

#9022

1989: PEOPLE POWER

PBS VIDEO
1999
Grade Levels: 10-13+
57 minutes



DESCRIPTION

Archival footage and personal reflections add depth to this chronological perspective of the fall of communism and the breakup of the Soviet Union. Highlights include the rise of Poland's Solidarity Party, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Romania's revolts in the late 1990s, and Russia's failed coup and Yeltsin's leadership...all prime examples of the power of the people.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Civics

- Standard: Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations
 - Benchmark: Understands the effects that significant American political developments have on other nations (e.g., immigration policies; opposition to communism; promotion of human rights; foreign trade; economic, military, and humanitarian aid)

Subject Area: Behavioral Studies

- Standard: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions
 - Benchmark: Understands that intergroup conflict does not necessarily end when one segment of society gets a decision in its favor because the "losers" then may work even harder to reverse, modify, or circumvent the change

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To examine why citizens throughout eastern Europe began to lose faith in the communist system and ideology.
2. To introduce the principles of communism.
3. To compare the role of the individual in a democratic system versus a communist system.
4. To review living conditions and political changes in an Eastern European country in the 20th century before communism, under communism, and today.
5. To illustrate the political and economic changes that led to the collapse of communism.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Review with students the principles of communism. Compare the role of the individual in a democratic system vs. a communist system. How does each system give people power?

2. Why is the right to assemble considered an important element of democracy? How is it related to the right of free speech?

DURING SHOWING

Applications and Activities

1. Have students write down how the following people express their discontent with communism: Natasha Kuznetsova, Mihai Radu, Mike Fröhnel, Henryka Kryzwonos, Petr Miller, and Ioan Savu.
2. Have students write their responses to the following questions: What motivated people to protest? What risks did they face when they engaged in protests?

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Why did people become disillusioned with communism? How did they express their discontent? How did their actions contribute to the fall of communism? What if they had not taken action, or if politicians had tried to reform rather than dismantle their communist governments? Explain.
2. Based on the program, which do you think was a more important factor in the fall of communism: the quest for political liberties or the quest for a higher standard of living? Explain. Why were some people, like worker Nina Motova, worried about losing communism?
3. What frustrations led workers like Henryka Kryzwonos to demand an independent union? What tactics did they use to protest? Why do you think their success was threatening to communist leaders?
4. How did the Soviet authorities respond to the Solidarity movement? How effective was their response? Explain. How did Gorbachev's philosophy differ from the philosophies of other communist leaders? What impact did his reforms have on the Soviet Union? On other countries?
5. Based on the quotation from Bärbel Reinke, what do you think made an ordinary person like her finally decide to take action? What do you think caused protest and revolution to spread through Eastern Europe?
6. What did the Berlin Wall represent? What structures or places in the United States symbolize American history or values? How do they symbolize our history or values? What would their destruction or replacement mean to the American public?

Applications and Activities

1. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group to research living conditions and political changes in one Eastern European country in the twentieth century before communism, under communism, and today. Then have them create a timeline highlighting the events leading up to the rise and fall of communism in that country and a map illustrating consequent geographic changes.
2. Have students explore a dissident perspective on communist Eastern Europe by reading Václav Havel's short play "Protest," or scenes one and four from act 1 of his play "The Memorandum". Discuss what the plays tell about the society; what aspects of society Havel is satirizing; what moral or personal dilemmas the characters confront, and how they cope

with them; and why Havel's plays were considered subversive. Then ask students to write a paragraph from the point of view of a fellow dissident or a government censor, explaining why Havel's writing is either inspiring or dangerous.

3. Ask students to trace the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of communism. First, have some students research media coverage of the construction of the Wall and the U.S. response, and have other students research coverage of the fall of the Wall. Then have students draw political cartoons or write journal entries or letters that illustrate the answer to one of the following questions: Why did Berlin become the focus of tensions between East and West? What events led to the construction of the Wall? What aspects of communism and anti-democracy did the Wall symbolize? Why was the fall of the Wall such a symbolic event?
4. Using magazine and newspaper articles, have students imagine they are living in a former communist country today. Have them write a letter to a relative describing how daily life has changed. What has changed the most? What has changed the least? How do you feel about the changes? What do you think the future holds? What are your hopes and dreams for the future?

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Dateline: 1989, Berlin #2465
- Europe: Balkan Region #3239
- The Reunification of Germany #3074
- The Soviet Union Chronicles: 1945-1993 #3184



World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **1989 WORLD HISTORY**

<http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/a0005271.html>

Within the text of events that occurred in 1989 are linkable words to obtain further information on the selected word. Khomeini, Tiananmen Square, Mikhail Gorbachev, Berlin Wall, and others are listed.

- **RUSSIA**

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/rutoc.html>

Part of the *Country Studies/Area Handbook* series "describing and analyzing [Russia's] political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors." Research completed July 1996. Searchable; can limit your search to one or more countries. From the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress.



- **GERMANY**

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/detoc.html>

Part of the *Country Studies/Area Handbook* series “describing and analyzing [Germany’s] political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors.” Research completed August 1995. Searchable; can limit your search to one or more countries. From the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress.

- **BERLIN WALL**

<http://www.dailysoft.com/berlinwall/>

This searchable site contains vast amounts of information on the Berlin Wall, including a time line; an extensive collection of photographs with views of Checkpoint Charlie, escapes, Wall art and the Wall’s demolition; facts about the Wall; and an extensive archive of documents (mostly in German) and photographs. In addition, there are external links that include Berlin Wall sites geared for children, and personal narratives.