

FAREWELL ★ COMRADES!



Farewell Comrades! TV Series

In coproduction with Artline Films, ARTE France, ARTE G.E.I.E., ZDF/ARTE, YLE and TVP

A series by Andrei Nekrasov

6 x 52min

December 1991: Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, calls the main Western heads of State. Shortly after, in a televised speech, Mikhail Gorbachev announces: "I quit my duties as President of the USSR." He ends 80 years of history.

It is an unexpected outcome to the grand communist vision that had held the world in anticipation since the October Revolution in 1917. Yet in 1975, during the Helsinki Conference, the utopia seemed to be at the peak of its geographical expansion, controlling or influencing almost half of the planet's population.

1975-1991: Farewell Comrades! is an innovative documentary series telling the story of the countdown to the demise of the Soviet world and of the Socialist utopia, which it was based on.

Filed in 12 European countries, Farewell Comrades! follows the march of history through testimonies of known and unknown people, who participated in the different stages of this slow erosion, which neither state apparatchiks, nor secret services, nor heads of states around the world had predicted.

1. Episode: Victory (1975-1979)

In 1975 the Soviet Union is at the peak of its power: the final act of the Helsinki Conference officially confirms the Soviet dominance in East Europe, meanwhile the other superpower is in a deep depression after the Watergate scandal, and the defeat in Vietnam. But as consequence of the Helsinki Conference dissident groups like Charta 77 or the Moscow-Helsinki Group emerge and start to undermine the state authorities. And the socialist youth starts to dream about freedom under the raising influence of rock music, jeans and Western media.

2. Episode: Wars (1980-1984)

The super nation begins to disintegrate at its borders: The visit of pope John Paul II in 1979 in Poland gives the essential impulse for the Solidarnosc-strikes at the Danzig shipyards, the Afghanistan war soon becomes a military and economical disaster and leads to the final boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games by the West. As the Cold War heats up, the Soviet leadership is in bad shape: Within a few months Brezhnev and the subsequent leader Andropov die. In the Satellite States the old ruling elites have also lost touch and dept overload and economic stagnation lead to raising discontentment among the citizens.

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3. Episode: Hope (1985-1987)

When Mikhail Gorbachev takes power in 1985, his first actions wake great hopes inside and outside the country. Gorbachev is inspired by the Hungarian example, the awkward barrack of socialism that had already begun to get economical and social liberalisation on its way. But the catastrophe of Chernobyl shows Gorbachev in which ailing state the country is. At the 70th party congress of the communist party in 1987, he for the first time openly speaks about Glasnost and Perestroika – freedom of information and economical reforms that shall lead the giant nation back to its old strength.

4. Episode: Awakening (1988)

Glasnost and Perestroika start to unfold their impact: Everywhere in the Soviet Union newspapers and magazines are founded and the new wind of openness is notable. At the same time economic problems increase and in some provinces the first ethnic conflicts become visible. The discontentment is growing in the Satellite States, especially in the countries that decide not to follow Gorbachev's reforms.

5. Episode: Rebellion (1989)

1989 is the year of big changes. While the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary are taking the first steps with at least partly free elections into the direction of a democratic system, the old communist leaders in the GDR, CSSR, Bulgaria and Romania cling to their power. Finally in autumn 1989 they get kicked out of their offices by striking waves of peaceful demonstrations, and the biggest, almost bloodless revolution of all times.

6. Episode: Collapse (1990-1991)

The super power has released its colonies, but the riots do not stop at the borders of the Soviet Union. While the shining reformer Gorbachev is celebrated in the West, the problems at home outgrow. His old opponent Boris Yeltsin reappears on the political stage and after the thwarted putsch in August 1991 he now finally takes charge of the leadership. Gorbachev is left to announce the end of the Soviet Union in December 1991.

Illustrated by exceptional archives from the former Eastern Bloc countries and major Western media, Farewell Comrades! offers a unique perspective on this still little understood historical process, by bringing face to face two generations: A character born in the 1950's and brought up in the Soviet ideal, and his daughter who grew up in the West in the 1980's. The young European woman in search of her father's past and his roots, which lie in one of the major historical events of the 20th Century - the rise, peak and fall of the Soviet empire.

Director **Andrei Nekrasov**
Executive Producer **Christian Beetz, Olivier Mille**
Written by **Jean-François Colosimo, György Dalos and Andrei Nekrasov**

A coproduction of **gebrueder beetz filmproduktion** and **Artline Films**

Farewell Comrades! – An International Cross-Media Event:
TV Series – Web Format – Book – Events – Augmented Reality Quiz

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