

1989 - A STATESMAN OPENS UP

by Anders Østergaard and Erzsébet Rácz

90 min

In Coproduction with

Magic Hour Films

Proton Cinema

ZDF/arte, DR, VPRO, NRK, YLE

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1989 – A STATESMAN OPENS UP is a creative documentary and a high-politics drama about the collapse of the Iron Curtain. A young technocrat, Miklós Németh, becomes Hungary's new prime minister to save the country's appalling economy. He decides to remove the expensive border control apparatus from the state budget. Thousands of refugees from East Germany are encouraged by rumours that the Hungarian border to Austria will be opened and decide to make a go for it. However, Németh's decision has set him up against formidable adversaries and communist hardliners. A young East German couple is caught up in the political power game: the young man is finally shot dead at the border. This tragic event paradoxically accelerates Németh's final decision to open up the borders. Soon after, the Berlin Wall falls.

The film follows the personal account of the then prime minister of Hungary, Miklós Németh, underpinned by archive footage and reconstructions of various scenes and conversations based on comprehensive journalistic research and detailed testimony. Reconstructed conversations from confidential meetings have been re-recorded with speakers to superimpose the resulting sound track onto real-life film and video footage of the historical persons concerned in similar settings. This device has enabled Østergaard to recreate the actual events with the personalities who were genuinely involved, thus retaining their authenticity and the spirit of the times. It also allows the audience to reflect on the historic events covered by the film and the way they interrelate.