socialist system in 1991.

The story is told from the inside and gives audiences the experience of what it was like to live in this period. The gigantic 16-year process is told chronologically in six films. The series is also available as a 2x52’ version covering the period between 1989 and December 1991.

The Web Format and Mobile Application
The highly immersive and emotional web format particularly addresses a young and international audience and reaches them where they are: on the Internet and within their web communities.

The user is introduced to personal stories and fates through “open letters” – real postcards, written in the former Eastern bloc between 1975 and 1991. The postcards unlock the stories of our protagonists. They are linked to the archive footage of the main historical events, facts and movements of the last years of the Soviet Union.

The Book
The book, written by the renowned historian and writer György Dalos, gives background information about the historical period between 1975 and 1991. A special chapter is dedicated to “postcards” – the ones used in the interactive format, and all kinds of other postcards that were part of daily life.

The Exhibition
The original postcards of the web format are the core element of the exhibition project. Two central exhibitions in Paris and Berlin will be accompanied by a touring “exhibition in a box” for other countries in Eastern and Western Europe.

Events and Media Partnerships
In collaboration with institutional partners, a series of events, discussions and presentations will connect the main elements of the media event. Partnerships with newspapers, magazines and online platforms will promote the project.

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA EVENT

“Farewell Comrades!” – that’s one big story. Told across several platforms and media to reach a huge international audience, including the 6x52’ TV series, broadcasts in over a dozen countries, an immersive web format and mobile application, exhibitions and events, with accompanying books and DVDs. Produced in collaboration with Eastern European writers, directors and coproducers, “Farewell Comrades!” is a truly European event.
The People?
The greatest strength of the series is the collection of personal testimonies of "normal" people with extraordinary stories — such as two Afghan veterans, an Armenian priest, a Czech bomb detonator, a Hungarian workers brigade. They were the driving forces behind the subtle erosion and the sudden collapse of the system.

These extraordinary stories are mirrored by the perspective of some major players of the system. These individuals were in a position to witness the most critical events from inside the power structures: former heads of the communist system, celebrities, representatives of the ruling power, or those favored by it. For instance: Sergiu Celac, Ceausescu interpreter; Soviet child star Irma Sokhadze; Polish government spokesman Jerzy Urban; and the economist and head of the world’s largest brown coal mine, Herbert Richter.

The Stories?
Love stories, family stories, personal memories, stories of illegal travelling in the Soviet Union, of tragically failed escapes and of the first Hungarian Playboy magazine in the late eighties; stories of working migration and holiday stories, of heavy drinking at Brezhnev’s 70th birthday, or an inside view of the rivalry between Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

The Images?
Official archive images from TV stations, news agencies and military audiovisual services. Clandestine images shot by cameramen behind the Iron Curtain. And of course there are the private archives of ordinary people: home movies, photos, letters, maps and personal belongings, which vividly recreate the setting and atmosphere of these dramatic experiences and historical events.

The Postcards?
Original postcards are the connecting element between all media: they are at the center of the internet project and the mobile application. Some postcards are also integrated in the book and in the exhibition project. Specially made cards will function as a promotional tool for the media event to connect all elements.

The Audience?
"Farewell Comrades!" tells this European story with global consequences for an international audience. The various elements of the media event are addressed to different audiences across all borders and age groups.
THE PRODUCTION

The media event "Farewell Comrades!" is a coproduction between Arline Films (France) and gebruder beetz filmproduktion (Germany) with ARTE being the main partner from the very beginning.

For the first time ever, all three branches of ARTE - ARTE France, ARTE G.E.I.E. and ARTE Deutschland/ZDF - have joined forces to support this unique European project. Created in collaboration with Eastern European filmmakers, producers, researches and writers, the media event "Farewell Comrades!" is of global historical importance. More then 30 partners have already joined the network.

Our Vision

Our Goal is to initiate an international discussion about the most important historical event, which crucially shaped the second half of the 20th century. The breakdown of the Soviet empire did not only affect Eastern Europe, the dice roled for the whole worlds' future and faith. The decisions made in consequence are influencing our life, conflicts, pacts, agreements and wars today.

In 2011 this red-letter event will be memorized for the twentieth time. Looking back 20 years, what can be stated about this event of global significance? Farewell Comrades! Media Event will recall the collapse of the Soviet Union and the connected events from 1975 to 1991 back into memory by using a great number of media tools. We aim to approach a great number of viewers and participants of a broad international age group by reaching them on the platforms and in the media circles they frequently use.

The Farewell Comrades! Events

The media event will start with the publishing of the book, be followed by the launch of the web format and the opening of the main exhibition in Berlin and Paris in September 2011.

In November/December more than 15 international broadcasters will broadcast the TV series as one major TV event in Europe. The broadcast of the series will be accompanied by a series of local discussions, presentations and events.

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Delivery September 2011
www.farewellcomrades.com
FAREWELL COMRADES! – THE SERIES

THE COUNTDOWN

The 6x52’ TV series is dedicated to a particular period in 20th century history, specifically, the last 16 years before the final collapse of the global socialist system in 1991.

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   It’s 1975. The Soviet cosmonaut Alexej Leonov of the united Soviet-American space flight “Sojus – Apollo” looks down on planet earth where the communist idea has reached its highest expansion. But the first cracks on the imperial facade are already showing up. The erosion starts in the periphery, where pop culture and growing consumption needs increase dissatisfaction and the Polish pope is the only real authority figure.

   Even before Brezhnev’s death, his golden age is fading away. Economic growth slows down, military spending increases and food supplies stagnate. But the party elites aren’t in good shape either. Within only five years three party leaders, Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko, die. Also, the satellites are ruled by old men willing to defend their power with violence – as in the case of General Jaruzelski.

   The man who starts fighting the decline is Mikhail Gorbachev. Glasnost and Perestroika inspire hope in the East and West. The Soviet Union suddenly drops its historical role as brakesman and becomes the motor of the reform process. As a consequence, the party elites in the satellites are put under increasing pressure.

   The pluralization process in the Soviet Union has a strong impact on the satellites, where people start demonstrating and more and more oppositional groups arise. Moscow is too occupied with itself, and the round table talks in Poland and Hungary give an idea that the impossible might be possible.

   As a consequence of the developments in Poland and Hungary, a huge domino effect is created and each country, one after the other, is confronted by serious problems. The Empire starts losing its colonies.

   The “release” of the satellites increasingly heats up the independence efforts in some Soviet republics. The coup attempt by the old functionaries accelerates this process. Yeltsin and his supporters force the father of Perestroika to terminate the KP. Gorbachev’s last official act is to hand over of the legendary “atom suitcase” to his successor.

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THE AUTHORS

György Dalos
Hungarian historian, writer and expert of Eastern European history. He has published more than 20 books including Gorbatschow: Mensch und Macht. Eine Biographie (2011) and Der Vorhang geht auf - Das Ende der Diktaturen in Osteuropa (2009). In 2010 he was awarded with the „European Prize of European Understanding“ and is laureate of the Hungarian Golden Plaque.

Jean-François Colosimo

Jens Becker
Jens Becker, born 1963 in East Berlin, studied film at HFF Konrad Wolf in Potsdam and at WGIK in Moscow. Becker is professor at the film school in Potsdam and has completed more than 20 fiction and documentary films, among them the 2x52’ mini-series Last Days of the Polit Bureau (2009).

THE DIRECTORS

Andrei Nekrasov
Andrei Nekrasov, born 1958, is a Russian film and TV director from Saint Petersburg. He has produced more than 15 films, most of which have been shown at international festivals such as Cannes, Sundance, Berlinale etc. His last documentaries, Rebellion: The Litvinenko Case (2007) and Russian Lessons (2010), have been widely acclaimed internationally. Nekrasov is one of the leading Russian directors of today.

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INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

“Farewell Comrades! Interactive” is an immersive documentary web format and the second pillar of our European media event including the 6x52’ TV series, exhibitions, events and accompanying books and DVDs. The project addresses a younger European audience.

Investigate the History of the Soviet Empire
We lead our audience into an investigative journey through the personal memories of 15 to 20 fascinating characters. From their past journeys in the Soviet Empire and beyond, each of them has kept postcards. The postcards are clues to their secret personal stories. Simple and addictive game mechanics weave the stories together.

Real Postcards and Rare Archive
Real postcards are our main storytelling tool. Each postcard is an entry door to a portrait of our character and to the events, people and places connected to his or her part in the broader historical context.

Combined with a huge collection of personal and official archive footage, we offer a unique insight into how life unfolded beyond the Iron Curtain and allow our users to review their perspectives on the common facts.

Be Part of It!
In addition to the stories told by our characters, we also include stories told by our audience. They are invited to enrich our format by contributing their personal experiences to our web format.

There is no ONE single truth, no ONE single story – so what is yours?
THE CREATIVE TEAM

Lena Thiele
Author and Creative Director for cross-media productions at gebrueder beetz filmproduktion Berlin. In more than 10 years of work, she has acquired ample experience in the development of cross-media formats integrating web, game, film and mobile platforms for companies like MTV Networks or Bertelsmann AG. She is a guest lecturer in the field of Interactive Media, Games Producing and Transmedia Storytelling. She holds a Masters of Arts from the Berlin University of the Arts.

Pierre-Olivier François
French documentary filmmaker and journalist. Since 1995, reporter for ARTE (French-German public TV). Extensive news and feature coverage of European and international politics, societies, culture. Also since 2000, documentaries for numerous French, German and international broadcasters in fields like science (The Gift of Languages), geopolitics (North Korea - The Border and the War, A Barrel Full of Oil), or global food and drinks (Pizza Nostra, Once upon a Fry, Pschiiitttt ! A Soda History). Studied in Paris, Berlin and Bordeaux.

THE PARTNERS

For the first time ever, all three branches of ARTE, ARTE France, ARTE G.E.I.E. and ARTE Deutschland/ ZDF, have joined forces with coproducers Artline Films (France) and gebrueder beetz filmproduktion (Germany) to create "Farewell Comrades! Interactive".

Made in collaboration with five independent Eastern European partners, "Farewell Comrades!" is a truly European project. It premieres in the fall of 2011.

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THE BOOK

In summer, 2011, the German publishing house Beck is publishing the book by the renowned historian and writer György Dalos in several European countries. Aside from supplying background information and historical details, the book also links the themes of the TV series with the themes of the interactive web format.

Raise and Fall
In six chapters, György Dalos covers the major historical events spanning the timeline between 1975 and 1991. He gives an entertaining inside view of ordinary life behind the Iron Curtain. We can read stories of the Soviet medical researcher Fyodor Uglov, for example, who wrote a drastic report on the Soviet society’s state of health in 1981. Or we can read the stories of the Hungarian engineer Ernő Rubik, the inventor of the Rubik’s Cube, or Sergiu Celac, the interpreter of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu. These stories are illustrated by unpublished private and official photos and images and give an astonishing inside view into the last act of the communist utopia of Europe.

Postcards from the Empire
A special chapter of the book is dedicated to postcard themes covered by our interactive web format. In Eastern Europe, postcards circulated widely. They were an affordable means of communication whenever leisure, work, political activity or big events called for a personal testimony from a traveller. Specific to the Communist Bloc were propaganda, advertising and “lifestyle” postcards bearing ideological messages, promoting Soviet-Bloc products, or advising citizens to certain behaviour and caution in day-to-day life.

THE AUTHOR

György Dalos
For his book Der Vorhang geht auf – Das Ende der Diktaturen in Osteuropa (2009) Dalos was awarded with the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding in 2010.

THE PARTNERS

C.H. Beck
The C.H. Beck publishing house is one of the largest and most famous publishers for history and science in Germany. C.H. Beck has already published three books by György Dalos about Eastern European history. The publication of the new book by György Dalos will be a highlight in summer 2011.

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In production
Publishing date summer 2011
LIVING HISTORY

The interactive exhibition project will accompany the media event. The exhibition will consist of a room designed like a 3-dimensional physically accessible website.

Center of the exhibition is a giant map covering the entire floor and inviting the visitors to an investigative journey through the historical period between 1975 and 1991.

Postcard Stories

Original postcards of this period will be fixed to the wall around the map and will form the entry points to a number of personal stories of the characters behind the postcards.

Interview clips and historical background information will be given via monitors in the exhibition room to fully comprehend the embedment of the personal character’s story introduced by the postcard in the historical period.

Analog background information of the characters, a historical timeline, and general information about the major historical events will round out the exhibition.

Locations

The two central exhibitions in Paris and Berlin will be supplemented by a travelling ‘exhibition in a box’ that will tour through other countries in Eastern and Western Europe.

THE PARTNERS

Collegium Hungaricum Berlin

The Collegium Hungaricum Berlin has become one of the most interesting locations for innovative and multi medial exhibitions in Berlin. During the exhibition in autumn/winter 2011 it will function as a platform for discussions, presentations and events connected to the Farewell Comrades! Media Event.

BDIC and Musée D’Histoire Contemporaine

Since its creation in 1914, the impressive Library of Contemporary International Documentation in Paris (BDIC) keeps on casting light on events of the past century, focussing on ideological movements and clashes in social and political history. Hence it will grant us access to remarkable footage, which will perfectly serve the purpose of our project “Farewell Comrades!”. BDIC is predestinated to host the Farewell Comrades! Exhibition in close collaboration with the Musée D’Histoire Contemporaine, where the exhibition in Paris will be located.

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Opening
September – December 2011