THE MINISTER
OLIVIER GOURMET
MICHEL BLANC
ZABOU BREITMAN
A FILM BY PIERRE SCHOELLER
L'EXERCICE DE L'ÉTAT
ARCHIPEL 35 AND LES FILMS DU FLEUVE PRESENT
I've been working on this project for 7 years. Originally, I wanted to address the invisible nature of power and show the people behind the scenes of government because these are the people who are pulling the strings and yet we never see them. It was very important for me to show that political decisions are thought up by a whole group of people, although only one person alone appears to make the decision in the end. So the original idea for the film lies in the relationship between the principal private secretary and the minister. The PPS epitomizes the man who never gets any media attention but who gets his hands dirty. So it's a film not so much about "the president's men" as about "the minister's men".

**The workings of power**

I wasn't so interested in the quest for power, in the accession to power or in the life of a political party - as in the workings of the government and of ministerial functions. That's why I wasn't keen on focusing on a real-life politician as I would have felt that it could limit the way of my creative expression. Instead, I wanted to focus on the hard facts of everyday political wheeling and dealing. I also wanted to show that political decisions are caught up in a kind of frenzied whirlpool because today's society has become so complex. Each and every one of us is saturated in a technological and media-obsessed society and I think politicians are just the same.

**The dream sequence**

The dream sequence allowed me to show what kind of man Saint-Jean is. This is a man who is literally haunted by his job, and who gets up in the middle of the night to visit the scene of a car crash where children have been killed. Because this is the kind of thing that is expected of a politician who is in the public eye. The dream sequence helps the viewer understand better how emotionally challenging a minister's job can be: I really wanted the viewer to empathize with this man's anguish and loneliness.

**Research & Screenwriting**

I did a lot of research into the material. I read a great many books and I combed a lot of newspaper articles. I also collected some 300 pictures of politicians to help me portray the minister. As far as the writing of the script is concerned, I worked with three people who worked in ministers' offices. They didn't actually write the script with me but they gave me feedback on the writing and brought their know-how into the process. For instance, the scene with PPS Woessner was directly inspired by the experience of one of those men who had joined the private sector after working as a government official.

**Master-slave relationships**

In the film, dominance and submission are the prevailing motifs. Each character dominates someone and is dominated by someone else up until the final sequence where they all end up in the President's office. Humiliation pervades the film but no one is brutal enough to enjoy venting their anger or losing their temper. Being temporariness is part of politics, just as political insider's advice and colleagues' words of support are always unreliable. For that matter, 'think positive' seems to be the motto in ministers' offices - advisors have to keep providing the minister with positive thoughts and reassuring words.

**Interview with Pierre Schueller**

**The Burden of Duty**

I was really taken up with the idea of the privatization of railway stations, although I couldn't possibly get too many technicalities. But I came up with an interesting perspective to depict the reform and the timing of the reform: I realized that any major reform involves the appointment of a new political figure that helps implement the reform in question. It's a strategy of power. Besides, it was interesting to confront the idea of a minister with his own beliefs. Because he wasn't in the least interested in this man who'd been driving him around for a few weeks. Saint-Jean is in his safe zone while this "incredible" man is doing an almost spiritual exchange takes place between them both. Saint-Jean remains marked by this experience forever.

**About the Cast**

Olivier Gourmet was extremely dedicated to the film. He brought so much energy into portraying anger and immediacy and his performance always rings true. His way of moving and of conveying emotions with his face and his body language is really sublime. I need those qualities in an actor. When he did the first reading of the script, I immediately felt that he was an obvious choice for the part. Olivier Gourmet played the role organically and the audience will hopefully empathize with him, as much as I do. What happened somewhat differently with Michel Blanck. The thing is, he had been wanting to play a political advisor for quite some time. And all of a sudden, he had the opportunity to play this role. What was amazing was that we had to wait a few weeks. Saint-Jean's accident changes him - when you come this close to death, you're bound to change. He suddenly realizes that his driver is a human being, although he wasn't in the least interested in this man who'd been driving him around for a few weeks. Saint-Jean is in his safe zone while this "incredible" man is doing an almost spiritual exchange takes place between them both. Saint-Jean remains marked by this experience forever.
The Minister for Transport, Bertrand Saint-Jean, is woken in the middle of the night by his personal private secretary. A bus has crashed into a ravine. He goes there, he has no choice. Thus begins the odyssey of a State official through an increasingly complex and hostile world. Speed, power struggles, chaos, economic crisis... In the frantic chain of events, one emergency replaces another. What sacrifices are men ready to accept? How long will they last in a State that devours those who serve it?

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FILMOGRAPHY OF PIERRE SCHOELLER
2011
THE MINISTER
2008
VERSAILLES with Guillaume Depardieu, Judith Chemla, Max Baissette de Malglaive
Festival de Cannes - Official Selection - Un Certain Regard
2002
ZERO DéFaut (tv feature) with Eric Elmosnino, Nade Dieu, Abdallah Moundy
1996
DEUX AMIS (short film) with Michael Lonsdale, Jean Mercure

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