

Centropa Civil Society Lesson Plan 2015

Lesson Title: *When Governments Fail, Civil Society Steps In: Importance of Civic Action*

Authors:

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Content Areas: Civics, Government, World History, Holocaust Studies, Geography, Political Science, Sociology, Theory of Knowledge

Categories: active citizenship, communism, civic action, revolutions

Ages: 12-18

Suggested time: 3-5 class periods

Suggested Centropa Resources / for Lesson:

Interviews: *(usually in the last part - click "After the War section" that might be used for the lesson)*

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/egon-lovith#After%20the%20War>

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/anna-mass#After%20the%20war>

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/vladislav-rothbart#After%20the%20war>

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/luna-davidova#Post-war>

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/beno-ruso>

<http://www.centropa.org/biography/magdolna-palmai>

Films:

http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/maps-central-europe-and-history?subtitle_language=

<http://www.centropa.org/node/47756>

Themes / Topics: fall of communism, political resistance, social movements and the struggle for justice, geography, ethics, moral decision making, upstanders vs. bystanders

Goals / Lesson Objectives:

- to explain why and how borders changed in 20th century Europe
- to explain the causes or negative elements of government in one country in Central or Eastern Europe which prompted the people to take action to bring about change (ex. Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Hungary - resources attached) or any other country with resources used from the Centropa website
- to explain the effects or specific examples of actions taken by people from a selected country
- Identify specific examples of civic action
- Understand the historical perspective and importance of the transitory year 1989

Essential Vocabulary:

communism

socialism

civil society

Solidarity

rebellion

totalitarian

resistance

Context / Background information:

The idea of this lesson is to engage in dialogue about the historical background of the failure of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and how everyday citizens joined together to take action for changes during this period.

As the Soviet Union used its victory in the World War II to expand its sphere of influence over neighboring European countries, an “Iron Curtain” was drawn upon Europe, dividing it into two halves, East and West, which reflected two radically different systems.

After a dark period of dictatorship and military control led by Joseph Stalin, more domestic policies and more liberal reforms were implemented by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev leading to a partial de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union. Yet the eighteen years term of Leonid Brezhnev took the country back from an economic standpoint, while significantly growing the Soviet Union’s global influence through huge investments in the military. Starting with 1985 however, Mikhail Gorbachev’s hands-off east Europe policy played a significant role in encouraging later democratic movements. Economic grievances and the acute perception of the suppression of the freedom of expression in East-European countries were voiced through a series of rebellions against communism and Soviet domination from the East German workers’ strike in 1953, followed in 1956 by Polish and Hungarian workers and students’ demonstrations, the 1970s workers’ strike in Gdansk. The 1980s came with several strikes in Poland and Hungary, in which the activists obtained major freedoms: free trade unions (which adopted the name “Solidarity”), free information and media, and civil rights, as well as some reforms in Hungary, including free travel.

The liberation of Eastern Europe came in 1989 in a fast pace series of events as briefly presented below:

- June 4- Solidarity won the elections in Poland and in August Tadeusz Mazowiecki was elected prime minister of Poland.
- August 23- approximately two million people in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined hands connecting the three Baltic countries in a human chain of about 650 km in length to commemorate the signing of the Ribentrop / Molotov Pact thus separating the Baltic States from the USSR. This event is known as Via Baltica, or the Baltic Way (or the Baltic Chain). Lithuania became the first country to separate officially from the Soviet Union in March 1990.
- East Germany's president Erich Honecker resigned in October due to large demonstrations;
- October 24, Hungarians non-violently overthrew the communist government and proclaimed the Republic;
- Czechoslovakia, the communist government resigned in November after a general strike;
- December 25, Romania violently overthrew its communist leader, Nicolae Ceausescu.

Instructional Activities and Assessments:

Introduction Activity / Hook: Teacher will use the Centropa Film - *"Maps, Central Europe and History: Changing Borders"* to set the geographic and political situation./

Instructional Activity:

Before Watching:

1. Using reference maps, students will be given two blank maps of Europe to identify the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Students will identify country borders in Central and Eastern Europe in 1945 and 1990. Students will compare the maps and the changes in the country distinctions.

After Watching:

1. Students will discuss the reasons for the changes in borders following the end of WWII and again with the fall of Communism.

2nd Instructional Activity:

1. Teacher will show film, My Escape from Prague <http://www.centropa.org/node/47756> (example Czechoslovakia) to demonstrate to students what some of the problems or negative elements existed in Europe were and why the people would want to bring about change.

Procedures for Students;

1. Students will choose a specific country from Central of Eastern Europe to research:
2. Students will use the suggested links or research the Centropa website and/or interview individuals for personal stories of people living with oppressive conditions under communism to understand the motivations that led to the desire for taking civic action.
3. Students will create a timeline of events leading to the fall of communism in the case study (selected country).
4. Students will design a presentation or a project - powerpoint, make a short film, comic strip, political cartoon, Facebook dialogue among different countries/governments/interests, oral debate, dramatization, writing newspaper articles or editorials, poster presentation, argumentative essay using sources for evidence, or any other creative method for demonstrating understanding - which reflect the negative conditions and how the citizens in their selected country addressed these issues/injustices.
5. Students will present their findings to classmates about conditions that prompted change and examples of civic action taken by people to bring about change (all presented findings are to be based on evidence from research sources.)

Assessment for Understanding:

- Teacher will facilitate open dialogue about the common elements that caused people to engage in civic action for change.
- Teacher will develop their own rubrics for assessing content comprehension and communication skills.

Extensions/Enrichment Activity:

Students will work in groups to identify an issue or problem at their own school or in their community which they feel is not being addressed and brainstorm ways that they could take action to correct an injustice.

Personal Information about authors:

Damjan Snoj is a teacher of History, Geography and Civics at OŠ Preserje (Preserje Primary School), Slovenia. OŠ Preserje is a small suburban public school near Ljubljana with about 350

pupils aged 6 to 15 divided into 9 grades. Damjan was introduced to Centropa during the Centropa seminar in Skopje, Macedonia in May, 2014.

Saulius Skucas is an English teacher of Jewish history and the Holocaust in the Secondary School of the Lithuanian University. He teaches many students who have living members who either witnessed or survived the hardships of Soviet Labor camps and who can tell personal stories of their family members' experiences. Saulius believes that critical thinking is vital for students and works hard to demonstrate to his students to believe in the diversity of the Jewish population and not to succumb to stereotypes.

Cherie Arnette is the Social Studies Curriculum Specialist for Escambia County, Florida, United States. Her role combines providing professional learning and training teachers in pedagogy, writing and designing curricula for Social Studies, as well as, providing resources for teachers in her district. Cherie taught for 17 years courses including AP Human Geography, World History and European History. Currently she is the First Vice-President for the Florida Council for the Social Studies.

Barbara Hairfield serves as the K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Specialist for the Charleston County School District in Charleston, South Carolina, United States. Prior to this position she spent over 20 years as a secondary Social Studies teacher, a teacher coach with the district, and a teacher specialist with the SC State Department of Education providing technical assistance to teachers in underperforming schools. Currently, Barbara serves a legislative appointment on the Education Oversight Committee in an advisory capacity to the South Carolina General Assembly. She has also served on the Board of Directors of the National Council for the Social Studies and is currently on the Executive Board for the National Social Studies Supervisors Association. In addition, Barbara works closely with teacher preparation programs as a reviewer for the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and is the Chair of The Citadel's Professional Education Board.