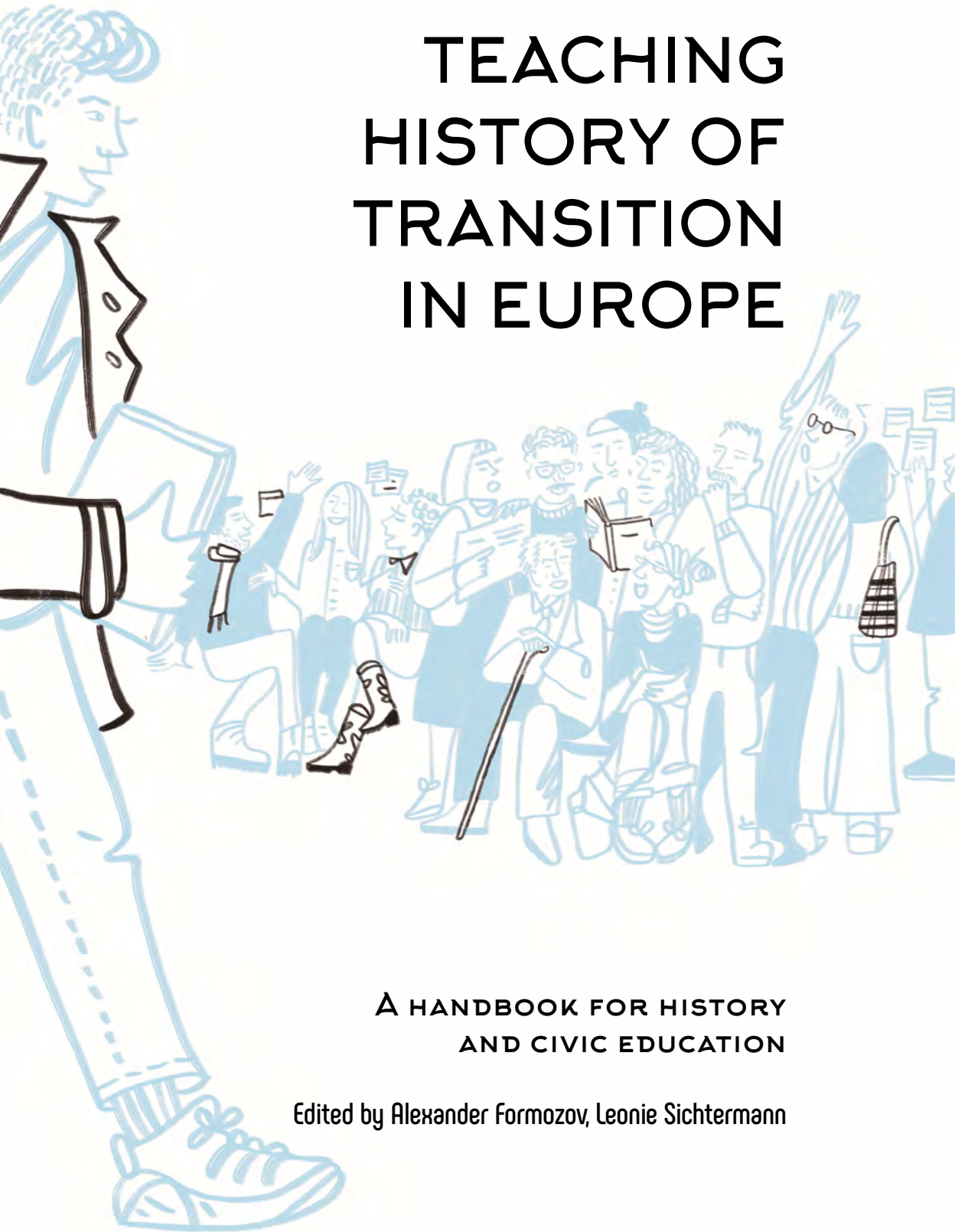


# TEACHING HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE



A HANDBOOK FOR HISTORY  
AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Edited by Alexander Formozov, Leonie Sichtermann



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More information can be found at <http://www.transition-dialogue.org>.

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## CONTENT

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Authors: Alexander Formozov & Leonie Sichtermann	
<b>Post-communist transition: The division of narratives.....</b>	<b>11</b>
Authors: Momchil Metodiev & Louisa Slavkova	
<b>Transition – a contested term.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Key aspects of transition in Central and Eastern Europe.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>How transition is taught .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Mapping textbooks and curricula: How history of transition is taught? .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Bulgaria.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Author: Bistra Stoimenova	
<b>Croatia.....</b>	<b>36</b>
Author: Vedran Ristić	
<b>Germany .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Author: Barbara Christophe	
<b>Lithuania.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Author: Asta Ranonytė	
<b>Poland .....</b>	<b>61</b>
Authors: Alicja Pacewicz & Stanisław Zakroczyński	
<b>Russia .....</b>	<b>74</b>
Author: Andrey Suslov	
<b>Ukraine.....</b>	<b>83</b>
Authors: Aleksander Krolkowski & Mykola Skyba	

<b>Lesson plans: Introduction</b> .....	<b>97</b>
<b>National lesson plans</b> .....	<b>105</b>
<b>Bulgaria: People and monuments during times of transition</b> .....	<b>105</b>
Author: Bistra Stoimenova	
<b>Croatia: What is (economic) transition? – Economic transition from the 1980s onwards</b> .....	<b>120</b>
Authors: Vedran Ristić, Vedrana Pribičević & Caroline Hornstein Tomić	
<b>Germany: Victims and perpetrators in the trials against the so-called wall-shooters. How can a constitutional state today judge past injustices?</b> .....	<b>148</b>
Authors: Barbara Christophe & Veronika Ludwig	
<b>Lithuania: The transition period in Lithuania: Social, cultural, and economic challenges</b> .....	<b>161</b>
Authors: Giedrė Tumosaitė, Tomas Vaitkūnas & Vaidotas Steponavičius	
<b>Poland: From central to local governance – The greatest achievement of Polish transformation?</b> .....	<b>171</b>
Author: Stanisław Zakroczyński	
<b>Russia: “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s”</b> .....	<b>185</b>
Author: Andrey Suslov	
<b>Ukraine – Studying Ukrainian and European history through active learning</b> .....	<b>199</b>
Author: Mykola Skyba	
<b>Transnational lesson plans</b> .....	<b>205</b>
<b>The role of civil society in transition to democracy</b> .....	<b>205</b>
Authors: Alicja Pacewicz, Olena Pravylo, Leonie Sichtermann, Louisa Slavkova & Giedrė Tumosaitė	

<b>The economic aspects of transition taught through the Accidents of Birth game.....</b>	<b>222</b>
Authors: Vedrana Pribičević & Bistra Stoimenova	
<b>Public memory, dealing with the past, competing memories.....</b>	<b>240</b>
Authors: Bistra Stoimenova, Alicja Pacewicz & Aiguste Starkutė	
<b>Crime and punishment? Transitional Justice in Post-communist Countries.....</b>	<b>258</b>
Authors: Stanisław Zakroczyński, Aiguste Starkutė, Momchil Metodiev & Alicja Pacewicz	
<b>Teaching transition: In search of better approaches and methods .....</b>	<b>277</b>
Author: Alicja Pacewicz	
<b>Teaching transition: Reflections on challenges, strategies, and conceptual approaches. ....</b>	<b>293</b>
Author: Barbara Christophe	
<b>The impact of the public discourse on teaching transition.....</b>	<b>316</b>
Author: Stanisław Zakroczyński	
<b>Authors.....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>Acronyms.....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Partners.....</b>	<b>327</b>



# Introduction

Authors: Alexander Formozov & Leonie Sichtermann

*History isn't the study of the past; it is the study of change.*<sup>1</sup>

Yuval Noah Harari

The period following the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe represents a pivotal chapter in European history, a time marked by profound political, social, and economic changes. **Teaching History of Transition in Europe** is a handbook for educators, a comprehensive resource providing them the tools necessary for teaching this complex and significant period, one which continues to shape contemporary Europe. It draws attention to the diversity of experiences across the region, offering comparative materials from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine.

The victory of Solidarność and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the accompanying transformations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have reshaped the continent. Although these events are well documented, their deeper historical impact and different interpretations in the various countries make teaching the multifaceted history of this period both a challenge and an opportunity.

As Europe continues to face extreme political stresses and attempts to consolidate in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it seems more important than ever to understand Europe's recent past. And perhaps, to paraphrase Yuval Noah Harari, this will help us to at least develop an idea of what might await Europe in the future.

## Reflections on Transition in the Light of War

The first edition of this handbook was conceived and written at a time when the authors could not have anticipated the tectonic shifts that the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 would bring about. In the past, Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine had set out together on the path of change after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, or so it seemed. But with Russia's full-scale attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the political results of the transition were to be revised by brute force. Its stated goal is to shift geopolitical outcomes, borders, and political alliances, as well as to curtail sovereignty and democracy in Ukraine.

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<sup>1</sup> Yuval Noah Harari (2024), *Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI*, p. xxxix

Furthermore, this war, alongside other hybrid threats, has fundamentally changed the meaning of democratisation and transition in Europe. Democratic gains have proven fragile in the face of such aggression, underscoring the importance of protecting democratic institutions from internal and external hazards. The invasion of Ukraine has reinvigorated discussions about sovereignty, self-determination, and the role of international alliances – topics that have been central to the transitions described in this handbook. As educators use this resource, it is crucial to keep in mind that these historical transitions are not static events of the past, but rather ongoing processes. Ukraine's resilience in the face of aggression shows that the fight for democracy and freedom is far from over.

### Structure and Approach

This handbook offers both materials for teaching transition and a methodological approach to tackle blind spots and neglected topics. We hope our particular approach will help educators deal with controversial topics constructively. The emphasis is on educational modules and formats which were developed transnationally. We believe that such a transnational approach in history education is essential to deal with the topic appropriately for two main reasons. Firstly, the post-1989 transition was itself a transnational process that transformed certainly half, if not all, of Europe. And secondly, many current conflicts stem from that time and thus have a transnational process at their origin.

The point of departure for developing this handbook was the **mapping of school curricula and textbooks** to find out how transition is framed and taught in formal educational institutions in each of seven countries. Our country experts focused on content and priority given to the topic, examined teaching methods and approaches and identified missing topics. The initial chapter offers background information on the concept of transition, its developments, and public perceptions in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Most importantly, it summarises the findings of the mapping and identifies common patterns across the region.

The **lesson plans** provide hands-on materials to support history and civic education practitioners in teaching transition in formal and non-formal settings. **National and transnational topics**, which receive insufficient attention despite their importance for understanding the transition period and the impact it can have on societies, are covered in depth by the 11 lesson plans. Each lesson plan describes a step-by-step instruction in detail and makes use of interactive methods, mainly through the use of historical sources. Most of the materials in this handbook are available for download in several languages on the website [www.transition-dialouge.org](http://www.transition-dialouge.org).

Additionally, we provide an extensive array of innovative materials designed for **online formats**, which allow educators and students to continue learning together even when in-person classes are unavailable. These formats include video tours, games, podcasts, interviews, online talks and more. All these resources can serve as additional teaching material to raise awareness on a topic in an interactive way.<sup>2</sup>

The concluding section examines the most common shortcomings and challenges in teaching about the process of transition and discusses **methodological approaches** to addressing blind spots and neglected topics, including ways to deal with controversial issues in the classroom – such as oral history, historical thinking, multi-perspectivity, and more.

## The Importance of Multi-Perspectivity

One of the core principles of this handbook is to promote multi-perspectivity in history teaching. Controversies over post-communist transition at the national and European level have repeatedly emerged with renewed vigour over decades. It is perhaps no surprise that populists of all stripes have been prone to exploit this. Therefore it is especially important to recognize where memories of the transition and popular narratives have been instrumentalized or distorted, how and why. Democratic governments also have – albeit to varying extents – a decisive say in what and how history is taught, as demonstrated in the closing chapter of this handbook. Teaching about the transition period is thus susceptible to the influence of public discourse and, especially, the point of view of the ruling power, since this is a topic that still sparks social and political debates in societies.

Teaching the histories of post-1989 transitions requires an exploration of the diverse and often conflicting experiences and memories that individuals and groups associate with this period. This approach encourages critical and historical thinking, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the complexities of history. Multi-perspectivity and enhanced public dialogue are essential for avoiding simplistic narratives that overlook the nuances of personal, national and regional experiences as CEE countries charted their paths away from authoritarianism. Developing these competencies should increase the resilience of societies against attempts to manipulate them through misrepresentation and disinformation.

From history, we can learn how we became who we are. The history of post-1989 transition in Central and Eastern Europe is where the origins of today's generations, our cultural and social realities lie. The foundations of contemporary social roles, relationships and imaginaries can be uncovered within this history, but also the roots of inequality, conflicts, and traumas. In a manner of speaking,

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<sup>2</sup> Material available at: [www.transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition](http://www.transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition)

this period created our cultural DNA, the practices and social structures which continue to shape our lives today.<sup>3</sup>

### About the Transition Dialogue Network

The idea for this handbook was developed in the Transition Dialogue network, which focuses on the formation of knowledge and perceptions of the transition from communism in Central and Eastern Europe. It was established by civil society actors and practitioners of history and civic education in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine.

The Transition Dialogue network is committed to the critical evaluation of the period of post-socialist transformation from 1989 onwards, to investigating the ways of coming to terms with its political consequences in the present-day societies, and to providing educational resources on transition for teachers and educators. It focuses on public discourse surrounding this period, particularly on how it is taught in schools, and examines the ways in which this era – already part of contemporary history – continues to shape narratives today. The immediate consequences, which are evident today also in the presence of war on the European continent, are highly relevant to the future of these countries at the political and socio-psychological level. The implications for education and democracy cannot be underestimated and the need to counteract generalising, simplistic narratives in order to promote cohesion based on democratic values cannot be exaggerated. In essence, the network seeks to answer three questions: How do we talk about our past? How does this affect our present? And what can be done for our future?

Past and current projects include publications in collaboration with organisations and experts in several partner countries, training courses for educators, participatory projects with young people, exhibitions, conferences, and more, all of which encourage reflection and questions about this period of the past and its resonance in the present.

The rapid pace of history has overtaken the narrative in this handbook at times and changed entire societies, not to mention some monuments, curricula and textbooks that the authors used as examples. However, we hope this handbook finds interested readers, reaches classrooms across the continent, and can contribute to our mutual understanding of each other's histories in Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Origin of Species: 1990s DNA Exhibition at the Vilnius MO Museum, 2019.*

## Post-communist transition: The division of narratives

**Authors: Momchil Metodiev & Louisa Slavkova**

More than 30 years after the end of communism, many people in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have 'transitioned' from communist Soviet satellites to capitalist EU members. Today, CEE states in the EU enjoy a higher standard of living and greater cultural, religious, and political freedom. The European Union now stretches across large parts of Eastern Europe, and EU internal-market freedoms (e.g., free movement of capital and labour) have reduced the intensity of post-Versailles border disputes between Eastern European states which are EU members. However, despite these obvious changes and successes, the period of transition following the collapse of communist regimes across this region is no longer understood as a common process, as it was in the 1990s, but as several unequal transitions. For many citizens the term 'transition' has become synonymous with an era of deprivation and lost hope.

The ambiguity contained within the term transition, as a means of encompassing this period, is reflected in the school textbooks of the seven CEE states which have been reviewed in the course of the Transition Dialogue (TD) project; Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. Although the experiences of transition in each country have been different, the states listed above represent specific historical experiences of transition in this region. The Bulgarian experience of the post-communist period, for instance, represents a negotiated character, between old elites and the opposition as equal parties to the deal, evident in its initial transition, which is typical of Southeastern Europe. Poland's transition period represents a trajectory which was considered in the late 1990s to be the most successful example of institutional transition and is typical of Central Europe. Croatia's and Lithuania's transition period represents the state-building initiatives established in the aftermath of the collapse of communism and the USSR. In contrast to other CEE countries, it introduces a new understanding of the process of transition towards newly gained or regained independence.

The following overview tries to fulfill two uneasy tasks. Firstly, it discusses how current developments in these post-communist societies have influenced both the meaning of the term transition and public perceptions of this historical period. Secondly, and more importantly, it turns to the school textbooks examined during the TD project by practitioners and scholars, summarizes how the history of transition is taught in each of these countries and identifies common patterns across the region. Popular understandings of transition in each country influence the way it is taught in schools.

### TRANSITION – A CONTESTED TERM

The term 'transition' refers to a common framework for analysing the development of post-communist Europe. It encompasses the processes of transformation, in the period after 1989/1991, from a totalitarian regime to democracy, open society, and a free market economy.

Generally rejected by historians, who prefer the term “post-communism”<sup>4</sup>, the term transition was introduced in political science, and then quickly became popular in everyday language – a cliché with which everyone tries to explain their own life experiences in this period.

Initially transition was perceived and studied almost universally as an economic and political process with clear purpose and content, and in this sense, it was understood to some extent as a teleological process, with a clear beginning and end. Gradually, political scientists have begun to highlight the importance of the specific context of transition for individual states, expanding the understanding of the scope of transformation, from a process mainly focused on the economy and politics, to one which includes history, society, and culture.<sup>5</sup>

By opening up the scope of transition, 'transitology' (a term drawn from political science for the study of the process of change from one political regime to another) became interested in why even those countries which had undergone the most successful political and economic transformations were still dealing with challenges to their democracies. This is how the term transition has shifted from one focused on describing processes in a specific historical context (post-communist), to one that is expected to explain new developments in CEE countries such as the rise of populism, nationalism, and the identity politics of the majority. The common perception of transition as an on-going process is rooted in the search for an analysis or a theory which can offer an explanation for both old and new challenges to democracy.

Though the concept of transition itself is neutral, it contains the implicit implication of positive social change. The term has, therefore, come to encompass the hope that certain policies can accommodate and advance the hopes and dreams of a range of different groups in a society.

<sup>4</sup> The authors of the text will be referring to transition mostly as “post-communism”.

<sup>5</sup> Compare: Bunce, V. (1995): 'Should Transitologists Be Grounded?' In: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Spring 1995), pp.111-127; Kubik, J. (2013): 'From Transitology to Contextual Holism: A Theoretical Trajectory of Postcommunist Studies'. In: Kubik, J. and Linch, A. (2013): *Postcommunism from Within. Social Justice, Mobilization and Hegemony*, New York University Press, pp.27-67.

## KEY ASPECTS OF TRANSITION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

### A transition to what?

While dismantling the communist state was a necessary task for all civic activists at the end of the communist era, it was not clear what would follow; political liberalization, 'Europeanization', the restoration of national dignity, or some combination of all of this at once?

More than 30 years later, this question remains. While Russia has aimed to restore national dignity since the 1990s, the CEE countries have initially focused on the liberalization of their societies. Over time, when politicians in some of those countries realized the value in election campaigns of emotional appeals to the concept of national dignity and traditional values, there was a shift in emphasis from liberalization to the defence of traditional values. As a result, the concept of illiberal democracy was born.<sup>6</sup>

The transitions of the 1990s were characterized by two main dimensions. The first was the democratization of political processes and the creation of classical liberal democratic states with checks and balances and the rule of law. The second was economic reform.

As regards the democratic dimension, in CEE countries the predominant understanding of democratization, formulated by political thinkers like Adam Michnik and Václav Havel, was the transformation of political structures into functioning democratic states, with a view to their future integration into the European Union. A key element of this process was its peaceful nature and the reaching of an agreement between the main political actors. This EU vision was widely shared by liberal, anti-communist thinkers and activists in many of the former Eastern Bloc countries.

As regards the economic dimension, this was perceived as universal and mandatory, with a clear emphasis on a market economy, privatization, and opening CEE countries to the world (in particular, EU members, consistent with the EU's four economic freedoms). Politically, those reforms followed strict criteria and included progress measurements according to specific indicators. However, as these criteria were set by international financial institutions, they were and still are subject to criticism both at the time of their implementation and today as being externally imposed, without taking into account the specific context in each country.

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<sup>6</sup> The term was introduced by Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

## Shock therapy or gradual transition?

Controversies about transition in the 1990s were less about its purpose and direction, than about the speed of economic reforms and became generally known as a debate between the proponents of shock therapy and the proponents of a gradual transition. Mainly based on economic indicators, the discussion largely ignored non-economic considerations, like strategies and mechanisms for society to deal with such rapid and fundamental processes of change.

By the end of the 1990s, some argued that it was clear that the faster and more profound the economic reforms, the faster economic recovery took place.

They claimed that countries that opted for a gradual transition found themselves caught in the grip of long-term and difficult reforms that either failed or did not provide a clear path to resolution, prompting them either to turn to their own versions of shock therapy or to seek another path to national recovery. The social cost of these experiences of reform were borne by a population which suffered the inconsistency of public services which should have been provided by the state, introducing new forms of social inequalities.

## The success of transition on a political level

It is difficult to draw conclusions about the success of the political reforms of the 1990s. It is a question of perspective, depending on the expectations and understanding of the goal of transition. In addition, transitology overlooked one fundamental aspect at the heart of political life in CEE: the separation of party and state. The main characteristic of the communist regimes was the formal subordination of the state to the party. In some countries this was even laid down in their constitutions. But analysis of the success of political democratization did not include consideration of the extent to which party and state were separated. Such analyses took account of democratization criteria which might typically have been relevant in a context in which party and state had always been separate, such as political pluralism, democratic elections, guaranteeing the rights of minorities (understood in the 1990s mainly as ethnic minorities), guaranteeing the civic liberties (i.e., media freedom, freedom of association, and of movement), etc. The dissolution of the repressive structures of the former communist regimes and subsequent lustration of their former cadres – the disclosing of information about their collaboration with the former communist services and their exclusion from public offices – was also pertinent to the question of the formation of the new “elites” in the 1990s. These questions, however, remained mainly in the realm of those interested in history and dealing with the past.



All the arguments above point towards a shared purpose of political and economic transition across the region, with one possible difference being the speed of this process and the different aspects which each country added to it.

Even though economic transformation and political democratization have been in the core, ultimately each country has been striving for nation building or restoration of its national sovereignty. The difficulties arising in the implementation of these reforms have opened up new areas of reforms, raised new questions and consequently, new perspectives for research and the understanding of transition in each of these countries.

As a result, despite apparently similar points of departure and a common narrative in the early 1990s, each country underwent its own process of transition and started attaching its own meaning to the process. These differences are well reflected in the textbooks under examination in this project.

### The winners and losers of transition

There is no agreement as to who won and who lost during transition, a dynamic widely understood as a measure of which social group benefitted most from the newly available opportunities of transformation. While a large-scale shift in the control of political processes occurred, the old communist era elites in most CEE countries maintained their social positions and influence to differing degrees. In addition, the more gradual the transition, the more enduring the hold of these old elites on their positions and influence. This was the case even in the new nation-states.

The presence of these old elites in public life is a source of frustration and disappointment with regard to popular expectations of transition among many social groups, since the persistent presence of these elites symbolizes the failed hopes of those parts of the population which had demanded change and carried out peaceful revolutions in their countries.

The problem is intensified by the question of social status. Privatization and political transformation were accompanied by rapid societal changes. Many social groups, most notably pensioners, but also whole regions, changed or lost their previous social status, including some regions that were depopulated as the result of the changing economic geography. This is one reason why, although many people are better off today, their social status is lower compared to the communist period. As a result, they perceive the process of transition negatively, and in some cases even as a period of personal or collective loss.

## The rule of law and the imitation of democracy

The above-mentioned change in social status raised the issue of a failure of justice in some societies during transition.

A key aspect of liberal democracy, the rule of law, was supposed to introduce equal treatment before the law for every citizen and to restore fairness and trust. However, this area remains, to date, one of the most problematic for post-communist societies.

This became obvious in the process of privatization that attracted not only transparent foreign investors, but also offered opportunities for fraud and criminal activity, which, in some countries, allowed predatory oligarchic elites to gain control over state institutions. In these cases, democratic institutions ended up as a façade, only mimicking a system that might be called a functioning democracy. All post-communist countries shared this experience to some degree.

The difficulties of introducing the rule of law as a basic democratic principle paved the way for a broader debate on the degree of social justice or fairness in the process of transition to democracy. This concerned mostly questions of meritocracy regarding the new elites; whether they emerged naturally through fair competition, were created by historical circumstances, or even through a conspiracy of the secret services of the former communist regime. As a result, the whole paradigm of transition to democracy was questioned, and its common narrative was undermined by specific national experiences of privatization.

Even more importantly, the very word “elite” obtained a negative connotation in many CEE countries. Fair or not, it started to be perceived as a predatory elite, as an “oligarchy”, which benefitted unjustly from the suffering of hard-working people, who lost their status in the process of transition. The negative connotations of the term “elite” have been employed by the illiberal populist movement, who have presented themselves, in contrast, as representatives of the common people whose promise for the restoration of national dignity was combined with a vague promise of social justice.

Thus, the recent rise of illiberal populist parties and movements is partly the result of the new ways in which public opinion is formed and expressed, but it is also an exploitation of grievances born in the years of transition in Eastern Europe. While in the late 1990s there were countries, mainly in Central Europe, that were depicted as post-communist transitional role models, today many, if not all countries in the region face levels of discontentment which the democratic process may not be able to resolve.

## Globalization and conspiracy theories

While post-communist Europe was changing in the period of transition, the world was not standing still either.

At a time when some of the former communist countries achieved what was considered a cornerstone of transition and democratization – accession to the European Union – it turned out that the European Union too had changed since this goal of accession was set.

In the early 1990s, CEE countries envisioned a model of society that combined America's deregulated economy with Europe's social security. In the late 1990s, just when the most advanced countries in Eastern Europe began to recover from the shock of the transition and started to benefit from its first positive results, the world was caught by a new technological revolution. Regardless of its name – globalization, Internet revolution, technological revolution, or dot-com boom – this revolution caused new social upheavals that changed the world, including the United States, the European Union, and post-communist Europe. The social changes of the transition period merged with social changes resulting from globalization and the technological revolution. Unlike in other parts of the world, however, post-communist societies do not distinguish between transition and the technological revolution but accept the two processes as two sides of the same coin.

Radical changes in forming and expressing public opinion were an indirect consequence of the technological revolution. A part of this is also the greater visibility and influence of radical ideas and theories, often combined with disinformation and conspiracy theories. While this leads to the greater visibility and consideration of minority issues and causes, it also supports the emergence of and growing susceptibility to conspiracy theories.

The combination of major social change, a growing sense of injustice and new social media tools created an atmosphere in the public sphere in which it became possible to present the peaceful nature of the revolutions in 1989/91 as a "grand deal" between old communist and new liberal elites, (such theories exist for example in Bulgaria, Poland, and Russia) who conspired for the establishment of a new state – a state which benefitted a few but disregarded most.

The core message of populism is that institution-building is a secondary task, and that it is not institutions but the influence of strong leaders which will dismantle this conspiracy of the 1990s and restore national or personal dignity.

## HOW TRANSITION IS TAUGHT – MAPPING TEXTBOOKS

Against the background described above, the search for a universal understanding of transition is a particularly difficult task. This becomes obvious when surveying the history textbooks examined in this volume.

### Chronology and terminology

The following summary from the mapping of history textbooks from seven CEE countries presents a sample of the diverse interpretations of transition against the background of respective national public debates. East Germany today is trying to rethink its unification with West Germany. Poland, the first country which undertook the path of change and transition, is also re-evaluating the role of the main actors in this transition today. Croatia and Lithuania are two countries from different regions that gained their independence as a result of the end of communism and achieved the goal of joining the European Union, each of them after successfully overcoming various difficulties in the building of new state institutions. Bulgaria is part of a region where transition began slowly and encountered substantial difficulties but, together with Romania, it indicates that reforms can be successful to the extent that they met the criteria to become part of the European Union. Ukraine is proof that, despite all negative predictions, the European Union remains as attractive for many people in Eastern Europe as it was in the 1990s and is the main reason that motivates a society to try to undertake painful reforms. The Russian state polarizes opinion around the world, while trying to present the country as having successfully regained its national dignity and proper place in the international arena.

Also, each of these countries has its own understanding and controversies around transition. Even the correct term for the process is a matter of debate. In Germany and Croatia, the term “change” or “turning point” is more popular, referring to a process rather than to a single event. The terminology used in Germany, “peaceful revolution,” refers precisely to the main feature of the beginning of this process. In other countries, the term transition is common to describe the post-communist period with all the positive and negative connotations. The term transition is not mentioned in textbooks in Russia. Russian textbooks explicitly describe the processes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Russian Federation, emphasizing the process of national reconstruction, as understood by the current Russian government. The most controversial process is the one in Ukraine, where transition continues to polarize, and consensus exists only over the country’s independence.

## Undisputed topics

### The event which initiated the process of transition

Generally, there is no dispute over the kind of event which initiated the transition after 1989/91. In the case of CEE countries, that event is the end of the communist system. The incidents constituting this event (e.g., violent or peaceful) may differ in different countries, but the result is similar, e.g., state ownership of businesses ends, and private ownership begins. In East Germany it is defined by the role of civil society in a dissident movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and negotiations for the unification of East and West Germany. In Poland it is defined by the role of working people in creating the trade union “Solidarity” and a degree of violence in the form of the imposition of martial law; in Russia it is defined by the role of the Communist Party attempting to modernize the Soviet communist system known as “Glasnost” and “Perestroika”; in Croatia it is defined by the death of Josip Broz Tito, president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the role of civil society in of the disintegration of Yugoslavia; in Lithuania it is defined by the role of civil society in the independence movement of 1987; and in Bulgaria it is defined by the fall of Todor Zhivkov, leader of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, in 1989, and the role of civil society in the democratic movement.

### The context-specific focus of national historiography

In all CEE states, transition is seen mainly as a process which includes democratization and privatization. At the same time, differences in the emphasis or details of these processes are driven by the local context. This diversity of views cannot easily be reconciled in history textbooks without an explicit focus on transnational patterns. In Germany, there was the comparison of National Socialism and East-German communism. In Ukraine, there was debate over why democratization and privatization did not lead to the formation of durable institutions and a mature democracy. In Bulgaria, there was debate over how to achieve European Union membership, without losing sight of the difficulties of the 1990s, including declining living standards, and the social upheaval of mass emigration. In Lithuania and Croatia, there was debate over the building of institutions. In Lithuania, there was debate over new models of social, political, and economic development, and the de-Sovietization of society. In Croatia there was and is debate over the assessment of the wars of disintegration of Yugoslavia. In Poland there was debate over the role of Pope John Paul II and the church in Poland under communism, the role of the “Solidarity” movement, Martial Law, regaining independence, and the birth of the Third Polish Republic, joining NATO and EU, as well as the social costs of transformation. In Russia there is consensus over the events surrounding the democratization of political life and the emergence of the multiparty system, the collapse of the Soviet Union, transition to a market economy, economic growth, the presidential election in 2000, the strengthening of the state, social and political stability, national security and the regaining of Russian prestige in the world community.

## What is missing?

### Country-specific omission of certain issues

The issues that are omitted from textbooks or curricula are those which a society most struggles to reconcile and integrate into a public narrative. They are avoided because there is no public consensus on them. In Germany, the issue of privatization is mentioned, but in most textbooks the emphasis is laid on the inevitability of its implementation, while only one of them mentions that quite a lot of corrupt western businessmen have misused the privatization process to get rid of trade competitors in the East. One textbook also tries to give a more nuanced picture of the political divisions in East Germany. It is juxtaposed with the general perception that privatization was a project largely promoted and implemented by western politicians and businesses who had no intention of 'saving' the East German economy or developing sustainable concepts for its development. This textbook criticises not only the corrupt misuse of the privatization process, but also the policy of privatization itself. In general, textbooks in Germany avoid serious discussion of how society dealt with the legacy of the GDR in a reunified Germany. How can society, in East and West, come to terms with a complex past and competing memories? How can history textbooks balance and address the extent to which the GDR was a dictatorship and the extent to which many people apparently lived happy and meaningful lives under that dictatorship?

In Bulgaria the topic of privatization is mentioned, but without in-depth discussion. Although social change during the transitional period is addressed, textbooks avoid questioning the fairness of the transition process and the extent to which the rule of law is upheld (even though this is the most debated aspect of transition in the country today). Bulgarian textbooks focus on successful reforms and integration into NATO and the EU but avoid the emergence of new elites. In Croatia textbooks are silent on privatization and its consequences, and the emergence of civil society. In Polish textbooks, similar gaps exist and, in addition, they fail to address the impact of important figures such as Lech Wałęsa. Lithuanian textbooks present the country as having undergone a unique transformation, while failing to place this transformation within the wider context of other countries in Eastern Europe, and Europe is defined as a uniform political, economic, and cultural space, without reference to the differences and peculiarities of Western, Eastern and Southern Europe.

In Russia, the 1990s are presented in the Cold War context as a period dominated by crime, declining living standards, the collapse of the economy, and weak authorities who adhered to the political interests of the "enemy" from the Western Bloc. Against the backdrop of the 1990s, the changes of the 2000s are presented as necessary to strengthen the state, defence, and foreign policy, with the goal of a 'resurrection of Russia'. The ways in which textbooks present Russian

foreign policy today reflects the influence of government interests in the selection and dissemination of historical knowledge. For example, the bombing of Belgrade by the US and NATO in 1999 is mentioned, but not the ethnic cleansing of Muslims by Serbian forces that happened ahead of it. The Russian-Georgian war of 2008 and annexation of Crimea are presented with similar omissions.

### **Shared silences on certain issues at the regional and transnational level**

The understanding of the transition process commonly focuses on events within a country, while largely ignoring broader regional issues. Insofar as these country-specific events are considered in any broader context, it is related to the European Union, and not CEE countries. This is an important omission, since an inward national focus leads to the erroneous conclusion that the national experience was unique, and common regional experiences are overlooked. For example, a student in Croatia or Bulgaria, will not realize that the issue of privatization in the 1990s is also a hot topic for discussion in Germany. Similarly, a student in the former East Germany today might not realize that the process of depopulation in his region is similar to that in other Eastern European countries.

Another significant omission from the textbooks of all countries in the region is globalization and the consequences of the technological revolution of the late 1990s. The issue is only mentioned in the case of Russia, in the context of Russian industry's orientation towards the future and the country's entry into the information society<sup>7</sup>, and omits the social consequences of such a technological revolution and changes in the ways in which public opinion is formed and the avenues through which it is expressed.

### **Transition Dialogue – Identifying the common challenges without losing sight of the specifics**

This mapping of how transition is presented in textbooks in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe does not aim to offer ready-made recipes for their improvement. Events in the region show that each country has its own unique experience of successes and failures to overcome, but transnational analysis allows for the identification of shared instances of success and failure.

In 1989/91, the CEE region was driven by a common hope that transition would change society for the better. The diversity of narratives on transition is evidence of the unique trajectories of transition experienced by each country. The Transition Dialogue project, however, is driven by the understanding that CEE countries continue to face a range of similar consequences resulting from the difficult, necessary, and unavoidable political decisions which inform the process of

<sup>7</sup> Information society refers to a society in which the creation, distribution, use, integration and manipulation of information is a significant economic, political, and cultural activity.

transition. Recognizing the existence of the common features of transition across the region and presenting the experience of individual countries within this wider context promises a path to resolving these shared problems. Identifying the common 'blind spots' of national history textbooks through this comparative methodology facilitates an understanding of a shared European perspective on the transition process which is beneficial for the whole region.

The TD project aims to address this tension in the understanding of the concept of transition, as both a historical period of the post-communist era, and an active concept used to understand contemporary socio-political and economic phenomena. Where the national history textbooks examined in this volume focus on the national events and experiences which comprise this process for individual states, these transition processes occurred within a broader regional context. The mapping summaries of CEE history curricula which follow reflect this attempt to integrate the specific experiences of states into a regional outlook which promotes this transnational perspective on the transition period. The "deprovincialization" or "denationalization" of the concept of transition in history textbooks is a possible path not only to the democratization of the discourses presented in textbooks but also to a better understanding of the common historical processes and parallel developments in all post-communist countries.

The societies of those CEE countries which participated in this project are profoundly marked by, and still grappling with the consequences of the socio-economic and political upheaval of the post-communist period. The transnational methodology presented here, which approaches national processes of transition within a broader regional framework, highlights in particular the increase in civic engagement across most CEE countries, which has been of great significance in overcoming the difficulties inherent in this transformation of political structures.



# Mapping textbooks and curricula: How history of transition is taught?

## BULGARIA

Author: Bistra Stoimenova

### BULGARIA

Grade/Age group:

- 7<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 11-12;
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 13-14;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 14-15.

Subject: History and civilization

- Subtopic – 7<sup>th</sup> grade: Bulgaria after 1989;
- Subtopic – 9<sup>th</sup> grade: World after 1945;
- Subtopic – 10<sup>th</sup> grade: Bulgaria after 1989.

Share (%): (average of the three school books mapped for each grade)

- 7<sup>th</sup> grade: 10.23%;
- 9<sup>th</sup> grade: 2.67%;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade: 6.07%

### I. General information

The Bulgarian educational system has been reformed several times since 1990. The national curriculum underwent changes in 2001, 2003, and 2015. It defines<sup>8</sup>:

- The objectives, content, and specific features of general education and preparation.
- The subjects of general education.
- The requirements for learning outcomes concerning each subject of general education and the acquirement of subsequent knowledge and skills.

<sup>8</sup> Eurydice: 'Bulgaria Overview'. Available at: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bulgaria\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bulgaria_en).

General education subjects like “History and Civilizations”, in which the teaching on the transition to democracy is included, is compulsory from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade (lower secondary and the first stage of upper secondary school).

The aims of Bulgarian history education are stated in the State educational standard (2015, 2018). Knowledge about the past is seen as a prerequisite for understanding the present and future by creating a connection between the fields of national memory and civilizational heritage. The priorities of Bulgarian history education are formulated in the State educational requirements.<sup>9</sup> There are four areas of competences: “Foundations of the Contemporary World”, “National and World history and Cultural Heritage”, “Individuals in History” and “Historical Sources.” History standards determine the knowledge, skills and perspectives students should acquire at lower secondary school and first upper secondary school levels. The focus lies on two aspects: the history of the twentieth century and exploring the past for a better understanding of the present. History education emphasizes the role of humanity in historical processes, and its potential and responsibilities in taking part in historical changes. The benchmarks of the development of students’ knowledge, skills and competences are defined as: the ability to read critically, comprehend, and interpret different historical sources.

## II. Main narratives and main events/Chronology

### Teaching the transition to democracy in the curriculum

The Bulgarian history curriculum is built on the following principles: chronological-progressive (linear ascending); thematic (with a selection of key issues in chronological order); synchronous (parallel presentation of national [Bulgarian] history and World history); concentric (repetition of the same curriculum with different grouping and abstraction).

The history curriculum for 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades (educational content on different periods of Bulgarian history) is based on the use of different information (concentric method). In the school programs on “History and Civilizations” for 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> (lower secondary school) and for 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grades (first stage of upper secondary school) World and Bulgarian history are presented in parallel (synchronous method). This method focuses on the synchrony and asynchrony of historical processes and their impact on the Bulgarian past, rather than emphasizing

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<sup>9</sup> Наредба № 5 от 30 ноември 2015 г. за общообразователната подготовка. – *Държавен вестник*, бр. 95 от 8 декември 2015 г., 47-128, Вж също така Приложение № 8 към чл. 6, ал. 1, т. 8 Изисквания за резултатите от обучението по учебния предмет История и цивилизации – за прогимназиален етап, с.85-86; за първи гимназиален етап, с.87-88. (Regulation No. 5 of 30 November 2015 on general education. – *State Gazette*, no. 95 of 8 December 2015, 47-128, See also Annex No. 8 to Art. 1, item 8 Requirements for learning outcomes in the subject History and Civilizations – for the lower secondary stage, pp.85-86; for the first secondary stage, pp.87-88.)

Bulgaria in the context of World history. The advantage of the Bulgarian history curricula (5<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grades) is that it builds on a combination of two approaches: thematic and linear.

Table № 1 presents the main findings of the project to map Bulgarian history curricula by each grade on teaching transition. Transition, as a historical period, is taught at two stages in the Bulgarian educational system and in three school years: lower secondary school (7<sup>th</sup> grade) and at the first stage of upper secondary school (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades). The table shows the educational content, topic(s), and learning outcomes focused on the transition to democracy.

Table № 1. Bulgarian History Curriculum: Teaching the transition to democracy

STAGE	GRADE	EDUCATIONAL CONTENT	TOPIC(S) ON TRANSITION	LEARNING OUTCOMES
LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL	7 <sup>th</sup>	The History of Bulgaria (from the National Revival in the 18 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century)	4 topics in the curriculum <b>4. Bulgaria after 1989</b> <b>4.1. State and politics</b> <b>4.1.1. The end of the communist regime</b> <b>4.1.2. Bulgaria and the unification of Europe</b> <b>4.2. Society and everyday life</b> <b>4.2.1. Bulgarians – citizens of the World</b> <b>4.3. Culture</b> <b>4.3.1. The cultural development of contemporary Bulgaria</b>	Students should be able to: – <b>describe</b> the transition to a multiparty political system. – <b>identify</b> different types of powers and <b>identify</b> the correspondent institutions that represent them in contemporary Bulgaria. – <b>give examples</b> of changes in the everyday life of Bulgarians. – <b>give examples</b> of Bulgarian cultural presence around the world. – <b>present</b> examples of the influence of contemporary global culture in Bulgaria.
FIRST UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL	9 <sup>th</sup>	Contemporary History (from the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century to the present day)	3 topics in the curriculum <b>3. The world after 1945</b> <b>3.1. State and politics</b> <b>3.1.6. The end of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe</b> <b>3.2. Society and ideas</b> <b>3.2.3. The transition from a planned to a market economy in Eastern Bloc countries</b>	Students should be able to: – <b>identify</b> the consequences of changes in the USSR and Eastern European countries. – <b>explain</b> the difficulties of the transition from a planned to a market economy in Eastern Bloc countries.

	<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	A History of Bulgaria (from Prehistory to the present day)	9 topics in the curriculum <b>9. Bulgaria after 1989</b> <b>9.1. State and politics</b> <b>9.1.1.</b> <i>The development of a multiparty political system</i> <b>9.1.2.</b> <i>Political changes and the building of the institutions of the democratic state</i> <b>9.2. Economy and Society</b> <b>9.2.1.</b> <i>The transition to a market economy</i> <b>9.2.2.</b> <i>Demographic and migration processes</i> <b>9.3. Culture</b> <b>9.3.1.</b> <i>Culture in a democracy</i> <b>9.3.2.</b> <i>Humanism, tolerance, and freedom of movement of people and ideas</i>	Students should be able to: – <b>explain</b> the abolition of totalitarian institutions and a return to the principles of pluralism, democracy, and the market economy. – <b>describe</b> the organization of the Republic of Bulgaria according to the Constitution. – <b>explain</b> the challenges during the period of transition of the Bulgarian economy toward a market economy. – <b>give examples</b> of social problems during the transition period.
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According to Table № 1 the educational content and emphasis in teaching the transition period differ from grade to grade. It starts in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, covering the historical periods of the nineteenth to the early twenty-first century in the context of Bulgarian history. Students are introduced to the modernization of Bulgarian society, and the complex and contradictory paths of development of the values of contemporary Bulgarians, including the period of transition. This is supposed to reinforce the awareness of civil and national identity and an understanding of the civic responsibility of the individual. Students learn about the political, economic, social, and cultural changes in Bulgaria after 1989. Students learn about the transition to a multiparty political system, how to identify different types of powers (according to the new Bulgarian constitution and their features) and identify the associated institutions in contemporary Bulgaria.

In the first upper secondary school, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, content includes 'Contemporary History (from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present)'. Alongside the main political, economic, social, and cultural processes in the Balkans, in Europe and across the World, significant space is given to the peculiarities of Bulgarian historical development in the twentieth century and the position of Bulgaria in

the contemporary world. During the teaching/learning process, students develop skills in dealing with sources and applying specific methods in producing historical knowledge. Emphasis is placed on developing critical thinking, finding and analysing information independently, and expressing and debating arguments. With regards to the transition to democracy, students develop a clearer understanding of totalitarian regimes and changes in the USSR and Eastern European countries. Students learn to explain the difficulties of transition from a planned to a market economy in the Eastern Bloc countries and to point out the consequences of changes in the USSR and Eastern European countries, with a focus on the economic and social aspects of this transition: issues concerning the transfer of property (privatization in economics), unemployment, the social transformation of society, and so forth.

Finally, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the educational content includes 'A History of Bulgaria (from Prehistory to the present day)'. In this grade, students expand and deepen their knowledge of the most significant political, economic, social, and cultural processes of Bulgarian history. Students acquire a deeper understanding of the complex political, economic, social, and cultural transformations of Bulgaria after 1989. They should be able to explain the abolition of totalitarian institutions and a return to the principles of pluralism, democracy, and the market economy. Students learn about the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the challenges of the transition of the Bulgarian economy to a market economy and its subsequent social consequences.

### Teaching the transition to democracy in the textbooks

The mapped textbooks<sup>10</sup> belong to the subject 'History and Civilizations' for 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. There are 5 alternative textbooks for each grade. The books were chosen based on an inquiry among history teachers. The textbooks

<sup>10</sup> The textbooks used for this mapping are:

- 'История и цивилизации за 7. Клас' // Михайлова, Е., Митев, П., Вачков, Д. София, Просвета Плюс, 2018. ['History and Civilizations for 7<sup>th</sup> grade', Mihailova, E., Mitev, P., Vachkov, D. Sofia, Prosveta Plus, 2018.] (Mihailova et al., 2018).
- 'История и цивилизации за 7. Клас' // Якимов, Г., Баева, И., Калинова, Е., Васева, Н. София, Булвест-2000, 2018. ['History and Civilizations for 7<sup>th</sup> grade', Yakimov, G., Baeva, I., Kalinova, E., Vasseva, N. Sofia, Bulvest 2000, 2018.] (Yakimov et al., 2018).
- 'История и цивилизации за 7. Клас' // Палангурски, М., Русев, И., Стоянов, Л., Стойчева, В., Симеонова, Й. София, РИВА, 2018. ['History and Civilizations for 7<sup>th</sup> grade', Palangurski, M., Russev, I., Stoyanov, L., Stoycheva, V., Simeonova, J. Sofia, RIVA, 2018.] (Palangurski et al., 2018).
- 'История и цивилизации за 9. Клас' // Груев, М., Стоянов, Б., Славчев, К., Сидеров, Й. София, Просвета, 2018. ['History and Civilizations for 9<sup>th</sup> grade', Gruev, M., Stoyanov, B., Slavchev, K., Siderov, Y. Sofia, Prosveta, 2018.] (Gruev et al., 2018).

represent three main publishers in the history textbook market: Prosveta<sup>11</sup>, Klett<sup>12</sup> and Riva.

### Topics in the transition to democracy: lessons and exercises

Table № 2 presents the main findings of mapping Bulgarian history textbooks on teaching transition to democracy, per grade and per textbooks. There are titles of lessons and exercises listed including the space for each (number of pages and percentage of the whole book) dedicated to transition in Bulgaria.

Table № 2. Topics on transition in history textbooks

Textbooks/ Grades	Topics on transition: Lessons and exercises		
<b>7<sup>th</sup> grade</b>	<b>Mihailova et al. (2018)</b>	<b>Yakimov et al. (2018)</b>	<b>Palangurski et al. (2018)</b>
	<p><b>Part IV “Bulgaria after 1989”</b> – pp 124-139: 15 p. – 10.1%</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b> 35. The end of communism <i>The Constitution of Bulgaria 1991 (exercise)</i> 36. Bulgaria in a unified Europe 37. Bulgarian citizenship 38. The cultural development of contemporary Bulgaria <i>Sum Up: What did you learn?</i> <i>I work by myself (exercise)</i></p>	<p><b>Part IV “Bulgaria after 1989”</b> – pp 170-193: 23 p. – 11.3%</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b> 31. The end of the communist regime and the beginning of democracy <i>How to conduct research into the events and processes of the recent past? (exercise)</i> 32. Bulgaria and the unification of Europe 33. Bulgarians – citizens of Bulgaria and of the world 34. The cultural development of contemporary Bulgaria <i>What did you learn about ... Bulgaria after 1989 (sum up)</i> <i>More about ... Blaga Dimitrova</i></p>	<p><b>Part IV “Bulgaria after 1989”</b> – pp 141-156: 15 p. – 9,3%</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b> 36. The end of communism 37. The Bulgarian transition to democracy 38. Bulgaria – part of the Euro-Atlantic family 39. Bulgarian citizens in a contemporary world <i>History workshop: My rights as a European citizen</i> <i>Bulgaria on the road to democracy (sum up)</i></p>

<sup>11</sup> Prosveta publishing house is the largest Bulgarian publisher of textbooks. There are two other imprints, Prosveta Plus and Prosveta Azbuki.

<sup>12</sup> Klett is an international publishing house; in Bulgaria two imprints are included under the umbrella of Klett: Bulvest 2000 and Anubis.

9 <sup>th</sup> grade	Gruev et al. (2018)	Markov et al. (2018)	Baeva et al. (2018)
	<p><b>Part III: The world after WWII</b> – pp. 166-174: 8 p. – 3,9%</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b>                      33. The end of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe                      34. Bulgaria in the transition to democracy and a market economy</p>	<p><b>Part III: The world after 1945</b> – pp. 176-181: 5 p. – 2,3%</p> <p><b>Lesson:</b>                      33. The “Velvet Revolutions” and the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc</p>	<p><b>Part III: The world after 1945</b> – pp. 168-172: 4 p. – 1,8 %</p> <p><b>Lesson:</b>                      31. The end of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe</p>
10 <sup>th</sup> grade	Pavlov et al. (2019)	Palangurski et al. (2019)	Boteva et al. (2019)
	<p><b>Part IX. Bulgaria after 1989</b> – pp. 263-267; 272-276: 8 p. – 2,9 %</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b>                      68. The transition towards parliamentary democracy and a market economy (1989-2006)                      69. The Euro-Atlantic orientation of Bulgaria (1989-2006)                      -                      71. Bulgaria in a global cultural dialogue  <i>Bulgaria after 1989 (revision and sum up)</i></p>	<p><b>Part IX. Bulgaria after 1989</b> – pp. 257-273: 16 p. – 5,6 %</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b>                      65. The Bulgarian transition towards democracy  <i>Historical Labs</i> The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria – the basis of democracy                      66. The transition towards a market economy                      67. Bulgaria – a part of the Euro-Atlantic community                      68. Bulgarian society and European values  <i>Historical Labs</i> Bulgaria – part of a world cultural space  <i>Revision</i>                      Self-evaluation</p>	<p><b>Part VIII. Bulgaria after 1989</b> – pp. 338-376: 38 p. – 9,7 %</p> <p><b>Lessons:</b>                      67. Development of a multiparty political system                      68. Political changes and the construction of democratic state institutions  <i>The Bulgarian national anthem – a symbol of the state (exercise)</i>                      69. Bulgaria’s road to NATO and the EU                      70. Bulgaria in the EU                      71. The transition towards a market economy                      72. Demographic and migrant processes  <i>Bulgaria and the EU (exercise)</i>                      73. Culture in a democratic environment                      74. Humanism, tolerance, and freedom of movement of people and ideas  <i>What did you learn about ... Bulgaria after 1989 (revision)</i></p>

### III. Main disputed concepts and focus

The mapping of history textbooks for 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades reveals that more space is given to teaching transition in 7<sup>th</sup> grade (between 11.3% (Yakimov et al., 2018), 10.1% (Mihailova et al., 2018) and 9.3% (Palangurski et al., 2018)). The least space is given in the textbooks for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (3.9% (Gruev et al., 2018), 2,3% (Markov et al., 2018) and 1,8% (Baeva et al., 2018)). (History textbooks for 10<sup>th</sup> grade represent transition as follow: 9,7% (Boteva et al., 2019), 5,6% (Palangurski et al., 2019) and 2,9% (Pavlov et al., 2019).) There are objective reasons for these differences, and they are linked to the history curriculum. Educational content for 7<sup>th</sup> grade is divided into four topics, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade there are nine topics (see Table № 1). Content in 9<sup>th</sup> grade deals with only three topics and the transition period is situated in the bigger context of the “World after 1945” (to the present). This part covers the Cold War period, and the subsequent opposing blocs (USA and USSR broadly speaking, but also countries of Western and Eastern Europe), decolonization, international relationships, the transition away from communism after the fall of the Berlin wall, the process of globalization, and so forth.

The learning content, which is mandatory through the 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, is structured in four lessons and several exercises in all three of the textbooks analysed (see Table № 2).

Thus, in addition to basic knowledge, teaching materials are included to develop students' skills and competencies. The core text of the lessons accommodates the pupils' age (13-14 years old), which accounts for 50% of the information on the topic. The remaining 50% is in the form of various sections in textbooks and other history sources (e.g., texts, images, maps, statistics, etc.). This is a list of the sections in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks analysed: „Vocabulary“; „Chronology“; „Evidence of the time“; „More about...“; „Do you know that...“; „Check what you have learned“; „Apply your knowledge“ (Yakimov et al., 2018); „Vocabulary“; „Faces of History“; „Something curious“; „Questions and tasks“ (Mihailova et al., 2018); „Vocabulary“; „Faces of history“; „The document“; „Historical mosaic“; „Learn, practice, explore“ (Palangurski et al., 2018). In the last two textbooks, (Mihailova et al., 2018; Palangurski et al., 2018) almost all the historical sources are accompanied by questions or tasks. An example for a task connected to the teaching of the transition to democracy and the events after 1989 in Bulgaria was taken from the textbook of the Riva Publishing House (Palangurski et al., 2018, p. 143). Here students are asked: „Do you find any connection between the removal of the Berlin Wall and the events in Bulgaria?“

Among the images in the section on „Bulgaria after 1989“ of the mapped 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks, photographs are most commonly used, cartoons and posters are absent with the exception of Palangurski et al. (2018, p. 143). Official sources,



such as excerpts from the national Constitution, European Commission reports, conventions, and a draft law, prevail among the written documents included in the „Evidence of the time“ section (Yakimov et al., 2018). The opinion of an artist (a ballerina, *ibid.* p. 189) is only quoted in the lesson on cultural development. The narrative (main text and accompanying history sources) presents a single point of view (and this perspective is based on the official sources). The authors have sought to remain objective and to present the key milestones in the transition to democracy since 1989.

The summary of „Bulgaria after 1989“ (Yakimov et al., 2018, p. 191), includes tasks that follow Bloom’s taxonomy as „Describe, comment, compile“: 1. Describe how the transition to a multiparty political system took place in Bulgaria. 2. Explain the form of government in Bulgaria according to the country’s 1991 constitution. List the institutions that represent the legislative, executive, and judiciary in Bulgaria. 3. Comment on the processes of Bulgaria’s accession to NATO and the EU. What efforts have successive governments made and what difficulties did Bulgarian citizens have to overcome? 4. Clarify the meaning of the terms *market economy*, *privatization*, and *restitution*. 5. Write a text (up to 10 sentences) describing the economic changes in Bulgaria after 1989.

Similar trends can be found in the other two 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks. For example, an explanation for the long duration of Bulgaria’s transition to democracy (Mihailova et al., 2018, p. 126), with an emphasis on slowing down reforms, which in turn has led to economic problems, the swelling of organized crime and frequent political crises, e.g., the crisis of 1996-97.

The long transition: Privatization was carried out with the return of land and nationalized urban property to their former owners. However, the pace of reforms was slow. Unemployment and inflation were rising rapidly. A weak government provided incentives for a growth in organized crime. In 1996, a new economic and financial crisis took hold. [...] Over the course of subsequent decades, the main political parties alternated in government or shared power after democratic elections. Every government tried to continue or implement the reforms it had promised in its program. However, the reforms’ controversial results fomented new grievances among citizens, leading to frequent changes of government. The main problems for Bulgarians continued to be low incomes, corruption, domestic crime, the emigration of young people overseas, and non-compliance with the law.

All three 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks offer several good examples of lesson exercises that aim to develop pupils’ different skills and competencies according to the curriculum. In Yakimov et al. (2018) an exercise titled, *How to conduct research into the events and processes of the recent past?*, students are required to ask their parents/grand-parents about the transition period using ready-made questionnaires

and present the results in a graphic form; in Mihailova et al. (2018), the exercise titled *The constitution of Bulgaria 1991* uses the 1991 Constitution as an official written source and offers a well laid out framework to explain the separation of powers; and Palangurski et al. (2018) has a section titled, *History workshop: My rights as a European citizen*, offering various tasks aimed at better understanding the civic rights of European citizens.

Transition as a topic is given the least prominence in the mapped 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks. This has already been explained by the peculiar place that the topic occupies in the curriculum. Two of the mapped textbooks have only one lesson dedicated to the transition period, usually related to the countries of Eastern Europe: The „Velvet Revolutions“ and the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc (Markov et al., 2018, pp. 176-181); and „The end of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe“ (Baeva et al., 2018, pp. 168-172). Gruev et al. (2018) offer two lessons on the topic: 33. „The end of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe“ and 34. „Bulgaria in a transition to democracy and a market economy“ (pp. 166-174) (see Table 2).

Nevertheless, while presenting the totalitarian regimes, it becomes clear that Bulgaria is one of those countries in Eastern Europe where processes of serious change were under way. All three textbooks share a focus on the political and economic aspects of the change, with the main narrative concerning the events in Eastern Europe and especially the fall of the Berlin Wall and its consequences for the USSR and Eastern Bloc countries. Bulgaria is mentioned together with countries such as Hungary, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia in the so-called 1989 „autumn revolutions“ across Eastern Europe (Baeva et al., 2018, pp. 169, 170 on the first free political meeting in Sofia).

While describing the „Velvet Revolutions“ in Central and Eastern Europe, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook by Markov et al. (2018, p. 181 and the map on p. 177) devotes more space to post-communist change in Bulgaria, with a separate paragraph titled „The Bulgarian transition“. The history sources used comprise photos and an excerpt from the 1991 new Bulgarian Constitution. The photos show a queue for bread (1991) and the art installation „Communism to the Garbage“ (1990). There are no lessons or exercises related to the topic of the transition to democracy in the mapped 9<sup>th</sup> grade history textbooks. On a positive note, students are introduced, albeit briefly, to the turbulent changes in Central and Eastern Europe, including in Bulgaria, and thus developments are presented in a broader European, regional, and global context.

Of the three mapped history and civilizations textbooks for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Boteva et al. (2019) has given the highest priority to the transition – 9.7% of its 392 pages. The two other textbooks set aside less space for the topic: Palangurski et al. (2019) gave it 5.6% (out of 284 pages) and Pavlov et al. (2019) – just 2.9% (out of its 280 pages). There is an objective explanation behind this, related to the 10<sup>th</sup>

grade history curriculum, including nine topics from an extremely long chronological period, starting in antiquity, and ending in early twenty-first century. Thus, the topic of Bulgaria's transition after 1989 is not just the last chronological period, but just one of nine, occupying the least space in the textbooks. For this reason, the authors of the last two textbooks have limited themselves to four (Palangurski et al., 2019) and three lessons (Pavlov et al., 2019) on the topic, each of them accompanied by one or two exercises.

The core text of the lessons is the most extensive in these textbooks, with various aspects of the political, economic, and social nature of the transition period being described in detail. Boteva et al. (2019) connects the reasons triggering the transition to the „perestroika“ taking place in the USSR and similar processes in other Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The core lessons also feature attempts to present other viewpoints, on the developments of 1990, for example, but this attempt is not sustained and does not cover the 1996-1997 crisis (Boteva et al., 2019, p. 342; p. 359).

In addition to the core text, the remaining 50% of the content is offered in the form of various rubrics in textbooks and other history sources (i.e., texts, images, maps, statistics, etc.). Here are some examples of the sections in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks: „Vocabulary“, „Chronology“, „Personality of the epoch“, „Evidence of the time“, „More about...“, „Do you know that...“ (Boteva et al., 2019); „The Chronicle“; „Faces of History“; „The Document“; „Historical mosaic“; „Learn, practice, explore“ (Palangurski et al., 2019); „Vocabulary“; „More about...“; „Think, explain“; „Research“ (Pavlov et al., 2019).

All history sources included in the textbook are accompanied by questions or tasks for students. Tasks such as searching for information, critically analysing it, compare/contrast and draw your own conclusions, participating in debates, and so forth, are good for developing students' competences. Some good examples are: *The Bulgarian national anthem – a symbol of the state (exercise)* (Boteva et al., 2019, p. 348-349); *History labs: The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria – the basis of democracy* (Palangurski et al., 2019, p. 261-262); in Pavlov et al. (2019) *Bulgaria after 1989 (revision and conclusions)*.

The mapped history textbooks are a third generation of such textbooks, and they show very well the evolution of education. This is true in many respects, the reduced length of text by authors, the increased variety of visual sources and, especially, the role of original images as important documents for history teaching. In this sense new Bulgarian history textbooks are good examples of the development of competence-based history education.

#### IV. Recommendations – What is missing

After mapping 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks on teaching transition it is possible to make several general conclusions:

- The events, processes and facts of recent history allow students to better understand democratic principles and values and to reflect on the evolution of modernity.
- There is an emphasis on the development of students' skills and competencies for critical thinking when dealing with different types of historical sources.
- There is a lack of integration of different perspectives as a systematic approach, including in the selection and choice of historical sources (this approach could be used in other topics of the same textbook, but it is missing in those parts of the textbooks that deal with transition). In the majority of the sources used, written texts and images reflect predominantly official points of view (like excerpts of constitution, law, etc.). A number of viewpoints are largely absent, for example, the presentation of the voices of women, minority groups or the opposition. In the selection and choice of sources, photographs are included but sources like cartoons, posters, literature, movies, or personal stories are rarely used although they are useful sources for understanding people's emotions and attitudes.

There are other options for teaching the period of transition, such as e-textbooks (with digital sources, such as video, audio, games, etc.); the variety of sources depends on the publishing houses. For quite some time now oral history has been used as an approach in studying the recent past, especially if this past is perceived as sensitive and controversial. There is huge potential in the work of archives in the digitalization of many original sources of the period of the transition to democracy – for example a special webpage by the Archives State Agency for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of 1989 and the transition to democracy in Bulgaria: <http://thechange1989.archives.bg/>.

## BULGARIA: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*The general narrative is factual, avoiding general assessments, which reflects the lack of public consensus on transition.*

**Momchil Metodiev,**  
historian



*General understanding of the post-communist period in the textbooks tends to analyze the economic aspects of the transition, while undermining or totally neglecting the institution building.*

**Momchil Metodiev,**  
historian



*In the history curriculum there is no [...] discussion of controversial issues or search for different interpretations of many events of the transition period: for example, the minority politics of the Bulgarian communist party during the 80s, the role of Bulgarian Turks during the transition (and the role of their party Movement for rights and freedoms), the division amongst Bulgarian society about interpretations of crimes of the communist regime, the heritage of this period, etc.*

**Bistra Stoimenova,**  
historian



*The focus is on the political and economic changes of transition while the transformations in the social and cultural fields are only marked.*

**Bistra Stoimenova,**  
historian

## CROATIA

Author: Vedran Ristić

### CROATIA

Grade/Age group:

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school/ age group: 14-15;
- 1<sup>st</sup> grade trade high school/ age group: 15-16;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade trade high school/ age group: 16-17;
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade gymnasium/ age group: 18-19.

Subject: History

Share (%):

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school: 9%;
- 1<sup>st</sup> grade elementary school: 4.7%;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade elementary school: 6%;
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade gymnasium: 12.5%.

### I. General information

The school system in Croatia is organized into 8 years of compulsory elementary school followed by non-compulsory secondary school (vocational/specialized schools or gymnasium). The transition period and process are taught mostly in history classes in the final year of elementary school (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and in the final year of gymnasium (4<sup>th</sup> grade). In vocational and specialized schools, it is taught in those grades that deal with the twentieth century, which are mostly 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. Elementary school students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade are between 13 and 14 years old, students in other classes and grades in which twentieth century history is taught are between 15 and 18 years of age. Economic aspects of the transition are taken up most extensively in geography classes in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of gymnasium. Citizenship education exists in Croatia as an extracurricular or cross-curricular activity and has been introduced as such in a few elementary schools. Democratization processes linked with the transition may be taught in citizenship education classes.

In the current history curriculum<sup>13</sup>, which was last amended in 1999, the term “transition” is not explicitly mentioned. However, the most recent history and period marking the transition, which was set into motion with the death of the president of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, in 1980, is taught in history classes at all the levels of education mentioned above. Key developments and historical milestones from 1980 to present times – the dissolution of Yugoslavia/the wars in Croatia and in neighboring Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-socialist economic and political transformation processes, accession to the European Union, etc. – are all tackled; however, they receive less space and attention in history teaching compared to other topics and historical periods. The most recent approval of textbooks by the Croatian Ministry of Science and Education (MZO) was issued in 2014. Currently, there are 10-12 school history textbooks (elementary and high school) in use that deal with the twentieth century and thus with transition. The books selected for this mapping are<sup>14</sup>:

- Three gymnasium textbooks – gymnasiums have the most detailed history curriculum, containing the most advanced main narrative on the transition.
- One elementary school textbook – containing the basics of the main narrative on the transition which is commonly presented.
- Two trade school textbooks – containing the least extensive main narrative of the transition.

## II. Main narrative

### Public discourse

“Transition” is a term rarely used in Croatian public discourse to designate the historical period of political system change from socialism to democracy and a market economy, the dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation, and the building

<sup>13</sup> This text was written in 2020, and it reflects the state at the time. It was revised in 2021 by the project leader in Croatia, Caroline Hornstein Tomić, including reviewers' feedback by Ivan Hrštić, and Drago Čengić (Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar), Velimir Šonje (Arhivalitika/Ekonomski Lab) and Vedrana Pribičević (Zagreb School of Economics and Management ZSEM). In 2022 new curricula and textbooks have come into use of which an analysis is yet to be made.

<sup>14</sup> Titles and authors:

- *Povijest 1*, Miroslav Akmadža, Mario Jareb, Zdenko Radelić, Alfa, 2014 (secondary school, gymnasium).
- *Povijest 8*, Snježana Koren, Profil, 2007 (elementary school).
- *Hrvatska i svijet od sredine XVIII. do kraja XX. stoljeća*, Vesna Đurić, Ivan Peklić, Profil, 2013 (secondary school, trade school with two years of history learning).
- *Kratka povijest za strukovne škole*, Željko Holjevac, Hrvoje Petrić, Meridijani, Zagreb, 2014 (secondary school, trade schools with one or two years of history learning).
- *Geografija 4*, Dragutin Feletar, Ružica Vuk, Meridijani, 2010 (secondary school, gymnasium).

of an independent Croatian state. It is more common to speak of “changes” in the broadest sense of the term. Public discourse in Croatia is profoundly polarized between the different positions in the political spectrum, and the perspectives and attitudes with regards to historical periods and events, such as World War II, socialist Yugoslavia, and the Croatian fight for independence/the Homeland War (1991-1995) are as diverse. One part of the political spectrum highlights the struggle for an independent state as a legitimate and successful fight for national self-determination, emphasizing the toll on Croatian victims of Serbian aggression and presenting the Croatian state building process as a historical achievement of sovereignty from external (in the context of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbian) domination. Another part holds up the Yugoslav Federation as a model of enduring and successful governance and integration of the multi-ethnic Balkan region, which eventually was undermined by nationalist forces; greater attention is drawn here to the Serbian victims of the Homeland War, and to the opposition against Croatian nationalism, in order to challenge and amend a dominant and one-sided national narrative. Claims to a “historiographic” approach are put forward by this side, and to scientific scrutiny. The complexities of war, guilt, and victimhood, and of the post-socialist transformation processes are often underscored and compromised in ritualized, politicized, and conflicting debate, and in competing narratives and approaches. A discussion differentiating between the gains and losses of the transition from socialism to liberal democracy and a market economy is largely missing, which is also reflected in classroom debate.

### Teaching transition

Given the central role of public schooling in forming national identity and memory and in nurturing a relationship to cultural heritage, controversies about teaching history in Croatia should be considered within the context of the post-socialist state and nation building process. Changing governments have been engaging experts with political affiliations in the processes of curricula reform and in the revision of textbooks, and particularly so with respect to teaching history. The official stance of the Ministry of Science and Education (MZO) and of other educational bodies and agencies largely reflects those of the political parties in office. The outlines of educational policies for curricula and textbook development, therefore, shift along actual power configurations in politics. Textbooks currently in use have been written according to educational policies and guidelines issued during the 1990s, and the curriculum from 1999, in the era of Franjo Tuđman. Subsequent governments have been revising and amending existing textbooks and commissioned the writing of new textbooks: first, by a centre-left government in the years following the millennium, provoking fierce protests from experts close to the centre-right on the political spectrum. In 2002, a new supplement for schoolbooks based on the “historiographic” (see above) approach was written to



be applied specifically in areas of the country bordering with Serbia, which had undergone the process of peaceful reintegration (finalized in 1998). After a long, controversial public debate the book was not officially incorporated into history teaching. Then, a centre-right government, acknowledging objections and protests, continued the reform process initiated by the previous government. From 2010 to 2015, a centre-left government again held office and initiated a comprehensive curricula reform process in 2014. After another shift of government to the centre-right, the curricula reform stalled in 2016, leading to widespread public protests. It was eventually resumed, however, with a different group of experts who revisited its core provisions. The most controversial part of the educational reform was the history curriculum, the last of all the curricula to be passed, after a series of public consultations and changes of the working groups in charge of developing it. The new history curriculum is currently applied in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary schools and in the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of gymnasium. In the school year 2021/2022 it will be introduced throughout all grades and teaching the transition period will be part of it.

All the programs currently in place for teaching history offer the same basic narrative, varying only in nuance. Thus, key topics relating to the transition are generally addressed in the same way in the textbooks available. Consensus exists over the economic crisis of the 1980's after the death of Josip Broz Tito, the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Homeland War as a deeply disruptive factor, the emergence of a market economy, successful political democratization, the political goals of integration into the EU and NATO, reconstruction of infrastructure and post-war recovery. Narratives vary concerning the roles of Tito and his regime, civilian casualties of the war, the role of the Croatian army in war crimes, and the role of the first president of independent Croatia, Franjo Tuđman.

The most comprehensive section on transition deals with the political dimension of this narrative, the success of democratization. The political transition is seen to start with the death of Josip Broz Tito, and encompasses the break-up of Yugoslavia, the development of democratic institutions/infrastructure, the declaration of independence and international recognition of the Republic of Croatia, and the presidency of Franjo Tuđman. Integration into NATO and accession to the EU are presented as two political goals of the transition. There is a strong focus on the narrative of nation building.

The narrative on ethnic conflict refers to the authoritative regime of Tito and his death leading into the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and to the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science (SANU), publicized in 1986, in which the Serbian intellectual elite claimed Serbia's unfavourable position in Yugoslavia thus legitimizing Serbian nationalistic politics. Key figures mentioned are, first

and foremost, Slobodan Milošević, accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo, between 1991 and 1999; the insurrection from August 1990 in areas of Croatia that were populated by a Serb majority known as the “log revolution”; the declaration of SAO Krajina, a self-proclaimed Serbian autonomous region on Croatian territory; forced migration, civilian casualties of the conflict; the Ovčara massacre of Croat civilians by Serb armed forces; the siege and fall of Vukovar; operation “Storm” as the last major battle in the Croatian War of Independence; the exodus of Serbs from Krajina. All topics are interwoven into the main war narrative, pointing at nationalism as the trigger of ethnic conflict and a key factor leading to war. Other causes of the conflicts, such as the fight for control over economic resources and assets, are understated.

### III. Main events/Chronology

The death of Josip Broz Tito, in 1980, is considered as the starting point of the transition process, and Croatia’s accession to the European Union in 2013 as its end point or completion. However, economic, political, and social transformations are ongoing in everyday life in Croatia today.

The main events thematized are:

- 4<sup>th</sup> May 1980: The death of Josip Broz Tito.
- 1986: The creation of the SANU Memorandum.
- January 1990: The dissolution of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ).
- April 1990: The first multiparty elections.
- 17<sup>th</sup> August 1990: The start of the “log revolution”.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1990: The liberal-democratic constitution of the Republic of Croatia.
- 28<sup>th</sup> February 1991: The declaration of SAO Krajina.
- 25<sup>th</sup> June 1991: The declaration of independence from Yugoslavia, officially proclaimed by the Croatian parliament.
- 18<sup>th</sup> November 1991: The end of the siege /fall of Vukovar.
- December 1991: The bombing of Dubrovnik.
- January 1992: The international recognition of Croatia.
- 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August 1995: Operation “Storm”.
- 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009: Integration into NATO.
- 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013: Accession to the EU.

#### IV. Main disputed concepts

In public discourse, evaluations of the roles of key historical figures, such as Josip Broz Tito as leader of the Yugoslav regime, and Franjo Tuđman as first president of independent Croatia, are disputed. Portrayals of Tito as charismatic leader who held Yugoslavia together, leading to its dissolution after his death, are confronted with narratives of his authoritarian rule, and that of the Yugoslav regime, which suppressed opposition and persecuted “non-friends/enemies” (*neprijatelji*) even outside its territory. The revision and re-evaluation of the role of the partisan movement in defeating fascism and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) regime during WWII, is also important in post-socialist history politics in Croatia, highlighting atrocities committed by partisans against civilians. Each of these complex aspects should be integrated into the history of Yugoslavia under Tito.

Portrayals of Franjo Tuđman, as the first president of independent Croatia and architect of Croatia’s independence are undisputed, but his depiction as the “father of democracy” is controversial, given the authoritarian tendencies of his rule. Furthermore, policies of the Tuđman regime regarding neighboring Bosnia and Hercegovina are equally controversial. As with Tito, the complexities of Tuđman, as a historical figure, and his regime, should be recognized in a more nuanced portrayal.

Narratives of the Homeland War are also disputed. Debate concerns whether they highlight or underscore civilian casualties amongst Croatian Serbs, and how they address the expulsion of, and atrocities committed against, Serbian civilians by Croatian armed forces during the liberation of areas under occupation by Serbian troops (specifically: Krajina), which had forced out the local Croatian population when taking control. Again, it is not the facts that are disputed, but the legitimacy of these actions which is in question, and the need for switching perspectives to acknowledge the diversity of historical experience. Ideally, students should be empowered and encouraged to explore complexities, ambiguities, and diverse perspectives, in order to expand their understanding of the transition period: encompassing the political, economic, and socio-cultural disruptions and divisions articulated during the invigorating quests for independence of the 1980s, leading to the eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia, and to the armed conflicts in the 1990s.

#### V. Focus

The presentation of the transition period is predominantly event-based and national in perspective. A brief overview of the disintegration of the USSR is presented but only up to the fall of the Iron Curtain. No context is given in terms of transitions in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The European Union is represented, if at all, as an observer of key events.

The textbooks selected for this mapping differ, however, with respect to their methodological approach. The transmission of knowledge follows an information-based approach and most of the tasks in the textbooks aim to reproduce the information presented. Discussion, critical reflection and questioning, or learning about and empathizing with different perspectives are not encouraged. The development of critical thinking skills and an understanding of multiple perspectives are today explicit educational goals for history teaching stated by both sides of the political spectrum. The extent to which this approach is being implemented in the classroom remains, however, difficult to assess. Teachers tend to avoid controversial discussion and reflection on narratives, to avoid accusations of taking a specific political position.

### **VI. Recommendations – What is missing**

The main narratives of the transition address three different fields: politics, ethnic conflict, and economics. Economic aspects of the transition however fall short in teaching; the main topics are the supply shortages in the 1980's, external debt, state companies, inflation, and economic strain during war-time occupation. War damage to the economy, the recovery of transport and economic infrastructure, and privatization and EU integration are also topics which are touched upon. Still, in order to deepen the understanding of the transition period and the transformation processes which Croatian society has experienced over the past three decades, economic aspects of the transition should be more extensively included in history teaching. However, one has to bear in mind the limited amount of time which is provided for teaching history, compared to other subjects, and for teaching the transition period, relative to other historical periods.

Finally, textbooks hardly address the emergence of the non-governmental sector and the development of civil society in Croatia as an important part of the transition period. Activist groups engaged in anti-war campaigns throughout the country and thus built the foundations of some of the NGOs which focus their work on human rights, transitional justice, and on educational reforms, and which are part of a quite vibrant, diverse civil society in Croatia today.

## CROATIA: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*Since Croatia is still a young nation, extensive parts of the curriculum are spent on the Homeland War, which was a defining moment in Croatian independence, while transition seems to only be somewhat of a side-topic.*

**Vedrana Pribičević,**  
economist and university teacher



*Generally, the curriculum misses a systematic overview of transition, both from a standpoint of history and from economics. While key developments and historical milestones from 1980 to present times [...] are all tackled, they are not contextualized and discussed at any meaningful length.*

**Vedrana Pribičević,**  
economist and university teacher



*The dominant public narrative about the Homeland War is almost exclusively croatocentric. The Serbian, Bosnian or European perspectives are quickly dismissed as foreign and antagonistic to Croatia.*

**Vedran Ristić,**  
history teacher



*The role of the non-governmental sector and development of civil society in Croatia is often ignored, despite them being the loudest whistleblowers in transition.*

**Vedrana Pribičević,**  
economist and university teacher

## GERMANY

Author: Barbara Christophe

**GERMANY (Berlin, Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt)**

Grade/Age group:

- 10<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 15-16 (middle-school (Realschule) and Gymnasium)

Subject: History

Share (%):

- 6.7%

**I. General information**

Selecting a manageable sample of textbooks for analysis has been difficult. This is due to the federal structure of the German educational system, which has 16 federal states, and the coexistence of three different types of schools, as well as the presence of seven major publishing houses on the German textbook market. This report is based on a close reading of 6 textbooks<sup>15</sup> selected according to three criteria:

- The focus is on textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the last year of compulsory history teaching.
- Textbooks from the three major publishing houses, Westermann, Klett, and Cornelsen, are covered.
- Textbooks for Gymnasiums and Realschule are compared in order to account at least partly for the segregated nature of the German school-system.

One textbook for upper secondary education is included in order to cover the most sophisticated arguments on the market so far.

<sup>15</sup> These are:

- Cornelsen 2018: *Forum Geschichte*, 9/10, Berlin/Brandenburg; Gymnasium (quoted as C/G).
- Cornelsen 2018. *Entdecken und verstehen*, Berlin/Brandenburg; Realschule (quoted as C/R).
- Klett 2018: *Geschichte und Geschehen*, 9/10, Berlin, Gymnasium. (quoted as K/G).
- Klett 2012: *Zeitreise 3*, Niedersachsen, Realschule, Niedersachsen (quoted as K/R).
- Westermann 2018. *Horizonte 10*. Berlin/Brandenburg, Gymnasium (quoted as W/G).
- Westermann 2018. *Zeit für Geschichte 11*. Niedersachsen, Gymnasium (quoted as W/G 11).

## II. Main narrative

### *Public discourse*

In Germany, public debates on how to make sense of the transition period have always been closely linked with debates on how to come to terms with the legacy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). We observe competing labels functioning as flagship words for certain types of discourses. The term ‘peaceful revolution’, which celebrates the events in 1989 and 1990 as a breakthrough in democracy and national unity, has, by now, become the official name used regularly in textbooks. However, it has not yet completely displaced the term ‘turnaround’ (Wende) in common parlance, a term which conveys a somewhat sceptical attitude, emphasising the discomfort of the necessity of former citizens of the GDR to adapt to the new circumstances of a reunified Germany exclusively based on the West German model. With regard to the legacy of the GDR, we see similar disagreements reflected in the use of terms. Whereas some characterize the East German regime as a participatory dictatorship thus drawing attention to the millions of people who were involved in the exercise of power, others refer to the same state as an illegitimate state, implicitly putting the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) regime on a level with the Nazi Regime. Since 1989 there have been several public controversies over these issues at a number of different levels.

### Teaching transition

The education system in Germany is federally organized, with 16 federal states in charge of adopting curricula, approving textbooks, training teachers, etc. For this paper we have analysed curricula and textbooks from three federal states: Lower Saxony in West Germany, Saxony Anhalt in East Germany, and Berlin, as the only entity that emerged as a result of the fusion of former West and East German territories. In all of them the topic of transition is mainly dealt with in the history curriculum for the lower and upper secondary level. In all three cases, it forms the last part of a teaching unit on the timespan of between 1945 and 1990. However, all three curricula for Gymnasiums chose different wording in labelling the transition period: whereas the curriculum of Lower Saxony (2015) speaks about the ‘end of the bipolar world’, the curriculum of Saxony Anhalt (2016) talks about the ‘German reunification’ and only the curriculum in Berlin (2017) makes use of the established phrase, the ‘peaceful revolution and the challenges of reunification’. Another remarkable difference refers to the degree of detail in descriptions. Here, the Lower Saxony curriculum adds little more to the general headline pointing only very generally to ‘reunification’ as an important concept to be dealt with when teaching the ‘end of the bipolar world’. The curriculum in Saxony Anhalt pays special attention to methodological questions of history teaching.

It points to the usefulness of dealing with the memory of contemporaries and with public controversies. In a similar vein, the Berlin curriculum puts emphasis on examining memory in East and in West Germany.

### III. Main events/Chronology

There are an impressive number of canonical events which are mentioned in the textbooks of all three publishing houses, including

- May 1989: The government orchestrated fraud of local elections in the GDR in May 1989 was a starting point for oppositional demonstrations and an increasing number of people fleeing the GDR.
- 18<sup>th</sup> September 1989: The overthrow of long-term Party chief, Erich Honecker, in the Politburo of the SED and the appointment of the younger and seemingly more reform-minded, Egon Krenz, as his successor, which can be seen as a last and ultimately failed attempt on behalf of the ruling party to regain some kind of legitimacy or credibility in the eyes of the people, many of whom had started to flee the country.
- 9<sup>th</sup> November 1989: The famous press-conference of Politburo member, Günther Schabowski, announcing, in a mostly unorganized way, the opening of the Berlin wall which led to a massive, now legal, movement of East Germans to West Germany, a country most of them had not been able to visit since the building of the wall in 1961.
- 18<sup>th</sup> March 1990: The first free elections in the GDR.
- 1<sup>st</sup> July 1990: The introduction of the West German Deutsche Mark in the GDR.
- 12<sup>th</sup> September 1990: The signing of 2+4 treaty in Moscow which paved the way to international recognition of the unification of Germany.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1990: The decision of the GDR parliament to join the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) according to article 23 of the FRG constitution and thus to accede to the constitutional order of the FRG, a decision which ended a long debate on whether reunified Germany should elaborate a new constitution or simply stick to the old West German constitution which was originally meant to be only provisional.

More general issues are dealt with extensively in all textbooks, though at times in rather different ways. These are (details in the full version of the mapping):

*The coexistence of two modes of expressing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the GDR with some people taking part in demonstrations and others fleeing the country:*



- The Cornelsen textbook for the Gymnasium focuses almost exclusively on demonstrations and protests and discusses refugees from the GDR only in connection to the opening of the Berlin wall on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1989.
- The Cornelsen textbook for Realschulen actively downplays the differences between refugees and participants in demonstrations by talking about artists who had been expelled from the GDR and people who asked for permission to leave the country in the same paragraph, as well as in mentioning the lack of freedom of expression as the first reason for the massive flight of people in 1989.
- In the Klett textbook, the reader is alerted to the fact that the number of those willing to flee the GDR was significantly higher than the numbers of protesters. In a paragraph that starts with the phrase “the people enforce a change”, the Klett textbook for Realschulen talks exclusively about refugees. Explicit attention is, moreover, drawn to the differences in attitude between those who wanted to leave the country and those who wanted to stay in order to “break the rule of the SED”, thus leaving no doubts about where the sympathies of the authors lie.
- The Klett textbook for Realschulen dramatizes the binary opposition between protesting and fleeing even more by turning the question of “staying or leaving” into the headline of one subchapter.
- The Westermann textbook occupies a middle ground, discussing people who displayed their discontent with the GDR regime either by leaving the country or by taking part in demonstrations, thus actively downplaying any differences between these two camps.

*The change of mood among participants in demonstrations in the GDR with slogans shifting from “we are the people” to “we are one people”:*

- Cornelsen provides the most space for a discussion of this issue, paying particular attention to the defeat of all those who wanted to “preserve an autonomous, democratic GDR”, thus implying that what people became in the end was the opposite, i.e., dependent on a more powerful West Germany. This narrative is further developed in the summary of the whole chapter where the authors claim that the “original goal of the opposition, the goal to reform and render socialism more human was pushed to the back” by “new forces” which “strived for a quick reunification with the federal republic and the introduction of the D-mark”. The binary oppositions constructed here between (i) “the original goals of the opposition” and the “new forces” as well as between (ii) the noble aim of “rendering socialism human” and the desire for a more powerful currency show quite clearly that the authors do not seem to be too fond of those who appeared to be the champions of history.

- The Westermann textbook offers a rather different version of the story, portraying West German chancellor, Helmut Kohl, as a politician skillful enough to seize the opportunity offered to him by the swinging moods of the East German people, which shifted from organizing a peaceful revolution to demanding national unity. The Klett textbook for Realschule offers a primarily economic account. According to them, people in the GDR opted for reunification because “it became clear how incredibly high the state debts of the GDR were” which could only have been reduced “by further reductions of the standards of living”.

### IV. Main disputed concepts

*Historians* have mainly discussed two questions: (1) The nature of the relationship between the GDR dictatorship and the Nazi dictatorship. Some historians would draw a parallel between Stalinist mass killings based on class membership and the Nazi mass killings based on race, while others would claim that state socialism, based on universally recognizable values, was fundamentally different from National Socialism which openly celebrated and brutally institutionalized a racist particularism. (2) The definition of priorities in research activities about the GDR. While some focus on state repression, others pay attention to the everyday experiences of ordinary people as well.

*Public debates* have been dominated by several recurring issues, four of which appear to be particularly important. (1) By the 1990s, two parliamentary committees of inquiry had discussed the performance of the Treuhand, the government agency that was charged with privatizing state-owned property in the GDR. The final report estimated that cheaters and swindlers had caused losses of 3-10 billion Marks for the German state during the selling off of GDR property. In 2019, the Alternative for Germany Party (AfD) and the Left Party demanded a new committee of inquiry claiming that in the 1990s, the files of the Treuhand had not been accessible. (2) In 2009, the question of whether the GDR can be adequately described as an *illegitimate state*, triggered controversies. Those in favour referred to the absence of any separations of power, to the fact that citizens could not appeal to any administrative jurisdiction in order to file a complaint against the decisions of state bodies and to the listing of political offenses like subversive agitation in the criminal code. Those against, warned that defining the GDR as an illegitimate state would automatically mean that everybody who served in any of its organs would be morally suspect. (3) In recent years, three rival explanations for the *increasing influence of right-wing parties* in the federal states that formerly belonged to the GDR have vied for attention. Some refer to the legacy of a democratic deficit inherited from the GDR-dictatorship, others point to insufficient efforts on behalf of state institutions in reunited Germany to come to terms with the SED dictatorship and a third group of commentators drew

attention to the resentments produced by the marginalization or colonization of East Germans after 1990. (4) The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in 2019 sparked a debate about who can claim *ownership of the peaceful revolution*. Some give credit to ordinary citizens for their readiness to flee a country that proved unable to satisfy their consumer needs and offer freedom to travel, which ultimately brought down the GDR regime. Others point to the urge for democracy and freedom expressed by civil rights groups as the driving force behind what they perceive as a revolution.

Finally, debates on the *role of history teaching* in coming to terms with the legacy of the GDR have produced two opposing views: (1) Some observers argue that schools as a rule do not offer enough factual knowledge about the repressive character of the GDR regime and thus contribute to the reproduction of nostalgia. (2) Others claim that history teaching fails to have an impact on students' opinions because it offers accounts of GDR history which are too one-sided, ignoring the heterogeneity of German culture(s) of memory. They see a solution to the problem in the production of truly polyphonic storylines which would resonate with the experience of different people.

## V. Focus

The textbooks focus on events as well as relevant actors (state and non-state). While they contextualize international events randomly the focus remains on the national level.

Looking at the variety of viewpoints expressed in the different books, two aspects deserve attention. First, the higher the educational level or the grade a book is designed for, the greater the scope for the differing positions articulated in them. This means that the students are offered more support in exploring controversial views.

Second, the textbooks of all three publishing houses give space to multiple perspectives. However, they do so in relation to different issues and events as well as by drawing on different means. Some books choose the classical strategy of providing different sources, others point to the complexity and differences in opinion in the authors' text.

The Cornelsen textbook is especially strong in rendering visible societal controversies by offering rich sources and giving voice to historical actors with opposing views on crucial issues. This refers first to the question of whether the GDR was an illegitimate state characterized like Nazi Germany by the total absence of any rule of law.

The Klett textbook stands out for sketching a very nuanced picture of the GDR. The massive fraud of the local elections in May 1989, is said to have hap-

pened not at the precinct-level but only at the district level. The text, moreover, points out that GDR law not only allowed the observation of elections, but also banned electoral fraud, and thus provided an opportunity to open a court case against the manipulation of the local elections.

The Westermann textbook takes a leading role when it comes to rendering visible different perspectives on the problems and challenges Germany faced after reunification. It is the only textbook which deviates from a sanitized view on the Treuhand, the bureaucratic agency which was charged with privatizing the formerly state-owned enterprises of the GDR. Whereas the other two textbooks describe it as an efficient state body selling enterprises that would be able to compete on the world market and closing others which would not, the Westermann textbook mentions briefly that quite a lot of cheaters took advantage of the situation in order to rid themselves of competitors in the East.

However, the textbooks are also full of ambivalence, which seems to arise mainly as a result of the attempt to integrate as many different experiences and perspectives as possible into a coherent story, without admitting to contradictions in the past and without allowing for any serious disagreement with regard to the question of how to make sense of these realities in the present. Such ambivalence mainly relates to socially contested and controversial issues. The textbooks are thus rather vague with regard to the question of how to deal with the violations of human rights committed by officials of the former GDR in general and the so-called shooters at the wall in particular, i.e., the GDR soldiers serving at the border with the FRG who at times shot people trying to flee the country. Outright contradictory statements can be found in paragraphs trying to assess the consequences of reunification and to answer the question of whether East Germans are better off today or have reason to complain about having lost their jobs or being replaced by specialists from the West and thus being treated as second-rate citizens. Apparently, giving space to controversies while simultaneously rendering them invisible, is doomed to fail in all textbooks.

## VI. Recommendations – What is missing

Some issues seem to be absent from all the textbooks analysed. Firstly, while they aim to address certain controversies, they do not admit to the existence of others.

- All textbooks could discuss the question of who the main historical actors were and what motivated them in a more systematic way. Were they the opposition, interested in democracy and freedom, or ordinary people, interested in a better life, or both? They could give voice to contemporaries *and* quote from current debates.

- None of the textbooks touches upon the contested issue of the Treuhand. Has the agency done a good job sparing East Germans much of the troubles a lot of people had to go through in Eastern Europe during transformation? Or did it provide opportunities for corruption, enabling West German enterprises to either pilfer money intended to support the build-up of the East German economy or to get rid of East German competitors? Or do both statements contain some truth?
- There is hardly any serious discussion of how to deal with the legacy of the GDR in a reunified Germany. How can we, in East and West, come to terms with a complex past and competing memories? How can we tell a story that neither silences the fact that the GDR was a dictatorship nor ignores the observation that many people lived happy and meaningful lives under that very dictatorship? How can we take into account the needs of the victims of the SED regime who seek recognition of and compensation for their suffering, while simultaneously avoiding the devaluation of the lives and experiences of those who did not join the opposition?
- Textbooks should definitely deal with the contested issue of explaining the polling results of the AfD in East Germany. They should point to competing explanations of their success and provide factual information which would help students to make up their own minds. History didactics regularly points to the necessity to link discussion of historical questions to current issues, this should not only be a task for civics textbooks, but for history textbooks as well.

*Second*, none of the books broadens the perspective and discusses the global context of transition. It would make sense to focus on the role the global hegemony of neoliberalism has played in shaping the agenda in many post-socialist societies or to point to parallels between the privatization processes in East and West.

## Conclusion

Summing up, we can state that German textbooks to some extent adequately reflect societal controversies on how to assess transition by offering a variety of viewpoints on the same topic. Furthermore, slightly different accounts in textbooks from different publishing houses also ensure a degree of plurality. At the same time, there are still a lot of issues on which textbooks try to render societal controversies invisible by resorting to ambivalent or vague statements. Vague and ambivalent statements seem to serve the function of pleasing different constituencies. Last, but not least, German textbook stories tend to tell rather narrow-minded national stories about transition while largely neglecting the international context.

## GERMANY: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*The counter-memory of former GDR citizens is under-represented whenever it touches power-relations. [...] The voices of former foreign contract workers in the GDR [and of their children] talking about their experiences of an often difficult and violent transition remain most of the time unheard.*

**Marie Müller-Zetsche,**  
historian and researcher



*Everyday history(ies) or biographical work based on contemporary witness accounts, stimulation of intergenerational conversations about the experiences of transition, on both sides of the former iron curtain.*

**Veronika Ludwig,**  
history teacher



*Representations and discourses on culture and subculture in transition: punk and squatter scenes, environmental movement.*

**Veronika Ludwig,**  
history teacher



*The textbooks\* lack in-depth presentations and source materials regarding the economic transformation or transition from a planned to a market economy; [...] the effects of the accompanying mass unemployment, the associated exodus of entire cohorts from East to West and other dislocations that have affected the economic, socio-cultural and political situation of the region to date.*

**Veronika Ludwig,**  
history teacher



*Under-represented [...] are the voices of East German feminist activists that fought during 1989 and in the early 1990s for ecological and social justice.*

**Marie Müller-Zetsche,**  
historian and researcher

\* Most frequently used in the federal states Berlin, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

## LITHUANIA

Author: Asta Rėnonytė

### LITHUANIA

Grade/Age group:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade / age group: 9;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 11;
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 12;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 16,
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 18.

Subject:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: Integrated Social and Scientific course;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: History (national level);
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade: World History;
- 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Lithuanian and World History.

Share (%):

- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade: less than 1%;
- 5<sup>th</sup> grade: 3-4%;
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade: 5%;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade: 18%;
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade: 5%.

### I. General information

Lithuania's education system is decentralised, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle. National authorities, municipalities and schools share responsibility for the quality and content of the education. The Parliament adopts the main laws and legal acts regulating the system of education and science at a national level, while the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, or the Government, adopts other legal acts applicable at the national level (i.e., a core curriculum). The municipalities set and implement their own strategic education plans in accordance with the national documents. The schools organize the education process and the teachers are able to adapt the core curriculum and other education content to students' individual needs.

Since the approval of curricula for the lower secondary and upper secondary schools (2008 and 2011), the content of school education in Lithuania is based on a competency-oriented curriculum. However, in practice, the syllabi for the lower secondary school and for the upper secondary school highlight both competence and knowledge-based approaches. It is difficult to define which approach is dominant, as their proportions are not indicated and teachers can choose the one they prefer.

Textbook development is also decentralized. Schools may select appropriate textbooks from the National database of textbooks and other educational supplies. Only textbooks that meet curricular requirements are approved by education experts and included in the database. This practice leads to a greater diversity of textbooks and approaches presented by various authors. Therefore, different textbooks for the same grade can co-exist and each of them might approach the theme of the transition period slightly differently.

The transition period is widely covered in 10<sup>th</sup> grade teaching/learning about Lithuanian and World History. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade it is taught on the Integrated Social and Science education course; in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, in History, in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, in the subject of World History, and in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in the subject of Lithuanian and World History.

Ten textbooks have been selected for this mapping<sup>16</sup>. One of the key criteria for the selection was the number of schools using them in the teaching/learning process. Another important criterion was the diversity of authors/publishers maintained. The idea of mapping the teaching of the transition period also encompasses reviewing whether authors are consistent in their presentation of the topic.

<sup>16</sup> The textbooks selected are:

- 'Raktas 3' [The Key, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade] // V. Varnagirienė, R. Makarskaitė Petkevičienė, 2013.
- 'Atrask. Istorija 5' [Find. History, 5<sup>th</sup> grade] // Darius Petreikis, Jūraėė Litvinaitė, Faustas Meškuotis, Rūta Ramoškaitė-Stongvilienė, Algis Bitautas, Simona Stankutė, 2014.
- 'Žingsniai 6' [Steps, 6<sup>th</sup> grade] // Rytas Šalna, Karolis Mickevičius, Antanas Meištas, Rimvydas Laužikas, Ignas Kapleris), 2012.
- 'Naujausiųjų laikų istorija 10' [Contemporary History, 10<sup>th</sup> grade] // Algis Kasperavičius, Rimantas Jokimaitis, Algis Sindaravičius, Jonas Laurinaitis, Juozas Brazauskas, Audronė Čičauskienė, Beatričė Stukienė, Bijūnas Paulius, 2004.
- 'Laikas 10' [Time, 10<sup>th</sup> grade] // Karolis Mickevičius, Antanas Meištas, Andželika Laužikienė, Ignas Kapleris, Živilė Tamkutonytė-Mikailienė, 2007.
- 'Istorijos vadovėlis 10' [Textbook of History, 10<sup>th</sup> grade] // Ramojus Kraujalis, Arūnas Streikus, Mindaugas Tamošaitis), 2010.
- 'Pilietiškumo pagrindai ir laisvės kovų istorija 9-10' [Civics and History of Fights for Freedom, 9-10<sup>th</sup> grades] // S. Bitlieriūtė, A. Jakubčionis, 2012.
- 'Istorijos vadovėlis 12' [Textbook of History, 12<sup>th</sup> grade] // Gintaras Kaselis, Ramojus Kraujalis, Stasys Lukšys, Arūnas Streikus, Mindaugas Tamošaitis), 2009.
- 'Istorijos vadovėlis 12' [Textbook of History, 12<sup>th</sup> grade] // Arvydas Anušauskas, Gintaras Kaselis, Ramojus Kraujalis, Stasys Lukšys, Arūnas Streikus, Mindaugas Tamošaitis, 2012.
- 'Laikas 12' [Time, 12<sup>th</sup> grade] // Karolis Mickevičius, Antanas Meištas, Rimvydas Laužikas, Ignas Kapleris), 2016.



## II. Main narrative

The transition period in Lithuania in the '90s is deeply connected to the narrative of Independence and the reinstatement of democracy. The fifty years during which Lithuania was a part of the USSR is mostly reflected as a period of occupation. The main narrative found in school is that independence was restored mainly thanks to the Sąjūdis movement (the movement which paved the way for the restoration of Lithuanian Independence in 1990), led by public intellectuals and other prominent people of that time. At the same time, the history of the transition period is taught by highlighting certain events that are considered to have had the greatest impact in the process of regaining independence. These events are usually massive demonstrations, such as the Baltic Way, which is widely celebrated and commemorated as a human chain physically uniting people of all three Baltic States. The initial idea for the Baltic Way was to commemorate the anniversary of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 1939, which is considered a turning point in the history of independent Lithuania, when the leaders of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union not only agreed to a non-aggression pact but also signed the Secret Protocol which defined the borders of Soviet and German spheres of influence across the Baltic States, Finland and Poland. The existence of this protocol was considered proof that Lithuania was occupied and became a part of the Soviet Union unwillingly. Thus, the Baltic Way is used in the construction of the narrative that everyone had the same dream and the same hope of independence, which finally came true with the declaration of the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. The transition period in the Baltic States is often remembered as the Singing revolution because it was a rather peaceful movement joined by crowds singing patriotic songs during gatherings and demonstrations.

### Public discourse

Public discourse mainly covers the political issues of the transition period, such as relations between the Soviet Union and Lithuania, the aggression of the Soviet Army, the relationship between leaders of the Communist Party and Sąjūdis, etc. The media, and different projects aimed at raising awareness, highlight the fact that the most significant changes which took place 30 years ago, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the declaration of the independence of Lithuania in 1990, happened at a political level, which was shaped by (self) organized parts of society which gradually became institutionalized.

### Teaching transition

Curricula and the content of the textbooks used in schools today reflect the narratives of public discourse. Despite some visual and interactive efforts to find comprehensible ways to explain the range of changes in the late '80s and early

'90s (e.g., the Baltic Way is compared to the flashmob of 2 million people or called the inspiration of the current Hong Kong movement) to today's generation, the politics of memory or historical consciousness is created from traditional political artefacts such as freedom of speech, the idea of independence, and the values of national solidarity, patriotism, and resilience. However, the economic, social, cultural, and everyday life of the transition period are sidelined, and official discourse does not reflect those aspects of the transition period in the post-communist society of Lithuania. Radical change in the political system caused significant transformations in society; for instance, many people lost their jobs and had to struggle to find another occupation in order to survive. Also, people lost their savings as the currency rate dropped and the still unfamiliar market economy was used by financial scammers to take advantage and get rich quick. This led to drastic changes in social status; many people that had once held reputable jobs became market traders (an occupation which had been marginalized in the Soviet period).

The official history of the transition period, which is reflected in the teaching process, reflects a positive, shared sense of nation that followed the Sąjūdis announcement of the Independence of Lithuania. Public discourse does not share the controversial or mixed attitudes of Russian and Polish ethnic minorities, who experienced challenges different to those of Lithuanians, because they felt that their national identity might not correspond to the popular discourse of Lithuanian independence and they could be considered alien in the newly re-born country. Furthermore, too little attention is paid to the impact of the market economy, which caused changes not only in the economic life of citizens but influenced the value system, especially, of the young generation, who did not receive the same social services as their parents had done; the security of a steady job and a place to live.

Consensus exists on certain concepts and topics included in teaching on the transition period. Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, teaching emphasizes the Declaration of Independence in 1990, important symbols of the modern state, such as the national flag, the national anthem, the Baltic Way, and the impact that the changes of this period had on people's lives. Political changes, technological and scientific achievements, and the problems of contemporary Europe are addressed, and controversies between Western and Eastern Europe are laid open. Consensus also exists over the meaning of the development of both the role of civil society in Lithuania's peaceful fight for independence, on the one hand, and over the market economy in post-soviet countries on the other. Moreover, in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, new models of social, political and economic development are discussed and framed in terms of eliminating the consequences of Sovietization. The latter is understood as a phenomenon which covered all areas of the social, political, cultural, and economic life of people from 1940 through to 1990. In all these spheres, people had to adopt the political system, as well as the way of life,

mentality, and culture modelled by the Soviet Union. The declaration of independence was followed by the Lithuanian government's amendments to Criminal law to identify people who had collaborated with repressive Soviet mechanisms, such as the KGB. However, the process was complicated and is still not finished. In other public spheres, de-Sovietization proceeded more quietly. For example, all the symbols of the soviet regime were forbidden, and society accepted this as a natural consequence of a change in ideology. Besides, artefacts of everyday life in the soviet period became a theme in art and exhibitions.

### III. Main events/Chronology

It is commonly held among historians that the first demonstration organized by a dissident organization, the Lithuanian Liberty League, in August 1987, marks the starting point of the transition process in Lithuania. However, there is no consensus over the end date of this period: it ranges from 1991, with the fall of the Soviet Union, to 1993, when Soviet troops withdrew from Lithuania (and even longer, if social or cultural aspects are considered).

The main events dealt with are:

- 1985: The beginning of Gorbachev's leadership.
- 1987: The first public demonstration held by the Lithuanian Liberty League<sup>17</sup> that was not dispersed by the Soviet militia. The official reason for the rally was the commemoration of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the participants of the demonstration, most of whom were dissidents, demanded the release of the Secret Protocol and initiated talks on the declaration of independence.
- 1988: The establishment of the Reform Movement of Lithuania (Sąjūdis). Hundreds of large demonstrations were organized by the Reform Movement across Lithuania.
- 1989: The beginning of radical changes and the collapse of the USSR (The Baltic Way, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, etc.). The Lithuanian Communist Party declared its independence from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It became a separate political unit which was not longer related to the Communist Party of the USSR.
- 1990: Lithuania's declaration of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. The USSR implements an economic blockade, cutting off the supply

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<sup>17</sup> The Lithuanian Liberty League was a dissident organization in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. It was established in 1978 as an underground resistance group which secretly published anti-Soviet literature and raised the question of independence.

of oil, gas, and other materials and products. The blockade lasted for 75 days and had a significant impact on the economy of the newly re-established state.

- 1991: The January events (the Soviet Army and its special forces attempted to take over the main strategic locations in Lithuania (Parliament, National Radio and Television Building, TV Tower, etc.). On January 13<sup>th</sup> 1991, 14 people were killed and 580 injured were taken to hospitals during clashes between the Soviet Army and peaceful protesters) and the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- 1993: The withdrawal of the Soviet Army (Soviet Army troops that were located in Lithuania leave the country).

### IV. Main disputed concepts

Looking at Lithuanian curricula and textbooks, the concepts available for teaching on the transition period are not disputed. As mentioned above, the only dispute emerges around the question of when the transition period ended. For instance, the transition process did not finished with the declaration of independence as the state still had to prove its intentions in the international arena and receive international recognition. Some argue, that the transition period ended in 1991, when the State of Lithuania received international recognition and became a member of the UN. Others think that the political system stabilized in 1992, when a new Constitution was adopted in a referendum and a new Lithuanian Parliament was elected, etc. 1993 is usually qualified as the end of the transition period, because it was the year when the last troops of the Soviet Army left the country.

### V. Focus

The perspective on the events examined in teaching on the transition period differs. While teaching in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades focuses on national events, textbooks for 6<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades include an international/European perspective as well. An example of this is the representation of changes in Eastern Europe through an overview of events in the former Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, other examples of countries in Eastern Europe with key roles in the post-Soviet transition are mostly absent in Lithuanian textbooks, and Lithuania is presented as the country that caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and as the country undergoing a unique transformation.

## VI. Recommendations – What is missing

The following aspects should be considered in the teaching of the transition period. These are:

- The context of radical political and social changes at the end of the twentieth century. Lithuania is now presented as a country undergoing a unique transformation, however, there is no information about similar changes in neighbouring countries. Lithuania's Reform Movement is portrayed as the region's leader during the transition period and Lithuania, as the cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union (Lithuania was the first Soviet Republic to declare its independence), while there is no mention of the transition processes in Germany, Poland, and other countries, or of their influence on Lithuania. The lack of regional context gives students a narrow understanding of the concept of post-Soviet transition itself as it is usually seen only as a political change and its impact on people's everyday lives is not discussed.
- A short review of Lithuania's relations with the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century. Students should be introduced to the history of the transition period within the context of its historical background. (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- There is almost no mention of other Eastern European countries that underwent the process of transition. Europe, as a concept, is defined as a political, economic, and cultural space without identifying the differences and peculiarities of Western, Eastern or Southern Europe, so the history of Lithuania is seen as separate, not only from Western Europe, but also from the Eastern European Bloc. (6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade)
- The concept of post-Soviet transition could reveal the depth of radical changes and their consequences in former communist societies. For example, some information about the attitudes prevailing among ethnic minorities could be added. More attention could also be given to the changes in social, economic, and cultural life and public discourse. For instance, the transformation of the curricula and educational process in 1988-1990 could be discussed (radical changes in the political system affected the school curriculum and teachers had to react quickly, finding new approaches to teaching history). (12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- More attention should be given to the possibility of view the transition period from multiple perspectives and thus enabling students to discover the wider picture of this complex, challenging, and exciting time.

## LITHUANIA: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*The dominant public narrative overlooks the change itself, portraying only the freedom of Lithuania without turning back to the regular person and their life changes.*

**Laurynas Kudijanovas,**  
history teacher



*The process of a nation-building, which is a common phenomenon of most newly (re)established countries, often excludes the perspectives of the national minorities, which is also a case within the Lithuanian history textbooks.*

**Vaidotas Steponavičius,**  
social science and  
humanities teacher



*The value of a diverse and civic-based national community, including their perspectives, is missing attention and discussion [in Lithuanian school history textbooks].*

**Vaidotas Steponavičius,**  
social science and  
humanities teacher



*It is still unknown for students how the 90s were affected by [...] subcultures, and by uncensored literature. This cultural content could be examined from a few different perspectives.*

**Vaidotas Steponavičius,**  
social science and  
humanities teacher



*There is little (if any) communication on the LGBT contribution to the civic society.*

**Vaidotas Steponavičius,**  
social science and  
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## POLAND

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### POLAND

Grade/Age group:

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 14-15;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 16-17;
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 17-18 ;
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade/ age group: 18-19.

Subject:

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade: History;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade: History basic;
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade: History advanced;
- 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade: Civics advanced.

Share (%):

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade (subject "History"): 6.7%
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade (subject "History basic"): 5.4%
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade (subject "History advanced"): 5.1%
- 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (subject "Civics advanced"): 2.6%

### I. General information

National curricula have been subject to many changes in Poland since 1989 which has also had an impact on textbooks. In the early 1990s, the revision of the curricula became one of the key mechanisms in shaping the Polish system of education. Subsequent governments introduced significant changes in the existing curricula, and their content, form, and language reflect the influence of ideology and conflicts in the public discourse. Developments in the context of the national curricula after 1989 in Poland can be described as both a mirror of and a tool for political and social change. The new curricula were usually prepared rather quickly (the last one quite hastily in fact) and introduced in a top-down rather than a grassroots manner, so that even textbook publishers were barely able to keep up, not to mention schools and the teachers themselves.

One of the most crucial elements of the transition in the Polish education system after 1989, was the strong emphasis on liberalization and deregulation. However, a radical shift took place in 2002 as a result of systemic changes, including external exams, which were introduced by the government of that time. Starting with this core curriculum, through the one established in 2008, and ending with the 2017 curriculum, the pedagogic freedom of teachers has been gradually limited by the extent of detail demanded by learning requirements. This was due to a process of strict standardization in learning outcomes through the introduction of increasingly specific requirements for students, teachers, and the contents of textbooks. All subsequent national curricula can be described as a hybrid of conservative, liberal and even leftist elements.

After the parliamentary elections in 2015, authorities carried out the promised educational reform, the key elements of which included changes in the school system (the closure of all middle schools) and a radical change in the national core curriculum. A new perspective on the Polish road to independence and the transition period was given a strong voice, in accordance with the conservative educational program and historical policy of the Law and Justice Party and its government which came to power in 2015. This policy is based on the metaphor of 'getting up from our knees', i.e., building national pride and highlighting the merits of Poles throughout the centuries (while silencing discussion over controversial issues), representing Poland as a defender of Christianity and 'European values' and a victim of fascism and communism. These politics of historical memory are enacted through the state institutions, such as the National Memory Institute, historical museums, public media, and educational programs.

Regarding the textbooks, the Polish school system allows teachers to use various options from a list approved by the Ministry of National Education. They can even choose not to use a textbook, though few teachers choose this option. Teachers are obliged only to fulfil the criteria set out in the subject curriculum: both general and detailed requirements are listed in the document (e.g., for a basic history course in a secondary school there are around 270 standard requirements, for an advanced course, an extra 300 are added). The main problem with the selection of textbooks was that the period from 2017-2022, should be seen as a time of transition from the one curriculum to the next, as introduced by the reform. For instance, new textbooks for the upper classes in high school have not been published yet. The textbooks for history and civic education chosen for this mapping are and have been used in various stages of education before and after the reform of 2017.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The textbooks selected for the mapping are:

- The *Common History*, e-textbook, accessible online, ('old curriculum') 6<sup>th</sup> grade of 'old' elementary school; J. Wołdoń, P. Wiszewski, R. Kołodziej, 2012.
- *History 4*. Textbook. M.T.Małkowski, 2017 ('new curriculum').



## II. Main narrative

### Public discourse

The debate regarding the Polish transition period has been an important element of Polish politics, journalism, and academic life since 1989. We must assume that, at least until Poland joined the European Union in 2004, i.e., for 15 years, the key axioms of the transition period were consistently fulfilled by the policies of subsequent governments. The main processes of transition, led by subsequent governments and supported by the mainstream media, with the active or passive participation of the majority of society, can be identified as:

- The transition of the political system towards a liberal democracy. Developing political pluralism, ensuring an independent judiciary, strengthening independent governmental institutions, freedom of the media and non-governmental organizations. Decentralizing the state by building a system of institutionally and financially strong, highly legitimized, and independent local authorities.
- Creating a free market economy, limiting the role of the state using “shock therapy” (1989-1992). Trading the Polish currency (złoty) on the foreign exchange market, fighting inflation, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and legislative solutions for supporting private business endeavours, reforming public transport, the pension system, and the healthcare system (particularly between 1997 and 2001).
- Integration with Western Europe. The constant work of subsequent Polish governments to become involved with European and transatlantic organizations.
- Limiting accountability for the past. Poland did not immediately conduct large-scale processes of lustration and decommunization. It was only in 1997 that a very limited lustration law was adopted, full decommunization never truly took place. No “show trials” of the Polish United Workers’ Party leaders took place either.

Almost immediately after Poland joined the EU, consensus over the direction of Polish transition period policy ended. Since the 2005 election, political forces basing their vision of Poland and the world on criticism of the principles of the transition period have been increasingly popular. The most significant and

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- *History. XX Century*, D. Stola, 2012 ('old curriculum' for 'old' high school). Used in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of 'old high school'.
  - *KOSS. Civic education for the high schools. Part 1*, 2019, ('new curriculum'), used in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of 'new high school'.
  - *In the Spotlight. Textbook for the civic education in high schools. Part 1*. (in Polish: “W centrum uwagi”) Used in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of the 'new high school'.

constant force of this nature is Law and Justice (in power – as part of a coalition – from 2005 to 2007, and independently in power since 2015). The other important party of the time, Civic Platform (in power – as part of a coalition – between 2007 and 2015) is considered to be a defender of the transition period's achievements.

Criticism of many aspects of the transition period, particularly social and economic, has been put forward by representatives of various groups; left- and right-wing circles, younger and older generations. Broadly speaking, the main points of contention regarding the transition period can be defined as:

- **A lack of accountability:** Supporters of the transition period argue that in failing to implement measures to prevent former-communist figures from taking positions in public life, Poland avoided a potentially bloody settling of accounts, which allowed the country to face new challenges. Critics of the transition period argue that, due to a lack of accountability, the wealthiest and the best “connected” social group remained in power and demoralized Polish society. In this way, the state did not fulfil its most important role: delivering justice to those responsible for committing crimes.
- **A socio-economic assessment of the transition:** Following the opinion of the proponents of the transition period, “shock therapy” was a difficult but necessary process for the giant civilizational leap Poland has undergone in the last 30 years. What is more they follow the liberal persuasion that everyone is responsible for his own fate and the passivity of the people harmed by the economic transition is caused by their ‘homo sovieticus’ formation, as they were formed in a system which suppressed individualism and entrepreneurship. Opponents of the transition period, state that the way the economic transition was conducted is the best evidence that the people of “Solidarity” (especially industrial workers, many of whom became unemployed) were betrayed by Solidarity and the post-communist elites, who did not care about their interests during the transition period. The most radical economic reforms resulted in creating islands of poverty, social exclusion, and structural unemployment. What is more, the state was overly hasty in divesting itself of responsibility in key areas of public life (transport, pensions, healthcare).
- **Liberal democracy:** Those in support of the transition period, argue that Poland took an exemplary path in the transition from a dictatorship to western European style liberal democracy. A system of free elections, an independent judiciary, a free media, and the wide implementation of civic rights, amongst other achievements, are all proof of this. Those criticizing the transition period state that Polish democracy is incomplete as it has been “badly conceived” and favours “Round Table elites”. The political sys-

tem fosters political corruption and the formation of cliques and forgets about social rights.

- **Integration with the west:** On the one hand there is the perception that integration with the west is an incredible success in the history of Poland. Poland is included in an international community and membership in the EU and NATO led to an unprecedented degree of infrastructural modernization, offering Poles new opportunities. Critics argue that, although membership in western organizations is a success,<sup>19</sup> it has led to a decrease in Polish sovereignty and an increase in dependence on foreign cultural and political influences. Additionally, the possibility arises that Poland will get stuck, in part due to the structure of the European market, in the so-called “middle income trap”. Therefore, Poland should carry out an independent policy within the EU, basing it, for instance, on strong ties to the US and other countries in our region (e.g., Hungary).

### Teaching transition

After the parliamentary elections in 2015, many historians and scientific bodies voiced concerns regarding the process of design, the consultations, and the didactic shortcomings, of the curriculum that was first proposed.<sup>20</sup>

It is worth noting that the 2017 curriculum includes a significant number of content standards regarding the transition period. It has specific requirements regarding the systemic changes of 1989-1997 and the political and social tensions of that period. The requirements include a familiarity not only with the description of the changes, but students should also be able to “assess the process of systemic and economic transition” and even “explain the controversies surrounding decommunization and lustration”. While these requirements are viewed as appropriate, many teachers have doubts as to whether it will be possible to fulfill them in class.

Overloading the curriculum with specific content, dates, events, and concepts, limits the opportunities for the analysis of sources or conducting independent historical research. Most likely, it will be even harder now to fulfill the curriculum’s requirements in a way which leaves time for recent history, including the political and social changes which took place after 1989.

<sup>19</sup> Support for Poland being a member of the EU and NATO is still around 90% (sic!) in Poland and even critics of the transition period rarely chose to criticise it. Compare: Fundacja Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej (2021): ‘Polska w Unii Europejskiej’ [‘Poland in the European Union’], Nr 139/2021.

<sup>20</sup> “History is not a collection of patriotic episodes or heroic characters. Overlooking controversial figures who can’t be only seen in a positive light is a misrepresentation of history.” – stated the Scientific Council of the Institute of History in January 2017.

What is more, teachers' concerns over discussing topics related to current political conflicts results in a "freezing effect". They are worried that this might expose them to criticisms from parents, denunciations to the principals or even educational authorities who have the right to monitor schools' curricula. Even if no real reprisals take place, the fear of them discourages the discussion of any "hot" topics. However, the first real research regarding how the transition period is being taught under the new curriculum, cannot be conducted before late spring of 2021 when lessons at secondary schools will start.

According to the new curriculum, history should primarily serve as a way to build a shared identity and national memory as opposed to the construction and de-construction of knowledge based on the analysis of different narratives, documents and artifacts. Therefore, many historians and educators have doubts if the current curriculum can foster independent historical thinking, as it is rather an effort to present a coherent identity building, patriotic narrative for young Poles.

It is probable that the history of the fall of communism and the transition period will become a part of a "historical policy" as a way to inspire national pride and to counteract the "pedagogy of shame" allegedly introduced by previous liberal and left-wing authorities and intellectual elites. In that case the Polish transition period might be depicted as the triumphant victory of the heroic nation, which finally, with the support of the Polish Pope and the Catholic Church, defeated the communist regime in Poland and beyond. There is also a risk that history teaching might mimic the new narrative in erasing or defaming figures of those who presumably "betrayed" the Solidarity movement, aka the politicians who came to power after Round Table Talks in 1989 and the intellectuals who supported them. According to this vision they were not only responsible for plotting against Solidarity, but also for securing the impunity of post-communist elites, for the economic enfranchisement of the nomenklatura, for economic disparities and most of the problems that Poles have faced since 1989. This double figure of "hero and victim" might lead to historical misrepresentations.

Nonetheless this does not mean that specific teachers and textbooks cannot reference various, even contradictory, perspectives, interpretations, and sources. Monitoring the way educators make actual pedagogic decisions on how to teach the transition period is highly recommended.<sup>21</sup>

A new way of talking about recent history raises the need to rearrange the points of emphasis, or even change the main characters. For example, the new curriculum underscores the role of John Paul II, the Polish Catholic Church and even "the cursed soldiers" (the fighters of post-war, anti-communist guerrilla

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<sup>21</sup> We will not learn what this looks like in practice until the second half of the next school year, in the case of the basic courses, and the second half of 2023 in the case of the extended courses.

forces also known as “doomed soldiers”, or “damned soldiers”)<sup>22</sup> but overlooks Lech Wałęsa as a “Solidarity” hero. Generally, the names of influential personalities are largely missing. Special emphasis in the national curriculum is given to the “cursed soldiers” as the forgotten heroes in the continuous fight against communism, almost the only founding fathers of our national independence.<sup>23</sup> Current re-interpretations of the transition period might also have its upside as students might get a somewhat more realistic view of the economic and social misfortunes of the transition period than before.

The basic civics curriculum contains no direct references to the systemic transition, or even the social and cultural changes which took place. We can speak of a process of “historization” regarding the transition period, as if these events took place so far in the past that there is no point in researching their connection to Poland’s current democratic system, political situation, or social tensions. It is only in the extended civics curriculum (lessons conducted in the last two years of high school, for students who wish to pass the “Matura” exam in this subject) that requirements exist which encourage such considerations, i.e., the student “analyses the ways social classes adapted to the socio-economic changes in Poland; [and] identifies the reasons for the social advancement or demotion of the representatives of these social classes”.

The extended curriculum also includes specific requirements regarding the political transition as a process of democratizing the state and society, explicitly inviting teachers and students to compare different models of transition from a monistic, quasi-totalitarian system to a liberal democracy. It remains to be seen how this promise will be translated into real learning experience.

All the requirements of the extended curriculum go clearly beyond factual knowledge, referring to cognitive competencies and higher order thinking, and demanding the use of various sources, including valuable sociological literature. However, it is worth noting that they make up a small percentage of all the subject requirements, so it is not clear to what extent they will be included in textbooks and everyday work with students. If they are fulfilled, we could consider it an exemplary solution, we can only express doubts as to whether these standards should apply only to those students who choose to pass civics on the “Matura” exam, and not to all students.

<sup>22</sup> See: Wikipedia: ‘Cursed soldiers’. Available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursed\\_soldiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursed_soldiers) and; Kończal, Kornelia (2019): ‘The Invention of the “Cursed Soldiers” and Its Opponents: Post-war Partisan Struggle in Contemporary Poland’. In: *Eastern European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*. Available at: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0888325419865332?journalCode=eepa>.

<sup>23</sup> The only specific suggestion regarding a particular issue is in reference to the “cursed soldiers”: “it is important that in the process of learning about the events surrounding the tragic fates of the victimized soldiers and civilians of World War II and post-war underground resistance, the student [...] understands and is able to explain the terms “*The Pantheon of Cursed Soldiers*” and “*Łączka*” [...]”.

Examining these textbooks, the percentage of content related to the transition period is relatively high but various textbooks for the same subject, based on the same curriculum, dedicate different amounts of time to the topic. There is a significantly increased amount of transition period related content in high school civics textbooks following this reform. Previously, the transition period was mentioned only incidentally, currently, all civics textbooks contain a separate chapter dedicated to it.

What is worth noting, following this reform, the topic of the transition period is touched upon as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary school (in history). However, it appears only in a national context (“Poles dismantled communism”). 1989 is mentioned for the first time in the context of remembering the “cursed soldiers”. John Paul II is elevated to the role of the most significant actor of the transformation. International issues in the context of transition are included in the higher grades, though to a different extent – and are always only a small addition to the national perspective.

There are multiple narratives apparent in the history of the transition period. Different textbooks emphasize different things: for example, the new 8<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks seem relatively more critical of the transition process (textbooks covering the twentieth century for the “new” high school are still not available).

Topics related to the transition period were always present in the history and civics “Matura” exams, but we still do not know what form this content will take in the new exams to be held in 2023 which are aligned with the new curriculum. Questions related to the transition period were usually worth about 4-8% of the exam. These questions could vary from talking about the fall of communism in Poland and other Eastern European countries (mainly history), to the political, legal, and social effects of the transition process (mainly civics, e.g., questions about the changes in human rights protection after 1989, or even the term “homo sovieticus” and the changing family model after 1989). One could say that, so far, the exams have also included controversial topics and did not require students to follow the “right” version of history. We will soon see whether this will change under the new curriculum.

### III. Main events/Chronology

History textbooks present an almost canonical, unchanged chain of events leading up to the systemic transition period. What varies is the way the beginning of “the path to freedom” is identified by different textbooks. A “classic” starting point to talk about the transition period is either the creation of the democratic opposition in the late 1970s or the strike at the Gdansk Shipyard. It then leads through the activities of the Solidarity trade union, martial law, underground activism, Gorbachev’s reforms and geopolitical changes, the Round Table Agreement,

the Elections of 4<sup>th</sup> June 1989, establishing Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government, changing the country's name and electing Lech Wałęsa as president.<sup>24</sup> Poland's membership in the EU is usually perceived as the end point of the transition process.

#### IV. Main disputed concepts

Disputes in education are connected to big themes in public discourse and they evolve around milestone events like the Solidarity strikes (who was the real leader), the Round Table Agreements (peaceful consensus building or a conspiracy by communist and Solidarity elites), the June elections (whether they were free or rigged because of the political guarantee given to the Communist Party) [see also page 2 ]. Even the pantheon of leaders of Solidarity and the transition process is disputed, with Lech Wałęsa being accused of acting as a secret police agent.

There are also deep controversies around decommunization and lustration, touching upon the question of accountability for communism. In this respect we have the big question, whether the lack of "revenge" in the form of clear punitive measures for former Party and army officials was the proper choice for Poland and to what extent it fed into the political conflicts and economic inequalities after 1989.

The overall model of transition and its social costs comes under scrutiny too – the neo-liberal focus on freedom and individual success prevailing in Polish debate for many years is now criticised both from left and right-wing positions. The economic reforms of the 1990s are presented by some as the only path from communism to a market economy, but others criticise this shock strategy as detrimental to large parts of Polish society and responsible for deep social and economic inequalities and political divisions which still damage our public life today. The argument that there can be no real freedom without social and economic justice is loudly voiced and will probably find more emphasis in the new textbooks and teaching practice.

There is also a question over the extent to which the Polish transition period and present public life are influenced (or poisoned) by the remnants of the political culture of the communist period. Passivity, expecting too much support from the state, an inability to collaborate, to trust others, or to engage in public life,

<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that so far there was no "expunging" of the "Founding Fathers of the Third Polish Republic" (like Lech Wałęsa or Tadeusz Mazowiecki) from the new textbooks for primary schools. However, the names of their opponents, Anna Walentynowicz, Andrzej Gwiazda and Lech Kaczyński, appear more frequently in the "post-reform" textbooks than they did in the "pre-reform" ones.

and the lack of reliance on democratic procedures and institutions are sometimes attributed to the unwanted heritage of the “homo sovieticus”.

It should be noted that such disputed topics, which could inspire interesting debates in the classroom, more often have a discouraging effect on teachers. They do not feel comfortable dealing with Poland’s most recent history, subject as it is to political re-interpretation, including the influence of an explicit or tacit “historical policy”. Educators are not prepared to deal with conflicting interpretations of public life in the classroom or even to express their own opinion on political issues, including the transition period with both its merits and failures. This applies not only to discussions regarding the Solidarity movement and the transition process, but also to gender issues, different family models, migration, and refugees, or even the climate crisis.

### V. Focus

While the 4<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks for primary schools paint the Polish people as heroes, unanimously fighting communism until its fall, with no reference to international history, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school textbooks do include geopolitical changes in the cause-and-effect chain of events leading to the fall of communism. The main international threads mentioned in the textbooks are the USSR crisis, Reagan’s anti-Soviet policy, Gorbachev’s failed reforms and the dissolution of the USSR, the Reunification of Germany, the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the war in the former Yugoslavia, different roads to transition and, finally, Europe coming together.

History and civics textbooks treat the political history of the Third Polish Republic with varying levels of specificity. All civics textbooks and most history textbooks mention the period of socio-economic transition, its benefits, and its drawbacks. They use terms like hyperinflation, “shock therapy”, free market and planned economies, unemployment, state agriculture farms, “homo sovieticus”, and increased GDP.

The emphasis falls in various places. The transition process is also sometimes analysed in different contexts, like education, family life, human rights, a free press, lifestyle, and the class structure and stratification of society. Geopolitical change is an essential element in discussing the transition period: “moving” Poland west. The processes of the European and transatlantic integration of Poland are discussed in quite a detailed way. Its social and economic effects are also indicated.



## VI. Recommendations – What is missing

What is really missing in teaching the transition period can be described in terms of pedagogy rather than specific content.

As mentioned before, the method of teaching history and civics which is prevalent in Polish schools, does not guarantee that learning about the transition period will develop students' deeper competencies: cognitive, exploratory, civic, social, and those related to communication. It is primarily based on retaining facts and definitions, and – as clearly stated in the curriculum – the building of a collective national memory, rather than on the development of critical thinking, finding and analysing sources, or undermining historical myths and misrepresentations. Learning to think historically is fundamentally missing.

Education focused on developing competencies in historical and critical thinking demands more time than teachers are able to provide, due to the huge number of state requirements, as well as the need to go beyond “frontal teaching” and towards pedagogic approaches which engage students, such as educational projects, debates, museum visits, study visits, case analysis, roleplay and simulations, the creative use of modern technologies, or looking for witnesses and testimonies of the political events and social processes of the past few decades. Such didactic competencies are still lacking.

What is more, most high school teachers and students consider the results of the “Matura” exam to be the key (and only) criterion of success. This is not conducive to the use of interactive methods but rather focuses attention on studying the specific topics and types of tasks which might be included in the exam. Many long-serving teachers feel that, though the latest core curriculum includes more specific guidance on the period of transition, the previous curricula gave them more autonomy, as they were more generic and did not impose such rigid requirements regarding content, outcomes, and time, as those in the present one.

Almost all the content omissions in the subsequent Polish curricula are to a large extent a visible result of the dominant vision of Polish society and the state that a respective government hold and the narratives they are building. One can easily trace the omissions in the past neo-liberal curricula, such as the high social costs of economic transformation, new inequalities, the flaws of decommunization in Poland or the unresolved problems with re-privatization. On the other hand, the present curriculum is also clearly biased, which can be seen both in concrete omissions (e.g., it does not mention Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki) and in more general terms, as it offers significantly less space to the European and international context of the transition period. It remains to be seen how this will be translated into textbooks and teaching practice –for example if such top-

ics as nationalism and xenophobia, alongside other problematic issues casting a shadow on the “greatness of Polish nation”, will also be included.

Paradoxically, education about the transition period may, to some degree, also be profiting from the current public debate as conflicting views on the past are constantly clashing in public discourse and might also serve as an inspiration for engaging class discussions. However, in order to make it valuable from the educational point of view, teachers have to assist students in the critical analysis of documents and/or media messages and in a respectful exchange of views on controversial issues. Many Polish teachers lack didactic competences in this respect. In addition, due to the freezing effect of political propaganda and polarization they might also be afraid to touch upon those controversies.

Finally, one of the weakest points of the present and previous approaches is the visible lack of multi-perspectivity in dealing with the past, and with the transition period. It must be noted that there are topics which are avoided by virtually all consequent curricula and textbooks, such the perspective of neglected groups such as women or different national or ethnic minorities. The history of the transition period is far from being “herstory” in Poland. Mainstreaming stories of marginalized groups is still not a part of history teaching in Poland. It looks like it might be easier to introduce diverse perspectives in teaching civics. Multi-perspectivity and a plurality of voices, if introduced in national and school curricula, would not only nurture critical thinking in those two subjects but could also enhance a more open conversation on the Polish past and future, both in educational and in public discourse.

## POLAND: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*The Polish public sphere [...] are rather two 'dominant' spheres which are in constant opposition to one another, [...] so the two narratives concerning transition are radically different. [...] In the 'governmental' public sphere there is a total lack of the 'liberal' narrative on transition, treating this as a political, social and economic success.*

**Stanisław Zakroczymski,**  
historian and lawyer



*In general teaching in Poland focuses on political history, rather than social and human history. This translates directly into textbooks content and teaching practice where accounts and memories of ordinary people are usually not included even as primary sources. Perspectives of different minority groups have been systematically omitted.*

**Stanisław Zakroczymski,**  
historian and lawyer



*In the Polish debate on systemic changes, little is said about the surge in poverty and unemployment that took place in the early 1990s. Poverty and social exclusion are rarely treated as a striking aspect of that time.*

**Piotr Szumlewicz,**  
sociologist and philosopher



*Issues that have so far been overlooked [in history textbooks]: [...] the issue of women's rights, including the introduction of the abortion ban in 1993; the problem of the revival of anti-Semitism in public life; the problem of the role of the left in the capitalist system; the problem of assessing the achievements of the Polish People's Republic.*

**Anna Dzierzgowska,**  
history teacher



*In the discussion on the first years of the transition, the issues related to the growth of the propaganda and economic power of the Catholic Church are usually overlooked.*

**Piotr Szumlewicz,**  
sociologist and philosopher

## RUSSIA

Author: Andrey Suslov

### RUSSIA

Grade/Age group:

- 10<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 15-16;
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 16-17.

Subject:

- 11<sup>th</sup> grade: World History;
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade: World History, Russian History, Russia and the World.

Share (%):

- 11<sup>th</sup> grade
  - Russia and the World: 20.40%
- 10<sup>th</sup> grade:
  - Russia and the World: 20.40%
  - Russian History: 56.49%
  - World History: 19.62%

### I. General Information

The Russian education system is centrally organized: The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for the formulation and implementation of education policies at all levels, curricula and textbooks are also approved at the central level. Regional Ministries of Education are responsible for policy implementation at the local level. Teachers have some opportunities for freedom of teaching, but most of them prefer to follow official curricula. NGO's and other civil society actors have only limited opportunities to influence teachers and educational officials.

The course of general school education in Russia takes 11 years, leading to the Unified State Examination. Most Russian schools follow this general curriculum. Lyceums and gymnasiums (about 16% of pupils) may have curricular specializations, but all schools teach the general academic core curriculum.

For this mapping, schoolbooks were chosen in three different fields:

- Three books in “General History”.
- One book on the subject “Russia and the World” (for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades).
- Two textbooks focused only on Russian history.

The mapping focused on five textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and one book for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade.<sup>25</sup> As of 2019, these are the only books approved by the Russian Ministry of Education. The number of approved textbooks in history has been cut from over 20 to 6 since the 1990s. Most schools rely on their municipality to procure textbooks, which further limits the choice of textbooks available.

## II. Main Narrative

### Public Discourse

The official discourse in Russia aims to justify the need for the political and economic course of the 2000s, to present the existing political system and its leader Vladimir Putin, as the only possible option/leader for today and for the future prosperity of the country. In this framework the period of the 1990s is

<sup>25</sup> The textbooks analysed in this article are

- (A) История России. 10 класс. Учебник для общеобразовательных школ. В 3-х частях. // Горинов М.М., Данилов А.А., Морюков М.Ю. и др. Под ред. А. В. Торкунова. Москва, Просвещение, 2016. [The History of Russia. Grade 10. A textbook for comprehensive schools].
- (B) История. История России. 1914 г. — начало XXI в.: учебник для 10–11 классов общеобразовательных организаций. Базовый и углублённый уровни: в 2 ч. Ч. 2. 1945–2016. // В.А. Никонов, С.В. Девятков. Под редакцией С.П. Карпова. Москва, Русское слово –Учебник, 2019. [The History of Russia. 1914-early 21st century. A textbook for Grade 10 of comprehensive schools. Basic and advanced levels: in 2 parts. Part 2'. 1945–2016. V.Nikonov, S.Devyatov, edited by S. Karpov. Moscow, Russkoe slovo – uchebnik, 2019].
- (C) История. Конец XIX — начало XXI века: учебник для 10—11 классов общеобразовательных организаций. Базовый и углублённый уровни: в 2. ч. Ч. 2. // Сахаров А., Загладин Н., Петров Ю. Москва, Русское слово –Учебник, 2019. [History. End of 19<sup>th</sup> – early 21st century: a textbook for Grades 10–11 of comprehensive schools. Basic and advanced levels: in 2 parts. Part 2'. A.Sakharov, N. Zagladin, Yu. Petrov. Moscow, Russkoe slovo – uchebnik, 2019].
- (D) Всеобщая история. Новейшая история. 10 класс. Базовый и углублённый уровни. Учебник. // Хейфец В., Федоров, О., Хейфец Л., Северинов К., под редакцией: Мясникова В. Москва: Вентана-Граф, 2019. [General History. Contemporary History. Basic and advanced levels: Grade 10'. V.Kheifets, O.Fyodorov, L.Kheifets, K.Severinov, edited by V. Myasniokov. Moscow: Ventana-Graf, 2019].
- (E) Всеобщая история. Новейшая история. Учебник. Базовый и углублённый уровни. 10 класс. // Шубин, А. В. Москва, Дрофа, 2019. [General History: Contemporary History. Basic and Advanced levels. Grade 10'. A.Shubin. Moscow, Drofa, 2019].
- (F) Всеобщая история. 10 класс. Новейшее время. Учебник. Базовый уровень. // Белоусов Л. С., Смирнов В. П., Мейер М. С. Москва, Просвещение, 2019. [General History. Contemporary History. Grade 10. Textbook for comprehensive schools: basic level'. L.Belousov, V.Smirnov, M.Meyer. Moscow, Prosveshcheniye, 2019].

shown as an era of criminal hegemony, corruption, and chaos at its worst. In contrast, the 2000s are seen as a period of flourishing culture and economy, a period when people gained social benefits and “the power vertical was rebuilt.”

There is very limited public debate in Russia on the discourse of the transition period because authorities almost do not recognize the opinions of political opponents and scholars. It is easy for them to suppress opposing voices since almost 100% of television broadcasting and most radio and print media outlets are under state control.

### Teaching Transition

The image of the 1990s in textbooks differs greatly from that of the 2000s. While the former is shown as problematic at best and as an era of criminal hegemony, corruption and chaos at worst, the latter is seen as a period of flourishing culture and economy, when the population gained social benefits and “the power vertical was rebuilt.” The textbooks highlight the alleged successes of the government, while presenting the failures in both internal and external politics as a result of the struggle with many different enemies, both internal and external.

The concepts of “transition” or “democratic transition” are avoided in Russian textbooks. While describing the events that took place in the 1990s, the authors use the term “reforms,” which is scarcely used when they write about the 2000s. The representation of “perestroika” and the 1990s varies depending on the textbooks: two out of the six books studied present alternative points of view (A, B), while others present the reforms of the 1990s as altogether beneficial for Russian society, a position that doesn’t fall in line with the official Russian discourse of today.

However, the differences in understanding particular events or actors by various authors do not change the general image of the studied periods. For example, one of the textbooks shows the 1990s as the classical image of the “wild ‘90s”, the other one as a time both difficult, yet full of hope and opportunity. However, those nuances fade, since the socio-economic and political development of the country in this period is shown to be negative compared to the following era, the 2000s, which is presented as a complete success.

In some cases, textbooks may become a tool of government propaganda. The way textbooks present contemporary Russian foreign policy is largely determined by an official narrative, which suggests historical omission and a distortion of facts.

### III. Geographical boundaries

Three out of the six analysed textbooks focus on contemporary history of the world (twentieth century), including to differing extents Europe, Asia, Africa, North and Latin America (D, E, F). Nevertheless, the topic of the post-socialist transition in Central and Eastern Europe is central in these books with a share of 16% to 25%. They also mention the Russian context, though not comprehensively and generally in the context of international relations and events.

Out of the three further selected textbooks, two (A, B) draw special attention to Russian history and one (C) has a focus on Russian history in relation to the history of the world. As exemplified by the curricular topics, Russia's relations with neighboring countries are covered in the context of National History in a rather comprehensive way.

### IV. Main events/Chronology

Half of the textbooks studied in this article place the beginning of the transition period in the mid-1980s, while the others situate it at the end of that decade.<sup>26</sup> Only one of them (B) pinpoints an end to the reform period – the year 2000. Others leave this point open, and it remains unclear whether the reforms are still taking place. Because the end of the transition period is not defined in most textbooks and the process of transformation has been ongoing, albeit in different ways than in the 1990s, it is important to include the 2000s in the scope of the analysis.

Conforming with the curriculum, textbooks on world history spotlight the collapse of the global Socialist system and the paths of post-socialist development.

In Russian History the curriculum and textbooks focus on the “attempts to modernize the Soviet economy and political system in the 1980s”, “The democratization of public life” and “Crisis in the relations between the USSR and its allies, the collapse of the global socialist system”. The unit “Russian Federation (1991-2003)” is dedicated to the transition period and is the last in the present curriculum – however several textbooks provide a narrative which continues up to 2014.

Important focal points, based on several textbooks, are in chronological order:

- Perestroika and Glasnost.
- The creation of the multiparty system.

<sup>26</sup> Some authors consider Perestroika (1985) to be the start of the transition period, others take serious changes in the USSR, like the Congresses of People's Deputies (1988), etc. as a starting point. Some authors take the collapse of the USSR as a starting point of the transition period.

- The collapse of the centralized management system.
- The growth in centrifugal attitudes in inter-ethnic relations.
- The crisis of power: the consequences of the failure of Perestroika.
- The events in August 1991.<sup>27</sup>
- The “parade of sovereignties”.<sup>28</sup>
- The Belavezha Accords of 1991 and the collapse of the USSR.<sup>29</sup>
- The political crisis in September and October 1993.<sup>30</sup>
- Public and political development in the second half of the 1990s.
- Inter-ethnic and inter-confessional problems in Russia today.
- The conflict in Chechnya.
- The Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- The transition to a market economy.
- “Shock therapy” and its social consequences.
- The difficulties and controversies of economic development in the 1990s.
- Russian culture today.
- The revival of religious traditions and spiritual life.
- Russia and the development of the “information society”.
- Russia and the challenges of globalization.
- The presidential election of 2000.
- A course aiming for the reinforcement of the state, economic growth, social and political stability, national security, and Russia’s dignified place in the world community.

### V. Main disputed concepts

One may get the impression that, while writing the textbooks studied in this article, these authors neglected many Russian experts and their research, which, whatever their political views are, cannot be described simply as an apology for official policies. This research revealed, on the one hand, the inconsistency and

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<sup>27</sup> “The events of August 1991” refers to the failed Soviet coup attempt between August 18<sup>th</sup> and August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1991, when a group of Soviet officials calling themselves the “State Committee on the State of Emergency,” attempted to depose Mikhail Gorbachev.

<sup>28</sup> The so called “parade of sovereignties” was a series of declarations of sovereignty of varying degrees by the Soviet republics in the Soviet Union from the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

<sup>29</sup> The Belavezha Accords were signed on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1991, forming the agreement that declared the USSR had effectively ceased to exist by renouncing the Union Treaty of 1922 and establishing the “Commonwealth of Independent States” in its place as a successor.

<sup>30</sup> The Constitutional crisis in October 1993 was a political stand-off between the Russian president Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament that was resolved by military force.



insufficiency of the reforms, and, on the other, the mistakes and the personal agendas of the reformers. It revealed the roots of the state of Russian society as we see it now – a state described critically by all researchers though from different positions. The publications of contemporary Russian economists, sociologists, and political scientists show that most of them are not afraid to express their opinion, and that this opinion, generally, differs largely from the point of view of government officials and the pro-government media.

The analysis of textbooks in Russian history, focused on the reforms that took place from the 1980s to the present day, proves the position of the author to be dependent on the political conjuncture while describing the events of the 2000s. The image of that period is uncontested and doesn't differ from the official discourse. One can say that, in said textbooks, the description of this period is formed more by a political agenda than the accuracy of historical science. The last two decades are described only in bright colours, while any negative opinions about the current political elite are absent. The textbooks highlight the successes (some of which have nothing to do with the actions of the Russian government, but, rather, with international processes), while presenting the failures in both national and foreign politics as an outcome of the struggle with many different enemies, both internal and external.

However, there is a significant discrepancy between the official discourse and the narrative of two of the six textbooks under examination. It concerns the presentation of the reforms in the 1990s, which, in general, are presented in these two textbooks (B, C) as a social recovery. In one case (B) the textbook offers three different perspectives on the collapse of the USSR. It is also clear that the perspective on Russian history of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century presented in the studied textbooks is not defined solely by their authors' ideological position. The political influence in the formation of the official historical narrative is easily demonstrated by the participation of President Vladimir Putin, Patriarch of the Orthodox Church Kirill, and other officials in the discussions about history textbooks and curricula. The urge of the Russian political elite to standardize history education, which can be seen in both the reduction of the number of alternative textbooks in schools as well as interventions by government officials and religious leaders, is regarded as truly disturbing by many experts.

The general history section in three of the textbooks analysed (D, E, F) is generally based on facts rather than on opinions. This could be explained by a huge amount of factual material; however, the narrative remains very formal and pro-government. On the other hand, the smallest (by volume) textbook presents very radical and unquestionably negative opinions on "Western politics", the "Color Revolutions" and protest movements of the recent past.

In some cases, the textbooks may become a *tool of government propaganda*. In particular, in presenting the Second Chechen War, textbooks do not men-

tion the use of indiscriminate weapons and mass “disappearances” of civilians, the Russian government’s responsibility for the deaths of soldiers, civilians and hostages, the creation and reinforcement of a regime not controlled by the Russian government in the Chechen Republic etc. Torkunov’s “History of Russia” (A) even directly justifies the governmental measures to curb democracy – including renouncing regional governor elections among others – which followed the infamous 2004 Beslan hostage-tragedy and were represented as strengthening the “power vertical”.<sup>31</sup>

The representation of *Russian foreign policy* and international relations is largely determined by official discourse, which suggests historical omission and a distortion of facts. Some of the events described in the textbooks are particularly important to show how the textbooks follow official discourse:

- The bombing of Belgrade in 1999; “anti-Serbian US and NATO aggression” is responsible for the war, while ethnic cleansing is never mentioned (C, E, F).
- The Russian-Georgian war of 2008; “the Georgian army attacked South Ossetia [...], Russia was forced to command a military operation to force Georgia into peace” (F).
- The annexation or so called “return of Crimea” in 2014; Ukrainian nationalists had illegitimately overthrown the government in Kiev, the majority of Crimeans wanted to be reunited with Russia and a legitimate referendum took place, as a result of which Crimea joined Russia. The presence of Russian military units and their role is never mentioned (A, B, D, E, F).

When addressing the process of democratization in Eastern Europe, Russian textbooks generally emphasize the economic and social problems stemming from the transition to democracy, the growth of nationalist sentiments, anti-Russian policies and so forth. The transition period in Eastern Europe is represented as a result of objective internal processes rather than the work of external forces in only one case (E).

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<sup>31</sup> A peculiar description of the Beslan hostage-tragedy, followed by the renunciation of direct regional governor elections, can be found in Torkunov’s “History of Russia”: “The events at the beginning of the year 2004, when terrorists seized the school in Beslan, taking more than a thousand people hostage, demonstrated that the executive body of the government was not ready to take action in a moment of crisis. Further reforms in government management were necessary.” We may not expect the authors of a Russian state-approved textbook to criticise the government’s actions or to ask whether the government is responsible for a terrorist attack of such scale, as well as the deaths of so many hostages. However, with this sentence the authors are justifying, in an illogical manner, the renunciation of direct regional governor elections, the introduction of requirements on the number of minimal delegates to represent a party in the government, the introduction of a higher elective barrier, the proportionate election system for the State Duma and the creation of the State Council.

## VI. Focus

The Russian curriculum is formally considered to use the competence-based approach. However, the presence of the *compulsory minimum* of content in each discipline contradicts this approach. The contents of the Unified State Examination also demonstrate a knowledge-based approach in many respects. Despite this, some tasks check the students' competences. Thus, the approach is a mixed one.

Among four textbooks dealing with World History, only one (D) also focuses on the cultural context, while the others describe politics, socio-economic processes, international relations and so forth instead. In two cases this narrative is based on the description of general facts rather than on interpretations. Among the actors mentioned, besides Soviet, Russian and contemporary Western politicians,<sup>32</sup> are Havel, Wałęsa, Dubcek, Ceausescu, Kadar, Zhivkov, and Milosevic.

The two books on Russian History (A, B) address mostly internal politics, economy, and foreign politics. The particular significance of international relations and foreign policy in all Russian textbooks is remarkable.

## VII. Recommendations – What is missing

Alternative perspectives are not presented at all in five out of six of the textbooks studied. In the exceptional case (A), this is a rhetorical device to reveal the absurdity or hostility of alternative perspectives. The most important thing is to provide alternative interpretations of contemporary history for Russian teachers and students. It is necessary to include more perspectives from contemporary scholars – sociologists, political scientists, economists etc. – in teaching.

It is also important to offer a larger number of alternative textbooks and real options for choosing teaching manuals.

For a comparative analysis and teaching of the transition period of post-socialist countries it would be useful to note that the development of post-socialist countries has shown that their transformation trajectories do not always lead to the establishment of democratic regimes. For instance, the transition of the Russian Federation has turned out to be neither particularly market-oriented nor democratic.

<sup>32</sup> Soviet and Russian politicians include Andropov, Gorbachev, Eltzyn, Gaidar, Chernomyrdin, Zyuganov, Putin, and Medvedev. Western politicians include Thatcher, Kohl, Merkel, Trump, Reagan, Schroeder, Blair, Cameron, May, Chirac, Le Pen, Sarkozy, Hollande, Macron, and Obama.

## RUSSIA: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*When describing political development [in Russia] in the 21st century, textbooks lack any negative assessments of the growing deficit of democracy, degradation of parliamentarism, loss of judicial independence, strengthening of authoritarianism, etc.*

**Anonymous history teacher**



*In post-Soviet history, not only textbook authors but also many scholars have hardly paid attention to the important discourse on the development of civil society [and independent media] in Russia. [...] The authors of the textbooks, if they touch on these subjects, act as propagandists.*

**Anonymous history teacher**



*The discourse on human rights and the development of the human rights movement in the post-Soviet period is virtually absent from the textbooks. This issue is important not only because of the significance of the process of rolling back political freedoms in the Putin era and especially in recent years. Expert assessments, as well as eyewitness accounts, could show what the inclusion of certain mechanisms of human rights protection has given Russians.*

**Anonymous history teacher**



*[The textbooks] lack scholarly assessments. Content and interpretations are the most significant. For example, the socio-economic reforms of the 1990s are presented primarily as a difficult time. Despite words about the inconsistency of reforms, notions of their deficiency and perniciousness are created. What is clearly missing are economists' assessments of the role of reforms in preventing the worst-case scenario and the benefits of transition to a market economy.*

**Anonymous history teacher**

## UKRAINE

Authors: Aleksander Krolikowski & Mykola Skyba

### UKRAINE

Grade/Age group:

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 10-11;
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade / age group: 16-17.

Subject:

- 5<sup>th</sup> grade:
  - Introduction to the History of Ukraine
- 11<sup>th</sup> grade:
  - World History;
  - History of Ukraine;
  - Ukraine and the World.

Share (%):

- Ukraine and the World (Integrated course): 50% (152/304)
- World History: 24.19%
- History of Ukraine: 51.07%

### I. General information

After the proclamation of Ukraine's independence in 1991, Ukrainian society was optimistic that the totalitarian past could soon be overcome and integration into Europe would succeed. However, the reality was different, and the transition period is ongoing.

Until 2017, textbooks developed according to Soviet methodology were in use in Ukrainian school programmes.<sup>33</sup> In 2017, the New Ukrainian School (NUS) reform, which included new curricula and textbooks, was initiated. The main idea of the reform was to shift from old-fashioned knowledge-based education to a

<sup>33</sup> Як створювалися перші підручники з історії України // Ф.Г. Турченко, 2016, *Наукові раці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*, 2016, вип. 45, том 1 [‘How the first textbooks on the history of Ukraine were created’, F. Turchenko].

competency-based approach. The timeframe for these reforms is set to run until 2029.<sup>34</sup>

Since 2018 the Ministry of Education and Science have developed and recommended an *integrated* course, “Ukraine in the World”, aimed at the parallel study of events and phenomena, both globally and nationally. In addition, democratic changes, human rights, and the issues of modern democracy are covered in a Civic Education course, which was first introduced in the national curriculum as a pilot course in 2020 and is taught to students in general education in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The introduction of these two courses represents the most essential changes in school history education in Ukraine since the 1990s.

This report is based on a reading of 20 textbooks for the subjects “Introduction to History” (5 textbooks, 5<sup>th</sup> grade), “History: Ukraine in the world” (1 textbook, 11<sup>th</sup> grade), “History of Ukraine” (8 textbooks, 11<sup>th</sup> grade) and “World History,” (6 textbooks, 11<sup>th</sup> grade) covering the period of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as contemporary history. These textbooks are available as online versions on the official website of the State Institute of Education Content Modernization and are the most accessible textbooks for all Ukrainian schools.<sup>35</sup> There are two types of 11<sup>th</sup> grade history textbooks: the *standard version* and the so-called *profile version* (2 textbooks in “History of Ukraine” and 2 in “World History”). The profile version is intended for schools with in-depth study of a history course, and the standard version for all other schools.

## II. Main narrative

### Public discourse

Ukrainian society's optimism about democratic transformation was suppressed by several factors, namely political problems with Russia, the painful experience of “wild capitalism”, the economic crisis inherited from the USSR, and unpopular reforms due to social factors.<sup>36</sup> This social turbulence led to the division of society (mainly by age) into numerous categories, such as those who began to miss the Soviet era, and those who tried to find a new life in other countries. Of course, this had an extremely negative effect on all transition processes.

The context in which history is taught, and therefore the study of democratic transition is shaped by high and emotionally charged expectations of the

<sup>34</sup> For more details on the NUS reform, see: <https://mon.gov.ua/eng/tag/nova-ukrainska-shkola>.

<sup>35</sup> Access to the textbooks: [www.en.imzo.gov.ua](http://www.en.imzo.gov.ua).

<sup>36</sup> ‘1992-2004: Держава шукає себе’ // Головко, В.; Кульчицький, С. & Якубова, Л. в: Головко, В. & Якубова, Л.: *25 років незалежності: нариси історії нації та держави*, Ніка-Центр, 2016, с. 144. [‘1992-2004: The state is looking for itself’. Golovko, V.; Kulchytskyj, S. & Yakubova, L. In: Golovko, V.; Yakubova, L.: *25 years of independence: essays on the history of the nation and state*, Nika-Centre, 2016, p. 144].

educational sector. The spectrum of these expectations is broad but polarized. The context of education is affected by a large part of business representatives, public organizations, and politicians. NGOs stress the importance of forming a new cohort of people who are willing to move beyond private space, to take care of public space, to take responsibility for elections and other democratic procedures, and to develop rational and critical thinking. There are also local communities and organizations focused on national-patriotic courses, who insist that education must encourage patriotism in students. Politicians also have their views on how history should be taught. It is important to note that the different political and oligarchic forces that influence the social process have differing ideas about the narratives of transition. Thus, there are at least two basic patterns within the narratives used by Ukrainian politicians. One is oriented towards reforms and sympathetic to secular “Protestant” countries in Europe (such as Germany, Sweden, and the Czech Republic among others). The other, focuses on establishing a unique national identity, which should be the basis for the consolidation of society, and on sympathy with more religious, “Catholic” countries in their recent “conservative turn” (such as Poland and Hungary).

The general understanding of the transition period in Ukraine is that “democratic transition” is a process of transformation in post-totalitarian societies – the formation of democratic societies with appropriate institutions of power. Thus, according to a 2021 survey, 54% of respondents believe that democracy is the most desirable type of government for the future of Ukraine.<sup>37</sup> Within that data, the popular picture of the transition process is that Ukraine is an example of a state in which, despite the superficial liberalization of socio-political and economic processes, there was no formation of the institutional base necessary for a sustainable and mature democracy. A peak in interest in this topic and the most active discussions occurred from 2006-2008, during the so-called Orange Period of Ukrainian History, when a critical mass of experts and analysts opposed the “multi-vector” policy inherent in the decade of Leonid Kuchma’s presidency (1994-2004). Subsequently, the return to power of Viktor Yanukovich (President from 2010-2014) was seen by society as a confirmation of a reversal of democratic changes and the weakness of institutions.

The dramatic events that took place in Kyiv from November 2013 to February 2014 became known as the Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity. Later developments, namely separatism in eastern Ukraine, which grew into an armed confrontation supported by Russia, and the annexation of Crimea, shifted the focus from democratization to the formation of national identity and security.

<sup>37</sup> Democratic Initiatives Foundation (2021): ‘Thirty Years of Independence: what accomplishments and problems of growth do Ukrainians see and what are their hopes for the future’. Survey report, available at: <https://dif.org.ua/article/thirty-years-of-independence-what-accomplishments-and-problems-of-growth-do-ukrainians-see-and-what-are-their-hopes-for-the-future>.

As a result, the main narratives of the years 2015-2021, include the mobilization of efforts to combat external aggression in the hybrid war, decentralization, reforms of state institutions aimed at achieving greater accountability and openness. The experiences of these years have shown that it is the creation of capable institutions that has spread liberal practices, rather than the superficial Western and democratic rhetoric of previous decades. The topic of human rights and the development of democratic institutions remained on the agenda of NGOs and human rights defenders, as well as some politicians, who did not, however, form a majority; Ukrainian civil society still plays a crucial role in the socio-political processes of Ukraine.<sup>38</sup>

### Teaching transition

The main feature of humanities curricula in secondary education in the early years of Ukrainian independence was a so-called “teleological approach”. That is, the authors of the textbook should know the “purpose” of the historical process and convey it to the students. In this case, Ukrainian independence replaced the establishment of the Soviet Union as the “purpose of history”. In both cases, the interests of the state (or nation) are far above the interests and needs of individuals; heroic efforts are only one way to achieve this “goal”. In this context, the theme and discourse of the integrated course “Ukraine in the World” is increasingly about interdependence; the description of what it means to be a citizen refers more to the relationship between the individual and the community, than to becoming an essential part of that community by virtue of birth. It is thus about the shift from emotional to rational citizenship.

Some Ukrainian school students are introduced to the basic concept of the transition period for the first time in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. While *one* textbook, *Introduction to the History of Ukraine*, explains the terms “revolution”, “democracy” and “independence”<sup>39</sup>, another textbook for the same subject only describes the historical events without explaining the meaning of the processes.<sup>40</sup>

The history of the 1990s, and the transition period, is studied in high school in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade within the courses in “History of Ukraine” and “World History”. As of 2019, six textbooks were officially in use for 11<sup>th</sup> grade “World History”, eight

<sup>38</sup> Fukuyama, F. (2021): ‘What does Ukrainian democracy lack’. Available at: <https://zbruc.eu/node/103251>.

<sup>39</sup> The textbook provides examples of the Ukrainian revolution and the struggle for independence in 1917. See: ‘Вступ до історії’ // Пометун, О.І.; Костюк, І.А. & Малієнко, Ю.Б. Освіта, 2013, pp.128-134. [‘Introduction to the History of Ukraine’. О. Pometun, І. Kostjuk, Y. Malienko –K.: Osvita, 2013, pp. 128-134].

<sup>40</sup> ‘Вступ до історії 5 клас’ // Власов В.С. Генеза, 2018; [‘Introduction to the history of Ukraine’, V. Vlasov –K.: “Geneza”, 2018].



textbooks on “History of Ukraine”, and one textbook for the integrated course “Ukraine in the World”.

For example, the *History of Ukraine* textbook by Sorochinska and Gisem pays attention to the transition to a market-based economy and emerging social issues of independence. The “World History” course textbook by the same authors devotes almost 20-25% of its content to the Soviet-backed Warsaw Treaty countries, focusing on the crisis of the totalitarian regime, the unification of East and West Germany and the problems of the modern relapse into the “Cold War”. It can be concluded that one of the main goals of the “World History” course is the comparison of transition processes in Ukraine with transition processes in Central and Eastern Europe and coverage of the connection with global processes.<sup>41</sup>

Considering the emphasis on the importance of democratic transformations and their impact on the collapse of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe, it may be noted that at least some of the authors of Ukrainian textbooks on World History are trying to build a new Ukrainian identity based on democratic discourse. However, some textbooks<sup>42</sup>, as they did 30 years ago, only describe historical events and pay very little attention to social processes and people’s initiatives. Some sections, such as “Everyday Life and Culture” have a number of critical errors and ignore postmodern processes in world culture.

It could be concluded that one of the main goals of the course, “Ukraine in the World”, is the decolonization of students’ perspectives on the transition, from the objectification of Ukraine to the perception of their country as a subject of international relations.<sup>43</sup> The only existing textbook for this course pays considerable attention to the description of the processes in Eastern Europe during the so-called “Autumn of Nations” (the revolutions of 1989), but it does not consider

<sup>41</sup> The “World History” course purpose (as defined in the curriculum): “The purpose of historical education in high school is to promote the formation of students’ national and cultural identity, patriotic outlook, active social and civic position, self-esteem as a result of understanding the social and moral experience of past generations and understanding of the history and culture of Ukraine in the context of historical process.” For example, the textbook *World History* by Polyanskiy (Полянський П. Б.: «Всесвітня історія») focuses on the processes of democratization in the post-war period and connects this to the crisis of Soviet totalitarianism. The *World History* textbook by Shchupak (Щупак І. Я.: «Всесвітня історія») considers the crisis of totalitarianism both as a consequence of the transition to a post-industrial society and in connection with the processes of democratization and liberalization in countries of Western Europe and the United States. At the same time, it draws attention to the political and military pressure of the Russian Federation on independent countries, and softly points out the necessity of participation in military blocs such as NATO.

<sup>42</sup> Such as the *World History* textbook authored by O. Gisem and O. Martyniuk. Гісем О. В. & Мартинюк О. О.: ‘Всесвітня історія’.

<sup>43</sup> The “Ukraine in the World” course goal: “The integrated course aims at promoting the development of an individual who possesses key and substantive competencies, is aware of his or her national identity, has a patriotic outlook, takes an active civic position, understands the challenges of a globalized world, and is able to respond to the dynamics of social events, concerning the national interests of Ukraine in late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century and its place in world history.”

the transition process after 1991 and has little explanation of causal links in these processes. The author leaves this part of the educational work to the teacher, who must implement the goals declared in the mission of the course without guidance. Under such conditions, the outcome depends on the teacher's professional skills and the contexts in which they work.

In general, the "World History" course in Ukrainian schools, as a general subject in secondary education institutions, retained the original twentieth-century presentation in which Eurocentric concepts were studied without connection to other concepts, such as postcolonialism and ideology (bipolar, multipolar).

Studying transition in history courses in schools focuses on the names of political leaders and socio-economic, socio-political, national, cultural, and religious, events. The program only encourages students to memorize phrases of "significance", an approach which is no longer relevant to modern educational needs.

Several overlapping dimensions can be observed specifically in teaching the transition period in Ukraine. Most authors refer to the following sub-narratives:

- *Democratization*: the shift from totalitarianism to a system of the democratic division of power, decentralization, and the construction of a more inclusive society.
- *Decommunization*: indicating the ideology and practices of the Soviet period as criminal, with the aim of deconstructing the historical myths related to it.
- *Decolonization*: departing from Russian narratives about the secondary importance of Ukrainian culture, science, and economy relative to Russia's. Introduction of discourse on the return of expropriated cultural and scientific figures and centrality of Ukrainian achievements.
- *Transformation* of the structure of the national economy: from production using raw materials to a hi-tech, innovation economy.

### III. Geographical boundaries

Since 2017, there have been examples of high-quality textbooks that offer a dynamic picture of political, economic, social, and ecological changes in the *European* space, offering students tasks which seek to develop skills in critical thinking, independent research, and judgment. They include the topics of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the "Velvet" revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, Ukraine's independence, and the difficulties of becoming a democratic society.

About one-third of the content of the World History textbooks is dedicated to the countries of the former "Warsaw Treaty", like Bulgaria, the former Czecho-

slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and the former Yugoslavia (later Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia). It is also important to note that the new textbooks touch upon the social problems of the transition period, and the move from a planned to a market economy. However, for the most part, transition processes are not considered in standard level “World History” course textbooks and are considered in textbooks of the *profile level* only. For example, a profile-level textbook authored by Gisem and Martyniuk, focuses on the transition process of Eastern European countries in contrast to the standard-level textbook by the same authors.

#### IV. Main events/Chronology

Ukrainian students are introduced to the transition process in Ukraine through school courses and gain a basic understanding of this topic. Generally, this information provides the first picture for most Ukrainian citizens of the transition period and offers a certain matrix that is further supplemented by information from different sources.

Here we will consider the core samples of textbooks:

##### 1. “Introduction to History” course (5<sup>th</sup> grade)

In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students are only introduced to history as a scientific discipline. A small number of working hours are devoted to each historical period. However, the course examines the period of Ukraine’s declaration of independence and the Revolution of Dignity. The main method used in the course is the study of history through the analysis of historical monuments and artifacts.

The website of the Ministry of Education recommends five textbooks by different authors.<sup>44</sup>

The following sections are related to the transition period:

##### a) Declaration of independence of Ukraine

- The dissident movement of the 1980s (presented in one textbook (C)).

<sup>44</sup> These are:

(A) ‘Вступ до історії 5 клас’ // Власов В.С. Генеза, 2018; [‘Introduction to History’, Vlasov, V.S.: Geneza, 2018].

(B) ‘Вступ до історії: підручник для 5-го класу закладів загальної середньої освіти’ // Мороз, П.В. & Мороз І.В. Педагогічна думка, 2018; [‘Introduction to History’, Moroz P.V. & Moroz, I.V.: Pedagogichna Dumka, 2019].

(C) ‘Вступ до історії для учнів 5-х класів’ // Щупак, І.Я.; Піскарьова, І.О.; Бурлака, О.В.: Оріон, 2018; [‘Introduction to History’, Shchupak, I. Ya.; Pirskarova I.O.; Burlaka, O.V.: Orion, 2018].

(D) ‘Вступ до історії: підручник для 5 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти’ // Пастушенко Р. Я.: Астон, 2018; [‘Introduction to History’, Pastushenko, R. Ya.: Aston 2018].

(E) ‘Вступ до історії: підручник для 5 класу’ // Гісем, О.В.: Ранок, 2018; [‘Introduction to History’, Gisem, O.V.: Ranok, 2018].

- What does independence from the USSR mean?
  - The difficulties Ukraine has faced following the declaration of independence – economic crisis, and the violation of human rights and freedoms.
  - European integration.
- b) The Revolution of Dignity and Russian aggression against Ukraine
- Why did the revolution of dignity take place? (The main factor is the abandonment of the course of European integration).
  - A confrontation with the police and the “Berkut” unit: the special police force, Ukrainian government held “Berkut” responsible for most of the “Heavenly Hundred” civilian deaths. The “Heavenly Hundred”: the people killed during the 2014 Ukrainian revolution. The majority of those listed were civilian protesters who supported the revolution.
  - The occupation of Crimea (presented in 2 textbooks (C,E)).
  - The anti-terrorist operation in eastern Ukraine (presented in 2 textbooks (C, E)).

Considering the short time devoted to the topic of transit, we can conclude that the inclusion of material depends on the skills and workplace context of the teacher. The textbook by Gisem and the textbook by Shchupak et al. cover the topic as much as possible under existing course conditions.

### 2. “Ukraine in the world” course (11<sup>th</sup> grade)

The integrated course “Ukraine in the world” for 11<sup>th</sup> grade is now represented by only one textbook with the same name.<sup>45</sup> It includes the following list of topics for study, related to the period of the post-communist transition:

- a) Revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe, from 1956-1993
- A weakening of the bargaining power of the USSR.
  - World economic and social change from 1960-1980.
  - The anti-communist movement in Eastern Europe, 1956-1989.
  - The “Autumn of Nations” in Eastern Europe, 1988-1993.
- b) The Declaration of Independence of Ukraine (1985-1991)
- The liberalization of the communist regime in the post-war USSR.
  - The opposition movement in Soviet Ukraine: “Sixtiers” and dissidents.
  - Ukraine in the context of the growing systemic crisis of the communist regime.

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<sup>45</sup> Mudryj M., Arkusha O. (2019): ‘Ukraine in the world’ (Integrated Course), Kyiv: Geneza, pp.144-296.

- The concept of the “Soviet Nation”, the social atmosphere in Soviet Ukraine.
  - “Perestroika” in Soviet Ukraine, the underground national movement.
  - The August Coup of 1991 and the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine.
- c) Ukraine in the Modern World (1991-2014)
- The difficulties and achievements of state-building in independent Ukraine.
  - The Revolution of Dignity, 2013-2014. The military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.
  - Ukraine in a “multipolar world”.
  - The Euro-integration process in Ukraine.
  - The postindustrial world and contemporary challenges.

Reviewing the material of the textbook and the methodology of its presentation, we can conclude that this textbook gives the most comprehensive information on the transition process among all the textbooks examined. However, it should be noted that the textbook ignores the transition process in other former Soviet republics such as Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. Comparing the transition processes of post-Soviet countries could improve the construction of causal links between these processes.

**3.** In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade, students study the history of a specific period in detail. Several hours are devoted to each part of the contemporary history of Ukraine and the World. In the so-called *synchronized* courses, “History of Ukraine” and “World History”, learning is synchronized through a recommended sequence of sections in both courses during the school year. As mentioned above, the transition process is considered in 11<sup>th</sup> grade courses, “History of Ukraine” and “World History”, in which it is considered within the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**3.1.** “History of Ukraine” course (11<sup>th</sup> grade)

The following sections are related to the transition period:

- The opposition movement in Soviet Ukraine.
- “Perestroika” in Soviet Ukraine.
- The growing activity of Ukrainian society.
- The beginning of the construction of a multiparty system.
- The Declaration of independence of Ukraine.
- The start of state-building processes.

- The Constitutional process and the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine.
- The “Orange Revolution” of 2004; Economic development and the economic difficulties of Ukraine from 1992-2005.
- Ethno-social processes and living standards.
- Foreign policy and the international relations of Ukraine 1992-2005.
- The social, political, and economic life of Ukraine from 2005-2010.
- Ukraine from 2010-2014, The Revolution of Dignity.
- New international relations. The military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.
- The cultural and religious life of independent Ukraine.

The website of the Ministry of Education recommends eight textbooks by different authors, six standard version textbooks<sup>46</sup>, and two profile ver-

<sup>46</sup> Standard versions:

- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти, // Сорочинська Н. М., Гісем О. О.: Тернопіль: Навчальна Книга – Богдан, 2019. [‘History of Ukraine’, Sorochinska N., Gisem O. –Ternopol: Navchalna Kniga – Bogdan, 2019].
- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Власов В.С. & Кульчицький С.В.: К.: Літера ЛТД, 2019, 142-212. [‘History of Ukraine’, Vlasov V., Kulchitskiy S., K.: Litera LTD, 2019 pp.142-212]. The textbook pays special attention to the dissident movement in Soviet Ukraine, the connection between the economic crisis and socio-political processes. In addition, the specifics of the socio-political and socio-economic situation of Ukraine in a hybrid war are considered.
- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Хлібовська Г. М., Наумчук О. В., Крижановська М. Є., Гирич І. Б., Бурнейко І. О.: Тернопіль, Астон, 2019, 78-254. [‘History of Ukraine’, Hlibovska G., Naumchuk O., Kryzhanovska M., Girich I., Burneiko I., Ternopil: Aston, 2019, pp.78-254]. The textbook examines the struggle of the Crimean Tatar people for the right to return home. Emphasis is placed on restoring Ukrainian independence. Attention is paid to the concept of civil society and internal threats in the context of destabilization and hybrid warfare.
- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Гісем О. В., Мартинюк О. О.: Ранок, 2019, 131-231. [‘History of Ukraine’, Gisem O., O, Martyniuk O, Kharkiv : Ranok, 2019, pp.131-231]. This textbook gave some attention to such grassroots initiatives as the Donbas miners’ strikes of 1989.
- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Струкевич О. К., Дровозюк С. І.: Грамота, 2019, 95-234. [‘History of Ukraine’, Stukevich O., Drovozyuk S., K.: Gramota, 2019, pp.95-234]. The textbook contains information on the participation of underground movements in the formation of independence and the problems of the “shadow economy” and corruption.
- ‘Історія України (рівень стандарту)’, підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Даниленко В. М., Смольницька М. К.: Генеза, 2019, 85-208. [‘History of Ukraine’, Danilenko V., Smolnitska M., K.: Geneza. 2019, pp.85-208]. The textbook contains additional information about cultural life and educational changes in the time of independence.

sions<sup>47</sup>: The textbooks of the standard level offer a limited narration of the transition process in Ukraine, but give a basic idea of the main historical, economic, and cultural processes of Independent Ukraine. Profile-level textbooks provide much more information about the transition processes and allow students to understand causal relationships between historical events and processes, including through self-study material.

### 3.2. “World History” course (11<sup>th</sup> grade)

The following sections are related to the transition period:

- Eastern European countries: transformation processes.
- The “Velvet Revolutions” in Eastern Europe.
- The collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia.
- Eastern European countries from the 1990s to the early twenty-first century.
- The Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine.

The website of the Ministry of Education presents six recommended textbooks by different authors, including four standard version textbooks<sup>48</sup> and two profile versions.<sup>49</sup>

#### <sup>47</sup> Profile-level:

- ‘Історія України (профільний рівень) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Власов В. С., Кульчицький С. В.: К.: Літера ЛТД, 2019, 117-269. [*History of Ukraine. Profile level*, Vlasov V., Kulchitskiy S., K.: Litera LTD, 2019, pp.117-269.] Additional attention is given to the transition from a planned economy to a market model.
- ‘Історія України (профільний рівень) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Гісем О. В., Мартинюк О. О.: Ранок, 2019, 86-240. [*History of Ukraine. Profile level*, Gisem O., Martynuk O., Kharkiv: Ranok, 2019, pp.86-240.] Considers the problems of the return of the Crimean Tatar people to Crimea and the social

#### <sup>48</sup> Standard versions:

- ‘Всесвітня історія (рівень стандарту) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Шупак І. Я.: Оріон, 2019, 76-139. [*World History*, Shchurak I., K.: Orion, 2019 pp.76-139].
- ‘Всесвітня історія (рівень стандарту) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Полянський П. Б.: Грамота, 2019, 86-117; 187-205. [*World History*, Polanskiy P., K.: Gramota, 2019, pp. 86-117, 187-205].
- ‘Всесвітня історія (рівень стандарту) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Гісем О. В., Мартинюк О. О. Ранок, 2019, 75-116; 196. [*World History*, Gisem, O., Martynuk, O., Kharkiv: Ranok, 2019 p.75-116, 196].
- ‘Всесвітня історія (рівень стандарту) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Ладиченко Т. В.: Генеза, 2019, 60-80; 126-134. [*World History*, Ladychenko T., Kyiv: Geneza, 2019, pp.60-80, 126-134].

#### <sup>49</sup> Profile versions:

- ‘Всесвітня історія (профільний рівень) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. // Гісем О. В., Мартинюк О. О.: Ранок, 2019, 71-113; 174-206. [*World History. Profile level*, Gisem O., Martynuk O. Kharkiv: “Ranok”, 2019, pp.71-113, 174-206].
- ‘Всесвітня історія (профільний рівень) підручник для 11 класу закладів загальної середньої освіти. Ладиченко Т. В., Заблоцький Ю. І.: Генеза, 2019, 86-126; 174-203. [*World History. Profile level*, Ladychenko T., Zabolotskiy Y., Kyiv: Geneza, 2019, pp.86-126, 174-203].

### V. Focus

The concept of transition and democratization is an obligatory part of the curriculum. Despite that, in practice, teachers and students often skip the detailed study of that process since they are the last topics in the curriculum for a school year. Broadly speaking the topics on independence are part of the transition narrative, however, the main focus is the establishment of the Ukrainian state.

Another important aspect, which should be taken into account in teaching practice, is historical trauma. According to leading public intellectuals (such as Evgen Hlibovytsky) each generation in Ukraine in the last 100 years has experienced a historical trauma; Holodomor, Chernobyl, deep economic crisis in the mid-90s, and the war in eastern Ukraine waged by Russia. For example, all authors of the *History of Ukraine* textbooks consider the Chernobyl disaster as one of the main factors in the collapse of the USSR. Those events stressed the importance of the values of survival rather than the values of self-expression and development-oriented values. As a result, historical memory is viewed more like trauma and is transmitted more effectively from generation to generation; it is a matter of perception and is quite emotionally and psychologically loaded.

It should be noted that the textbooks contain topics for discussion among students. This approach can contribute to the development of critical thinking and a departure from the dualistic paradigm of assessing events. However, the success of such discussions depends on the teacher.

### VI. Recommendations – What is missing

The school history curriculum focuses on offering “correct” answers and pays little attention to interacting with controversial topics, reflecting, debating, and evaluating difficult situations. The inconsistency of social and political processes is often overlooked. A partial solution may be for independent NGOs to develop textbooks and disseminate them to schoolteachers. Civil society control of the education process and a school student’s involvement in grassroots initiatives can also be very helpful, as shown by some well-known cases where NGOs control the educational process at universities. This experience could be used to ensure the quality of the educational process and the quality of the textbooks.

All textbooks partially describe the transition processes in Eastern European countries, focusing mainly on political processes. Profile-level textbooks also address a cultural and economic change in Eastern Europe since 1991. It should be mentioned that the textbooks examined do not consider the transformation processes in other independent countries of the former USSR. Perhaps it makes sense to develop manuals for history teachers that would help to acquaint students with the transition processes in Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakh-



stan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Tajikistan. It would make sense to plan a discussion among students, during which they can compare the features of the transition process of each country.

The textbooks mentioned are generally accurate in their presentation of key events from the perspective of historical accuracy. However, both the design of the textbooks and the nature of the curricula and instructional methods leave little time or opportunity for students to make sense of the presentation of facts, to highlight themes that raise questions and/or alternative interpretations, and, most importantly, to use their mini-studies, conversations with witnesses, discussions, and so forth, to make sense of the processes involved. A passive, repetitive approach in history teaching, which focuses on facts should be transformed into an active learning approach with active learning methods that focus on students' abilities to understand historical processes in order to become independent thinkers. This would also mean creating space for games and debates in the educational process.

The school as an institution continues to operate within the Soviet paradigm with its doctrinaire and teleological approach. The teacher acts as a "steward of the storehouse" of historical facts. Her task is to lead the student down a corridor of events, opening only the chambers of facts and dates which are featured on the programme. Many teachers work in this way. Students resist this kind of history as they are not encouraged to understand historical events as a part of "their own" experiences, as something that affects their daily life. We should move away from this approach and change to one in which history is understood as a flow of events with its consequent crises and opportunities.

On the one hand, Ukraine should be further integrated into global processes and trends, and on the other hand, the importance of local and oral history should be emphasized.

## UKRAINE: QUOTES – WHAT IS MISSING?



**What is missing from the chapters on transition in history textbooks, in terms of relevant narratives and memories?**



**Which voices, memories, or narratives related to the period of transition are under-represented in the dominant public discourse of the country?**



*In school history textbooks, lots of facts are presented as [mere] facts, but there is no space for discussion, fact-checking and analysis.*

**Olena Pravylo,**  
*culture activist and educator*



*It would be interesting [...] to discuss controversial issues through the voicing of different points of view by experts, witnesses, and contemporaries of the events under discussion.*

**Volodimir Keniyz,**  
*history teacher*



*There is no dialogue between different points of view from other dimensions of transition [other than ethnic minorities], such as discussions between people who have Soviet nostalgia and those who have a patriotic view of events.*

**Olena Pravylo,**  
*culture activist and educator*



*Geopolitically, Ukraine was situated between two “worlds” and often became an arena of confrontation between the progressive and the conservative. [...] [Facts and examples] that are missing from the schoolbook materials are quite numerous, and many more are unexplored and uninvestigated. [...] A better systematization of materials, a balanced point of view, and better visualization would be desirable.*

**Volodimir Keniyz,**  
*history teacher*

## Lesson plans

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of hands-on materials for teaching the periods of transition to democracy in Eastern Europe after 1989/91. The aim is to support history and civic education practitioners in formal and non-formal settings to enable a better understanding of the past amongst younger generations and build a sustainable future. It includes 11 lesson plans which present national and transnational topics which do not receive enough attention but are important in understanding the influence that periods of transition have on societies. The lessons are designed for students from 8 – 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Each lesson plan consists of a detailed step-by-step description for teachers that is divided into sub-units and accompanying activities. Each activity employs interactive methodology and uses mainly historical sources. The sources are available in the appendices of each plan. The tools needed for the lesson are listed in the beginning.

The timeframe and number of tasks should be understood as a guideline and can be adapted – shortened, selected, extended etc. – in accordance with needs and preferences of the teacher and her students.

The national plans in the languages of our network partners – Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian – as well as more tasks and materials for the transnational lesson plans are available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.

#### **Competences framework**

Content and learning goals are laid out in accordance with both international standards defined by the European Union, as well as the national curricula standards of the TD project partner countries.

#### **Recommendations for active citizenship competence from the Council of the European Union**

In its recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning, the European Council<sup>50</sup> defines citizenship competences as: *“the ability to act as responsible*

<sup>50</sup> Council of the European Union (2018): ‘Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning’, pp.10f. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2018:189:TOC).

*citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.”<sup>51</sup>*

In accordance with these recommendations, the lesson plans in this handbook aim to support the development of:

- Knowledge of basic concepts and phenomena relating to individuals, groups, work organizations, society, economy, and culture.
- Knowledge of contemporary events, as well as a critical understanding of the main developments in national, European and world history.
- Awareness of the aims, values, and policies of social and political movements.
- Understanding of the multi-cultural and socioeconomic dimensions of European societies.
- Skills to develop arguments and constructive participation in community activities.
- Interest in political and socioeconomic developments, humanities, and intercultural communication.

### **The Council of Europe’s model of competences for a democratic culture and intercultural dialogue**

In order to empower learners to act as competent and effective democratic citizens, the Council of Europe recommends that educators foster the following competences amongst others:

#### **Values**

- Valuing human dignity and human rights.
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law.
- Attitudes
- Respect.
- Civic-mindedness.
- Responsibility.
- Self-efficacy.
- Tolerance of ambiguity.

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<sup>51</sup> Council of Europe: ‘A model of the competences required for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue’, p. 1. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/a-model-of-the-competences-required-for-democratic-culture-and-intercu/16809940c3>.

**Skills**

- Autonomous learning skills.
- Analytical and critical thinking skills.
- Skills of listening and observing.
- Empathy.
- Cooperation skills.

**Knowledge and critical understanding**

- Knowledge and critical understanding.
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability.

## Learning standards and outcomes as defined in the national curricula for history teaching

### Bulgaria

#### Lower secondary school (7<sup>th</sup> grade) – students should be able to:

- Describe the transition to a multiparty political system.
- Identify different types of powers and find out the correspondent institutions that represent them in contemporary Bulgaria.
- Give examples of changes in the everyday life of Bulgarians.

#### Upper secondary school (9<sup>th</sup> grade) – students should be able to:

- Point out the consequences of changes in USSR and Eastern European countries.
- Explain the difficulties of transition from a planned to a market economy in the Eastern Bloc countries.

#### Upper secondary school (10<sup>th</sup> grade) – students should be able to:

- Explain the abolition of totalitarian institutions and a return to the principles of pluralism, democracy and market economy.
- Explain the challenges faced during the transition of Bulgarian economy toward a market economy.
- Give examples of social problems arising during the transition.

### Croatia

#### Goals for 8<sup>th</sup> grade – students should be able to:

- Understand the difference between different democratic and totalitarian regimes and their influence on the lives of individuals and groups within society.
- Connect different economic doctrines to economic development in Europe after WW2.
- Analyse the market and command economy in the Croatian and world context in the second half of twentieth century.
- Describe the circumstances and events that lead to fall of communism in Eastern Bloc countries.
- Understand the processes that lead to Croatian independence, including political and economic transformation, democratization, and internationalization.

#### Goals for 12<sup>th</sup> grade – students should be able to:

- Critically review the effects of totalitarian regimes on the lives of individuals and on society, including effects of nationalization, worker's self-management, and political and economic migrations in Yugoslavia.
- Point out the benefits and pitfalls of worker's self-management.
- Understand the economic circumstances that lead to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, including the stagnation of the 1980s.
- Assess the economic impact of the fall of communism and transition, with special attention to the Homeland War and privatization in Croatia.

### Germany

#### Goals for 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade students (gymnasium) in Lower Saxony:

- Focusing on the structural aspects of the economy and environment as well as society and law, students explore the living conditions in the two German states through looking at welfare standards, mobility, gender roles and leisure activities.
- Focusing on the structural aspects of domination and stateness students deal with the end of the bi-polar world.

#### Goals for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in Lower Saxony learning about societies in transformation and comparing system change in Poland and Romania, students focus on:

- Political reforms attempted in Poland in response to the state crisis of the 1980s.
- Actors and political factions during the phase of system change in Poland.
- Round Tables as a tool for the transition to democracy.

- Securing power and the role of the Ceaușescu family in Romania (cult of personality).
- Economic and social measures to stabilise the balance of power in Romania. (e.g., “Programme for the Systematisation of Villages” [“sistemizarea satelor”]) and counter-reactions.
- The violent overthrow of the Ceaușescu regime and the transition to a democratic system.

## Lithuania

### Goals for 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grade – students should be able to:

- Evaluate what effect the resistance to the communist regime had on its collapse. Indicate the most significant events of this resistance.
- Identify the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union and global communism system. Evaluate its consequences for humanity.
- Define the external and internal causes and circumstances of the restoration of the Lithuanian Statehood.
- Compare Lithuania’s achievements and problems (e.g., problems of market economy and development of civil society) with the achievements and problems of the former communist bloc countries. Provide examples.
- Describe and compare the changes in people’s daily lives in Europe and Lithuania in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### Goals for 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade – students should be able to:

- Evaluate Lithuanian society’s resistance to the communist regime in the context of Eastern and Central European countries.
- Examine the realization of the aim of Lithuanian society to live in an independent state. Indicate the circumstances of the establishment of Lithuanian Sąjūdis. Explain the reasons behind different approaches to the restoration of Independence in Lithuania. Describe the measures taken to re-establish Lithuania’s Independence.
- Draw conclusions about the changes of the political map of Europe after 1990. Identify the main trends in the political development of the new states. Indicate the main conflicts between the new states and the ways to resolve them.
- Summarize the political conditions that affected the development of society in the re-established Republic of Lithuania.
- Evaluate and explain the factors that encourage and discourage the development of Lithuanian civil society. Explain the reasons behind social and ethnic changes in Lithuania.

## Poland

### History in primary school:

- Describes the key systemic transformations in 1989–1997.
- Characterizes the socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations of the 1990s.
- Explains the causes of social tensions.

### History in secondary school – basic level:

- Compares the process of overthrowing communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the systemic transformation of these countries.
- Describes the key systemic changes in 1989–1997, explains their international conditions
- Explains the controversy surrounding the problem of decommunization and lustration
- Evaluates the process of political and economic transformation.

### History – advanced level:

- Compares the process of overthrowing communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the systemic transformation of these countries.
- Characterizes the socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations of the 1990s.
- Characterizes political disputes over the shape of a free Poland.
- Assesses the social costs of transformation.

### Knowledge about society – advanced level

- Presents the undemocratic nature of Polish politics and political solutions from the period of the so-called People's Republic of Poland (monism, the leading role of the decision-making bodies of the Polish United Workers' Party, system of political fictions).
- Presents – using selected examples – various models of democratization; considers to what extent Polish democratization at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s was a reform, and to what extent – a revolution.
- Compares various models of decommunization and lustration and considers their validity.
- Analyses the issues of the diverse approaches in the social memory of the so-called People's Republic of Poland and its accounts based on literature (e.g., excerpts from Paweł Śpiewak's *Remembrance after Communism*<sup>52</sup>).

<sup>52</sup> Śpiewak, P. (2005): *Pamięć po komunizmie* [Memory after Communism]. Gdansk: *słowo/obraz terytoria*.



## Russia

Some learning outcomes with references to Russian and World history in the curriculum

**Secondary school:**

- Understanding of the experience of Russian history as a part of world history, assimilation of the basic national values of modern Russian society: humanistic and democratic values, ideas of peace and mutual understanding between nations and people of different cultures.
- The ability to apply historical knowledge to comprehending the essence of modern social phenomena, life in the modern polycultural, polyethnic, and multi-confessional world.

**High school (10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade):**

- Basic level: Skills in project activities and historical reconstruction involving various sources.
- Advanced level:
  - Possession of systemic historical knowledge, understanding the place and role of Russia in world history.
  - Possession of techniques in working with historical sources, the ability to independently analyse the documentary based on historical topics.

## Ukraine

**History secondary school basic level:**

- Describes international and national perspective of key events between 1985-1994.
- Characterizes the socio-political, economic and cultural transformations of the 1990s.
- Explains the causes of social and political events of this period.
- Compares the process of overthrowing communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the systemic transformation of these countries.
- Explains the controversy surrounding the problem of decommunization.
- Evaluates the process of political and economic transformation.

### History secondary school advanced level:

- Compares the process of overthrowing communism in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the systemic transformation of these countries.
- Characterizes the socio-political, economic, and cultural transformations of the 1990s.
- Characterizes political disputes over Ukraine Independence and preconditions for revolutions of the next decade.
- Presents democratic changes and explains the difference between civil societies in Soviet, Perestroika, and independence times in Ukraine.
- Presents – using selected examples – various models of democratization; considers to what extent Ukraine was democratized at the turn of the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s.
- Compares various models of decommunization and lustration and considers their validity.
- Analyses the issue of diverse approaches to the social memory of key events of the transition period and symbols of the time.

# National lesson plans

## BULGARIA: PEOPLE AND MONUMENTS DURING TIMES OF TRANSITION

Author: Bistra Stoimenova

### I. Overview

The focus of this lesson is the issues regarding the cultural heritage of the communist regime, such as monuments and other architectural sites, the variety of attitudes towards this during the transition period, and possible solutions to these issues. The students will be advised to use different types of historical sources, as well as a variety of perspectives on the subject at hand.

### II. Students' age

Upper secondary level: 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> grades.

### III. Objectives

The students will be expected to:

- Develop their knowledge and critical understanding of the complexities related to the monuments of the communist regime during the transition, and people's attitudes towards them.
- Analyse various types of historical sources to investigate different viewpoints.
- Discuss and express their own opinions using specific facts.
- Develop teamwork skills.

### IV. Key concepts

Cultural heritage, civil society, collective memory.

### V. Key question

What were people's responses to the totalitarian regime monuments in Bulgaria after 1989?

### VI. Prior knowledge

Knowledge about the period 1945-1989 in Bulgaria.

### VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

**Duration:** 90 minutes (2 X 40 minutes)

The learning activities are intended to last roughly 90 minutes. The lesson comprises two parts: in the first one, the students work with resources providing information about the Soviet Army Memorial in Sofia<sup>53</sup> (and different perspectives on it), and the second part will be a discussion among the students.

### ACTIVITY 1: Work with historical sources

**Step 1:** Split the class into small groups of 3-4 students.

**Step 2:** Students work with sources on the Soviet Army Memorial in Sofia and on two examples of attitudes towards monuments (see APPENDIX – WORKSHEET, p. 108). One of the examples is the wrapping of the Reichstag in Berlin, and the second relates to the worldwide movement during the summer of 2020 to demolish various monuments that commemorate controversial historical figures (colonialists, slave traders, Confederacy heroes from the US Civil War, etc.).

In the course of the lesson, the students compile a list of different points of view regarding the monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia, and the group then determines the material that results from the analysis of individual history sources.

The students also become familiar with the two examples and can explore them in more depth or find similar examples.

**Duration** of steps 1 and 2: 40 minutes

### ACTIVITY 2: Role-play – discussion of points for and against the monument in two groups

**Step 3:** Split the class into two large groups.

**Step 4:** The first group believes that the Soviet Arm monument in Sofia must be preserved. The second group is against this argument. Both groups will discuss and articulate at least three arguments in support of their side of the argument. These arguments are written on three separate sheets (coloured sheets or sticky notes can also be used). These arguments are mostly based on the students' work with the history sources during Step 2. Other arguments might also be presented as long as they are supported by facts.

**Duration: 15 minutes**

**Step 5:** The teacher stages a discussion between the two groups. The written arguments are placed on a board (or on a wall) facing away from the students. The arguments of the two groups are presented one at a time, turning the respective sheets face up. Each time, different students from each team present the arguments within a two-minute time limit. The listening team can pose a question about the arguments being presented, to which the presenting team should respond. It is important that as many students as possible get involved in the discussion. It is

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<sup>53</sup> Editor's note: The monument was partially removed in December 2023.

essential to avoid repetition of the arguments. Students should not interrupt each other. Questions can be asked after an argument has been presented.

After both groups have presented their arguments, the teacher makes a summary of both positions (this can instead be done by a special jury of students, which monitors the course of discussion).

The presentations could be ranked by means of a student vote as well.

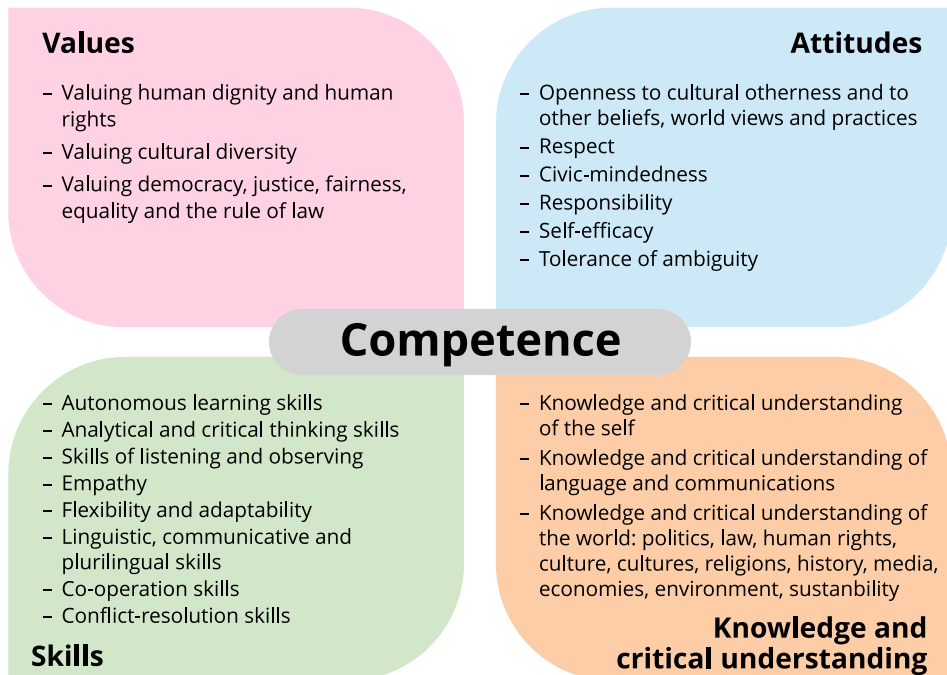
**Duration:** 25 minutes

**Possible follow-up:**

**Project work:** The students conduct research into the monuments to the totalitarian regime in the places they live. The final result of this work will be a file containing a description of the monument (including photos taken by the students) and a brief history of its creation. The contemporary condition of these monuments and whether or not the citizens agree on their future shall also be reflected in the file.

1. Materials and tools, required equipment, handouts
2. Annex (handouts examples) /Appendix

The story was captured in the short documentary *In Step with The Time* directed by Anton Partalev, featuring anonymous interviews with the artists of Destructive Creation and various representatives of pro-Russian organizations in Bulgaria. The film came second place at the 2013 *Festival IN OUT* (In Out Festival) in Poland.



## APPENDIX

### Worksheet with different views

#### 1. Chronology

December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1941 – The 25<sup>th</sup> Ordinary National Assembly of Bulgaria declares war on the United States and Great Britain. Diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union persist.

August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – Bulgaria declares neutrality once again. An order is issued to disarm German army units on Bulgarian territory. Ivan Bagrianov's government resigns, and attempts begin to reinstate a new cabinet.

August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – The government orders the withdrawal of Bulgarian troops from Macedonia.

September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1944 – Led by Konstantin Muraviev, the legal opposition forms a new cabinet. (Bulgarian Agrarian Popular Union – Vrabcha 1).

September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – At 6am, German military units capture the headquarters of the Bulgarian occupation corps in Niska Banya (Serbia).

September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – Muraviev makes an official government announcement on the radio, "complete and unimpeachable neutrality".

September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – At 7am, the USSR declares war on Bulgaria. At 10.45 pm, the Bulgarian government, in the presence of its regents, decides to sever diplomatic relations with Germany and seek a truce with the USSR.

September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – The government decides to declare war on Germany, taking effect at 6pm on September 8th.

September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944 – The Fatherland Front, comprising communists, the left-wing splinter group of the Agricultural Party, Social Democrats and the right-wing Zveno Political Circle, launch a coup d'état and seize power, forming a coalition government led by Kimon Georgiev.

September 1944 – May 1945 – Bulgaria takes part in the final stage of the war against Germany.

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1947 – The peace treaty with Bulgaria is signed in Paris.

December 1947 – Soviet troops, stationed since September 1944, leave Bulgarian territory.

1947-1954 – The so-called "Goryan movement", a resistance movement of peasants who are against the imposition of the communist regime in Bulgaria, takes place.

September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1954 – The Soviet Army Memorial is unveiled in the centre of Sofia.

November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1957 – The “Alyosha” monument is unveiled in Plovdiv.

1992 – The Sofia Municipal Council decides to remove the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov from the city centre.

1993 – The Sofia Municipal Council, dominated by the right-wing Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), decides to remove the monument to the Soviet Army.

2010 – An Initiative Committee for the dismantling of the Soviet Army Memorial is established.

## 2. The Soviet Army War Memorial in Sofia

2a) The central monument of the war memorial, 1970.



Source: <https://bit.ly/362T8gS>. Photo by Bin im Garten, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.



## TEACHING HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

2b) The sculptural composition on the eastern facade of the monument. "October 1917" on a drawing by the painter Boris Angelushev, sculpted by Lyubomir Dalchev.



Source: <https://bit.ly/3hUrrJU>. Photo by Ferran Cornellà, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.

2c) Western facade group composition titled "Fatherland War", created by Vassil Zidarov and his team.



Source: <https://bit.ly/37I3utv>. Photo by Ferran Cornellà, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.

2d) Southern facade group composition titled "The Homefront", created by Petar Doichinov and his team.



Source: <https://bit.ly/3pMsv6T>. Photo by Ferran Cornellà, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.



### 3. Ten million lev for the most expensive monument in our country: the Soviet Army war memorial

The monument works began in June 1952. “The foundations are being laid at the moment. The sculptural work is going well.” In the 1953 draft capital investment plan, the war memorial was given a price tag of Lev 10 million “for its final completion”, according to documents. Whether this was the entire memorial budget, or if the money only covered the work to complete is unclear. What is certain is that the memorial was ready for unveiling in 1954, taking place on September 7<sup>th</sup>, commemorating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “people’s republic”.

In 1993, the Sofia Municipal Council, dominated by the UDF group, decided to remove the memorial. At this point, however, the attempts to implement the solution failed to garner strong public support and came to a halt.<sup>54</sup>

### 4. The first skaters in Sofia – late 1980’s – early 1990’s



Photo by Martin Mladenov, rights reserved.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Площад СЛАВЕЙКОВ (2014): ‘Десет млн. лв. за най-скъпия паметник у нас – на Съветската армия.’ [SLAVEIKOV Square (2014): ‘Ten million leva for the most expensive monument in our country – The Soviet Army War Memorial’]. Available at: <https://www.ploshtheadslaveikov.com/deset-mln-lv-za-naj-skapiya-pametnik-u-n/> (in Bulgarian).

<sup>55</sup> More information available at: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/hjmFRkXKLI72C/> (in Bulgarian).

## 5. The first techno music parade in Sofia, the summer of 1999



Credits: „Lik“ weekly, issue 5, 1999, rights reserved.

## 6. Initiative committee for removal of the memorial

In September 2010, an initiative committee was set up to dismantle the Soviet Army Memorial. The committee was based on the opinion that the monument was built in honour of an army that entered Bulgarian territory for no justifiable reason as a result of a war declared unilaterally against Bulgaria. Thus, from an international legal perspective, the Soviet Army was acting as an aggressor rather than a liberator. According to the committee, the monument paraded the Communist Party's final victory over the "Goryan movement".

The committee staged several events in front of the monument that made clear their request for its dismantling: November 9<sup>th</sup> 2010 – an event under the slogan *"The Berlin Wall fell, the occupier's monument stands!"*; January 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 – a rally raising placards around the monument; April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 – an event under the slogan *"Let us celebrate an urban space free of lies!"*; November 9<sup>th</sup> 2012 – *"The wall has fallen, the monument stands."*

## 7. The Soviet Army Memorial as a stage for political art and protest

7a) "Keeping up with the times"

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the figures of the composition on the west side of the memorial were spray-painted as American comic and pop culture characters (from left to right): the Mask, the Joker, the Werewolf, Santa Claus, Superman,

Ronald – the McDonald’s clown, Captain America, Batman’s assistant Robin, and Wonder Woman. The flag held by one of the figures was painted as the Stars and Stripes, and under the group of figures a caption was sprayed reading, “In step with the times”.



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15545141>.

Photo by Ignat Ignev, under a CC BY 3.0 license.

#### 7b) Transforming the Memorial into a comic

Today, this fixation with monuments is made lighter perhaps only by the Destructive Creation group and their followers. In 2010, their work “In step with the times” replaced the images of Russian soldiers from the Soviet Army Memorial with popular comic book characters. Compared to everything else that the official art institutions have to offer, this creation can easily claim to be the purest manifestation of postmodernism in our country: it is a combination of poking fun at the institutions, irony, pop art, allegory, instrumentalising pop culture images, etc. These are all directions pursued by contemporary art. What it most significantly represents is a critique of what we are used to taking for granted. The ease with which the images of superheroes matched the faces and figures of the Soviet liberators was among the most astonishing revelations of this work. It thrust into the spotlight a long-hidden truth – that so-called “socialist realism” and comics used the same techniques. A key difference between them also emerged: socialist realism stripped the life force of colours off its images, and in so doing deprived the viewers of the visual world’s simplest pleasure, instead instilling into them feelings of fear and respect.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Площад СЛАВЕЙКОВ (2014): ‘Какво да правим с паметниците’ [SLAVEIKOV Square (2014): ‘What are we going to do with the monuments’]. Available at: <https://www.ploshadslaveikov.com/kakvo-da-pravim-s-pametnitsite/> (in Bulgarian).

### 7c) "Bulgaria apologizes"

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013, the Soviet Army Memorial in Sofia was once again covered in paint overnight again, this time entirely in pink and accompanied by inscriptions in Czech and Bulgarian: "Bulharsko se omlouvá!!!" and "Bulgaria apologises!!!" The other sides of the monument was covered in appeals like "C'mon apologise" and "Prague'68". This was obviously an apology to the Czechs, commemorating the anniversary of the Prague Spring suppression in what was then Czechoslovakia.



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=27812813>.  
Photo by Ignat Ignev, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.

### 7d) "Glory to Ukraine"

On February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014, the memorial was covered overnight with inscriptions such as "Glory to Ukraine" (in Ukrainian) and "Kaputin" (a word play with Vladimir Putin's name and kaputt, the German for broken or shattered) with the flag of Ukraine painted above them. A central soldier and the flag above him were also painted in the Ukrainian colours of blue and yellow. This was meant to express solidarity with Ukraine after weeks of heavy, violent anti-government protests in Ukraine, defending the country's pro-European orientation.

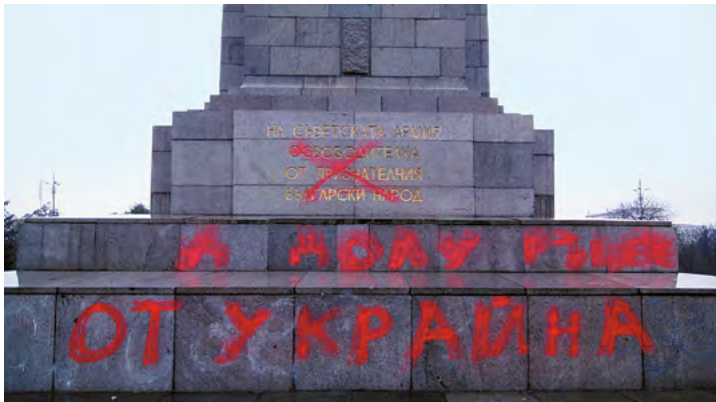


Source: <https://bit.ly/3HXJIGr>.  
Photo by Vassia Atanassova - Spiritia, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.

7e) “Keep your hands off Ukraine”

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 the monument again met the dawn with a Ukraine-defending inscription, this time in response to the invasion of the Crimean peninsula by Russian troops, which read “Keep your hands off Ukraine”, and crossed out the original dedication, “To the liberating Soviet Army from the grateful Bulgarian people”.

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, a Polish soldier waving the Bulgarian flag and a Ukrainian soldier next to him were painted upon it. Below them an inscription in red said, “KATYN 5.III’40”. Another, white one under the memorial’s central statue read, “PUTIN, GO HOME!”



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31412988>.  
Photo by Luchesar V. Iliev, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license.

7f) “BSP are terrorists”

On July 1, 2017 (the July Mourning Day) the Memorial was found to have a new inscription reading “BSP (The Bulgarian Socialist Party) are terrorists”. Unlike the other cases of “defiling” (as the memorial’s advocates used to put it), this time the creativity of the intervention was critically limited. The inscription was obviously daubed in a hurry in red on the front plate of the monument, on top of the original “To the liberating Soviet Army from the grateful Bulgarian people”.

Source: <https://www.ploshtadslaveikov.com/bkp-sa-teroristi-glasi-pametnikat-na-savetska-ta-armiya/>. Photo by Vesselin Borishev, Club Z, rights reserved.





## 8. Anger in Russia over the desecration of Soviet monuments in Bulgaria

### The Soviet Army Memorial is the monument most often painted in Sofia.

On February 24, 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia aired its indignation, stating: “The news of another case of vandalism of the Soviet Army Memorial in the centre of Bulgaria’s capital Sofia on the night of February 23<sup>rd</sup> has been met with deep indignation in Russia.” The Ministry sent a protest note to Bulgaria’s foreign affairs ministry requesting that they “conduct a thorough investigation into this hooligan incident, bring to justice those responsible for the illegal actions and take appropriate measures to put the memorial back to order”.<sup>57</sup>

### 9. “I’d give a good wallop to the one smearing the monuments.”

“The one smearing the monuments, I’d give him a good wallop,” admits the sculptor Krum Damyanov.

The creator of some of the top monumental art projects under the totalitarian regime admitted in an interview with Mariana Parvanova for the *Monitor* that he finds it difficult to choose between art and vandalism when it comes to the painting of monuments in our country: “It is a blend. As an artistic whim I find some of the outcomes amusing. I believe those have hit their mark. Dimitar Blagoev made a good Santa Claus. An element of modern art is present in the painted Soviet Army Memorial. But, in principle, I’d give the one smearing the monuments a good wallop. It’s complicated. I can’t judge. I don’t know whether or not it has a political effect.”

Damyanov is convinced of one thing: “What was done before us should not be destroyed. This means that the level of society has not moved at all. It destroys everything before it, the most important document – not a retelling of what was, but what one sees. That should not be destroyed. And that’s what intelligent nations don’t do. In Vienna there is a monument to the Soviet Army, in Berlin too. I will not forget Munich. I was walking around, and I saw in a glass box a torso shot with an assault rifle. Underneath the Germans had written: ‘Stop. Look. Think of those who did it, and those who shot it.’ Everything is preserved there, from all periods. With us, the first is neither of great quality, nor is the second intelligent.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Площад СЛАВЕЙКОВ (2014): ‘Гняв в Русия от поругаването на съветски паметници у нас’ [SLAVEIKOV Square (2014): ‘Anger in Russia over the desecration of Soviet monuments in Bulgaria’]. Available at: <https://www.ploshtadslaveikov.com/gnyav-v-rusiya-ot-porugavanite-savetski/> (in Bulgarian).

<sup>58</sup> Площад СЛАВЕЙКОВ (2014): ‘Скулпторът Крум Дамянов: Бих набил този, който маца паметниците’ [SLAVEIKOV Square (2014): ‘The sculptor Krum Damyanov: I would beat the one who touches the monuments’]. Available at: <https://www.ploshtadslaveikov.com/skulptorat-krum-damyanov-bih-nabil-toz/> (in Bulgarian).

## 10. The Soviet Army Memorial will not be removed

The Soviet Army Memorial will not be removed from downtown Sofia, but its name is likely to be changed. This is the result of a poll conducted by Alpha Research, commissioned by Sofia Municipality. The poll was conducted in the period August-September 2014, with 400 people interviewed at home.

51% of interviewees asked about their attitude to the Soviet Army Memorial were positive about it. 30% believed the memorial should not be changed. Only 17% were unequivocally against its existence.

When asked what the future of the memorial should be, 66% of Sofia residents replied that it should remain as it is; 16% believed the memorial should be renamed, while 17% argued it should be dismantled.

How should the monument be altered? The majority of respondents believed its name should be changed to a memorial to the victims of World War II.<sup>59</sup>

### Example 1 – The Wrapped Reichstag by Christo and Jean-Claude



Photo by Michael, under a CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 license.

More information available at: <https://christojeanneclaude.net/artworks/wrapped-reichstag>

On June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1995, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, with the help of 90 professional climbers and 120 installation workers, completed the wrapping of the Reichstag building in Berlin.

<sup>59</sup> Площад СЛАВЕЙКОВ (2014): 'Няма да махат Паметника на Съветската армия, сменят името му' [SLAVEIKOV Square (2014): 'They will not remove the Monument to the Soviet Army, change its name']. Available at: <https://www.ploshtadslaveikov.com/nyama-da-mahat-pametnika-na-savetskata/> (in Bulgarian).

Having turned the proposal down three times, in 1994, after a 70-minute debate, the German parliament approved the project with 292 votes in favour and 223 against. A parliament debated a work of art for the first time in history.

In a 1977 interview, Christo said: "I used to wrap museums or art buildings. The Reichstag is a political site and it taught me a lot about the relationship between art and politics. [...] Not the Reichstag itself, but the vicissitudes surrounding its wrapping set in motion a discussion about the significance of the building and its place in Berlin, Germany and history."<sup>60</sup>

### **Example 2** – Worldwide removal of monuments in the summer of 2020

In the summer of 2020, with the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, the United States, and later Europe, began to see a process of revisiting several monuments to controversial historical personalities.

In Richmond, Virginia, a monument to Confederate Army General Robert Lee took on a new look: on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the image of George Floyd, whose death was caused by a police officer during his detention in Minneapolis and sparked mass protests against police violence, was projected onto its plinth.



This is what the Robert E. Lee statue in Virginia looked like on May 5, 2020.

Photo by Ron Frazier, under a CC BY 2.0 license.

<sup>60</sup> See at: <https://www.facebook.com/ChristoandJC/posts/10158350281004491>.



In Bristol, UK, the statue of Edward Colston, a seventeenth-century slave trader, was toppled by BLM protesters and dumped in the harbor on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, forcing the UK to reconsider how it should confront its racist history.

Colston, a merchant, profited richly from slavery, transporting at least 80,000 people from West Africa to the Caribbean. Almost 20,000 of them died on the voyages. Now that the statue, erected in 1895, is gone, critics want to replace it with a statue of Paul Stephenson, a black worker who led a boycott of the Bristol Omnibus Company in 1963 to force it to end discriminatory hiring practices against minority workers.



The crowd surrounding the fallen statue of slave trader Edward Colston during the Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol, UK. The sign reads: "If this movement hasn't opened your eyes, what will? Time to speak up. Time to end white privilege."

Photo by Keir Gravil, under a CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 license.

## CROATIA: WHAT IS (ECONOMIC) TRANSITION? – ECONOMIC TRANSITION FROM THE 1980S ONWARDS

**Authors: Vedran Ristić, Vedrana Pribičević & Caroline Hornstein Tomić**

### I. Overview

This lesson focuses on tourism as a case study to teach students about the transition from a command to a free market economy. To analyse the effects of tourism on the economy and everyday life, it compares tourists' experiences from before and after the transition period.

### II. Students' age

This lesson is aimed at 4<sup>th</sup> grade grammar school students aged 17-18.

### III. Objectives

Learning outcomes based on the national curricula: POV SŠ B.4.1. Students examine different forms and stages of economic development in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Croatia, Europe, and the World.

Lesson outcomes:

The students will be able to:

- Define the concept of economic transition.
- Analyse the effects of economic transition on Croatian tourism.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of command and free market economies.

Lesson aim:

- To inspire reflection on processes of economic transition and raise awareness about positive and negative outcomes attached to this notion.

### IV. Key concepts

Worker self-management, command economy, free market economy, transition (privatization, liberalization, transformation, reconstruction, convergence, war economy).

### V. Key question

How did the economic transition affect Croatian tourism and how did it affect the everyday lives of the Croatian population?

## VI. Prior knowledge

Based on the curriculum, students should be familiar with most of the following topics relevant for understanding the economic transition: The Great Economic Crisis of 1929, the economy of the USSR, the rise and fall of communism, the Cold War, globalization, European integration, and the Croatian War of Independence (Homeland War)

## VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

### ACTIVITY 1: What did you do last summer? (2 min)

The teacher asks students where they went for vacation last summer (or the summer before that considering the COVID-19 situation) and leads a short introductory conversation about the topic.

### ACTIVITY 2: Head in the clouds (5 min)

The teacher asks students the following question: Do you know what constitutes a command economy? Students write down at least three terms which they associate with a command economy. A live word cloud can be created via *www.mentimeter.com* or similar tools, or the answers can be written on the board. The teacher and students read and comment on the answers. The same procedure is repeated for the question: Do you know what constitutes a free market economy?

### ACTIVITY 3: Rewind the tape (5 min)

The teacher asks several questions (see APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 124) about the economic history of Croatia – with a special focus on the 1980s, when Croatia was a republic in the Yugoslav Federation – either through an interactive quiz, using an online tool, or PowerPoint. Students answer the questions based on prior knowledge, deduction or speculation based on what knowledge they might already have on this subject. The teacher encourages students to give answers which they may have picked up from their parents, relatives, friends, school, or immediate environment, even if they are not sure of their accuracy. The questions in the test are designed to challenge misconceptions and prejudice, both in those who idealise and those who denigrate Croatia as part of socialist Yugoslavia. Once all the students have given their answers, the teacher presents the correct answers on the next slide with an explanation, facts, charts, figures, and discusses these answers with the students.

### ACTIVITY 4: Introducing workers' self-management (7 min)

The teacher gives the students a card containing information on workers' self-management in Yugoslavia (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 126). After reading the students answer the questions provided.

**ACTIVITY 5: Soaking up some sun (7 min)**

Students read the text “Tourism – the socialist way” (see APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 127). The goal is to present Yugoslav socialism through the lens of tourism, which might prove useful in several ways. Firstly, students can draw on their personal experience of travelling for leisure, so they can easily relate and compare historical accounts with tourism today. Secondly, tourism is an important sector of the Croatian economy, both historically and currently; it can effectively be used to illustrate institutions of socialism, the transformation/transition period and nascent capitalism. Upon reading the text, students are asked what the main pros and cons of command economy tourism might be. A table is either projected or drawn on a flipchart/board.

Socialist economy	
(suggested) Pros	(suggested) Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communally owned resources.</li> <li>• High level of state investment possible.</li> <li>• Government manages the means of production, which ensures that there is fairness in resource utilization and distribution.</li> <li>• Lower inequality since wealth is distributed to everyone.</li> <li>• Government control over prices (to some extent).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourages the profit motive.</li> <li>• Lack of private investment.</li> <li>• Ideologized, closed for some options</li> <li>• State ownership of resources leads to inefficiencies since workers lack incentives to work hard and cut costs of production.</li> <li>• Does not reward people for being entrepreneurial.</li> <li>• Lacks innovation.</li> </ul>

**ACTIVITY 6: A tourist trap (20 min)**

The Teacher divides the students into 5 groups. Each group reads the citations of tourists from the table “Let’s go on a summer vacation!” (see APPENDIX – SOURCE D, p. 128) and one of the 1A-1E texts (see APPENDIX – SOURCE E, p. 129). The goal is to study the citations and determine which people would travel to which destination and identify reasons for this choice. After the task is completed, the spokesperson of each group presents their solutions. The teacher encourages comments and helps students amend the table containing the pros and cons of command economy tourism.

**ACTIVITY 7: Winds of war and economic transition (7 min)**

The teacher gives students a card containing a text about the Homeland War and its effects on tourism in Croatia (see APPENDIX – SOURCE F, p. 132). After reading this information, students answer the questions provided.

**ACTIVITY 8: Head in the sand**

The teacher presents several questions (see APPENDIX – SOURCE G, p. 133) on the transition process, either through an interactive quiz, using *www.mentimeter.com*, or a PowerPoint presentation. Students answer the questions using any prior knowledge they might have on the subject. The teacher encourages students to give answers which they may have picked up from their parents, relatives, friends, school, or immediate environment, even if they are not sure of their accuracy. Once all the students give their answers, the teacher presents the correct answers on the next slide with an explanation, facts, charts, and figures and discusses them with the students.

**ACTIVITY 9: I Know What You Did Last Summer (20 min)**

The teacher once more divides students into 5 groups. Each group reads texts 2A-2E (see APPENDIX – SOURCE H, p. 143) and again uses quotes from the tourists in the table “*Let’s go on a summer vacation!*” (see APPENDIX – SOURCE D, p. 128). *The goal is to study the citations and determine which people would travel to each destination following the transition.* After the task is completed, the spokesperson of each group presents their solutions. The teacher encourages comments and helps students understand how vacation plans might have changed for each person as the structure of the economy changed due to the transition process.

**ACTIVITY 10: Discussion and assessment (10 min)**

The teacher asks a series of questions intended to encourage discussion about the transition period (See APPENDIX – SOURCE I, p. 147). The teacher can choose which questions to ask depending on the emphasis she/he wants to make.

## APPENDIX

## SOURCE A: Myth busting



**Q1: In Yugoslavia, everyone had a job – there was no unemployment.**

**FALSE**

Unemployment rates in Yugoslavia (source: OECD)

	1952	1965	1974	1980	1989
<b>Slovenia</b>	1.8	1.7	1.4	1.4	3.2
<b>Croatia</b>	2.9	5.6	4.8	5.2	8.0
<b>Vojvodina</b>	2.9	4.5	8.9	12.4	13.6
<b>Serbia (minor)</b>	2.5	7.4	11.3	15.8	15.6
<b>Serbia (including Vojvodina and Kosovo)</b>	2.6	7.1	11.5	16.1	17.6
<b>Montenegro</b>	3.2	5.1	12.7	14.7	21.5
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	1.5	4.8	9.7	14.1	20.3
<b>Macedonia</b>	6.3	13.5	19.7	21.5	21.9
<b>Kosovo</b>	2.6	15.2	21.0	27.6	36.4

Source: The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies<sup>61</sup>

**Explanation:** Yugoslavia started having problems with unemployment as early as the mid-1960s. The average unemployment rate increased from 6% in 1965 to over 16% in 1990, though there were substantial differences across the republics: Slovenia had practically full employment, while Macedonia and Kosovo had particularly high rates of unemployment.



**Q2: Yugoslavia/Croatia was an export giant.**

**FALSE**

Exports as percentage of GDP (Source: OECD)

	1970	1976	1983	1987
<b>Slovenia</b>	17.7	17.1	41.9	22.2
<b>Croatia</b>	15.6	14.9	25.5	14.3
<b>Vojvodina</b>	10.9	11.1	22.7	13.1
<b>Serbia (minor)</b>	17.4	14.9	31.4	20.3

<sup>61</sup> The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies. Available at: <https://wiiw.ac.at>.

<b>Serbia (including Vojvodina and Kosovo)</b>	15.0	13.9	28.2	17.6
<b>Montenegro</b>	8.6	17.5	24.6	17.5
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	12.9	15.9	32.3	19.8
<b>Macedonia</b>	13.7	15.0	26.6	17.8
<b>Kosovo</b>	7.7	17.5	22.6	11.4
<b>Yugoslavia total</b>	15.1	15.1	30.0	17.9

Source: The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies<sup>62</sup>

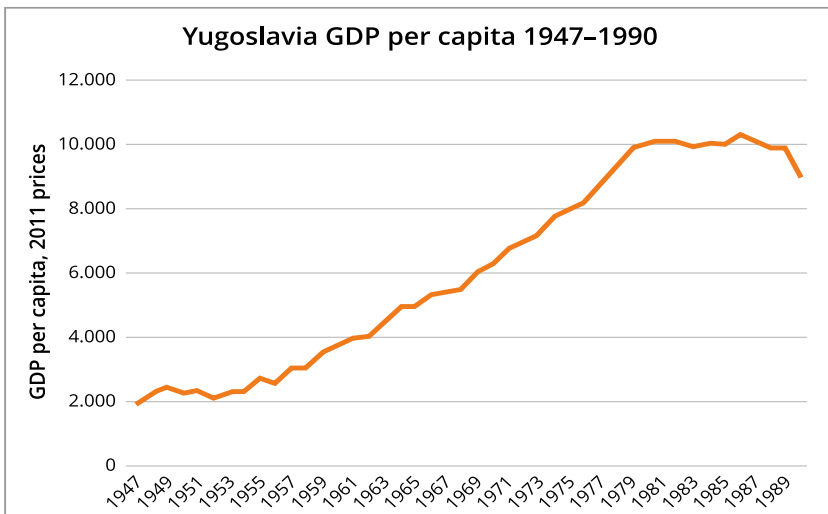
**Explanation:** The domestic market was much more important than the foreign market, with 82.1% of production allocated to a domestic or regional market. This characteristic of the economy persists even after the break-up of the country, albeit not in Slovenia, but things begin to change under the influence of the crisis of the eighties.



### Q3: Standards of living simply continued to increase in Yugoslavia.

**FALSE**

GDP per capita (Source: Maddison database)



Source: Maddison database<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Groningen Growth and Development Centre: Maddison Project Database 2020. Available at: <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2020?lang=en>.

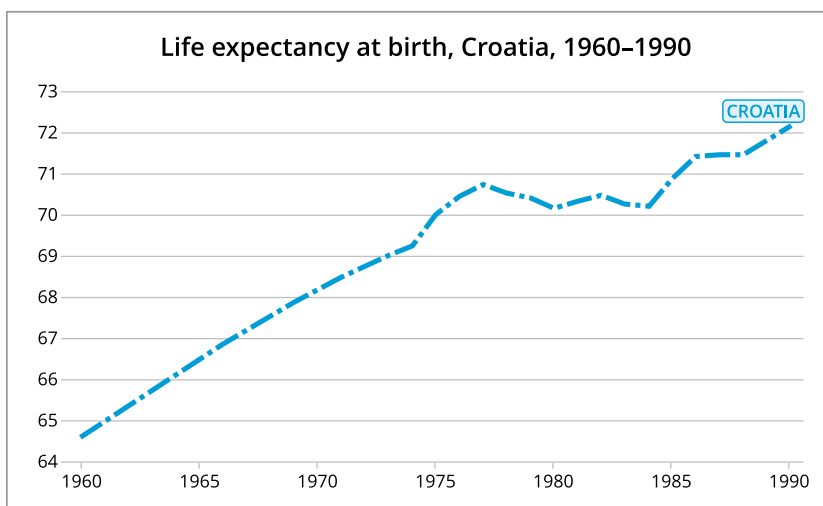
**Explanation:** While GDP per capita increased by a factor of five from 1947 to 1979, the 1980s were marked by stagnation or even a fall in GDP per capita from 1988 to 1990.



**Q4: Life expectancy increased during the period when Croatia was part of Yugoslavia.**

**TRUE**

Life expectancy at birth (Source: World Bank)



Source: World Development Indicators<sup>64</sup>

**Explanation:** Over the course of thirty years, life expectancy at birth in Croatia increased by 7,5 years.

### SOURCE B: Workers' self-management

The Yugoslav model of socialism was conceived after the political split between Yugoslavia and the USSR in 1948. Prior to the Stalin-Tito schism, Yugoslavia had all the ingredients of a socialist economic system: party control of the economy, central planning, and state ownership of the means of production brought about through nationalisation and the expropriation of private property, a state monopoly over the most important spheres of the economy (investment, banking, foreign trade) and administrative control of most prices. The central-

<sup>64</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators. Available at: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



ized system of economic administration lacked proper incentives for workers and firms, so it became necessary to introduce some elements of a market to stimulate growth. The new economic model introduced in 1950 was assigned the direct management of public property to the workforce of enterprises, introducing the principle of self-management into the economy. The factories, however, would not be owned by workers (nor by the state, for that matter), but only managed by them. The workers could appoint directors, but only the ones who had the support of the Communist Party. With further reforms in the 1970s, a special blend of economic models emerged with features of all three groups – socialist, market and self-managed – that were further sustained by the country’s favourable international relations. The openness Yugoslavia enjoyed throughout the 1960s and 1970s was a prerequisite for the development of tourism, where substantial government investments were directed towards constructing large hotel complexes aimed at increasing the capacity to accommodate domestic and foreign guests.

1. Can you define workers’ self-management in one or two sentences?
2. Which three key concepts would you highlight in defining workers’ self-management?
3. Would you relate workers’ self-management more closely with a planned economy or free market economy?
4. Are there any ambiguities you can identify in the concept of workers’ self-management?

### **SOURCE C: Tourism – the socialist way**

Tourism was an extremely important sector of the Yugoslav economy, with Croatia contributing about 80% of the total number of tourists in the entire federation. Tourism was also an important source of foreign currency which was often used to offset negative trade balance trends emerging in the 1980s. In other words, revenue from tourism often paid for the difference in value between exports and imports, allowing Yugoslavia to run a sizable trade deficit.

The vision of a satisfied and thus productive worker was a key cornerstone of socialist ideology, so companies invested great efforts to provide or subsidize vacations for workers. Just after World War II, a two-week paid leave was introduced; by 1973, Yugoslav workers had 18-30 days of paid leave a year. Government also subsidized transportation to vacation destinations. From 1965, the government and firms paid a holiday allowance to workers which amounted to about 1/3 of an average salary. Companies often had their own seaside resorts which their workforce could use for vacation at an affordable price.

Tourism in socialism	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

### SOURCE D: Let's go on a summer vacation!

Select quotes from magazine polls in the 1980s	
<p><i>In my 22 years of employment, I've rarely missed the opportunity to go on summer vacation. I mostly stayed in our union resort because it is the cheapest. This year I've planned a vacation to Zadar myself. I plan to spend around 2000 dinars with my wife and daughter.</i></p> <p>Milan Medaković, storehouse worker.</p>	<p><i>I spend my summer vacation at my mother in law's house on [the island of] Pašman. [...] My child is down there for the entire summer, and I have a greater degree of comfort there than anywhere else.</i></p> <p>Velimir Margetić, director in a state company.</p>
<p><i>This year I plan to stay with my family in a resort in Makarska for fifteen days. There will be days of sunbathing, swimming, indulging in some fine drinks and leaving behind everyday worries. I will set aside 2500 dinars out of our house budget for the summer vacation.</i></p> <p>Tomo Šuica, storehouse worker in an agricultural company from Karlovac.</p>	<p><i>I can only speak for myself because I work in a factory and in agriculture. I work in agriculture because our income in the textile industry isn't high enough to cover living expenses. I can't, for instance, leave my hay at home and go to the theatre for pleasure, or somewhere else the young might go.</i></p> <p>Branko Crnek, a textile worker from Krapina.</p>

*I'll spend my vacation home on the lawn mower with a pitchfork in my hands. I've never spent it outside my place of residence. Given the opportunity, I would spend it in our resort, where most Gavrilović workers go. I'm not going because I haven't managed to save any money.*

Dragan Dobrić, a meat industry worker from Poljana near Topusko.

*I can't go on vacation because my income is too low, around 1800 dinars, which I use to support five children. I have three acres of land I must work to grow the bare minimum for my family. I would love to go to the seaside, but it's not possible for me.*

Branko Šiljac from Hrašća near Ozalj.

*The offer of "tourist merchandise" is limited because it's not primarily a consumer society, and what we've seen is no poorer than what we've seen in much larger quantities in all tourist destinations around the world. The buyers should look for what Yugoslavia is most known for – crystal, embroidery, woodcarvings. [...] These independent, brave people aren't used to putting up with spoiled "ugly Americans"! Be "European" – reserved, polite, and unobtrusively dressed.*

Charlette L. Grable, American tourist.

## SOURCE E: Destinations

### 1A Worker's resorts

Companies could direct a part of their resources into the development of tourist infrastructure to secure affordable, or even free vacations in their own resorts. The accommodation and service would be rudimentary, following the "bed, plate and sun" principle. In some areas local tourist businesses saw the resorts as competition, while in others they were the spearhead of tourism. In the off-season some hoteliers made arrangements with work organizations to fill their capacities by lowering prices. As the workers' living standard rose, so did their expectations, therefore some upgraded their resorts into B category hotels. There were 80,335 beds in worker's resorts in Croatia in 1988, which made for 24% of all domestic stays. Union councils and companies with no resorts of their own made arrangements with private accommodation holders. So, in the early 1980s, a good part of the Makarska riviera was under that kind of lease. Unions could also secure no-interest loans which could be paid over several months. Sometimes, the poorest workers would be sent on vacation for free.

- How did the communal ownership system enable workers to go on vacation?
- What are the advantages and drawbacks of a "union" vacation as opposed to arranging one's own vacation?
- Where is the "profit" in paying for workers' vacation?

### 1B World trends

Although Yugoslavia tried to develop capacities which would attract elite tourism, the lack of a free market and an underdeveloped infrastructure significantly reduced offers which might be interesting to such guests. The locals saw tourism as easy seasonal income. One guest noticed: “the Yugoslav people are genuinely likable and hospitable [...] but when they put on their waiters’ shirt, meaning when they are officially working, they give the impression of someone suffering forced labour.” One international poll on hospitality placed Yugoslavia 20th on a list of 23 countries. Still, openness towards foreign tourists brought in world trends that challenged the local conservative outlook. Well-off homosexuals that vacationed on the island of Rab were nicknamed the “consumer avant-garde”, and the 1970s saw the arrival of “hippies” at the seaside. In 1961, a naturist (nudist) camp, Koversada, was opened near Vrsar. The international naturist federation congress was held there in 1972. Spending outside of accommodation was low because of poor offers, with very few organized activities like diving, sailing etc. where tourist could spend their income, and the guests were mostly working class and hadn’t come on holiday to shop. The entertainment options on offer were also weak and mostly comprised small galleries and classical or pop music concerts. The Yugoslav part of the Adriatic was nicknamed “Europe’s most comfortable place to sleep”.

- What sorts of global trends entered Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s? Was this typical in communist states?
- Why do you think Yugoslavia scored low in the hospitality department?
- What prevented Yugoslavia from developing elite tourism capacities? Can that be linked to the command economy?
- Why do you think there were no major problems in the clash between conservative and modern worldviews?

### 1C Socialism and entrepreneurship?!

Although the construction of a private boarding house was financially risky, many increased their income that way. This sort of entrepreneurship was not in line with the socialist worldview, so state officials were not allowed to participate in this. The president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia, Milka Planinc stated in 1972:

“Today people can get rich based on ownership with no work. [...] What is this really about? Society has invested vast resources into roads, infrastructure, the construction of expensive objects that transformed the local landscape and made it commercially interesting. Society has invested billions, and the owner comes with his resources and builds a house there. Even if it costs 10-20 million,

it is nothing compared to what society has invested and he exploits to his own advantage the entire process which took place over the last 10 years of our successful development.”

The imbalance of foreign trade in the Socialist Republic of Croatia (SRH) had been precarious since 1966. The need for foreign currency made foreign guests desirable and “capitalistic” private entrepreneurship was tolerated.

- What was the official position of the government on private accommodation? What were the reasons behind the arguments? Would you agree with them? Explain.
- What does the foreign trade imbalance say about the Yugoslav economy?
- Why was entrepreneurship in private accommodation tolerated?

### 1D Hotel tourism

The 1960s and 1970s saw a construction boom in Yugoslavia for which the Adriatic was nicknamed “Europe’s construction site”. Hundreds of hotels, hotel complexes, camps and tourist settlements were built. Some of them are counted among high achievements of modernist architecture. They were intended for all guests, but the more luxurious hotels, like the hotel Adriatic in Umag, attracted almost exclusively foreign guests. In addition to luxury lodging, it offered a bar and terrace, casino, strip shows, and shows by world renowned artists like Tom Jones. The director commented: “We have no working hours. [...] We’re here for the guests. We can sell our services only while the guests are here and are in a spending mood.” The hotel complex Haludovo on the island of Krk attracted foreign partners like the owner of the magazine Penthouse. Advertising in that magazine cost \$15,000 per page, when at the same time, the price of a “fićo” (Fiat 500 car) was around \$1,000. The tourist complex Babin Kuk near Dubrovnik offered everything needed for a longer stay including entertainment, sports fields, and shops.

- Why was there a construction boom in the 1960s and 1970s? For whom were the different properties built? Explain.
- Why did luxury hotels accommodate mostly foreign guests?

### 1E Feet in a washbowl

Despite all the state incentives and socialist ideas of equality, there were those who didn’t go on summer vacation at all. One poll in 1985 showed that 35% of those surveyed saw travelling for a summer vacation as a luxury. A washbowl was used to symbolize that mood in the 1970s, giving rise to a common refrain, “those who have money soak in the sea, and those who have none soak at home

in a washbowl". State allowances were used by many to supplement their income. If they were granted in the first half of the year, they would already be spent by the summer months. Farmers couldn't leave on vacation because of summer field work. The residents of coastal areas left for hot springs or mountain areas, but more often stayed home to earn money by renting their rooms.

- What does the washbowl symbolize?
- Who couldn't go on summer vacation, and why?
- Can the inability of some to go on summer vacation be seen as a failure of socialism? Explain.

### **SOURCE F: The Homeland War and the economic transition**

The Homeland War and other conflicts in the territory of the former Yugoslavia were ruinous for the economy of the newly founded Republic of Croatia. Direct and indirect damages were estimated at \$37 billion. GDP dropped by half, traffic was blocked for years, and a quarter of the territory was under occupation. From 1988 to 1992, tourism revenue fell by 87.3%. It was only after 1997, when the region stabilized and roads started to be renewed, that a slow recovery of tourism began.

Alongside the war, the economic transition to a free market economy was underway which included processes of privatization, liberalization, and stabilization. By 1996, the legislative framework for privatization was finished and about 2,500 companies valued at 25 billion DEM in total (about 50% of the value of the entire Croatian economy) changed their owners. In the process, a lot of political trading occurred, and companies were often passed to uninterested owners or those who made a quick profit by selling them on.

- How did the Homeland War affect tourism?
- What is economic transition to a free market economy?
- Reflect on how the period of the economic transition might have affected tourism.

Upon reading the text, students are asked what they think the main pros and cons of a free market economy are. This table is either projected or drawn on a flipchart/board.

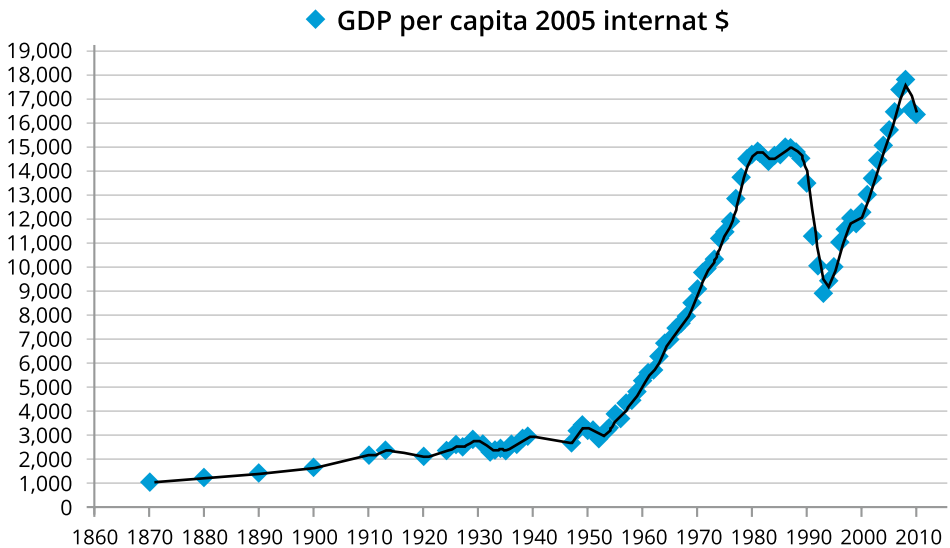
Free market economy	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers drive choices over what is produced.</li> <li>• Private ownership provides better incentives for investment.</li> <li>• Rewards innovation.</li> <li>• Competition between firms through markets and a system of prices.</li> <li>• Government ensures that markets are open and working.</li> <li>• Usually fosters economic growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited opportunities for the most disadvantaged.</li> <li>• Limited safety net for those who are disadvantaged, such as low unemployment benefits.</li> <li>• The disadvantaged are at risk of falling into poverty.</li> <li>• Increase in inequality.</li> <li>• Limited government intervention makes it difficult to control a firm's market power.</li> </ul>

**SOURCE G**



**Q1: The Croatian economy was greatly set back by the Homeland War.**

**TRUE**



Source: Maddison database<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Groningen Growth and Development Centre: Maddison Project Database 2020. Available at: <https://www.rug.nl/ggdc/historicaldevelopment/maddison/releases/maddison-project-database-2020?lang=en>.

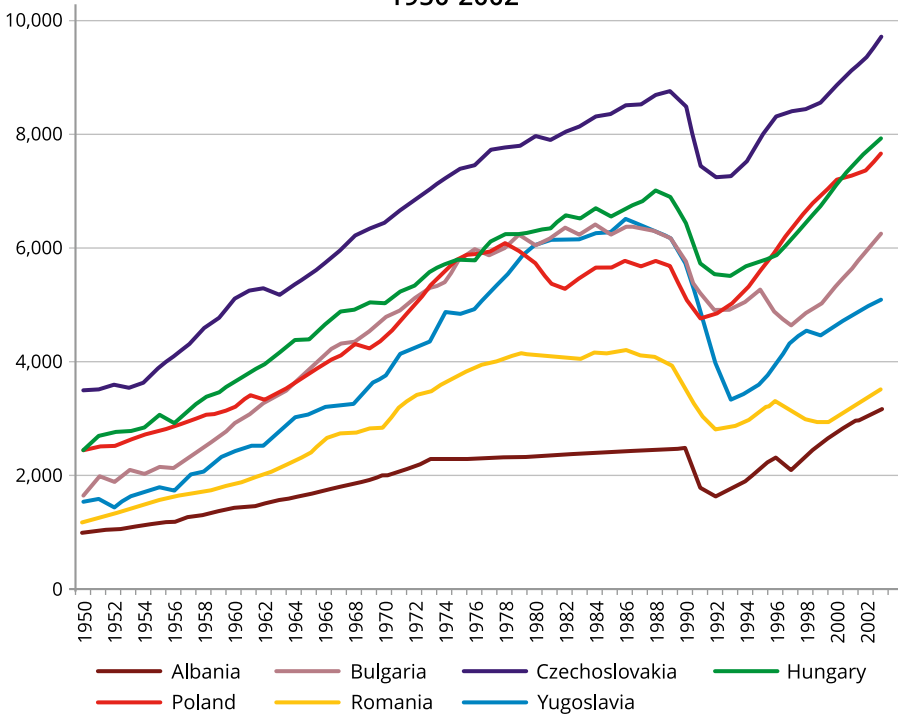
**Explanation:** During the Homeland War, in the period between 1991-1995, GDP per capita had fallen to the levels of the early 1970s, which is a twenty-year setback. It was only in 2004 that GDP per capita returned to the highest levels of the 1980s.



**Q2: The economic setback produced by the Homeland War was exclusively to blame for the fall in GDP per capita.**

**FALSE**

GDP per capita for select Eastern block countries, 1950-2002



Source: Maddison database<sup>66</sup>

**Explanation:** Other countries of the Eastern Bloc also experienced a fall in GDP per capita without experiencing a war. Dismantling socialism and beginning the post-socialist process of transition with its profound political, social, and economic transformations, universally depressed economies. Some countries, such as Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia quickly surpassed the levels of GDP per capita experienced prior to these transformations, even before the turn of the century. Others, such as Yugoslavia, Romania, and Bulgaria trailed behind.

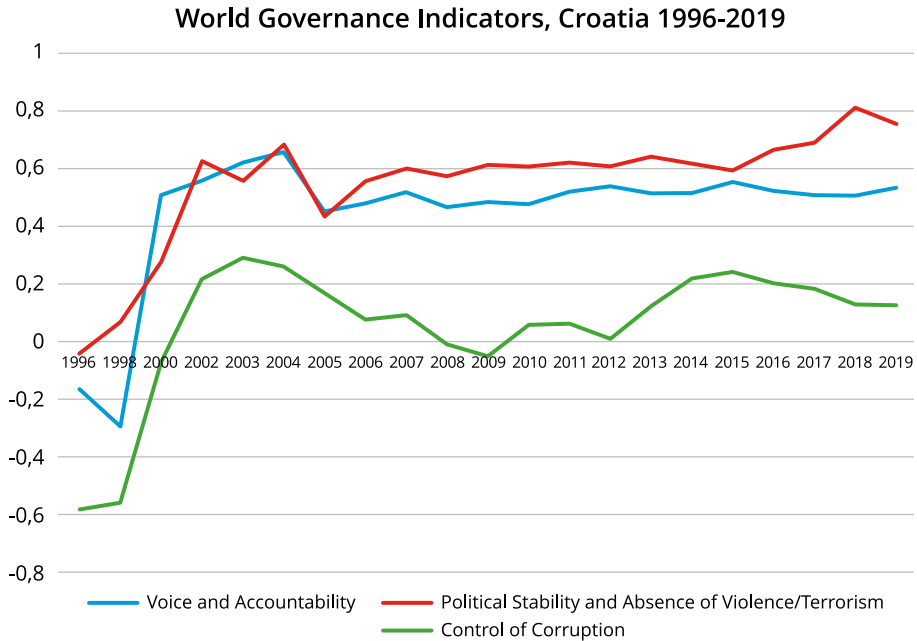
<sup>66</sup> Ibid.





**Q3: The transition period in Croatia also lead to noticeable democratization.**

**PARTIALLY TRUE**



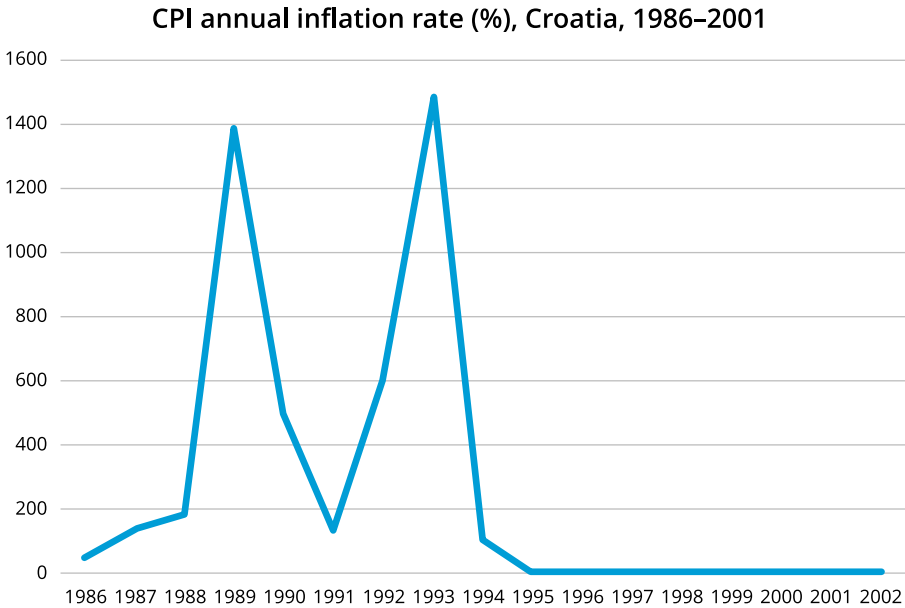
**Explanation:** Complex measurements of the democratization of society are included in the World Bank’s Governance Indicators which are a composite of many different indexes. “Voice and Accountability” captures perceptions of the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media. “Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism” measures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and/or politically motivated violence, including terrorism. “Control of Corruption” captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as “capture” of the state by elites and private interests. In the second half of the 1990s and at the beginning of the 2000s, indicators improved, only to level off in the period from 2004-2019, which means Croatia’s democracy was slow to consolidate. Some improvements in the political stability indicator coincide with accession to EU, while indicators showing control of corruption worsen in the same period.

<sup>67</sup> World Bank. Worldwide Governance Indicators. Available at: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/worldwide-governance-indicators>.



**Q4: Croatia has a history of high inflation, especially during the early period of the transition process.**

**TRUE**



Source: World Development Indicators<sup>68</sup>

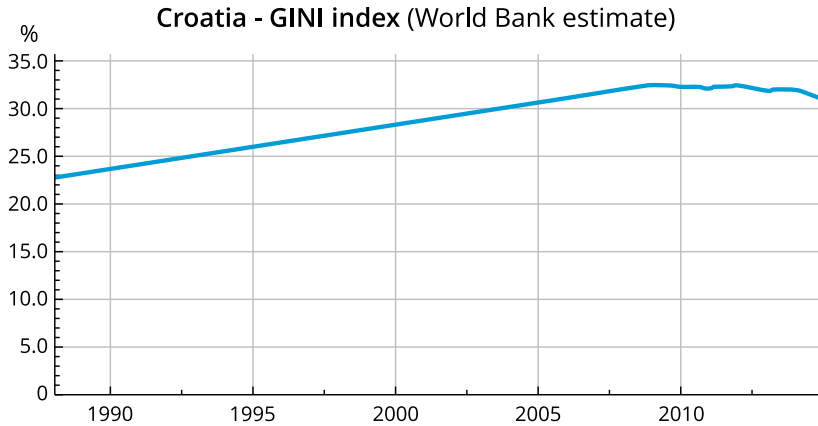
**Explanation:** Croatia had endemically high inflation in the years before the breakup of Yugoslavia. It entered the transition period with an inflation rate of 1400% per year in 1989. There was a second spike in inflation during wartime in 1993, where it reached 1500% per year. The stabilization programme which aimed to cut inflation successfully reduced the inflation rate to below 4% in 1995. The programme included the introduction of a new currency – the Croatian kuna – and it assured its full convertibility to other currencies.

<sup>68</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



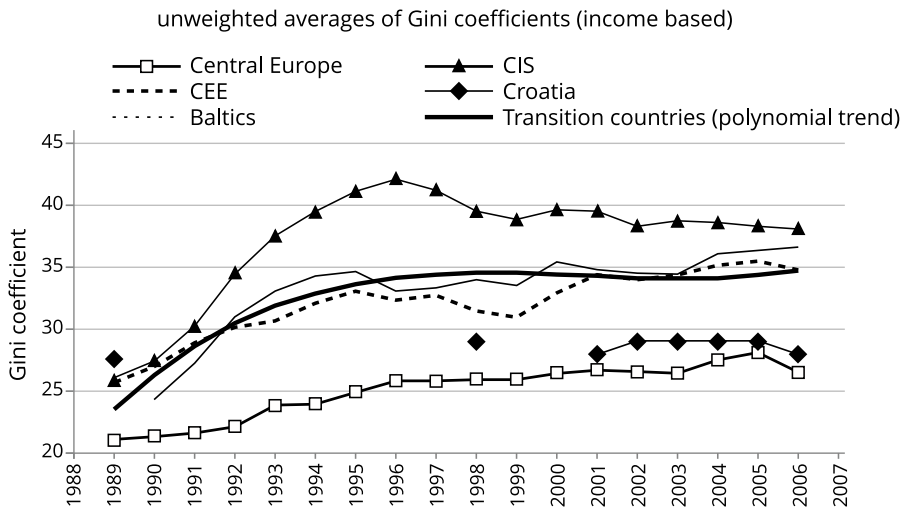
**Q5: Economic inequality increased greatly during the transition period.**

**FALSE**



Source: World Bank<sup>69</sup>

**Development of Inequality in Central Europe, Baltic States, SEE, Croatia and CIS, 1989-2006**



Source: The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Gini index (World Bank estimate) – Croatia. Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=HR>

<sup>70</sup> Leitner S. & Holzner, M. (2009): 'Inequality in Croatia in Comparison. Research Report 355', The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, p.2. Available at: <https://wiiw.ac.at/inequality-in-croatia-in-comparison-dlp-1887.pdf>.

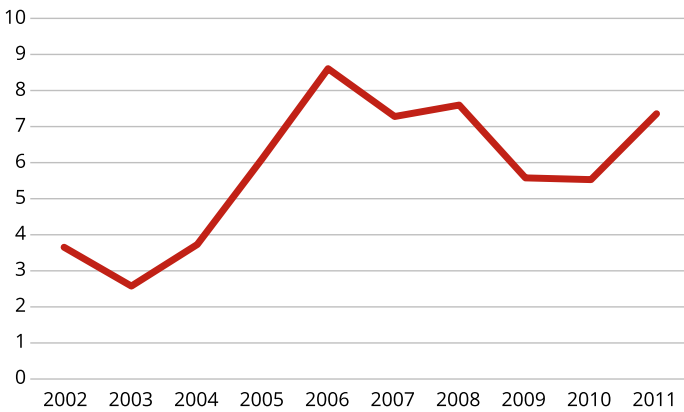
**Explanation:** The Gini coefficient, which measures inequality in the distribution of income, increased from 22.8 in 1988, to 32.6 in 2009. Since no data exists for the period from 1989 to 2009, some estimates suggest that Croatia has had a remarkably stable Gini coefficient during the transition period, unlike the Commonwealth of Independent States (including Russia), which had a considerable rise in inequality. Since then, only minor changes have occurred, leaving Croatia with a level of income inequality only slightly above that of the Central European transition countries on average.



**Q6: During the transition period, entrepreneurs in Croatia did not have a positive public image.**

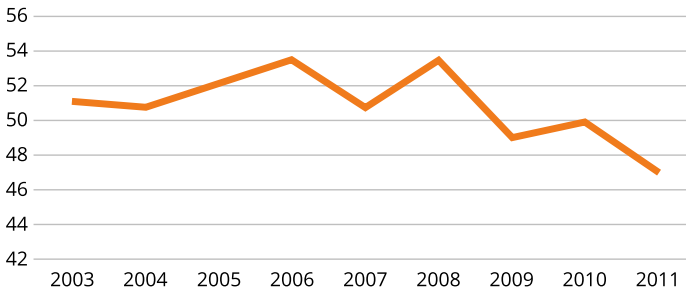
**TRUE**

**TEA – Total Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity Index, Croatia, 1986–2001**



Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor<sup>71</sup>

**Percent of individuals who agree successful entrepreneurs have high societal status, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, Croatia**



Source: Global Entrepreneurship Monitor<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Available at: <https://www.gemconsortium.org>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

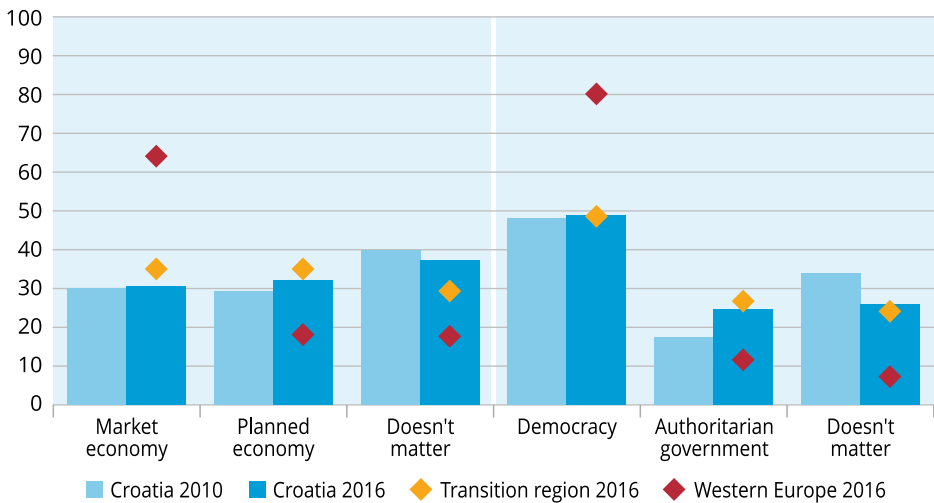
**Explanation:** While the number of entrepreneurs increased according to the TEA index calculated by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, this was not followed by improvements in the public image of entrepreneurs. At the advent of recession in 2009, less than 50% of respondents agreed that successful entrepreneurs held high social status. Privatization had tarnished the image of entrepreneurs. This is also visible in the way in which they were portrayed by the media: in 2011, only 40.9% of individuals agreed that entrepreneurship received sufficient media attention. Notwithstanding the negative public outlook on entrepreneurial activity, 65.33% of respondents agreed that entrepreneurship is a desirable career path.



**Q7: Individuals in Croatia hold mostly negative views on the market economy.**

**TRUE**

**Market economy and democracy:** percentage of respondents who prefer a market over a planned economy and democracy over an authoritarian government



Source: EBRD. Life in Transition III.<sup>73</sup>

**Explanation:** The latest Life in Transition report by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has shown that Croatian support for a market economy is among the lowest in the transition region, with only 31% of respondents unequivocally supporting the system as opposed to any other alternative. Attitudes towards democracy are more positive, with 49% preferring it to any other type of political system. Overall, more than one-third, and around a quarter,

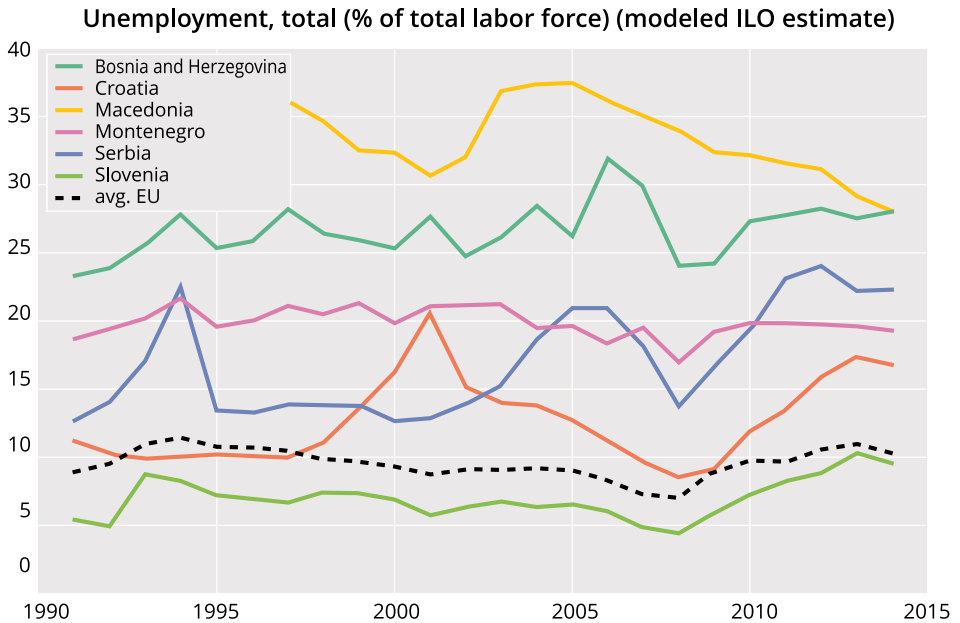
<sup>73</sup> European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2016): Life in Transition Report III, p.87. Available at: <https://www.ebrd.com/publications/life-in-transition-iii.pdf>.

of respondents expressed indifference to the type of economic or political system which exists in Croatia, respectively.



**Q8: During the transition period, the rate of unemployment in Croatia increased significantly.**

**TRUE**



Source: Gapminder<sup>74</sup>

**Explanation:** At the beginning of the transition, unemployment in Croatia was more or less in line with the average in the EU. In the early 2000s, it had nearly doubled, almost approaching levels of unemployment seen in Montenegro. More remote parts of Yugoslavia had already recorded high unemployment rates at the beginning of the transition period, signifying large, persistent disparities between the Yugoslav republics. The rise in unemployment in Croatia in the decade following the war could be attributed to economic transformation and the deindustrialization. The unemployment rate decreased during a period of economic expansion before the financial crisis of 2008 and again after Croatia’s accession to the EU, amongst other factors as a result of increased emigration.

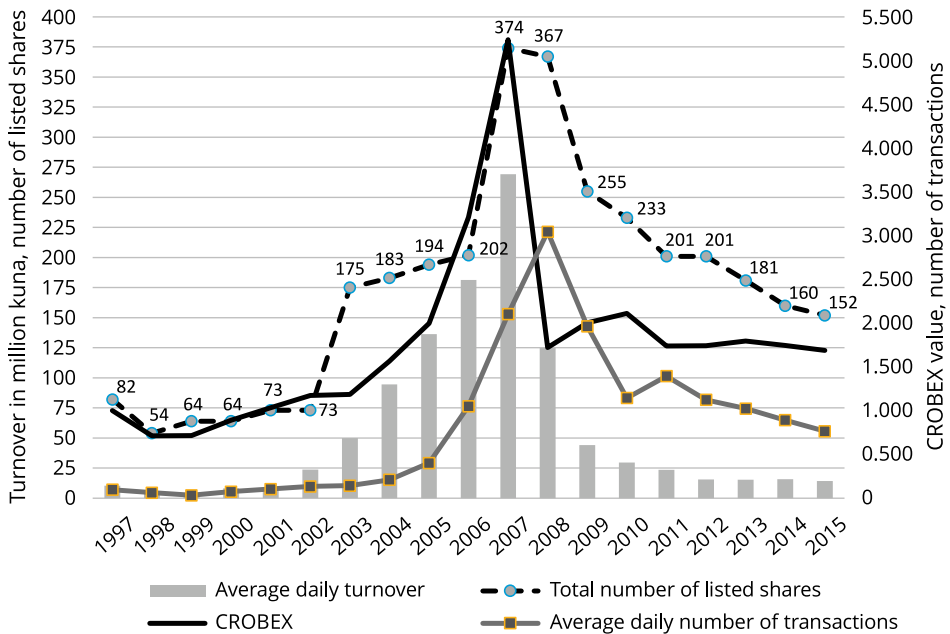
<sup>74</sup> Gapminder. Data documentation. Available at: <https://www.gapminder.org/data/>.



**Q9: The transition period in Croatia was marked by the emergence of capital markets.**

**TRUE**

**Stock market activity, 1997-2015**



Source: 20 years of the Croatian Capital Market – adapted from Zagreb stock exchange reports<sup>75</sup>

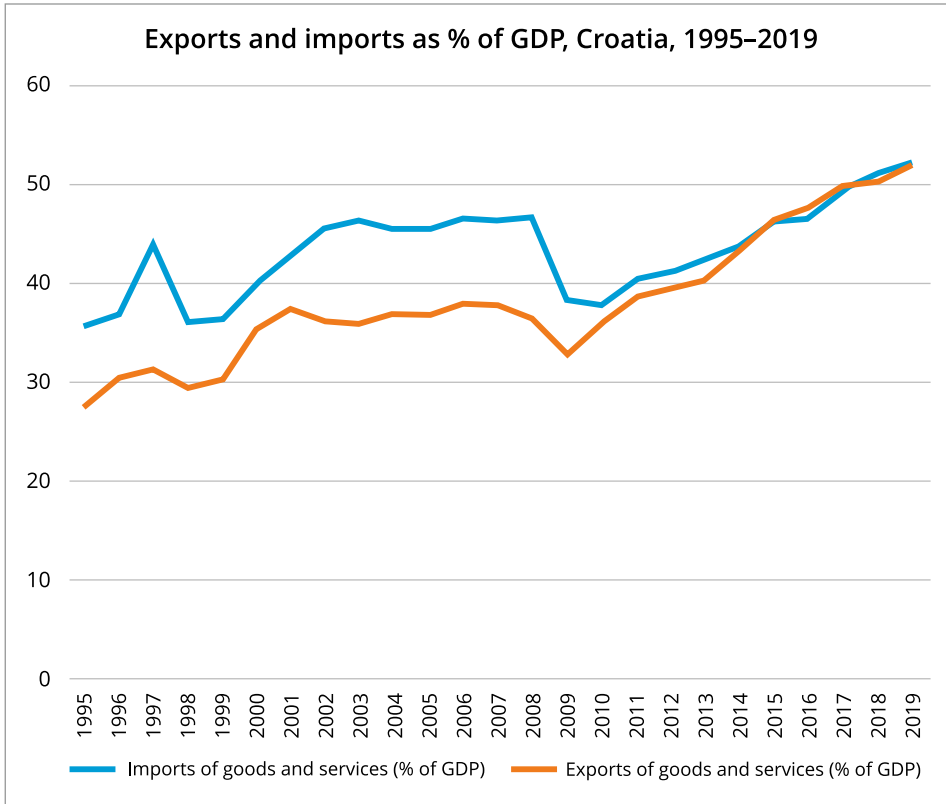
**Explanation:** The Zagreb stock exchange held a dominant role in the Western Balkan region until 2008, when its market capitalization significantly decreased due to the global financial crisis and the economic downturn. The expansion of the stock market can be attributed to several liberalization reforms conducted in the 1990s, ranging from opening the stock market to foreign investors to establishing dedicated financial regulatory institutions.

<sup>75</sup> Grubišić Šeba, M. (2017): '20 Years of the Croatian Capital Market'. In: Zagreb International Review of Economics & Business, Vol. 20 No. SCL, 2017. Available at: <https://www.hnb.hr/documents/20182/2070697/s-026.pdf/e984ecbe-febc-4c69-a62c-b289908efc36>.



**Q10: During the transition period, imports to Croatia increased while exports decreased.**

**FALSE**



Source: World Development Indicators<sup>76</sup>

**Explanation:** During the transition period, Croatia’s economy became significantly more internationalized, with exports rising from 27% of GDP in 1995, to 52% of GDP in 2019. There were two catalysts in this process: the crisis of 2008 and Croatia’s accession to the EU. The difference between exports and imports had been virtually eliminated since 2010, with exports and imports more or less moving in unison.

<sup>76</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.



## SOURCE H: Destinations revisited

### 2A Worker's resorts

The worker's resort Reflektor, on the island of Murter, was built in 1968. It is owned by the labour union of train drivers, so ownership did not change during the transition period. The main goal of a worker's resort is to ensure workers can take vacations where *"profit is not the prime objective, but workers and pensioners are able to enjoy a vacation at an elite destination in the Adriatic (with full board) at very affordable prices."*

Dalibor Petrović, a train-driver from Bjelovar, deputy director of the train driver's union and director of the worker's resort:



*"As companies were privatized, worker's resorts were either sold or turned into commercial enterprises. A well-known worker's resort – far better than the one we have at Slanica – belonging to Podravka in the city of Pirovac was dismantled, together with a number of others. The train driver labour union took over the ownership of the Reflektor resort in 1993, which required substantial material and human resources – but we are proud of what we've accomplished today. We are the only worker's resort in the entirety of the Adriatic where a worker or pensioner, and the members of their family, can take a summer vacation at an attractive tourist location. The accommodation is only 5 metres from the sea and, together with full board, costs around 165 kuna per day. We are lucky that train drivers acquired such a property back in 1968 and were able to preserve it."*

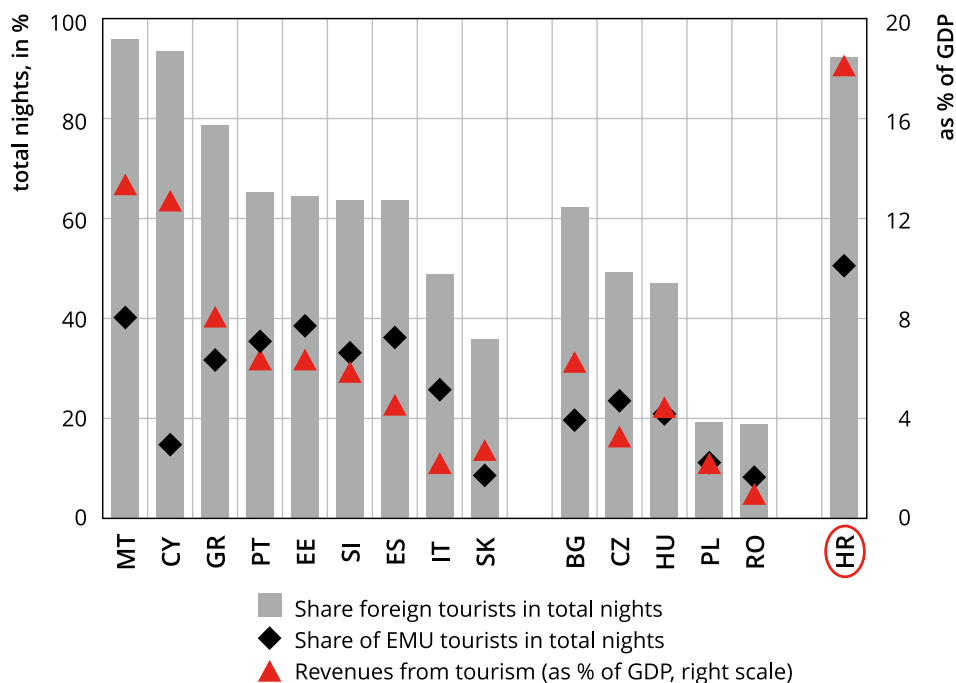
- What changed after the transition?
- How did Reflektor manage to maintain itself?
- Why do you think private companies don't invest in worker's resorts like their socialist predecessors did?
- How do private companies today care for workers?

### 2B World trends

Tourism is one of the most important sectors in the Croatian economy. The economic structure is marked by a lack of diversification, most visible in the excessive dependence on the tourism sector. In terms of the relative size of tourism revenues (percentage of GDP), Croatia stands out among traditional tourist countries of the Mediterranean such as Greece or Spain, but also has a higher share of tourism than the island economies of Malta and Cyprus. Globally, Croatia's share of tourism in GDP is only surpassed by so-called island micro-economies such as the Maldives or the Seychelles, which has profound effects on the economy.

## TEACHING HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

Tourism from the eurozone is a major source of revenue for Croatia, with over 50% of guests originating from the common currency area, bringing in about 70% of the total revenue in tourism<sup>77</sup>. Traditionally, the most common guests from that group are those from Italy, Austria, Germany, and Slovenia. This graph illustrates Croatia's eurozone tourist structure vis-a-vis some selected countries of Europe and main tourist competitors within the eurozone. A considerable number of tourists also come from the United States, with Dubrovnik as main attraction because it has been featured in shows such as Game of Thrones and Star Wars. Another niche emerged in the post-transition period, elite tourism, where property development was mostly stifled by unresolved property rights. In other words, it was extremely difficult to find large plots of land for property development which had undisputed ownership. A large plot of land with a single owner is needed to develop luxury resorts.



Source: Croatian National Bank

- What changed after the transition?
- Who profited most after the transition?

<sup>77</sup> Bukovšak, M.; Čudina, A. & Pavić, N. (2017): 'Adoption of the Euro in Croatia: Possible Effects on International Trade and Investments'. Croatian National Bank, p.10. Available at: <https://www.hnb.hr/documents/20182/2070697/s-026.pdf/e984ecbe-febc-4c69-a62c-b289908efc36>.

- What problems does an economy, which is excessively dependent on tourism face?
- Is a “tourism dependent economy” sustainable?

## 2C Free entrepreneurship or free rentierism?

Croatia has some 100,000 registered private renters who rent out their properties, mostly for short-term rentals to tourists. Owners of these properties pay the lowest taxes of all income earning individuals: a lump sum tax of 300 kuna per bed per year. The increase in tourism in the aftermath of the transition had a profound effect on property prices. For instance, in the period from 1990 to 2010, the prices of newly built properties increased by 92%. These prices rose further when Croatia entered the EU. Digital platforms increased the supply of tourist accommodation, leading to the *airbnb-ization* of city centres along the coast. However, digital platforms also suggest prices to those who rent out their properties, which increases competition and lowers the prices of accommodation for consumers.

- What changed after the transition?
- Was renting more profitable for private individuals before or after the transition? Explain.
- How do you think the collapse of the command economy and the social support system has affected the rise of private renting?

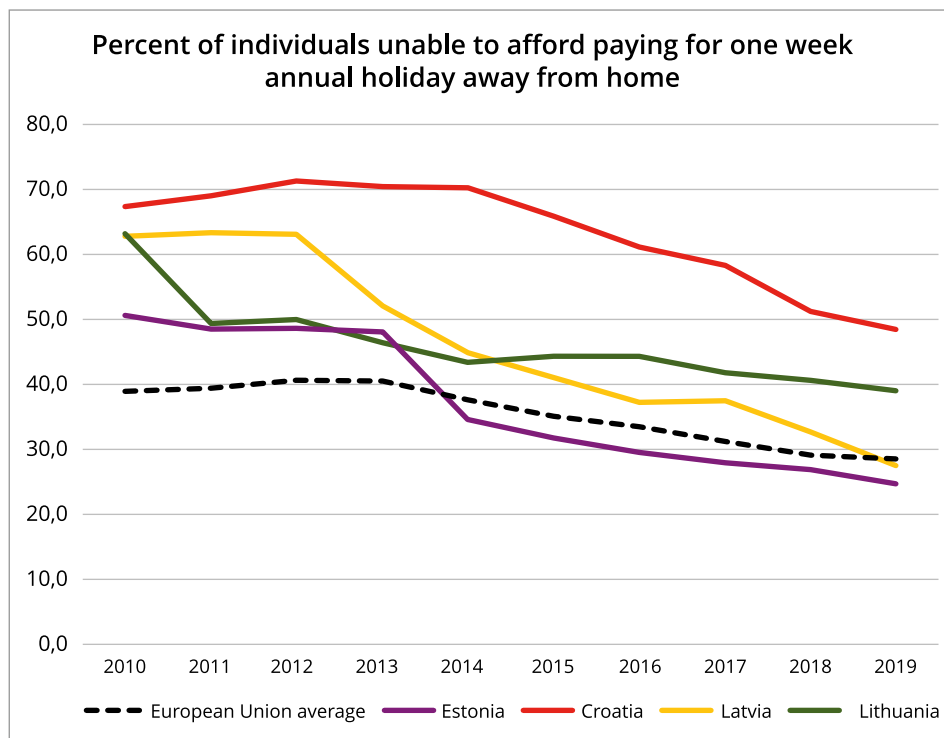
## 2D Hotel tourism revisited

The Haludovo Palace Hotel on the island of Krk was designed in 1971 by Boris Magaš, a renowned Croatian architect and member of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The project was funded by Bob Guccione, the founder of Penthouse magazine, who opened a casino on the property which quickly went bankrupt. The hotel was owned by the Brodokomerc company and served as a shelter for refugees during the war. The hotel was bought by its director, who received loans from the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development to prepare the property for the tourist season, in 1995. However, he did not invest the funds in the property and an investigation was later opened. The court case lasted for more than a decade. The hotel had its last guests in 2001. Ultimately, the hotel was sold to a foreign investor who is unable to invest in the property due to a dispute over property rights and problems in the process of privatization. Today, despite being abandoned, it serves as a tourist attraction.

- What were the difficulties faced when the hotel was privatized?
- Should the Croatian government have done more to keep the hotel open or not? Why?

- How was the hotel able to function before the transition and what changed?

## 2E Feet (still) in a washbowl?



Source: Eurostat<sup>78</sup>

In 2019, nearly every second Croatian citizen older than 16 years of age was unable to afford a one-week annual holiday away from home. The EU average was 28.4%. Inside the EU, only the Romanians and Greeks fared worse, but the situation was even bleaker during the Great Recession of 2008, when approximately 70% of Croats could not afford paying for one week of annual holiday. In the same period, the champions of the transition, the so-called Baltic tigers, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania experienced a sharp decline in the percentage of individuals not being able to afford holidays, from 58.8% to 30.4% on average.

- When it comes to ordinary citizens and their vacations, are they better off or worse off after the transition?

<sup>78</sup> Eurostat: 'Inability to afford a one-week annual holiday'. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>.

- Reflect on the reasons why, in a comparison between EU-member states, the percentage of people who can afford a weekly annual holiday differs so greatly.
- To what extent is the ability to pay for a vacation an indicator of financial wellbeing?

### **SOURCE I: Questions for final discussion/essay**

Was there a sound economic basis on which the socialist system could function? In the end, who paid for these vacations? Was this based on real productivity? Maintenance of the resorts was sustained by the companies and unions, how did they cover these costs? Did the state ultimately cover the costs, and by what measures (inflation, foreign debt, etc.)? Why don't today's companies sustain worker's resorts? Why is tourism today mostly run privately?

How do social concepts like justice, fairness, equality, transparency, loyalty, and equity, relate to the two economic systems in place before and after the transition? Which core values would you associate with the economy before and after the transition? Are there "winners" and "losers" in the transition process?

Are traces of the socialist economy still visible in your country?

Some theoreticians claim that the economic transition is ongoing. Using your knowledge of the situation in your country, discuss this question in class.

## GERMANY: VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS IN THE TRIALS AGAINST THE SO-CALLED WALL-SHOOTERS. HOW CAN A CONSTITUTIONAL STATE TODAY JUDGE PAST INJUSTICES?

Authors: Barbara Christophe & Veronika Ludwig

### I. Overview

The teaching unit consists of two double lessons and one single lesson. It is aimed at students of an advanced history course, who usually attend five lessons per week. In five steps they discuss, against the background of increasingly complex information, whether the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) border soldiers who shot at fleeing GDR citizens during their service at the inner-German border are guilty of a criminal offence.

- In the first step, the teacher will give a short introductory lecture on legal and political controversies surrounding the so-called “Mauerschützenprozesse” (wall-shooting trials) in reunified Germany.
- In the second step, the students reconstruct the concrete course of events on the basis of a descriptive text and vote for the first time in a secret ballot on whether or not the border soldiers are guilty of manslaughter, from their point of view.
- In the third step, in group work based on a division of labour, they either deal with the personal background of perpetrators and victims or with legal aspects of the crime. The working groups present the results of their work to each other. After each presentation there is a vote on the question of guilt.
- In the fourth step, the teacher explains to the students how the Berlin Regional Court and the Federal Supreme Court decided in the case.
- In the fifth step, the students reflect on their voting behaviour at the various stations in a homework assignment, explaining the reasons behind the decisions they have made and how their position may have changed in the course of the lesson.

### II. Students' age

17-19 years

### III. Objectives

The focus is on the development of orientation and judgment skills. As the students acquire knowledge, they come to understand how complex the historical events negotiated in the Wall Shooter Trials are. They understand that different

people hold different positions on this issue and the reasons behind this. They may even realize how their own judgement may have changed in the light of new facts. Students acquire the key competence of ambiguity tolerance.

#### IV. Key concepts

The teaching unit is based on the content and methodological requirements formulated in the History Framework Curriculum for upper classes in Berlin. It offers the opportunity (i) to deal with history as a controversy, (ii) to gain insights into the connection between history and law, and (iii) to deal with human rights violations after 1945 and their legal treatment after 1989. Methodologically, students learn to (i) independently compare and judge different sources and interpretations of the past, (ii) independently analyse normative texts, (iii) confidently describe and judge a (scientific, political) controversy.

#### V. Key question

What challenges does the rule of law face in judging injustices committed in a political system that is not built on the rule of law?

#### VI. Prior knowledge

The students must reactivate knowledge about the construction of the wall in 1961 and about the system of the GDR.

#### VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

##### First double lesson

The teacher reminds the students of the construction of the wall, introduces the problems of the wall-shooting trials, and refers to controversial social debates in reunified Germany. In order to arouse the interest of the students, the teacher thematizes the case of Chris Gueffroy, who was shot at the wall, and projects a press photo of his mother, surrounded by her lawyers, on the wall. He or she explains that Mrs Gueffroy has called for the border guards who shot her son to be convicted of murder. (5 minutes)

Following this, the students gather in small groups to trace back the course of the escape and shooting of Chris Gueffroy. They read a narrative text from the Chronicle of the Wall and highlight the facts which, in their view, are particularly relevant for a discussion of the case (see APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 152). The results are gathered in plenary. The teacher creates a timeline based on the discussion. Then the first secret ballot takes place in which the students decide whether the border soldiers are guilty of manslaughter from their point of view or not (approx. 40 minutes).

Afterwards, three different groups of students will work in groups on materials on different aspects of the Gueffroy case. At each stage, the work is to be pre-structured through work assignments. The students are informed that they can revise their notes at home and have 20 minutes at the beginning of the next double lesson to prepare their presentation. (45 minutes)

- At the first stage, they examine information on victims and perpetrators (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 153): Who was Chris Gueffroy? What do we know about the border guards? In analysing the material, they (i) highlight information which, from their perspective, could be legally relevant to a trial, (ii) work out arguments to which the defenders of the so-called “Mauerschützen” can refer, and (iii) evaluate the border soldiers’ personal guilt based on their own sense of justice.
- At the second stage the students work out what statements legal acts under the GDR make concerning the so-called shooting order. In concrete terms, they analyse decrees on the firing order, passages on the right to refuse to obey orders in GDR criminal law and international legal acts signed by the GDR (See APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 156). As a result, they explain (i) when the so-called “order to shoot” was legally ordered, (ii) what consequences this legal order had for GDR soldiers and citizens and (iii) to which conditions the lawmakers bound the use of firearms and to what extent they formulated exceptions. In addition, they justify to what extent the international legal act signed by the GDR is important with regard to the so-called shooting order.
- At the third stage, the students identify the central arguments of the so-called Radbruch formula (See APPENDIX – SOURCE D, p. 158) and justify the extent to which this formula can be applied in the so-called “Mauerschützenprozesse” (wall-shooter trials) from their point of view. They proceed in three steps. (i) They define positive and natural law and describe the historical context for which the formula was developed. (ii) Then they explain the two reasons which, according to Radbruch, make it possible to convict a person of an act which is not punishable under existing positive law and explain to what extent Radbruch himself makes a difference between these two reasons. (iii) Finally, they will discuss the applicability of the formula in the Wall Shooter Trials.

### **Second double lesson**

The results obtained in the three working groups are visualized on a poster. The group chooses a presenter (20 minutes).

The first two give a 15-minute presentation of their results, based on their posters. The audience takes notes and is given 10 minutes to ask questions. After each of the two presentations, participants vote on the guilt of the border guards. (2x30 minutes)



### **Concluding lesson**

Following the same pattern as in the previous double lesson, the third group presents their poster, classmates ask questions and take another vote. (30 minutes)

Afterwards, the students reflect on the overall week in plenary based on three guiding questions: Who consistently voted the same way? Who changed their position over the course of the week? What were the reasons for this? (10 minutes)

At the end of the lesson, the teacher refers once again to the social uncertainty in dealing with the Mauerschützenprozesse and recapitulates the verdicts that were passed (See APPENDIX – SOURCE E, *p. 160*). The teacher refers to the verdict of the Berlin Regional Court, which initially sentenced the shooter to three years and six months, then mentions that the verdict was overturned by the Federal Supreme Court on the grounds that the shooter himself was in a certain sense a victim of the border regime, and then points out that the shooter was given a suspended sentence of two years.

### **Assessment**

Assessment is based both (i) on the poster produced in the groups, the presentation, and the reaction to questions from classmates (ii), and on written homework assigned at the end of the lesson, where students reflect on and justify their voting behaviour over the course of the week.

### **Materials and tools**

- All materials must be printed out for all participants.
- The three groups each need one A3 sheet to make the poster.
- For the four votes, a ballot box and ballot papers must be prepared on which the students can tick guilty or not guilty.
- To record the results of the four votes, a table with four columns must be prepared in advance.

## APPENDIX

### SOURCE A: Case reconstruction

#### **'The Death of Chris Gueffroy',** In: *Chronicle of the Wall*

In May 1989, the 20-year-old waiter, Chris Gueffroy, from East Berlin is supposed to be drafted into the National People's Army. But he wants to travel, to see America, this is his big dream. [...]

Being locked up and knowing that it will always be like this, that he will never be free to decide for himself where he wants to live, is increasingly unbearable for the 20-year-old. When Chris Gueffroy learns in early 1989 that he is scheduled to be drafted into the National People's Army in May, he and Christian G. decide to leave the GDR in mid-January.

The two young men do not want to apply for departure. They fear the usual harassment at work and in their private lives that this entails. They learn from friends that the order to shoot has been suspended. Now it is clear to them: they will try to escape to West Berlin over the Wall. When Chris Gueffroy and Christian G. hear that the Swedish Prime Minister is expected for a state visit to East Berlin in early February 1989, they decide to try to escape on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. They cannot imagine that, during a state visit, refugees could be shot at. In case they are arrested, they expect to be deported to the West soon. [...]

On 5 February 1989, at around 9 p.m., the two young men leave their shared home, heading for the border area. [...] Around 10.30 p.m. they reach the "Harmonie" allotment gardens in the East Berlin district of Treptow. They wait in a tool shed for more than an hour and observe the border area in order to find a suitable time. Around 11.30 p.m. they approach the barrier installations in front of the Britzer Zweigkanal. [...] They have two homemade grappling hooks with them, which should help them to get across the barriers. Undiscovered, the two sporty young men give each other a leg up over the three-metre-high Hinterland wall. Christian G. reaches the top of the wall first and from there helps Chris Gueffroy up. They leave one of the grappling hooks behind. As they crawl through the signal fence, they trigger a visual and acoustic alarm. While the two men run towards the last barrier element, an approximately three-metre-high expanded metal fence, they are taken under fire by a couple of border guards. In order to escape the shots, they run along the fence in the opposite direction – and come under fire from a second couple of guards. When the attempt to overcome the last fence with the second grappling hook fails, the two try it again with a leg-up. About 40 metres away from Chris Gueffroy, a border guard squats down and fires single shots at his feet; he does indeed hit his target, but the person hit is in shock and shows no reaction. Then the shooter aims higher. With his back to the fence, a bullet hits Chris Gueffroy in the heart. He collapses and dies within minutes from the consequences of his serious injury. [...]

In the West as well as in the East, many residents of the border area register the nightly shots. A West Berlin witness tells the police that he heard at least ten shots and saw two men, one of whom was lying lifeless on the ground, being taken away. [...]

Chris Gueffroy's mother also heard the shots. Two days later, one of his friends visits her. He tells her about her son's plan to escape – and that the shots may have been aimed at him. That same evening the state security picks her up in order to “clarify the facts of a case”. After hours of interrogation, she finally learns that her son is dead. Staff of the GDR Ministry for “State Security” (Stasi) tell her that Chris Gueffroy was seriously injured in an attack on a “military security zone” of the GDR and died “despite immediate medical treatment”.

#### Work assignments

- Mark those pieces of information which, from your perspective, could be legally relevant at a trial. (AFB 1)
- Using the marked information, create a timeline of the escape attempt and its consequences (AFB 2).
- Assess the behaviour of the border guards. (Would you find them guilty? Give reasons).

## SOURCE B: Working Groups

### Victims and perpetrators? Who was Chris Gueffroy? What do we know about the border soldiers?

Chris Gueffroy, born on 21 June 1968 in Pasewalk, moves to Berlin with his mother when he is five years old. In third grade, sports investigators discover his gymnastics talent and assign him to the children's and youth sports school of FC Dynamo Berlin. Chris Gueffroy has high hopes for a career as a gymnast, but at the same time feels increasingly restricted in the state-regulated daily routine. When he refuses to pursue an officer's career in the National People's Army after school, he is not admitted to the Abitur. His dreams of becoming an actor or pilot are thus shattered. In September 1985 he starts an apprenticeship as a waiter at the airport restaurant Schönefeld near Berlin and then works in various restaurants. Although Chris Gueffroy has both an above-average income as a waiter and a certain amount of freedom, he also gets to know the dark sides of his profession. In front of his mother, he emphasizes again and again how corruption in the restaurant business disgusts him. His friend Christian G., whom he met at catering school, feels the same way.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Udo Baron, U. & Hertle, H.-H.: In: Chronicle of the Wall – Victims at the Wall. Available at: <https://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/en/victims/180603/gueffroy-chris>.

Had I... would I ... could I... Mike Sch. is 26 years old. He could be a happy man: nice wife, two little boys, six and four years old, nice flat in a new development area in Dresden, good job as a milling cutter. For one and a half years he has been free to elect whom he wants and travel where he wants. Mike Sch. could enjoy his life. If it weren't for the tormenting thoughts that keep haunting him, which all begin with: Would have. Would have. Could.

If only this boy had chosen another escape route ... If only I hadn't been on duty that night ... If only I could bring the boy back to life... And then this terrible dream that keeps coming back, short, and intense and always the same. "I see the flashing alarm light at the border, and how the red glow shines back from the metal fence. Nothing more. Then Sch. wakes up covered in sweat and relives once again the night from February 5 to 6, 1989, when he, a corporal in the GDR border troops, helped kill a young person and botched his own life.

Collapsed on the armchair in his living room, his face ashen, Mike Sch. describes how he experienced this evening of 5 February. He and his comrade Ingo H. had detected from the watchtower on Britzer Allee the trucks with the relay and were on their way down when suddenly the alarm light flashed. Then Sch. knew that his great wish had been dashed: to get through the one-and-a-half year border service without an "emergency". He knew that "border violators" had touched the trigger wire. And he knew that he had to stop them, by any means necessary.

The alarm light flashed red, which meant that the refugees were in the adjacent guard section, near the border post "Straße 16" where Andreas K. and Peter S. were on duty. Mike Sch.: "We were just walking out of the tower, as the S. shouted "Stop, border guard, stop!" and fired a warning shot. We had to stay in our guard area in such a case, but there the two men ran in at an angle. They ran like scalded cats." K. and S. fired, K.'s Kalashnikov was set on continuous fire. Nevertheless, the refugees reached the extended metal fence. And then Mike Sch. said the words of which he is ashamed today, which will soon bring him an indictment: "Now we, too, have to shoot, otherwise they'll be gone."<sup>80</sup>

### **Stasi carried corpses away from the Berlin Wall**

Mike Sch. was the post commander, with the authority to give orders to Ingo H. He does not know whether his subordinate would have fired even without the order. Nor can he say any more why he did not pull the trigger himself, although he already had his pistol in his hand. He only knows: Ingo H. shot. And the man who had been preparing to give the other one a leg-up collapsed at the fence.

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<sup>80</sup> Hoidn-Borchers, A. & Krause, W. (1991): 'Das Blut an ihren Händen' [The blood on their hands]. In: Stern 23/1991.

In the meantime, the “Government Crime Task Force” based in Berlin is investigating 153 cases against border soldiers who have shot or injured refugees. Several other cases are pending at the public prosecutor’s offices of various federal states. The Berlin judiciary is aware of the names of 38 shooters. Mike Sch. and his three comrades are among them.

Before the end of this year, says justice spokeswoman Jutta Burghart, the public prosecutor’s office hopes to “conclude the investigations in one case or another”. If convicted, the perpetrators face a prison sentence of no less than five years for manslaughter. However, no one has been arrested yet.

Since the beginning of last week, Honecker’s “accomplices” in the matter of the shooting order, the former SED greets Hans Albrecht, Heinz Kessler, Erich Mielke, Willi Stoph and Fritz Streletz, have been in custody. Reason for detention: incitement to manslaughter.

### **In the wrong place at the wrong time?**

Mike Sch. rather shrugged off the news of the arrests. How does it help him that now finally those who were actually responsible for the fatal shots are to be brought to justice? He must continue to live with the (self-) accusation of being a “wall murderer” because he gave an order.

Mike Sch. is a perpetrator, but also a victim of a regime that had men, women and young people shot who only wanted to get from one country to another. Mike Sch. says he was “broken”. He was just out of luck compared to most of his comrades: He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The 27-year-old Andreas K. initially refused to shoot at people and was then seconded to kitchen duty. His comrades had therefore ridiculed him with the nickname “**cockroach**”. He was allowed to take part in the border patrols only after he had given a written undertaking to shoot as well.

The 26-year-old shooter Ingo H. claims that he actually considered firing shots at fleeing people to be a crime, at least before he took on service with the border troops – a proof of his “political indoctrination”, as his defence counsel points out. The ordinary border guards, he continues, acted solely on orders from above. Anyone who prevented a “border breakthrough” – whether or not it was fatal – was also rewarded with special leave, commendations and money prizes. Acquittal is therefore the unanimous request of the nine defence counsellors.<sup>81</sup>

### **Work assignments**

- Mark those pieces of information that, from your perspective, could be legally relevant to a trial. (AFB1)

<sup>81</sup> Frenzel, E. (2014). ‘Die Grenze des Rechtsstaats’ [‘The limits of the rule of law’]. In: Der Spiegel 7.11.2014.

- Work out arguments to which the defenders of the so-called Wall gunmen can refer.
- Evaluate the border guards' personal sense of justice.

### SOURCE C: Which law applies?

#### GDR law and the firing order

##### *Order of the Minister of National Defence No 76/61 dated 6.10.1961*

All formations, units and troops of the National People's Army's Frontier Command are instructed to ensure the inviolability of the borders of the German Democratic Republic in every situation and to prevent any violation of its sovereignty. For the further securing of the national borders of the German Democratic Republic I order the following:

1. the provisions on the use of firearms of DV-10/4... ... shall apply with immediate effect to the guards, posts, and patrols of the border guards of the National People's Army [...] In extension of these provisions, the guards [...] shall be obliged to use the firearm for the following purposes:

- To arrest, detain or destroy armed persons or armed bandit groups who have entered the territory of the GDR or are trying to break through the border to the Western Zone, if they do not comply with the order to lay down their weapons or try to evade their arrest or detention by threatening with a weapon or using a weapon.
- To repel armed attacks or attacks on the territory of the German Democratic Republic, on the population in the border area, on border guards or members of other armed organs of the German Democratic Republic in the border area.
- To arrest persons who do not comply with the orders of the border guards by not stopping on call "Stop – stop – border guard" or after firing a warning shot, but who are obviously trying to violate the state border of the German Democratic Republic and when there is no other possibility of arrest.

##### *Law on the State Border of the GDR, 25 March 1982*

#### Section 27 Use of firearms

(1) The use of firearms is the ultimate measure of violence against persons. The firearm may only be used in cases where physical impact without or with aids has been unsuccessful or obviously does not promise success. [...]

(2) The use of firearms is justified in order to prevent the imminent execution or continuation of an offence which, under the given circumstances, appears to

be criminal. It is also justified for the purpose of apprehending persons strongly suspected of having committed a crime.

(3) The use of firearms shall, in principle, be announced by shouting or firing a warning shot, unless an imminent danger can be prevented or eliminated only by the targeted use of firearms.

(4) Firearms shall not be used, if

a)...

b)...

c)...

Against young people and women wherever possible.

## **2. The right to refuse to obey orders in the GDR**

*Criminal Code of the GDR dated 12.1.1968*

*Section 258. Acting on command*

(1) A military person shall not be held criminally responsible for an act committed in the execution of the order of a superior, except where the execution of the order manifestly contravenes accepted standards of international law or criminal law.

(2) ...

(3) Refusal or non-execution of an order, the execution of which would be contrary to accepted norms of international law or criminal law, shall not give rise to criminal liability

## **3. International legal instruments signed by the GDR**

### *3.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.

Article 13: Everyone has the right to move and reside freely within a State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

### *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*

Signed by the GDR in 1974

Article 12

1) Everyone who is lawfully resident in the territory of a State shall have the right to move and reside freely there.

2) Everyone is free to leave any country, including his own.

3) The above rights may be restricted only if such restriction is provided for by law and is necessary to protect national security, public order (ordre public),

public health, public morality or the rights and freedoms of others, and provided that such restriction is compatible with the other rights recognized in the Covenant.

### Work assignments

- Analyse the legal acts on the order to shoot and explain against this background (i) when the so-called order to shoot was legally ordered, (ii) what consequences this legal order had for soldiers and citizens of the GDR and (iii) what were the requirements the legislator applied to the use of firearms, and what were the exceptions it stated for such use.
- Explain to what extent the acts of international law signed by the GDR are important in relation to the so-called order to shoot.

## SOURCE D: The Radbruch formula

### Who was Radbruch?

Gustav Radbruch, born 1878 in Lübeck and died 1949 in Heidelberg. He was a German politician and jurist; from 1898 he studied law in Munich, Leipzig and Berlin; he received his doctorate in 1902 under a liberal doctoral supervisor in Berlin; was habilitated in 1903 in Heidelberg; in 1910, following several lectureships, he became professor of criminal law in Heidelberg; in 1914, he went to the university of Königsberg, but shortly afterwards he volunteered for World War I; Radbruch sympathized with Social Democracy at an early age; joined the Party in 1918, as his career would otherwise have ended; became a professor in Kiel in 1919 against the bitter opposition of his colleagues; was elected to the Reichstag in 1920; was Minister of Justice for some time; returned to the University of Heidelberg in 1926; in May 1933, he was the first German professor to be dismissed from the civil service

### What does the formula say?

Radbruch's formula is the name given to a thesis which Gustav Radbruch formulated in 1946 in his essay *Gesetzliches Unrecht und übergesetzliches Recht* [Legal Injustice and Supra-legal Justice]. In this essay he deals with situations where the positive justice, i.e., the justice laid down in laws, comes into conflict with principles that are above all law, including the ideas of equality of all people and the right to life. Radbruch demands that judges must always decide against the law and in favour of the supra-legal justice when the law in question

- Is to be regarded as "intolerably unjust" or: *"It should be possible to solve the conflict between justice and legal security such that positive law, secured by statute and power, takes precedence even if it is unjust and unsuitable in terms of its content, unless the contradiction between positive law and justice has reached a point that is unbearable and the law, as 'unjust law,' must give*



*way to justice. It is impossible to draw a sharper line between cases of legal injustice and laws which, despite their incorrect content, are nevertheless valid”.*

- “Deliberately denies” the equality of all human beings, which, from the point of view of the interpreter, is a fundamental principle of the concept of law: *“Where [...] justice is not even sought, the orders thus created can only be by virtue of power, never laws [...]; thus, the law which denies human rights to certain people is not a legal proposition. Hence, there is a sharp boundary between justice and non-justice, whereas, as has been shown above, the boundary between legal injustice and applicable law is only a delimiting measure [...].”*

### **Positions on the application of Radbruch’s formula to the Gueffroy trial**

#### ***How a West German court tried to deal with the East German past***

But then he (Seidel, judge at the Berlin Regional Court): asks: “Is everything justice that has formally been issued as law? “ His answer: “This law deserves no obedience.” Further, he states that he does not intend comparison, but, ever since the Nazi era, it has been known “that there is a core area of justice, which [...] no law may touch”. Seidel declares [...] “the protection of life applies to every individual”, hence a “serious violation of extra-positive justice” is to be noted.

Here, and also there, where Seidel speaks of “recognised norms of international law”, such as the freedom to leave any country, he depicts a juridically sound world which – unfortunately – does not exist. For four decades, lawyers and legal philosophers have been arguing about an internationally valid concept of “supra-positive justice” that would help to enforce human rights, no matter how states of illegitimate justice have formulated their laws.

For the Nuremberg Trials, which dealt with a part of the Nazi past, the legal institution of “Crime against Humanity” was invented especially for this purpose. It did not remain without controversy. With its help, however, crimes of a different quality than that of the wall-shooters were punished: the mass murder of millions of people.

Does Theodor Seidel nevertheless want to compare the horrible killing of a human being with industrialized mass murder? Does he intend to require the four defendants to think in “supra-positive terms” in a matter of seconds, something that lawyers have not managed to do in generations?<sup>82</sup>

With their judgement of 20 January 1992, the Berlin judges provide a kind of blueprint for the subsequent proceedings against wall shooters. They affirm the fundamental question of whether members of the former GDR border troops can be prosecuted in court, even though the use of firearms was legitimised by GDR

<sup>82</sup> Frenkel, R. (1992). ‘Tötung im Interesse der Obrigkeit’ [‘Killing in the interest of the authorities’]. In: Die Zeit, 24.1.1992

law: in the court's view, the deliberate killing of refugees by gunfire or mines is an intolerable violation of elementary commandments of justice. West German courts had already used the same formula in the 1950s to investigate Nazi crimes.

There is no doubt that justice is spoken in the trials of wall-shooters – but justice has fallen by the wayside. In their attempt to come to terms with crimes committed on the inner-German border, the courts for their part reach a limit: the limit of the rule of law.

Karin Gueffroy, the mother of the last GDR refugee who was shot dead, is probably speaking from the heart for the relatives of the victims of the Wall when she says in the newspaper *Das Parlament*, in view of the suspended sentences imposed by the Federal Court of Justice in 1993 on the shooters of her son: "I don't think it's fair, I still say that today. But I had to learn to live with it."<sup>83</sup>

### Work assignments

- Define positive and supra-positive law and work out the historical context for which the formula was developed. (AFB 1)
- Radbruch gives two reasons for convicting a person for an act that is not worthy of punishment under current positive law. Explain how Radbruch himself draws a distinction between these two grounds. (AFB 2)
- Justify how the formula can be applied in the Wall Shooter Trials. (AFB 3)

### SOURCE E: Court Sentences

- **Berlin Regional Court, 20.1.1992**
- 3 years and 6 months for voluntary manslaughter for the shooter Ingo H. Acquittal or probation sentence for the other three border guards.
- **Sentence by the Federal Court of Justice, 14.3.1994**
- Reverses the Regional Court's sentence on the ground that the Court of First Instance failed to take account of the fact that the shooter was at the very bottom of the military hierarchy, and that he was "also, to a certain extent, a victim of the border regime".
- **Follow-up proceedings at the Berlin Regional Court**
- Ingo H. was sentenced to two years on probation
- Border post commander remains unpunished "for want of intent to kill".

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<sup>83</sup> Frenzel, E. (2014). 'Die Grenze des Rechtsstaats' [The limits of the rule of law]. In: Der Spiegel, 7.11.2014.

## LITHUANIA: THE TRANSITION PERIOD IN LITHUANIA: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

**Authors: Giedrė Tumosaitė, Tomas Vaitkūnas & Vaidotas Steponavičius**

### I. Overview

This lesson aims to help students identify problems related to the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the period of transition to democracy in Lithuania, critically using and analysing diverse information sources. The lesson is based on the new realities, experiences, and social roles that the transition period introduced, alongside the re-establishment of independence and democracy. It can also become the final summarizing lesson of the transition period.

### II. Students' age

2nd gymnasium grade (10<sup>th</sup> school year); the age of students – 16-17.

### III. Objectives

- Cognitive competence, which includes learning to learn, problem-solving, critical thinking, and a multi-perspective approach. Students would work with various sources of information during the lesson, identify problems, discuss them in groups, and encounter different opinions or points of view, thus strengthening their cognitive competencies.
- Creativity as a prerequisite for the capacity to raise questions independently. Searching for and identifying challenges, proposing a potential solution, and defending it in the group would develop students' inner readiness to think critically and act "here" and "now".
- Socio-emotional competence as a prerequisite to showing respect for people from different social and cultural groups, encouraging cooperation, and understanding the reasons for stereotypes. Working together, students would expand their collaboration skills.
- Subject competence. Students are expected to acquire the ability to link the political, economic, and social processes of the transition period; acquire knowledge that reflects the society of the 1990s.

### IV. Key concepts

- The transition period – the transition from communism to democracy refers to a period when the state's political, social, cultural, and economic system underwent a transformation in 1989/1991.

- Ethnic group – a community or population made up of people that share a common nationality, language, or ethnic origin.
- Migration – moving from one place of residence to another.

### V. Prior knowledge

These lessons are the last in the series of 3-4 lessons about the transition period. Also, students must already have the following prior knowledge/have studied the following topics:

- Soviet policy before Gorbachev – the last years of stagnation, war in Afghanistan, economic downturn.
- The opportunity for change created by *perestroika*.
- The liberation of CEE countries from Soviet influence.
- The activities of the Helsinki Group, Kaunas Spring, Lithuanian Freedom League and the Catholic Church and their influence.
- The daily life of people before the transition.
- Establishing the Lithuanian Reform Movement in 1988.
- The re-establishment of the Lithuanian statehood in 1990.

### VI. Description of the lesson

#### **Objectives of the lesson:**

Working in groups, and critically using historical sources, students will be able to:

- Identify issues related to the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the transition period.
- Discuss and reflect on social, economic or cultural aspects of the transition period from multiple perspectives.
- Justify the issues identified using diverse sources of information.

**Duration of the lesson:** 45 minutes

**Materials and sources:** whiteboard, 3 different handouts with information about the social, cultural, and economic aspects of the transition period in Lithuania (excerpts from various sources of information) (see annexes 1-3); flipchart paper/ computer and multimedia.

### VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

#### **Introduction**

The teacher announces the theme/objective of the lesson, provides the criteria for the evaluation.

### Summary information

The teacher provides summary information from the previous lessons about the most important political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the period of transition to democracy and the changes in Lithuania and other CEE countries from 1989/1991 onwards, e.g., *the restoration of the independence in Lithuania, transition from a command economy to the market economy, opening of the borders, etc.*

### ACTIVITY 1: Associations

The teacher provides a concept related to the phenomena of the transition period (less abstract concepts, e.g., *Hopes and Fears in the 1990s*, etc., can be used). Students are asked to brainstorm associations (i.e., simple associative descriptions) justifying the concepts in their own words. It is important that the associations are written down on the board/flipchart paper as they will be re-visited at the end of the lesson. After a short brainstorm, the teacher asks students to comment on why they chose these associations.

### ACTIVITY 2: Identifying the social, cultural, and economic challenges/concerns of the transition period

The task for students is to identify the most prominent social, cultural, and economic challenges/concerns of the transition period in Lithuania.

**Step 1:** each student receives one of the handouts (See APPENDIX – Handout 1-3, from p. 166–170). They are asked to read the handout and mark the transition period's most critical challenges/concerns.

**Step 2 (optional):** students that have received the same handout form pairs and discuss the challenges/concerns that seem relevant to mention. The task is to select 2-3 significant challenges/concerns that can be brought to the later discussion.

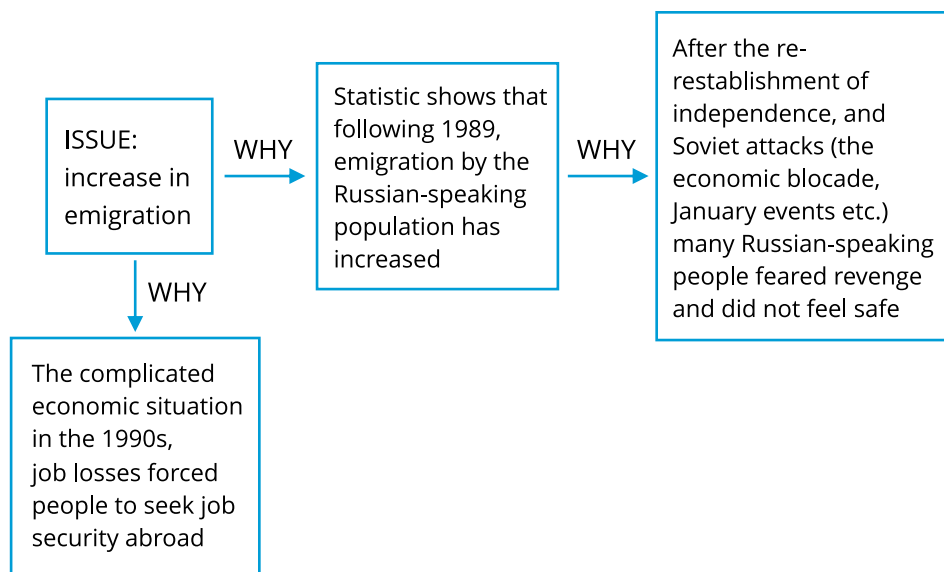
**Step 3:** all students that have received the same handout join one group to present and discuss the issues they have selected and identify the most prominent challenge/concern (e.g., strengthening organized crime gangs, high rate of unemployment, emigration, unstable economy, etc.) on behalf of the whole group.

**Step 4:** the results of the group work are presented in the classroom. Each group has up to 2 minutes to present their issue and explain why that challenge/concern is the most important. The teacher writes down the challenges on the whiteboard (flipchart, computer, etc.).

**Step 5:** the teacher provides a summary of the group work, emphasizing the main keywords, links, different approaches, and shares his/her observations.

### ACTIVITY 3: Identifying the reasons

Students reflect on the social, cultural, or economic challenge/concern identified and provide a broader justification (reason) for it. Students work in the same groups (preferably not larger than 6 people), discussing issues, identifying the main statements/reasons, and then transferring them to the scheme or visual charter. A modified 5 WHYS method may be used, for example:



The role of the teacher in this task is to consult with and mentor students, leading students through these complicated situations.

The results of the group work are presented in the classroom. Each group has up to 2 minutes to explain their reasons. Other groups can comment.

### ACTIVITY 4: Re-visiting associations

Having explored the transition period's challenges and causes, the teacher asks students if they would like to modify their associations based on their new knowledge.

This exercise can be used as a part of the Evaluation.

### Evaluation

Students are asked to write down on sticky notes (a whiteboard/flipchart paper and sticky notes, as well as online tools, e.g., Padlet, Mentimeter, etc., may be used) what they have learned during the lesson about a) the transition period; b) working together with classmates; c) oneself. After the sticky notes are placed

on the paper(s), the teacher briefly summarizes learning outcomes and links them with the lesson objectives. Students can be asked to comment on whether and to what extent they have succeeded in achieving them.

### **VIII. Possible follow-up**

Students who plan to study history on an advanced course in the following year are invited to consider a theme related to the transition period for their project work, e.g., memory research.

In cooperation with the language and literature teacher, the theme might be followed up with an essay of 300 words (e.g., the 1990s are different for everyone/ have we changed since the 1990s, etc.).

## APPENDIX

## Handout 1

**A.** My theory is this: in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a powerful emotional boost associated with the *Sąjūdis* and rock marches. It was a euphoric period, full of idealism and the belief that things will suddenly be different in some miraculous way once we have independence. But it soon became clear that the formation of this “difference” would take time – firstly, a period of difficulty, chaos, and uncertainty would have to pass.

People don't want to remember it. Therefore, another strong point in the narrative of Lithuania's independence is the new millennium, which is related to positive things: accession to the European Union, NATO, stabilization of the new economy, real estate boom. In many ways, the 1990s was a traumatic experience: there is no need to remember processes that contrast too much with the vision of the Revival period because it was not expected.<sup>84</sup>

**B.** The economic downturn that began in the 1990s and the restoration of independence had an exceptionally negative impact on the position of men in society. During the Soviet era, the economy was dominated by industry for several decades, which absorbed a large amount of male labour, says Aušra Maslauskaitė, a sociologist and professor at Vytautas Magnus University (VMU).

“Men were strongly oriented towards workers' positions. That was because working in such a job was often more rewarding than *rubbing a university or institute bench* because, in terms of pay, a worker's salary was not much different from that of an engineer. [...] For several decades, such a system continued, with many industries, hard work, hard-working men who contributed to the maintenance of the family” – explains A. Maslauskaitė.

In other words, there were workers with much lower education among the men. In the 1990s, with the economic downturn, deindustrialization began, and many jobs were lost.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Vyšniauskas, K. (2014): '90-uosius Lietuvoje reikia sukurti. Pokalbis su Jurijumi Dobriakovu'. In: *Literatūra ir menas*. [The 90s in Lithuania need to be created. Interview with Yuri DOBRIAKOV]. Available at: <https://literaturairmenas.lt/publicistika/90-uosius-lietuvoje-reikia-sukurti-pokalbis-su-jurijumi-dobriakovu> (in Lithuanian).

<sup>85</sup> Platūkytė, D. (2020): 'Dešimtojo dešimtmečio pokyčiai: vyrai laiką leido „ant sofutės gerdami alų, o moterys buvo stumiamos likti namie.' [Changes in the 1990s: men spent time “drinking beer on the couch” and women were pushed to stay home] In: *Lrt.lt*, 27 Sept. 2020. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1235314/desimtojo-desimtmečio-pokyčiai-vyrai-laika-leido-ant-sofutes-gerdami-alu-o-moterys-buvo-stumiamos-likti-namie> (in Lithuanian).



### C. Baltic way August 23, 1989



Photo by Vincas Tumosa (private)

#### Handout 2

**A.** In Lithuania in 1989, the application of the so-called zero acquisition of citizenship gave all permanent residents equal rights to acquire Lithuanian citizenship. The decision to obtain citizenship was taken by the majority of the country's population. The Law on National Minorities adopted in 1989 stipulates that the Republic of Lithuania guarantees equal rights and freedoms to all its citizens, regardless of their nationality, and means respect for every nationality and language.

Industrialization of the agricultural sector and decentralization of the economy in 1980-1988 led to the acceleration of the migration of the Russian-speaking population to more remote areas of the Baltic States. That was a period of economic stagnation in the USSR. The establishment of the independent Baltic States in 1990 has led to the emigration of people of other nationalities (except Lithuanians) from the Baltic States. Russification has been replaced by strengthening the national identity – in some countries, it appeared to be more liberal, in others – less liberal. This was a time when the pursuit of economic autonomy, industrial reorientation and restructuring became very painful. Almost 60% of Russians worked in industry.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Kasatkina, N. & Leončikas, T. (2003): 'Lietuvos etninių grupių adaptacija: kontekstas ir eiga' ['Adaptation of Lithuanian ethnic groups: context and course'], pp.9-45.

**B. Composition of Lithuanian population by nationality (in thousands)**

Nationality	1979	1989	2001	2011
Total	3391,5	3674,8	3484,0	3043,4
Lithuanians	2712,2	2924,3	2907,3	2561,3
Poles	247,0	258,0	235,0	200,3
Russians	303,5	344,5	219,8	176,9
Belorussians	57,6	63,2	42,9	36,2
Ukrainians	32,0	44,8	22,5	16,4
Jews	14,7	12,4	4,0	3,1
Latvians	4,4	4,4	3,0	2,0
Tatars	4,0	4,4	3,2	2,8
Roma	2,3	2,7	2,6	2,1
Germans	2,6	2,1	3,2	2,4
Armenians	-	-	1,5	1,2
Other	13,8	16,9	6,1	5,7
Not specified	-	-	32,9	33,0

Source: Lithuanian Statistics, 2013

**C.** The restoration of Lithuania's independence was met with fear and uncertainty by the most prominent national minorities living in the country and their communities. Pavel Lavrinec, Head of the Department of Russian Philology at Vilnius University, remembers the euphoria and hope for restoring statehood among Lithuanians 30 years ago, which contrasted with the rising tensions in the Russian minority.

"There were all sorts of fears: what will happen with the national language, Russian-language media and Russian schools. Many Russian speakers were sceptical about their future here in Lithuania, as were some Ukrainians, Belarusians and other people from Soviet republics. They did not have their own educational and cultural infrastructure here. But gradually, it became clear that nothing was terrible here. If you want to participate in Lithuania's economic and cultural life, teach in Russian schools – pass the state language exam, and that's it. Gradually, all fears dissipated", – tells P. Lavrinec.

New Russian-speaking immigrants joined those who had lived in Lithuania for many generations: political and economic, who were dissatisfied with the situation in their home country. According to P. Lavrinec, unlike those who had lived in Lithuania for a long time, the latter were more motivated, studied the Lithuanian language more diligently, and were interested in the country's culture and political system.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Adomavičienė, L. (2020): 'Rusas, BET gimtoji kalba – lietuvių: kaip per 30 metų pasikeitė tautinių mažumų padėtis Lietuvoje' ['Russian, BUT native language – Lithuanian: how the situation of national minorities in Lithuania has changed over the past 30 years']. In: Irt.lt, 21 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.irt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/1180376/rusas-bet-gimtoji-kalba-lietuviu-kaip-per-30-metu-pasikeite-tautiniu-mazumu-padetis-lietuvoje> (in Lithuanian)

### Handout 3

**A.** In Lithuania, which regained its independence on March 11, 1990, the population still received an income and paid for goods and services in rubles until 1991, when temporary coupons were introduced. In 1990, the average salary was 283 rubles, and the average pension was 109 rubles. [...] Today, we can find goods we never dreamed of or imagined at the time. 30 years ago, getting better quality meat was a problem, and coffee beans or bananas were a luxury item that you had to stand in the longest queue to get.

The goods of today and 30 years ago are light-years apart, but no less surprising is the price of some goods that are now taken for granted and are inseparable from our households. For example, the average cost of a colour TV set in 1990 was almost 740 rubles. That means that buying a TV at that time required more than 2.5 of the average monthly salary. A refrigerator, 30 years ago cost an average of 364 rubles or almost 1.5 salaries. Today, people can buy the cheapest TV set of incomparably higher quality for €200 or 23% of the average monthly salary. A new fridge can cost just over €200 or around 25% of the average monthly salary.<sup>88</sup>

### B. At the grocery store



Photo by Z. Bulgakovas (private)

<sup>88</sup> Cvilikienė, J. (2020): 'Gyvenimas prieš 30 metų: Kiek tuo metu kainavo televizorius ir kas uždirbdavo daugiausiai?' ['Life 30 years ago: how much did TV cost at the time and who made the most money?'], Swedbank Lietuva. Available at: [https://blog.swedbank.lt/pranesimai-spaudai-asmeniniai-finansai/gyvenimas-pries-30-metu-kiek-tuo-metu-kainavo-televizorius-ir-kas-uzdirbdavo-daugiausiai?fbclid=IwAR0jcjhobcyngvsLEVMhV\\_pfa9NwtwTLrJy-w6CLUNcHCgT7NkxjhwTzVyy](https://blog.swedbank.lt/pranesimai-spaudai-asmeniniai-finansai/gyvenimas-pries-30-metu-kiek-tuo-metu-kainavo-televizorius-ir-kas-uzdirbdavo-daugiausiai?fbclid=IwAR0jcjhobcyngvsLEVMhV_pfa9NwtwTLrJy-w6CLUNcHCgT7NkxjhwTzVyy) (in Lithuanian).

**C.** I think the Lithuanian people lived between hope and fear. There was still joy in regaining freedom and independence. Many people wanted to rejoin Western Europe as soon as possible and tried to contact foreign countries as much as possible. The difficult economic and social situation was also evident. What do I remember from that period? This was wild capitalism. Many people lost their jobs, and this put people under stress. I remember that the Baltic cities were littered with kiosks where people were desperately selling cheap things to survive. Others, meanwhile, made huge fortunes by exporting metals.<sup>89</sup>

**D.** Radical nationalists often argued that the transition of former communists and communist youth officials to private business was a part of an overall strategy to establish themselves in capitalism and the new states. Personal gain explains this well enough. However, this transition, of course, took place on a large scale and often in a corrupt form, often with the theft of state property. Both this and other forms of economic crime flourished, especially when Soviet laws had collapsed, and new free market rules had not yet emerged. [...]

The greatest threat to the future of the Baltic States was posed by the close ties of their new businessmen with organized crime, especially in the case of the embezzlement of state property. In Lithuania, in September 1992, the privatization of the four largest grocery stores in Šiauliai was stopped because local racketeers took control of it: auction participants and local officials were threatened. In similar cases, the property of the disobedient businessmen was set on fire or blown up. In the autumn of 1992, one bomb after another went off, especially in Latvia: it was the work of organized crime gangs fighting over property.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Kasparavičius, G. (2021): 'Olandas F. Erensas: 90-ųjų Kaunas buvo stebėtinai patrauklus (Nematyti kadrai)' ['Kaunas in the 90's was surprisingly attractive']. In: Kaunas Pilnas Kultūros, 18 May 2021. Available at: <https://kaunaspilnas.lt/olandas-f-erensas-90-uju-kaunas-buvo-stebetinai-patrauklus-nematyti-kadrai/> (in Lithuanian).

<sup>90</sup> Lieven, A. (1995): 'Pabaltijo revoliucija: Estija, Latvija, Lietuva – kelias į nepriklausomybę' ['The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania – the Road to Independence'], pp.357-364.

## POLAND: FROM CENTRAL TO LOCAL GOVERNANCE – THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF POLISH TRANSFORMATION?

Author: Stanisław Zakroczyński

### I. Overview

The lesson describes the significant changes in the management of public affairs which took place in Poland in 1989, because of the transition from democratic centralism, in which the administration was hierarchical and entirely under the control of the party, to a country built on the rule of local governance.

### II. Students' age

8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade

### III. Objectives

- The student explains the specifics of human rights and freedoms and the basic mechanisms of their protection.
- The student uses their knowledge to interpret events in public life, including political events.
- The student gathers and evaluates information regarding public life, including politics.
- The student can define the regulations relating to the system of governance as stated in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (decentralization, self-governance).
- The student identifies the legislative and executive authorities in local governments at the level of the commune (*gmina*) and of a city with county (*powiat*) rights, as well as at the level of the county (*powiat*) and voivodeship (*województwo*) in Poland; they can define the competences of these authorities and how they relate to each other.
- The student identifies the legislative and executive authorities of local governance.

### IV. Key concepts

Democracy, self-governance, public management, centralization, decentralization.

### V. Key question

How did the fall of communism and the transition to democracy impact the way Poland and my commune (*gmina*) are managed today?

## VI. Prior knowledge

Basic knowledge pertaining to the systemic transition from democratic centralism to the rule of law; the creation of “Solidarity”, Martial Law, the 1980s, the Round Table Talks, the elections on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989.

## VII. Step-by-step description of the lesson

**INTRODUCTION – what do we mean when we say local governance?** (All three activities should take around 30 minutes, if you do not have enough time, please skip the third one)

- Tell the students that the topic of the lesson is local governance. Ask them what they associate with the term “self-governance”? Do they know it from school practice? Can they name any specific actions taken by the local authorities in their commune (*gmina*) or town? Divide the students into groups and ask them to think about what qualities a self-governing body should possess? What issues should it deal with? Then ask the groups for short presentations referring to the results of their discussions. Optional: do this activity together, in the form of a class discussion.
- Watch the short film “Once upon a time. Local democracy.” (See APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 176) Think about the two models of solving shared problems depicted in the film. Which model is shown to be more effective? What were the shared problems the citizens solved together? What does local self-governance mean on a practical level? Think about how close the idea of local governance presented in the film is to the one you developed when working in groups.
- Read the definition of local government according to the European Charter of Local Self-Government (See APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 176). How is local government understood? Pay attention to the importance of “public affairs”, or “shared problems”, to local self-government. Local governance is meant to deal with those shared problems which are most important to the local community, such as utilities and services, i.e., sewage systems, and trash collection or providing public transport, but also education or health care. However, to ensure these services are provided we need to have the freedom to act and the technical and financial resources (the “ability”) to support them.
- Explain to the students that during the next part of the lesson you will talk about how local governance was established in Poland and what it has achieved in the first 30 years of its independence.

## HISTORY 1 – WHY DID THE COMMUNISTS DISLIKE THE IDEA OF SELF-GOVERNANCE? [20 minutes]

- **Review the basic facts concerning the communist regime in Poland**- what were its ideological and geopolitical roots? How long did it last? What were the circumstances of its collapse? Think about whether the communist system could have supported local governance?
- **Why did the communists dislike the idea of self-governance? The vision of a centrally controlled state.** Ask students to read an excerpt from an interview with Judge Jerzy Stępień- think about the answers to the questions in class (See APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 178). In particular, consider the underground corridors in Sandomierz, and what it says about how the Polish People’s Republic (PPR) was managed.
- **OPTIONAL:** Ask students to read an excerpt from Professor Jerzy Reguiski’s book. Consider the answers to the questions in class (See APPENDIX – SOURCE D, p. 179). In particular, think about what “democratic centralism” means and if it can be reconciled with the idea of self-governance.
- Connect the conclusions drawn from reading these texts to the discussions you had in point no.1. Think about which model of local authority presented in the film “Once upon a Time...” was in force in the PPR.

## HISTORY 2 – HOW DID WE REGAIN SELF-GOVERNANCE? [20 minutes]

- Review the basic information on the fall of communism in Poland: The events of 1980/1990, from the creation of “Solidarity” to the first partially free election.
- “Solidarity” as a self-governing movement. Ask students to read the text of the 21<sup>st</sup> thesis of the “Self-governing Republic” programme (See APPENDIX – SOURCE E, p. 180). Together, answer the questions below the text. Pay attention to the necessary features of local governance pointed out in the thesis. Consider whether the postulates included in the thesis were possible to fulfil in a communist system?
- Briefly describe to the students how, regardless of the introduction of Martial Law and the fall of the first “Solidarity” movement, activists such as Jerzy Stępień, Michał Kulesza or Jerzy Reguiski continued to work on the idea of local governance, despite the improbability of it ever being put in to practice.
- Watch a fragment of the film “It only happened in Poland” (See APPENDIX – SOURCE F, p. 181) in which Jerzy Stępień, Michał Kulesza and Jerzy Reguiski talk about the work of the “Local Self-governance Working Group” at the Round Table Talks. Answer questions pertaining to the source. Define

what the atmosphere of the talks was in regard to local governance? Did both sides agree on the issue? How did the talks conclude?

- Inform the students that the introduction of local governance became a priority for politicians with roots in the “Solidarity” movement, following the creation of Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government as a result of the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1989 election. Thanks to their efforts, the first free elections for city and commune (*gmina*) councils took place in May 1990. These elections began the process of transferring the management of local issues into the hands of local authorities elected by inhabitants.
- Point out that county (*powiat*) and voivodeship authorities were not established until 1998.

(For extracts from the current 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland pertaining to local governance see APPENDIX – SOURCE G, p. 182).

### LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN PRACTICE (20 minutes)

- Ask students to look at the results of a report on the level of trust shown towards the parliament (Sejm), the courts and local authorities (See APPENDIX – SOURCE H, p. 184). Discuss the results of these polls and think about what they suggest about the Polish people’s attitudes to local governance. Then consider what you yourselves think about the work of your local authorities; where do they succeed or fail in providing local services?
- Discuss what your local government has achieved in 30 years of self-governance. What changes have taken place? Were any investments made? What social issues have become more prominent? Have they been solved? You can prepare information/data on this topic. You can find advice on finding such information in the educational packet “National Lesson on Local Governance”.<sup>91</sup>
- **GROUP HOMEWORK.** Try to find out how the authorities of your commune (*gmina*) or city fulfill their duties and what the inhabitants of your commune/city think about their activity. Split up into small groups (3-4 people each). Design questions regarding the following tasks (choose those issues which you yourselves find most interesting), then try to find information concerning the actions taken by your commune to fulfil its duties in those fields:

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<sup>91</sup> Available at: <http://roksamorzadnosci.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Narodowa-Lekcja-o-Samorz%C4%85dzie-Terytorialnym-FRDL-licencja.pdf> (in Polish).



- Local roads, streets, and bridges (think about whether new roads are being built? How are they maintained? Are the roads resurfaced when needed?).
- Water supply, sewage, and sewage treatment plants (is the sewage system present and functional? Is the sewage treated? If so, do these processes work well?).
- Landfills, trash collection and the treatment of communal waste (have recycling and waste sorting been implemented? Are there sites for collecting dangerous waste nearby?).
- Local public transport: buses, trams, metro, trains, public bicycles (are there any, and if so what forms of local public transport exist? How accessible are the connections? How much do tickets cost?).
- Health care (are there local clinics or hospitals in the area? Do they function well? What issues do they face?).
- Social assistance.
- Housing built by local authorities (is the commune (*gmina*) building new housing? What is the quality of social and council housing? Is it provided to those in need?).
- Education (preschools, primary schools, high schools, and other educational institutions; how many are there? How do they work?).
- Culture (libraries and community centres; do they meet the inhabitants' needs? How many are there? How are they equipped?).
- Sports, including sports areas and equipment (programmes funded by local authorities; are there enough of them? How do they work?).
- Marketplaces, enclosed and open-air (are there enough of them? Are they in good condition?).
- Communal green spaces (are there enough of them? Are they in good condition?).

Remember that the questions should be well designed and simple. Answers can be given by circling one of three options (yes, no, I don't know) or by indicating an answer on a scale (e.g. 1 to 6). Conduct the poll in your commune (*gmina*), asking as many inhabitants as possible to answer your questions. Analyse and organise the results, presenting them either as percentages or numbers (if there were fewer than 25 respondents). If you live in different areas, compare the results on different topics. Send a report of your study to the mayor's office.

## APPENDIX

GENERAL COMMENT REGARDING SOURCE MATERIALS: Brackets contain suggested answers to the questions. These are not, of course, “the only answers” – they are only meant to help the teacher guide the students to a way of thinking in line with the main message of the texts they refer to.

### SOURCE A:

#### Council of Europe film “Once upon a time. Local Democracy.”

COMMENT: The film<sup>92</sup> was created for the Council of Europe, an institution which deals, among other things, with supporting the development of self-governance. It uses a very simple example to illustrate the difference between a centralized approach and a local governance approach to dealing with public affairs.

1. What challenge do the members of the community presented in the film face? [Using a new product (the coconut which falls from the tree) for the benefit of the community.]
2. What solution does one of the members (the leader) suggest? [Going to an important and distant office/ministry to get permission to use the coconut.]
3. What happens in the settlement while he is gone? [The inhabitants begin to solve some of their problems using the coconut.]
4. What issues were solved with the creative use of coconuts? [Water supply, roads, education, health care.]
5. What is the film’s message on public services? [The closer the centres of decision are to the inhabitants, the more effectively and quickly issues get resolved.]

### SOURCE B: European Charter of Local Self-government- excerpts

The member States of the Council of Europe, signatory hereto,

[...] Considering that the local authorities are one of the main foundations of any democratic regime;

Considering that the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all member States of the Council of Europe;

Considering that it is at local level that this right can be most directly exercised;

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<sup>92</sup> Available at: <https://human-rights-channel.coe.int/asset-once-upon-a-time-local-democracy-en.html>.

Convinced that the existence of local authorities with real responsibilities can provide an administration which is both effective and close to the citizen;

Aware that the safeguarding and reinforcement of local self-government in the different European countries is an important contribution to the construction of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and the decentralization of power;

Asserting that this entails the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment,

Have agreed as follows:

[...]

### Article 3

Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population.

**Explanation: The European Charter of Local Self-government is the most important European document defining local government and its relationship to the central authorities. The 47 member states of the Council of Europe which are signatories of the Charter are obligated to follow it. Poland accepted it in its entirety, which means that Polish local governments should operate in accordance with the Charter.**

1. How does the Charter define local government? [By its ability to act and not by who controls it.]
2. Who makes up local self-governments, as defined in the Charter? [The right to self-govern, and thus to create a self-governing body, belongs to the local community, that is all the inhabitants of a particular community – it is very important to remember that it is the local community who makes up the self-governing body and not its authorities!]
3. What do you think the term “public affair” means? How should it be differentiated from a private affair? Can you give examples of each? [The key element here is the public, that is, shared interest in solving a particular issue, when the guiding principle is not financial gain or benefit for an individual. It is a good idea to mention issues which appeared in source no.1. It is worth noting that some of these issues are more and more often referred to as “public services”, that is services which are commonly available to citizens, e.g., education, health care or public transport].

**SOURCE C: Excerpts from an interview conducted by N. Jarska and S. Zakroczymski with J. Stępień titled “Self-governance is a success story”, Więż.pl, 7.1.2020<sup>93</sup>**

**Natalia Jarska: There were people’s councils in the PPR. How did that system differ from the local governance system we have today?**

— First, the local governments did not possess legal personality. So, there was no executive body which could make decisions independently when working in the public interest. Second, there were no budgets for specific local governments. There was only the national budget, and the budget of the local government was only part of a higher executive body’s budget. You can’t even say that the higher executive body served a supervisory role, as it always had the right to overrule any decision made by the lower-level executive body. The existence of one, single, hierarchical administrative system meant that local authorities could not manage property on their own, they could not make purchases, sales, or take out loans, they could not make any use of property as an owner might. Thus, public property had no value. You can’t really talk about sensible management of public property. If local authorities wished to build something, for instance, they needed approval from the governing body with the power to make decisions, which was somewhere above it, often all the way in Warsaw.

**This made for a very ineffective state.**

— That’s true. I remember when in my hometown of Sandomierz, the underground corridors began to crumble. You had to wait for a decision from the Council of Ministers which issued a special resolution concerning the conservation of Sandomierz. But until that resolution was passed, until the financial means were allocated, everyone was waiting, in fear, to see what would happen. The collapse was so great that it required the assistance of the central government, but the local authorities could not do anything about it.



### Questions:

- 1. What examples of the powerlessness of local authorities in the PPR does Jerzy Stępień give?** [Local authorities, entirely dependent on central authorities, did not possess legal personality or independence in their actions, not even a separate budget]
- 2. Why were renovations of the underground corridors in Sandomierz delayed? What does this tell us about the system in the PPR?** [Only the central authority could make the decision to undertake renovations and allocate funding for conservation, and this bureaucratic process took time.]

<sup>93</sup> Original title: ‘Samorząd to historia sukcesu. Rozmowa z Jerzym Stępiem’. Available at: <http://wiez.com.pl/2020/01/07/samorzad-to-historia-sukcesu-rozmowa-z-jerzym-stepniem/>.

**SOURCE D: A description of the political system of the PPR,  
J. Regulski, "Self-governance in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Polish Republic",  
Warsaw 2001, pp. 18-19.<sup>94</sup>**

In 1944, the entry of the Red Army brought Poland a new system of governance. The new authorities introduced their influence gradually, eliminating opposition and increasing their control over public life. In the initial period following German occupation, cooperation between the ruling body and the citizens was necessary to organize a functioning state. And thus, the decree issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1944 by the Polish Committee of National Liberation, established by Moscow to manage Polish territories, did not bring any radical changes. While introducing the name of people's councils, following the Soviet system, it maintained the rule of local self-governance. This self-governance played a significant role, particularly during the settlement of the so-called Recovered Territories, where public administration was virtually non-existent despite the need to manage and organise life in the seized territories.

Eliminating the opposition and strengthening the position of the central authorities changed these circumstances, as any form of public organisation could become a threat to the totalitarian regime. The authorities stopped considering the desires and opinions of the public. A law officially abolishing local government was enacted on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1950, replacing the traditional local government apparatus with a new system of people's councils. This arrangement survived, with a few modifications, until 1989. [...]

The communist system in Poland, modelled after the Soviet system, was internally logically sound, but based on principles utterly foreign not only to Polish tradition and mentality, but also to the familiar models of democratic statehood which seem obvious to us today. The preamble of the 1976 Constitution stated that the state's role was to implement "the great ideas of socialism". The working class and its party were to be the leading force which dictated the direction of development. The slogan "the party rules, the government manages" reflected the conditions at the time. The people were to follow in the direction determined by ideology and its practical interpretation. Public opinion was of no consequence as those in power tacitly assumed that it would oppose the system. [...]

Thus, the communists found it necessary to maintain a centralized state whose control covered as much of public life and the economy as possible, as well as deeply infiltrating the private lives of its citizens. [...] Adopting democratic centralism and the principle of uniform state power was of paramount significance.

<sup>94</sup> Jerzy Regulski (1924-2015) – Professor of Urban Economics and Urban Planning. He was one of the co-authors of the reforms re-establishing self-governance in Poland. The excerpt is from a book in which he describes its causes, design, and course.

The principles of democratic centralism were formulated by Lenin. They stated that all ruling bodies are to be elected [...], but also that lower bodies are entirely subordinate to higher bodies. In practice, this meant that the central authorities made all the decisions, making any public control over their activities entirely a pretence. Elections became farcical under such circumstances. At the same time, the system rejected Montesquieu's principle of the separation of power, giving all the power to the state that is its administrative branch.

Any form of decentralization, which would allow for the formation of independent views, not to mention any attempt to bring them to life, was a threat to the rulers. Thus, the entire apparatus was designed only to pass instructions down and to control their execution.



### Questions:

- 1. When did the communists decide to eradicate local self-governance in Poland?** [The complete eradication of local self-governance only took place five years after the end of the war, as the communists did not wish to alienate the people. What is more, they needed the support of local authorities in the recovered Territories.]
- 2. What was the relationship between the Communist Party (Polish United Workers' Party) and public administration in the PPR?** [The party dictated decisions to the government and the administration it managed.]
- 3. What was the system of "democratic centralism"? Do you think such a system can be ever considered democratic?** [The democratic centralism system was based on the hierarchical subordination of ruling bodies and the lack of autonomy of local authorities. Such a system can hardly be considered democratic as it robs local communities of any influence on how their affairs are managed.]

**SOURCE E: Excerpts from the "Self-governing Republic" programme, adopted at the close of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Convention of "Solidarity" Trade Union Delegates 7.10.1980.**

**THESIS 21 – Legally, organisationally, and financially, independent local authorities must serve as real representatives of the local community.**

The basis of a true local government must be that it is chosen through free elections. The elections should be open to persons put forward by social organizations and citizen groups.

No electoral ticket should benefit from preferment. It is necessary to ensure conditions for conducting electoral campaigns in which various programmes and various candidates will participate. [...]

Local governments must receive the authority to decide on all local matters, and in this area can only be subject to legally defined supervision from the state authorities, which serves to review the legality of their actions. In cases of conflict between local authorities and administrative bodies, determinations should belong to the courts. Local governments must have the right to conduct business activity. The ability to form agreements between different local governments must be ensured. In order to fulfil their purpose, local governments must possess legal personality and the right to obtain independent financial means (local taxes).

COMMENT: The “Self-governing republic” programme was the programme of the popular social movement “Solidarity”. It envisioned a broad reform of the political, economic, and social system of the PPR, in order to develop the self-governance of its citizens and the democratization and increased transparency of life in workplace communities, local communities and the country as a whole.

1. **According to the programme’s authors, what was a necessary precondition to creating a true local government? Why do you think that was?** [The basic precondition was conducting a free election, so that candidates representing various programmes could compete against each other. Without the plurality of ideas and views, there is no way to create a true election regarding the affairs of the local community.]
2. **What should the elections for local government look like, according to the authors of the programme?** [Free, fair, democratic.]
3. **According to the authors of the programme, what rights and characteristics should a local government possess?** [The right to make decisions regarding local matters, limitations on supervision from the state, the right to appeal to the courts in cases of conflict with the administration, legal and financial independence.]
4. **Analyse “Solidarity’s” suggestions in the context of how Jerzy Stępień and Jerzy Regulski described the functioning of local authorities in the PPR. Were they an answer to the inadequacy of local authorities in the PPR?** [Yes, the idea was to ensure financial and operational independence for local governments and protect them from excessive interference from the central authorities.]

**SOURCE F: Clips from the film “It only happened in Poland”: the deliberations of the “Local Self-governance Working Group” at the Round Table Talks.**<sup>95</sup> Watch from min. 12:03 to min. 14:30.

COMMENT: The film was created for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reinstatement of self-governance in Poland. It is narrated by some of the co-authors behind the

<sup>95</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJBeiM5uZDQnrG0hLVjhgGw>.

idea of the system. They talk about the work on rebuilding self-governance, the process, and its results.



### Questions:

1. Were the deliberations of the “Local Self-governance Working Group” amicable? [No, the way each side viewed the idea of self-governance differed greatly; representatives of the communist authorities tried to stick to minimal changes, while the representatives of the opposition wanted a radical reform of the Polish system.]
2. How did the working group’s deliberations conclude? What led to such a result? [The deliberations concluded with a memorandum stating the discrepancies in opinions, meaning that no final decision was made as to what local governance would ultimately look like. This was because the very points of views of the participants were irreconcilable.]

## SOURCE G: The Constitution of the Republic of Poland – extracts pertaining to local governance.

### Article 16

1. The inhabitants of the units of basic territorial division shall form a self-governing community in accordance with law.
2. Local government shall participate in the exercise of public power. The substantial part of public duties which local government is empowered to discharge by statute shall be done in its own name and under its own responsibility.

### Article 164

1. The commune (*gmina*) shall be the basic unit of local government.
2. Other units of regional and/or local government shall be specified by statute.
3. The commune shall perform all tasks of local government not reserved to other units of local government.

### Article 165

1. Units of local government shall possess legal personality. They shall have rights of ownership and other property rights.
2. The self-governing nature of units of local government shall be protected by the courts.

### Article 167

1. Units of local government shall be assured public funds adequate for the performance of the duties assigned to them. [...]



**Article 168**

To the extent established by statute, units of local government shall have the right to set the level of local taxes and charges.

**Article 171**

1. The legality of actions by a local government shall be subject to review.
2. The organs exercising review over the activity of units of local government shall be the Prime Minister and voivodes and regarding financial matters – regional audit chambers. [...]

**Article 172**

1. Units of local government shall have the right to associate. [...]

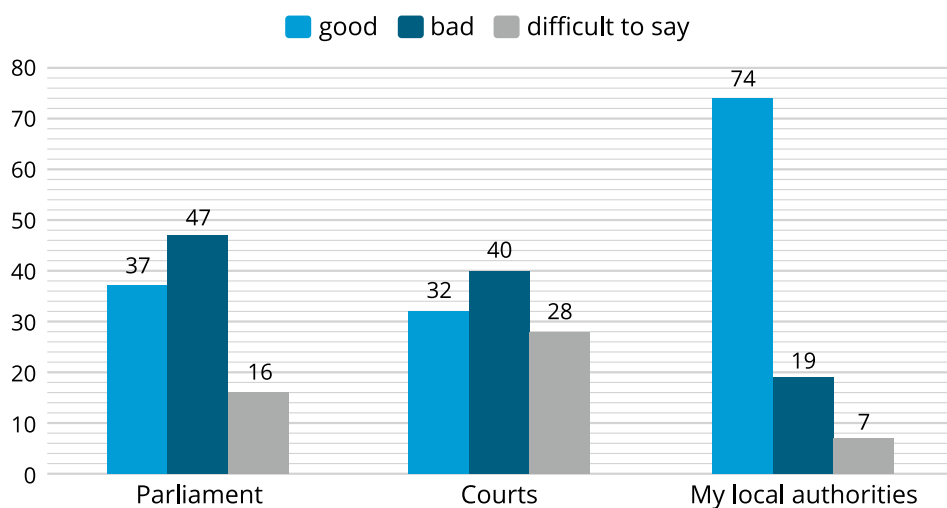
COMMENT: Above you can find extracts from the current 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland pertaining to local governance. These regulations are the result of the local governance reform conducted after the first, partially independent parliamentary election in 1989. It also serves as a summary of the first eight years of local governance in Poland.

**Questions:**

1. **How does the Constitution of the Republic of Poland define local governments?** [In Article 16, it describes local government as a “community” of all the inhabitants of any given unit of basic territorial division, for instance a commune (*gmina*), rather than as a local authority. The purpose of the local government is to act as a representative and in the interest of the community.]
2. **According to the Constitution, what is the basic unit of local governance? Why do you think the matter was regulated in this way?** [The basic unit is the commune (*gmina*) that is the smallest unit of local governance, rather than the voivodeship (*województwo*) or county (*powiat*) which are not mentioned in the Constitution. This is because local governance should be viewed as a “bottom up” and not a “top down” initiative, and its key element is the commune government (*samorząd gminny*) which is closest to the inhabitant.]
3. **Do you think the regulations of the 1997 Constitution are a response to the characteristics of local governance in the PPR which have been criticised in the earlier sources? In what way?** [Yes, the Constitution’s regulations are in fact a full response to the accusations against the system of governance in PPR made by Stępień, Regulski or the authors of the “Self-governing Republic” programme. They include the policy on decentralizing public power, the legal personality of local governments, limiting supervision to the review of the legality of their actions, and fiscal independence.]

**SOURCE H: The results of the Public Opinion Research Centre's report regarding opinions about various public institutions and authorities from March 2020<sup>96</sup>**

**Opinion regarding the activities of authorities** (source: CBOS, March 2020)



How do Poles view the activities of local authorities in comparison to the parliament and judiciary authorities? [Local authorities decidedly receive the most support. Only in their case do the positive opinions outweigh (significantly so) the negative opinions. What is more, in the case of local authorities, the number of “difficult to say” answers are the lowest, which shows that when it comes to evaluating local authorities, Poles have very definite opinions, most likely because they see the results of their activities on a daily basis.]

<sup>96</sup> Original title: Oceny działalności instytucji publicznych.  
Available at: [https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K\\_038\\_20.PDF](https://cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2020/K_038_20.PDF).

## RUSSIA: "POLITICAL WHIRLWINDS OF THE 1990S"

Author: Andrey Suslov

### I. Overview

This class is focused on Russian political life in the 1990s, following the fall of the Soviet Union. Some of the problems are described in comparison to similar processes in Eastern Europe. Students are encouraged to engage with the lesson material by using interactive media such as Kahoot!<sup>97</sup>, working with documents and group discussions.

### II. Students' age

High-school students (9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade) or technical education students.

### III. Objectives

- Creating an environment that will help to understand the controversial political processes of the 1990s in Russia.
- Creating an environment that will help to understand democratic values and the supremacy of law.

Values and skills through the high school program, according to the Federal State Educational Standard:

- **Personal:** "Russian civil identity, patriotism, respect for one's people, a sense of responsibility to the Fatherland, pride for your land and your Fatherland, the past and the future of Russia's multinational population"; "one's civil position as an active and responsible member of Russian society, who is conscious of her constitutional rights and responsibilities, respects law and order, possesses a sense of self-respect, a member who consciously accepts traditional, national, and universal humanistic and democratic values".
- **Meta-disciplinary:** "the ability to productively interact and cooperate during teamwork, to take into account the position of other teamwork participants"; "the ability to reflect cognitively in the sense of understanding one's actions and thinking processes".
- **Disciplinary:** "the possession of systematic historical knowledge, an understanding of Russia's place and role in world history"; "the ability to work with historical sources, the ability to independently analyse documentary evidence associated with a certain historical theme".

<sup>97</sup> Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform.  
For more information see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational\\_game](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_game).

## IV. Step-by-step description of the lesson

### Preparation process

Before the class the students should read through the corresponding part of the textbook. They should also bring their smartphones or other devices with internet access to the class.

### The Class

#### ACTIVITY 1 (15 minutes)

After a brief introduction, the teacher invites the students to play *Kahoot!* To do this, she logs into <https://kahoot.com> and starts the *Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s* game. In order to start the game, the teacher has to register on the website, then open the menu, press *Discover* and type in the name of the game (*Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s*) in the search bar. After the game has appeared, press *Play*, choose the *Teach* option and select the classic mode, after which the game's password will become visible. From the teacher's computer, the image will be projected on a screen which is visible to the students. The students, in turn, access <https://kahoot.it>, enter the password and their name or nickname. The teacher puts the questions on the screen one by one (20 seconds per question), then shows the correct answers and gives her comment on each question. The full text of *Kahoot!*, including the answers and commentary (See APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 187). These comments are extensive. To make the game more dynamic, the teacher should provide much shorter commentary to each question, including the parts that she considers most important.

#### ACTIVITY 2 (20 minutes)

The teacher divides the class into three groups. Each group receives a set of documents related to a certain problem and a few questions that they need to discuss after reviewing said documents (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 193). Each group is given four minutes to do this.

Next, the students work on the three historical problems that they studied in groups. Before each group's presentation, the teacher shows a short video that presents the problem visually. The teacher can download the video from <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1EhndENVgDr5YiaNX0oIj5Do1oZjOI73n?usp=sharing>. For the first group: Yegor Gaidar's dismissal.

For the second: The elections of 1996.

For the third: Boris Yeltsin's New Year address.

The groups answer the questions in turns, while the other students are welcome to express their own opinions. After that, the teacher gives her commentary

(They can be found in the APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 197). Each group is given five minutes for their presentation, including the video and the teacher’s commentary.

### ACTIVITY 3 (5 minutes)

During this final reflective part, the students must answer two questions: “What impressed you the most while studying the history of the 1990s?”, and “How did these events influence the state of modern Russian society?”

**Assessment.** The teacher should provide feedback during the class, noting the student’s success in understanding the concepts (listed above). Assessment must be based on the knowledge of the pre-studied material shown in the student’s answers during the class.

## APPENDIX

### SOURCE A: *Kahoot!*, “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s”.

The 1990s in Russia are called “wild” or “the time of hopes”. Do you know the most important details of the key political events of that period?

1. In December 1991, Boris Yeltsin gave Yegor Gaidar powers to lead the government, and Gaidar organized the “government of reforms”. Many of its members called it “the kamikaze government”. Why?

- A. They wanted to use the chaotic conditions for their personal profit.
- B. In the face of the breakup of the government’s power, most of their efforts went into preventing economic collapse while paying less attention to reforms.
- C. Boris Yeltsin promised to execute them if they didn’t reform the economy in one year.
- D. They were afraid of being torn to pieces by an outraged crowd.

**Comments:** The catastrophic situation at the end of 1991 resulted from the actions of previous regimes and the fall of the USSR. Gaidar, along with many of his government’s members, later stated that the majority of their efforts were dedicated to preventing a full stoppage of the economy, noting that any responsible manager would have done the same. Little time was left to regulate the reforms, which were painful for the population, as any dramatic social change would be. There was also resistance from the conservative majority of the Supreme Soviet of Russia, and the so-called “red directors” largely blocked the reforms. Because of these two factors, the members of this government felt that their dismissal was inevitable.

2. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1993, the radio station, *Echo of Moscow* broadcast the words one of these then-popular politicians addressing the military pilots: “Comrades, get in your planes, go bomb the Kremlin!” Who was it?

- A. Boris Yeltsin, the president of Russia.
- B. Alexander Rutskoy, Russian vice-president.
- C. Albert Makashov, a general.
- D. Anatoly Chubais, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation.

**Comments:** By the autumn of 1993, the political struggle between the president of the Russian Federation and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation had become a political crisis. The crisis was made worse by a legal impasse, since the Supreme Soviet tried to preserve the Soviet model of combining the executive and the legislative branches, and by the fact that the political forces were not keen on dissolving the conflicts using democratic procedures. In October, armed confrontations started in Moscow. The White House defenders successfully stormed the City Hall and tried to capture the main TV Centre Ostankino. The attack on the White House by tanks was a turning point. Even though the tanks shot blanks, the rebels were scared and immediately surrendered, and this dramatic picture settled in the historical memory of the Russian people. The effect of this confrontation was serious. Over the course of several days, at least 150 people were killed, according to officials. The political leaders lost the trust of the people, and the power system was transformed radically. Violence became an acceptable way to solve political conflicts.

3. The Russian Constitution of 1993 stated that

- A. The president possesses general leadership over the Government of Russia.
- B. If the president wishes to, the Federation Council can fire any judge.
- C. Russian international agreements have more power than local law.
- D. Government agencies can appoint local officials.

**Comments:** The Russian Constitution of 1993 created a legal foundation for building a modern democratic state. It became a constitution of direct action, which is especially important for the implementation of human rights and liberties. It strengthened the division of power, even though presidential power was still dominant, and became the base for the creation of local government systems. It is with this constitution that the Soviet power system in effect since 1917 was finally abolished.

Article 15 of the Russian Constitution, which gave the international agreements priority over local Russian law, did not disappear even in 2020. The new amendments state that the “decisions of international authorities, made based on the international treaties of the Russian Federation are not to be executed in the Russian Federation if they contradict the Constitution of the Russian Federation”.

Such wording does not refute the authority of international norms but makes it possible to ignore them in certain situations, even if it contradicts international law.

The most important amendments of 2020 are ones that expand the president's authority while narrowing the power of the government, and the legislative and the judicial branches of the state. The president's immunity now continues even after his presidential term. He gained general leadership over the government and the power to appoint and fire federal ministers and the attorney general. The president can now be re-elected twice more, in addition to his previous terms.

It is only with the 2020 amendments that the judges of the Constitutional Court, as well as of any other court, can be fired based on the president's will. Before the amendments, the courts had the power to elect and fire officials themselves.

The power of local governments was, in fact, nullified. A unification of the state and local governments was declared. The state authorities can now take part in creating the local government bodies, appointing, and firing the local officials, etc.

**4.** How many political parties took part in the State Duma election in 1995?

- A. Less than 10.
- B. 11-30.
- C. 31-50.
- D. More than 50.

**Comments:** The formation of a modern party system, a process which started in the 1990s, was never finished. During the first five years of the 1990s the number of parties grew radically, but in the second half of the decade it declined. 13 parties took part in the State Duma election in 1993, 43 in 1995, and 26 in 1999. In 1995, there were 258 registered political parties, but in 1999 there were only 139. The parties were weak mainly because they didn't have the time to become organizations representing the interests of large population groups. The limitation of the Federal Assembly (according to the Russian Constitution of 1993) and the people's inexperience with voting in a party system also weakened these parties. The liberal leaders of the early 1990s could not create a strong "party of power". Their party, *The Choice of Russia*, received 16% of the vote in 1993. In the State Duma election of 1995, the "party of power", *Our Home – Russia*, which included more officials and heads of enterprise, received a mere 10% of the vote. During the second half of the decade and especially after 2000 the natural development of the party system became more and more deformed. The party of power acts less and less like a political party that represents the interests of a large group of people, but as a corporation of officials that brings the will of the executive branch

into life. Real political parties are few, unpopular, and unable to become a part of the legislative branch.

5. Viktor Chernomyrdin, who became the Prime Minister of Russia after Yegor Gaidar's dismissal,

- A. Continued liberal reforms.
- B. Began cancelling liberal reforms.
- C. "Froze" liberal reforms.
- D. Did nothing about economic problems.

**Comments:** Viktor Chernomyrdin is remembered mainly for his malapropisms. He was seen as part of the old *nomenklatura*<sup>98</sup> connected to production, which is why the deputies voted for him. To their surprise, Chernomyrdin's government continued with the reforms. The government's priorities in 1993 included the strengthening of the Russian ruble, financial stabilization and fighting inflation. Altogether, these policies followed Gaidar's approach, and the liberal economic reforms continued. Despite the disadvantageous economic conditions, the basis for the development of the new economic and political foundation was created in an unprecedented time frame – less than ten years. However, while the transition to the market economy, albeit with some deformation, was performed, a real democracy could not be built. No real separation of authority, no independence of courts and no competitive party system has been established/implemented. A reform of the law enforcement system never took place.

6. Which of today's oligarchs was linked to the *semibankirschina* of the 1990s?

- A. Oleg Deripaska.
- B. Vladimir Potanin.
- C. Roman Abramovich.
- D. The Rotenberg brothers.

**Comments:** *Semibankirschina*, a folk word, was introduced by journalist Andrey Fadin in 1996, after Boris Berezovsky arrogantly named the seven people who controlled more than a half of Russia's economics and influenced the most important political decisions in the country. Those seven were Boris Berezovsky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Mikhail Fridman, Petr Aven, Vladimir Gusinsky, Alexander Smolensky and Vladimir Potanin. The presence of oligarchy in the 1990s is partially a myth invented by the media since one cannot insist on any direct influence of the richest people on politicians or political institutes. There was,

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<sup>98</sup> The *nomenklatura* were a category of people within the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries who held various key administrative positions in the bureaucracy, running all spheres of those countries' activity, whose positions were granted only with approval by the Communist Party of each country or region. The *nomenklatura* formed a de facto elite which had some specific privileges in the former Eastern Bloc.



obviously, some influence, most clearly seen in the oligarchs' financial support of Boris Yeltsin during the 1996 election. Despite the war on oligarchs declared by Vladimir Putin, the wealthiest capitalists still influence the government, although not in the way they did in the 1990s. Out of the former seven only Fridman and Potanin can be considered oligarchs now. On the other hand, others, such as Roman Abramovich, Oleg Deripaska, Viktor Vekselberg and Vagit Alekperov, who gained influence and wealth in the 1990s, are still present. They are accompanied by Vladimir Putin's friends, Arkady Rotenberg, Igor Sechin and others.

7. The Treaty of Federation was signed on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1992, by all the republics except for Chechnya and Tatarstan. This treaty

- A. Helped strengthen the unity of the Russian Federation.
- B. Provoked the decay of the Russian Federation.
- C. Encouraged some territories to separate from the Russian Federation.
- D. Tried to keep the Soviet Union intact.

**Comments:** Intending to attract the support of the autonomous regions, Boris Yeltsin rashly said in August 1990, "take as much sovereignty as you can eat". This phrase, which he later admitted was a mistake, encouraged separatist sentiments in autonomous regions and led to many of them declaring sovereignty and making their own laws. Much of the content of statements made by regional politicians was political speculation. According to some experts, real potential for separation was only present in Chechnya and Tuva. However, in the complicated situation of 1992, the threat of the country's breakdown was considered very seriously. The Treaty of Federation allowed the autonomous regions to move towards more centrist tendencies by setting the legal basis of the division between federal and local authorities. The federal centre sought favour with certain territories in 1992-1994, mostly with national autonomous regions, and built an asymmetric federation, in which some territories gained exclusive rights. This allowed the preservation of state unity. Later, the local authorities lost, little by little, their relative independence.

8. What was the immediate reason for the First Chechen War?

- A. Dzhokhar Dudaev's proclamation of the Independent Republic of Ichkeria.
- B. Russia's ultimatum to disarm the "illegal warring factions" in Chechnya.
- C. Russia's demand to free the hostages in Budyonnovsk.
- D. The murder of Dzhokhar Dudaev.

**Comments:** Chechen leaders and people were eager to be more politically independent than other regions. However, the main factor that led to the worst possible scenario of relations between the federal centre and the autonomous region was the constant urge of Russian political leaders to use or threaten force. The

state of emergency declared by Boris Yeltsin as a response to the declaration of the Independent Republic of Ichkeria led to stronger Chechen loyalty to Dudaev, the formation of a national guard, the blockade of the Russian army, and, finally, the criminalization and loss of control over the republic. When the federal army entered Chechnya on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1994, before the expiration of the ultimatum, it led not to the supposed quick victory, but to the far-reaching and tragic First Chechen War which took many lives. The war ended in the defeat of the federal army. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996, the Russian and Chechen delegates signed the Khasav-Yurt Accord, which ended the First Chechen War and established the following: Chechnya gained the status of an independent republic making up a part of Russia. Russia had to pay compensation for the buildings destroyed in Chechnya and withdraw its army from the region, while the Chechen side had to dissolve illegal armed groups.

To put this in historical perspective, we can say that Dudaev's project of an independent Chechnya would have been a secular autonomous republic within Russia, while in the present-day Chechnya is an Islamic dictatorship, which is harsher than the Russian dictatorship, with federally funded authorities that are absolutely independent from the federal centre.

9. As a result of the 1995 presidential election, the president of Poland, Lech Wałęsa
- Won the election because of the scale of his campaign.
  - Retired as president after losing to a Democratic Left Alliance candidate.
  - Led a successor to power.
  - Did not run in the election and retired.

**Comments:** The defeat of Lech Wałęsa, a symbol of Polish reforms, and the victory of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a social democrat, is not only a sign of change in the people's loyalties, but also an illustration of the success of the democratic process in Poland in the 1990s. This bigger success, in relation to Russian political reforms, was due not only to the better initial conditions (less of a totalitarian legacy, stronger help from the West, "Solidarity" leaders' authority, etc.), but also to a stronger attention to the cultivation of democratic practice. The free competition of political parties was encouraged, and efforts were directed to form an independent judicial branch. A key factor was the political support of liberal reforms conducted by the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Leszek Balcerowicz. This "shock therapy" gave the first positive results in half a year, supporting the acceptance of the democratic reforms. An administrative and tax decentralization (unseen in Russia) also played a big part in the political and economic reforms. The new Constitution, accepted on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1997, which limited the role of the president and the Sejm, led to a further strengthening of democracy. The Council of Ministers became the main element of the executive branch, but the programs proposed by it must be approved by a parliamentary majority.

**10.** How many people were killed during the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s?

- A. 100-200 people.
- B. 10,000-20,000 people.
- C. 100,000-200,000 people.
- D. 1,000,000-2,000,000 people.

**Comments:** According to Leszek Balcerowicz, “the peaceful disintegration of the Soviet Union looks like a miracle” compared to the Yugoslav civil war. This war or, to be precise, wars, claimed between 100,000 and 200,000 lives. Such a high casualty rate makes them some of the bloodiest wars in Europe, second only to World War II. These wars were fought in the territories of five (out of six) republics of the former Yugoslavia. From 1991-1992, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina separated from Yugoslavia, while Serbia and Montenegro created the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The battles with the most bloodshed happened first in Croatia and Bosnia, and then in Serbia (mainly Kosovo). This can be explained by the fact that in these regions people of many different ethnicities lived next to one another. Nationalist leaders of Bosnian Croats and Bosnian and Croatian Serbs wanted to join their territories to Croatia and Serbia, respectively. The Kosovo Albanians tried to gain independence.

NATO intervened in the conflict twice. The first intervention was in 1995, when NATO intended to stop the ethnic cleansing undertaken by the Serbian army. This intervention led to peace negotiations. Because of these negotiations, an agreement to create a united state of Bosnia and Herzegovina was made. In this state, three nations, Bosnians, Croats, and Serbs, would have equal rights, and each administrative entity would have its own government. NATO intervened for the second time in 1999, bombing Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia, in order to make the president, Slobodan Milošević, withdraw the Serbian army from Kosovo, where the fight against armed separatists turned into the ethnic cleansing of Albanians and led to the mass displacement of Kosovan citizens as refugees. The Serbian army left Kosovo and KFOR, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force, moved in. In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence.

## **SOURCE B:**

### **Documents for the “Political Whirlwinds of the 1990s” class.**

**1.** On December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1992, the 7<sup>th</sup> Russian Congress of People’s Deputies fired Yegor Gaidar, who, by then, had been in charge of the Russian government for about a year. He received 467 votes out of the necessary 521. As a result, Boris Yeltsin offered Viktor Chernomyrdin the position of First Deputy Prime Minister as a compromise.

**Ruslan Khasbulatov** (in 1992 – Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation):

...the day before Yeltsin was begging me, he was saying, “let’s keep him”. I was very angry with them, but still I told him, “Alright, I won’t bring up the question of Gaidar’s dismissal, but that means nothing, after all, I only have one vote, and there are about a thousand deputies at the congress”.

...Yeltsin realized that he’s not almighty, that his rating is not what it once was.

...this parliament [2002] doesn’t play the role of the centre, as the principal power of the democratic process anymore. When we talk about democracy, we need to first keep in mind what kind of power the central democratic authority holds, which is exactly what a federal parliament is.

**Gennady Burbulis** (in 1992 – First Deputy Prime Minister and State Secretary of the Russian Federation):

...the difficulties with the economic changes were perceived as a weakness by the people, as flaws of the democratic changes.

...Yeltsin manoeuvred nicely, as always, [...] if Chernomyrdin didn’t exist, he would have to be made up.

...we completely lost the loyalty of society, of the people in 1992.

**Viktor Scheinis** (in 1992 – People’s Deputy of Russian Federation):

...the fight, indeed, happened over economic issues. But the central question was the question of government, who will be in charge of it. Actually, our main goal was to grab the government from the president’s hands.

...the 7<sup>th</sup> congress had to show both the president and the democrats that the time of tempest and attack has gone, that we have to learn how to manoeuvre instead of going straight.

...with all its costs, in 1992, in 1993 and in the first years after the new constitution... public politics existed all the same, the society’s interest in political affairs was one of the factors that influenced political decisions. Today, all political decisions are hush-hush. The parliament, indeed, doesn’t play any serious role. [...] Society’s will to control their deputies, to go to elections and achieve certain results has changed. The elections are now controllable, just as democracy is controllable.<sup>99</sup>



### Discussion questions:

1. What was the main factor leading to Gaidar’s dismissal?
2. What are the main differences between the political life of the early 1990s and of today?

<sup>99</sup> Ten years later. Yegor Gaidar’s dismissal. December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002.  
Available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/24203420.html>.

2. The presidential election of 1996 became, in many ways, an iconic event. By the beginning of 1996 the current president, Boris Yeltsin, lost his popularity, and in February 1996 his approval rating was no higher than 4%. However, in the first round of the election, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, in which 11 candidates took part, he gained 32% of the vote. His rival, Gennady Zyuganov, received 32%. In the second round of election, on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Yeltsin won in a landslide, gaining 54% of the vote, while Zyuganov received 40%.

Journalists and politicians discuss how this result was achieved.

**Valery Khomyakov** (Political scientist, former member of Yeltsin’s campaign):

“There are no miracles, and there was no ballot falsification. The first and the main thing was that we managed to create the spectre of the return of communism with all its attributes: lines, alcohol, cigarette and soap shortages... “Vote or lose!”, “God forbid!”, “Buy some food for the last time!” – these mottoes worked. On the other hand, we cannot forget about the huge amount of non-public work with the regional elites done by Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin. The governors then had more weight than the Kremlin. Most of them were rather evasive, but he spoke their language and made them decide. He would often ask one of them to stay after a government meeting. “Well, who do you support?” “Boris Nikolaevich, of course!” “And what do you say back home? That you support the continuation of reforms? Well, go and meet ORT’s film crew in the corridor and tell them this!”

This was, of course, an administrative resource. But it wasn’t the same as today when they pressure retirees and state employees. Nobody touched simple voters.”<sup>100</sup>

**Igor Malashenko** (Responsible for the media coverage of Yeltsin’s campaign):

“The president ensured his own victory. If, after several heart attacks, with a malfunctioning heart, Yeltsin didn’t find it in himself to go around the country, to speak at demonstrations, to give interviews, to dance at concerts, nothing would have happened.”<sup>101</sup>

**Alexander Loktev** (in 1996 – Editor-in-chief of the newspaper, *Kommersant*):

“I was at the famous meeting that took place in the LogoVAZ reception house, which was then owned by Boris Abramovich Berezovsky. [...] I think that all the chief editors of all the important publishers were there, all the people that were responsible for the TV information broadcasting – ORT, NTV, etc. There were about 25-30 people. During that meeting we were told that if we didn’t support Yeltsin, the whole country will become “red” again. That’s why we must sacrifice our principles and support Yeltsin.”<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/russian/features-36714981>.

<sup>101</sup> Available at: <https://www.forbes.ru/forbes/issue/2006-06/14939-kak-delali-prezidenta>.

<sup>102</sup> Available at: [https://slon.ru/russia/ya\\_vzhivuyu\\_nablyudal\\_kak\\_hodorkovskiy\\_iz\\_hishhni-508974.xhtml](https://slon.ru/russia/ya_vzhivuyu_nablyudal_kak_hodorkovskiy_iz_hishhni-508974.xhtml).

### **Arkady Ostrovsky** (Journalist):

“Chubais is not sorry, he doesn’t regret that he was the author of the most controversial process of privatization: with loans-for-shares auctions, during which the largest and most valuable Russian assets were handed over to a group of magnates in exchange for loans and their support of a very sick Yeltsin during the 1996 election.”

**Anatoly Chubais** (Played a key role in the privatization process during his time in the Russian government):

“We didn’t have a choice. Had we not gone through with the loan-for-shares scheme, the communists would have won the 1996 election, and that would’ve been the last free election in Russia, since these guys never give their power away for nothing.”<sup>103</sup>



### **Discussion questions:**

1. Was the acting president’s victory in the 1996 election predetermined?
2. According to the experts, what are the main factors that ensured Yeltsin’s victory?
3. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1999, during his New Year’s speech, Boris Yeltsin announced his retirement. The Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin became acting president. In March 2000, he won the first run of the presidential election with 53% of the vote.

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Boris Yeltsin addressed the people on the TV, saying that he was appointing the FSB director Vladimir Putin as acting prime minister. He clearly stated that it is Putin who he saw as his successor: “...there will be a presidential election in a year. Today I have decided to name the man, who, in my opinion, can consolidate society. To ensure, with the support of a wide range of political forces, the continuation of reforms in Russia... This is Vladimir Putin, Secretary of the Security Council, Director of the FSB.”<sup>104</sup>

**Valentin Yumashev** (Advisor to the president of the Russian Federation):

“Yeltsin left his office half a year in advance to give Putin a leg-up against Primakov and Luzhkov, to guarantee, even more, his victory in the election... he (Yeltsin) saw him as a man who would continue his reforms. The liberal reforms, the reforms associated with the way of the market economy that Russia took, that Putin will continue with these reforms and will not turn from this main course.”<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Available at: <https://rg.ru/2004/11/19/chubaj.html>.

<sup>104</sup> Available at: <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/435055>.

<sup>105</sup> Available at: <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2019/11/22/816979-on-videl-cheloveka-prodolzhit>.

**Leonid Parfenov** (Journalist):

“To put a loyal candidate into the president’s chair through appointing him prime minister – operation “Successor” (this name is attributed to Boris Berezovsky) must preserve “Yeltsinism” without Yeltsin. For Yeltsin’s closest entourage that would guarantee wealth and personal safety in Russia. If Luzhkov came to power, redistribution and repressions would be inevitable. Stepashin is considered “decent” (“loyal”, “honest”, a man of his word), “but weak”. That means he will not be able to handle either the Caucasus or his political rivals in the *Centre*. Someone “loyal and strong” is needed... The new prime minister focuses on the Caucasian campaign. Putin’s main public allies – *ORT*, controlled by Berezovsky, and the government channel *Russia* – promote the image of a “strong hand” that will put everything in order. A little over a month after his appointment as prime minister, Putin formulates the slogan of his presidential campaign. Promising to “pursue the terrorists everywhere”, he gives a radical example: “Pardon my language, if we catch them on the toilet, we’ll whack them on the loo, after all!” The crowd adopts his words, turning it into a categorical imperative “Whack them on the loo!” This is the motto with which the country pledges allegiance to the new hero.”<sup>106</sup>

**Sergey Aleksashenko** (Economist):

“Boris Yeltsin naming his successor was a very important, key moment. By doing so, he crossed out all the republican basics... today, in our country, if we put away what’s written in the constitution, we have absolute monarchy. Not a limited one, not the British monarchy, we have a monarchy like one in Saudi Arabia, where one man decides everything.”<sup>107</sup>

**Discussion questions:**

1. Was there any real alternative to Putin during the 2000 presidential election?
2. How serious was the outcome of the “careful” disruption of democratic procedures with the help of political technology?

### SOURCE C: Suggested comments to the “Political whirlwinds of the 1990s” class.

**Group 1:** Summarizing the discussion, typical features of the political situation of 1992 should be noted. First, a struggle between political parties, and second, a violent struggle between the executive branch (the president and his administration) and the legislative branch (the Supreme Council). Both these things were

<sup>106</sup> Available at: <https://namednibook.ru/operaciya-preemnik-putin-mochit-v-s.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Available at: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/27342743.html>.

not an illusion, the struggle went on in the then-existing legal field. In the end, the majority of the Supreme Council, which consisted mainly of Soviet *nomenklatura*, won. Throughout 1992 it sabotaged the radical market reforms made by the government and, finally, dismissed the prime minister despite the president's support of him.

**Group 2:** To summarize the discussion, it would make sense to draw the students' attention to the fact that, in 1996, the presidential election was incredibly competitive, with a real choice and an unknown result. Moreover, at the beginning of 1996, most experts thought that Yeltsin would lose the election. The effects of falsification, which experts think was marginally present, were minor. It was new PR techniques and the money invested in them by big business that worked. **Georgy Satarov** (in 1996 – an advisor to the president of the Russian Federation) stated:

“The “Vote or lose!” campaign was a massive project to manipulate people's opinions and set the foundation for mass zombification for decades to come. The propaganda of today is a child of “Vote or lose!”. But the manipulation of public opinion, which required control over TV, was not the only source of Yeltsin's “victory”. The sale of the state and its resources to support groups (the “loans-for-shares scheme”) was also a very effective way to keep Yeltsin in the Kremlin. It largely determined the unification of power and wealth as one of the key elements of today's state and power model.”<sup>108</sup>

**Group 3:** To summarize the discussion, it is worth drawing the attention of students to the fact that, in the naming of Yeltsin's “successor”, the result of the presidential election in 2000 was largely predetermined.

**Gleb Pavlovsky**, a political scientist, characterized it: “The 1999-2000 election created a controllable democratic model... Putin's victory was achieved during a controlled manipulation of democratic procedures and (almost) according to democratic rules.”<sup>109</sup>

The aftermath was fatal to democracy. A gradual narrowing of the citizens' abilities to control the state led to a virtual autocracy in just 20 years.

As can be seen from the three examples discussed, the degree of political competition fell during the 1990s. The desire of the leaders of the executive branch to control the political process led to the formation of an authoritarian regime.

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<sup>108</sup> Available at: <https://tv2.today/TV2Old/Golosuy-ili-proigraesh-20-let-spustya>.

<sup>109</sup> Available at: <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/75808>.



## UKRAINE – STUDYING UKRAINIAN AND EUROPEAN HISTORY THROUGH ACTIVE LEARNING

Author: Mykola Skyba

### I. Overview

The methodological approach to the lesson – active and problem-based learning. Tools and framework – a blended learning method<sup>110</sup> (mostly ‘rotation model’) (see APPENDIX, p. 204). The teacher provides research tasks for the students which include the topic from the typical program, like the one transition topic, and assist students to break into small groups of 5-9. The students should read material on the topic independently. About 90% of the information related to the module will be delivered through a digital platform. The teacher will put together all relevant links and distribute them amongst the groups. The students then start working in groups and consulting with the teacher, either individually or as a group.

### II. Students’ age

9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade

### III. Objectives

#### Knowledge

- The students should know the chronological boundaries of political changes during the revolutions in the socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe; the key name and events such as “Perestroika”, the “Granite Revolution” in the USSR, the reunification of Germany, the division of Czechoslovakia, the civil war in Yugoslavia and the formation of newly independent states in the Balkans; the date of the Chernobyl disaster, the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine.
- Students should understand the essence of the concepts: “democratic transit”, “acceleration”, “publicity”, “new thinking”, “parade of sovereignties”, “coup”, “referendum”, “Velvet Revolution”, “Autumn of Nations”, “Granite Revolution”, “shock therapy”.

#### Skills and ability

The students should be able to:

- Define their research/learning goals, draw up a step-by-step plan and maintain a clear focus.
- Think critically, distinguishing between facts and judgment.

<sup>110</sup> See at: <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blended-learning-definitions-and-models/>.

- Collaborate successfully within a group.
- Work independently with historical sources and extract key figures and information.
- Draw their own conclusions and write a comprehensive essay.
- To speak in public.

### **Attitude**

The student can:

- Define their own point view as a citizen.
- Value freedom of thought.
- Respect the dignity of others.

## **IV. Key concepts**

The Declaration of the Independence of Ukraine was the result of the contemporary situation of forced consensus between the national-patriotic and communist factions in the Parliament of the USSR.

The economy of Ukraine between the market and state capitalism in the first years of independence.

'State capitalism' and political compromise give way to the emergence of an oligarchy which has shifted the balance of power and discredited the process of democratization in Ukraine.

The weakness of the state institutions overwhelmed by corruption increases the sense of insecurity within society.

The two-revolution movement, the "Orange Revolution" and the "Revolution of Dignity", represented an uprising of the middle class demanding a return to the democratic agenda.

These modules cover the content of:

- Section 5. "Revolutionary changes in Europe. Declaration of independence of Ukraine" the national curricula (the typical program "History: Ukraine and the World for 10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grades)<sup>111</sup> Particularly,
  - a. The liberalization of social and cultural life. National movements. The rehabilitation of the oppressed and release of political prisoners. The establishment of a multiparty system and development of national movements. Ukrainian counterculture.
  - b. Ukrainian society in the period of "perestroika". The establishment of public initiatives in Ukrainian society. The "Declaration of Principles" of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union. The People's Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika. Vyacheslav Chornovil. The move of parts of the Party nomenclature into national positions. The first alternative elections

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<sup>111</sup> See at: <https://history.vn.ua/pidruchniki/history-ukraine-and-world-11-class-2019-mudriy/>.

(1990). The “Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine”. The “Granite Revolution”. The formation of a multiparty system.

Chapter 5.4. Everyday life. The national values and ideological orientations of the population of Ukraine: regional differences. Attitudes to labor and state property. The beginnings of private enterprise and increasing commercialization. Living standards among the population. The housing problem. Family life and everyday life: the conflict of generations.

c. The Autumn of the Peoples: Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Poland: “Solidarity” and the Round Table Talks. Czechoslovakia: The Velvet Revolution. Yugoslavia: disintegration and civil war. The collapse of communist regimes in Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. The reunification of Germany.

- Partly chapter 6 “Ukraine in the contemporary world”

6.2. Ukraine in a “multipolar” world. The growing role of the United States in international relations. Russia: between the desire for international influence and self-isolation.

6.3. European and Euro-Atlantic integration; The Schengen area. The Council of Europe; The Maastricht Treaty; The Formation of the European Union; EU enlargement and “neighborhood policy”; Euroscepticism.

## V. Key question

Imagine you have a ‘time machine’. You can travel back in time, but you can only change one detail? What is the detail you would change?

## VI. Step-by-step description of the lesson

### Structure of the lesson

- Overall number of units – 8.
- Method – Blended learning (see APPENDIX, p. 204).
- First lesson – introduction to the topic; explanation of the method and discussion with students.
- Next seven units: Each starts from a question by the students to the teacher. Then all together choose the 4-4 cases and provide analyses.
- One of the units worth focusing on is the key dilemma.
- Specific recommendations for the teacher: to encourage students to think out of the box; to respect the originality and independence of their conclusions.
- Use the articles, interviews, blogs, etc. from the “The Ukrainians”, “Ukraine Rozumna” (Smart Ukraine), “NV”, etc. of new and contemporary public intellectuals (include: Yaroslav Hrytsak, Yevhen Hlibovytsky, Volodymyr Yermolenko, Sergii Zhadan).

### Description of the lesson

Examples of the topics:

- “Our Families’ Geography: Changes Over Time”
- “A Trick of the Memory”
- “Transition DJ set”
- Others – proposed by the students

### “Our Families’ Geography: Changes Over Time”

Aim: To highlight and explain the connection between geopolitical changes in Europe and the world and individual mobility (based on the biography of the students’ families and/or close people; connect everyday life, individual and societal, to a wider history).

#### Sub-tasks:

- Draw a map of decades (digital or analog) with geotags and usual routes of travels and trips – on the weekend, during holidays, for study trips, as part of military service, business-trips, etc.
- Collect and combine the images with significant characteristics of the journeys.
- Create a record of stories about travel experiences and impressions.

Expected results: A leaflet, including an infographic, video presentation using original sources (publications, archive, field study etc.).

### “A Trick of the Memory”

Aim: To understand how the human memory works and the influence of cognitive distortion on memory. To identify and avoid the problem of vague/false memories while working with historical issues.

Sub-tasks: Students records oral history segments (related to significant historical events) from eyewitnesses and compare this material with documentary evidence (part of it should be preselected by teachers, some discovered independently by students).

#### ACTIVITY 1:

- Discuss students’ personal geographies. Questions could refer to where they have travelled, with whom they communicate abroad, who their favourite travel bloggers are etc. (25 minutes)
- Mention the impact of the requirement to quarantine in the COVID-19 pandemic situation and the introduction of new barriers to cross-border movement (3 minutes)

- Ask what expectations students might have when travelling between countries (2 minutes)
- The teacher could point out that it is possible to look for the answers to these questions in history, and especially in the history of the transition period.
- A story about how the Iron Curtain affected the fate of families during the Cold War based on previously learned material.

Summary: The fall of the Berlin Wall, the policy of publicity and the rapprochement of the USSR with NATO members have dramatically changed this situation. However, the practice of building barriers to free movement remains. This is a common reaction to perceived threats. (15 minutes)

Students receive the following tasks:

- To work independently on the topic of revolutionary change in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s and early 1990s.
- To conduct mini-surveys and find out how the geography of travel changed from the late 1980s-2000s.
- To find out what socio-economic and political factors influenced the opening up of borders and what factors should be taken into consideration to predict the impact of these factors on the lives of students and their families in the next 3-5 years.

### ACTIVITIES 2 & 3:

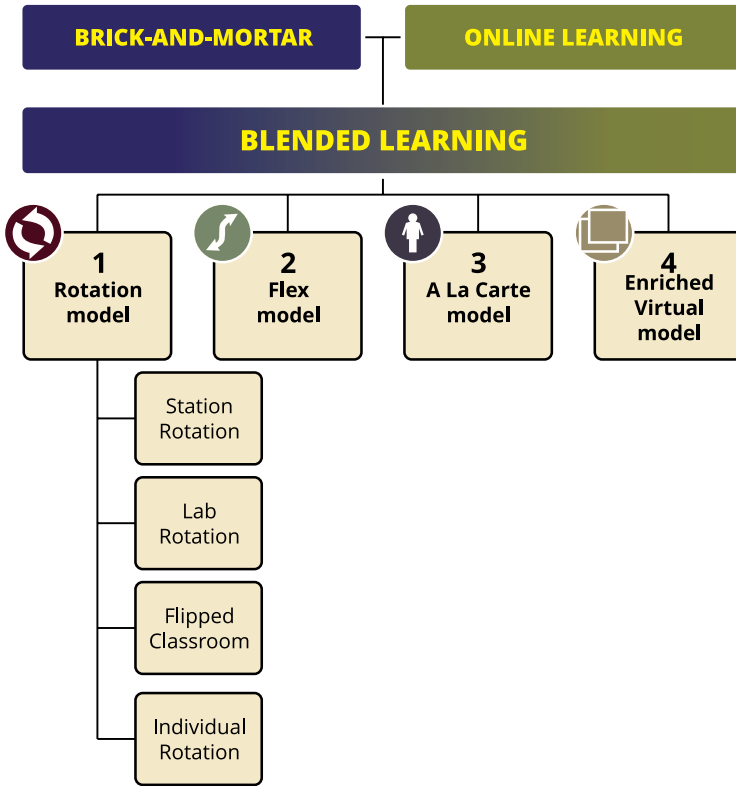
Students work in teams. The teacher provides mentoring. Classes can take place both at school in the classroom and/or remotely (in case of a deterioration of the epidemiological situation, and the joint decision of students). If teams work on school grounds, they can have meetings with the teacher for mentoring sessions. If teamwork takes place remotely, the teacher can schedule online meetings for each team.

### ACTIVITY 4:

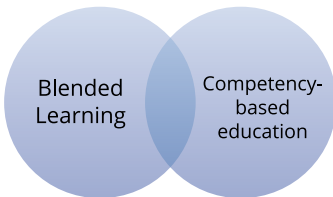
- Students present their work.
- Teachers can encourage creative forms of presenting the results, such as edited video plots (lasting up to 5 minutes), animations, infographics, mind maps, theatre performances, poster exhibitions, debates, and so forth.
- Such a teaching format gives students the opportunity to work with tools such as powertone, crello, etc.

APPENDIX

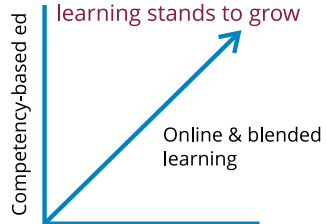
Model of Blended Learning by the Clayton Christensen Institute



Pedagogy: Blended learning as a delivery model that can complement competency-based instruction



Market trends: CBE policy could shape how online learning stands to grow



Historical grounding:  
Different ends in mind



## Transnational lesson plans

### THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

Examples from Bulgaria, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine

Authors: Alicja Pacewicz, Olena Pravylo, Leonie Sichtermann,  
Louisa Slavkova & Giedrė Tumosaitė

#### I. Overview

The lesson plan outlines a working definition of civil society and its role in a healthy democracy. It focuses on three pillars: 1) civil society in times of a totalitarian regime, 2) civil society and its role during a period of change – the end of a totalitarian regime and the beginning of a transition to democracy, 3) civil society today and its value for a resilient democracy.

#### II. Objectives

- Describe the role of civil society.
- Be in a position to compare different civil society movements before, during and after the transition to democracy in different countries.
- Be able to identify the challenges and opportunities for civil society in the present – on local, national, and transnational levels.

#### III. Key concepts

**Civil society:** “Civil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State.”<sup>112</sup>

**Civil society organizations (CSOs):** “A civil society organization is an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and

<sup>112</sup> EUR-Lex – Access to European Union law: ‘Glossary of summaries – Civil Society Organisations’. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil\\_society\\_organisation.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/civil_society_organisation.html). A very thorough description of the concept is available here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil\\_society](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society): Civil society can be understood as the “third sector” of society, distinct from government and business, and including the family and the private sphere. By other authors, civil society is used in the sense of 1) the aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or 2) individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government. Sometimes the term civil society is used in the more general sense of “the elements such as freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, etc, that make up a democratic society” (Collins English Dictionary). Especially in the discussions among thinkers of Eastern and Central Europe, civil society is seen also as a normative concept of civic values.

citizens. Examples of such organizations include social partners (trades unions & employers' groups); non-governmental organizations (e.g., for environmental & consumer protection); grassroots organizations (e.g., youth & family groupings). The European Economic and Social Committee represents civil society at EU level."<sup>113</sup>

**Non-governmental organizations (NGOs):** Sometimes civil society is mistaken for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) only. NGOs are legal entities regulated mainly by a special Non-Profit Legal Entities Act in any country. They are independent of the government and the private sector and are not working for profit; they are guided by certain goals and values set out in their statutes. Such a goal can be to support society as a whole or some of its individual groups (parents, children, artists, minority groups, journalists, etc.).

**Active citizenship:** "Active citizenship means people getting involved in their communities and democracy at all levels from local to national and global. An active citizen promotes the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes developing a combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to work to make a difference in the society."<sup>114</sup>

**Totalitarianism:** "Totalitarianism is a form of government that attempts to assert total control over the lives of its citizens. It is characterized by strong central rule that attempts to control and direct all aspects of individual life through coercion and repression. It does not permit individual freedom. Traditional social institutions and organizations are discouraged and suppressed, making people more willing to be merged into a single unified movement. Totalitarian states typically pursue a special goal to the exclusion of all others, with all resources directed toward its attainment, regardless of the cost."<sup>115</sup>

**Pluralism:** "Pluralism, in political science, the view that in liberal democracies power is (or should be) dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological pressure groups and is not (or should not be) held by a single elite or group of elites. Pluralism assumes that diversity is beneficial to society and that autonomy should be enjoyed by disparate functional or cultural groups within a society, including religious groups, trade unions, professional organizations, and ethnic minorities."<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> European university college Association (EuCA): 'Active citizenship'. Available at: <https://www.euca.eu/activecitizenship>.

<sup>115</sup> Britannica (2021): 'Totalitarianism'. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/totalitarianism>.

<sup>116</sup> Britannica (2008): 'Pluralism'. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pluralism-politics>.



## Key questions

- Can civil society exist in a totalitarian regime and, if so, how?
- What role does civil society play in times of transition to democracy?
- Why is civil society important for a functioning democracy?

## IV. Step-by-step description of the lesson

### Introductory words: Why focus on the role of civil society?

The idea that a dynamic, active, and independent civil society is crucial to the health of any democracy, has gained momentum in the last century, even more so after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism in Eastern Europe.

It is a key feature of totalitarian states, such as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland, or Ukraine before 1989/91 that the ruling regime puts under total control all spheres of human life and there is practically no space for people's own initiative or organization outside the structures of power. This, indeed, is the situation within the extreme form of totalitarianism, but various subcultures, underground movements, and, sooner or later, forms of civil protest and disobedience emerge even under the most oppressive regimes.

The attacks seen in recent years in many countries around the world against CSOs that criticise their governments or denounce abuses of power show that non-democratic leaders see civil society as a threat to their existence. We deem it important to point out the power of the citizens and civil society to effect change and help democracies to flourish. That is why we chose to develop teaching materials that focus on the historical role of civil society for the process of transition to democracy in post-communist countries in Eastern Europe. The lesson plan is split into three units: unit I deals with civil society before 1989/91 in communist Europe; unit II explains civil society in the transition period after 1989/91; and unit III examines civil society today and outlines why it is important to get involved.

### UNIT I: "CIVIL SOCIETY BEFORE 1989/91 IN COMMUNIST EUROPE"

**Materials:** sticky notes, white board, markers, pre-printed photos, a screen that everyone can watch and internet.

**Beginning of the lesson:** Give some introductory remarks to your students explaining that this part lesson consists of three parts: 1) civil society under communism, 2) civil society in times of transition to democracy and 3) civil society today.

### ACTIVITY 1: Analyse quotes – Who represents civil society under a totalitarian regime? (15 minutes)



**Aim:** Have a basic understanding of who represents civil society under a totalitarian regime and what form civil society takes in this context. Learn the distinction between genuine civil society and civil society organized by the state.



**Description:** Ask your students to listen to or read two quotes (see APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 215) and answer the following questions:

1. Who represents civil society according to the speaker's statements? List as many examples as you can find.
2. What does the speaker mean by "*all these groups which were organized by the Party and that would not really count as civil society*"?

### ACTIVITY 2: Analyse pictures and relate to what has been learned in activity 1 – The main actors and functions of civil society [10 minutes]



**Aim:** Learn to identify who the main actors of civil society are under a repressive regime (in comparison to a democratic state) and what the functions (confrontation and resistance rather than cooperation) of civil society are. Understand how they differ in comparison to a democratic context.



**Description:** Split the class into groups and provide each group with markers, paper (a different color for each group) and a set of pictures (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B: Picture SET I, p. 216). Ask the students to take 5 minutes to look at the picture and describe what they see. Once the 5 minutes are over, hand out *a second set of pictures* (see APPENDIX – SOURCE B: Picture SET II, p. 217). The pictures represent different civil society actors from different country contexts (Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, and Ukraine). While set I represents the "fake" civil society organized by the regime, set II represents the genuine civil society and protest actions.

Let each group nominate a person that will take notes and present the results of the group. Students should answer the following set of questions:

- What do you see on the pictures? Be as specific as possible (which country, city, year, event, participants, etc.). What are the people doing? What do they look like? Are they representatives of civil society?
- Relate the pictures to the homework and describe which are the pictures representing genuine civil society, which do not and why. Describe the characteristics of both. Use sticky notes in two different colors.

In a next step, invite the note-takers to share on the whiteboard the following clusters of information:

- Who were the civil society representatives before 1989/91?
- How were they organized?
- What were they doing?

Gather the class together again. First, ask the respective note takers to describe what the group observed on set I and set II of the pictures. Afterwards collect the sticky notes on a board. Summarize the characteristics of both.

## UNIT II: "CIVIL SOCIETY IN TIMES OF CHANGES"

**Materials:** pre-printed material, sticky notes, white board, a screen that everyone can watch, computer, projector, and internet.

**Beginning of the lesson:** Recapitulate what has been discussed in unit I regarding civil society. Explain, that this unit will deal with the role of civil society during the processes of change in Eastern Europe after 1989 and the fall of the totalitarian regimes.

### ACTIVITY 1: The transition of 1989: from ... to ... ? (15-18 minutes)



**Aim:** To consolidate the learning outcomes of the previous unit. To reflect upon the reasons that brought people to the civil movements and protests in the early 1990s.



**Description:** Each student receives one quote (see APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p. 218). Ask students to read the quote individually and write down, in their own words, 1-2 reasons that were important factors in starting the massive changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989.

Split students into the groups according to the quotes received (approx. 4-5 students in a group). Ask students to discuss and agree on 1 or 2 reasons to be presented to the rest of the class. Each group appoints a note-taker that will report the results of the group to the rest of the class. The note-takers of each group present the results of the group providing a very brief justification for their choices. Other groups can react briefly. Wrap up the discussion, provide your feedback.

### ACTIVITY 2: Triumph of the civil society (15-18 minutes)



**Aim:** To understand the role that civil society played at the beginning of the transition period and its contribution to the changes. To understand the diversity and uniqueness of each country's experiences and situation.



**Description:** Show students a video created by Radio Free Europe (see APPENDIX – SOURCE D, p. 220). Since students are already working in

the groups, ask each group to come up with their own title for the video. Ask 3 groups to present their title and explain why they have chosen it. Collect feedback from other groups. Choose one of the following questions to discuss with the students:

- Why is the sequence of the events of 1989 in post-communist and post-Soviet regions often called a “domino effect”?
- How can you define the role of civil society in the events of 1989?

### UNIT III: “CIVIL SOCIETY TODAY. WHY GET INVOLVED?”

**Materials:** sticky notes, white board, a screen that everyone can watch and internet.

#### ACTIVITY 1: Imagine that you are living in a country where you are not allowed to establish an NGO or organize a demonstration (15 minutes)



**Aim:** To imagine/visualize a political system where civil society does not exist, is banned, or repressed and to judge the consequences for democracy and society.



**Description:** Referring to previous activities, ask students what they think life in their country would be like now if civil society had not taken to the streets 30 years ago in protest against the communist regime. What countries in the world still have a totalitarian regime and what is public life like there? If students are lacking information, ask them to find out about the civil society situation in countries such as Cuba and North Korea on the web or briefly describe them yourself. Explain that there are other countries, such as Turkey, Syria, China, Hong Kong, and Nicaragua, where civil rights are systematically curtailed, and civic movements and organizations repressed. You may also refer to the political situation in Belarus and the brutal repressions on the civil society movements after the rigged presidential elections in 2020 (see APPENDIX – SOURCE E.a, p. 220).

Now suggest that everyone tries to imagine what their life would be like in a country where citizens do not have political rights, cannot associate, express their views freely and act without the permission of the authorities. Ask them to recall the titles of books or movies that are set in such places (see APPENDIX – SOURCE E.b, p. 220 for inspiration). Note that many of today’s series, especially political fiction, and science fiction, also portray a collapsing democracy and the birth of totalitarian systems in which citizens lose their political as well as personal rights and freedoms. This is the world presented, for example, in the British series “Years and years”. You can watch the trailer for this series or its short film review (see APPENDIX – SOURCE E.c, p. 220).

Ask everyone for a moment to imagine that also in your country, constitutional democracy is slowly starting to deteriorate, and the authorities are introducing a ban on association and independent public assembly. Discuss:

- How do students feel about these images?
- What can citizens do in such a situation?
- What do you think most people will do?
- How will you behave yourself?
- What could be the consequences of such behavior?

Note: you can suggest that they answer this question using a teaching aid such as Mentimeter<sup>117</sup> or a similar e-tool.

## ACTIVITY 2: What do civil society organizations actually care about? In what areas of life are they active in our country and elsewhere?

(10 minutes)



**Aim:** To sketch a general image of the diverse areas of work and actions of civil society organizations.



**Description:** Display the slide(s) (see APPENDIX – SOURCE F, p. 220) with graphic materials on the interactive board, illustrating the various areas of activity of community organizations. As it is in Polish (see English explanations below), first ask the students to try to guess which fields of activity each of the pictures relate to. Explain that the illustration in the lower left corner is the hashtag of the campaign “Civil Society Organizations. It works!”, promoting the activity of non-governmental organizations in Poland and building awareness of how many different problems of social, political, and cultural life they deal with on a daily basis. Although this graphic illustration concerns Poland, the categories included in it match the activities of organizations and civic movements in most countries.

Ask to illustrate the different areas of action with examples from your town or country. Also check if students would like to add any area of life or a problem that is dealt with by a known organization. Match it to the aforementioned categories or, if necessary, create a new one.

If students do not address the pandemic in any way, note that COVID-19 has proved to be a tough test for human and social rights, democratic values, the rule of law in all our countries and that almost everywhere civil society organizations played an important role during the pandemic. They will also be important players in the recovery and resilience of societies in the coming years.

<sup>117</sup> See at: <https://www.mentimeter.com/features/word-cloud>.

**ACTIVITY 3: Case studies from our own countries (20 minutes)**

**Aim:** To analyse an example of a civil society activity/action with a special focus on emancipatory/equal rights movements (examples can be found on [transition-dialogue.org](http://transition-dialogue.org)), to think about the role of progressive ideas in post-communist societies.



**Description:** Now pose an open question to the class on why active citizenship is weaker in post-communist countries than in countries with a longer democratic tradition. What could this be the result of? Membership in associations is not common here, sometimes it is even elitist and becomes only an element of political culture. Today, social media facilitates the communication and interaction of citizens, but this role is still limited.

Ask students to provide some examples of civic activities, including protests in recent years.

Choose an example of a civil movement from your country in the area of equal rights (e.g., women's rights, minorities' rights) or other progressive ideas (e.g., ecology, climate change). Based on the students' previous knowledge, analyse the selected movement according to the following questions: a) what were they about, b) what caused them, c) who were their leaders, d) what are the effects of their protests, social campaigns, and other activities? The teacher may also propose an analysis of a civil movement from another country, e.g., the protests organized in autumn 2020 by Women's Strike in Poland.

As part of the analysis of the case, ask the students to think of one important question they would like to ask of someone who participated in those activities. Students can share their ideas for questions and the volunteers can later choose some of them, edit them, and send them to the activists through social media. If the teacher is ready to devote more time to the topic of civil society, he/she can also let students invite such individuals to participate in the lesson (e.g., online). As an extra task, volunteers can conduct face-to-face interviews with activists.

Consider together whether the organizations and movements opposing the mainstream political, social, or cultural order play a positive role in democracy and society, or only disturb the social order (or at least – street traffic...). Why do new social movements arouse so much emotion in traditional societies? Should, for example, governments of individual countries or the European Union authorities support them?

### ACTIVITY 4: What do we need civil society for? What are its functions in our own country? Can democracy live without civil society? (15 minutes)



**Aim:** To investigate the potential functions of civil society and its institutions for democracy in our own countries and elsewhere.



**Description:** Write down on the board (regular or interactive) the question: What do we need civil society for? Ask young people, working in teams of three or four, to talk for a while about the functions of civil society organizations, activities, and impact in democratic countries or on the road to democracy. Then give students the text of Larry Diamond's speech at the *What Civil Society Can Do to Develop Democracy Leader Meeting* (SOURCE D) and ask them to jointly list the features that the author mentions. Compare the lists composed by all the teams. Are these functions also important in our country – today and in the future?

### ACTIVITY 5: Ideas for young people from student localities to get involved in CS actions or to establish their own association or action – teamwork (20 minutes)



**Aim:** To motivate students to develop their own project ideas and to get actively involved in civil society.



**Description:** Ask students what community organizations they have participated in or have benefited from in the past – themselves, their friends, family, or school. Explain that the scenarios were developed by NGOs from seven countries participating in the Transition Dialogue joint educational program.

Now suggest that everyone think for a moment what types of activities are closest to them and what they would like to get involved in over the coming weeks or months. Ask everyone to write their ideas on 1-2 sticky notes, then stick them on the board and organize them together, grouping similar ideas together (the same activity can be carried out using an interactive whiteboard or an e-tool like Jamboard<sup>118</sup>).

Divide the students into small teams based on their interests for similar topics and ask them to think together about what steps they should take now in order to actually engage in a civic initiative in the chosen area. Encourage cooperation in this group after classes too – suggest that each student take on a small task related to it, for example, searching the network for contacts to local organizations, their activists, current or planned activities, and checking how young people can take part in these activities. Explain that they can also plan their own

<sup>118</sup> See at: <https://jamboard.google.com/>.

community action (or even set up an association) on an issue that interests them – for example, student rights, protecting trees from being cut down, or caring for homeless animals in their locality.

Note that some of the problems students want to deal with not only affect their local community, but often the entire country, and even Europe or the world (e.g., climate, environment, exclusion, inequality, and xenophobia). So, students can also plan to engage in a wider initiative – for example, a campaign or civic action carried out on a European or even global scale (such as the youth climate movement Fridays for Future<sup>119</sup>). Mention volunteer work – special portals for finding such offers can help you search for opportunities<sup>120</sup>. Ask students to consider why some people believe that there is no real modern democracy without volunteering?<sup>121</sup>

### Summary

Invite students to write down one thought and one question that came up in their heads during class on a post-it note, and to post it in a prominent place as they leave the classroom. Read them carefully and use them as feedback and material for further work with the class.

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<sup>119</sup> Information available at: <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>.

<sup>120</sup> In the EU many offers can be found at [https://europa.eu/youth/go-abroad/volunteering/opportunities\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/go-abroad/volunteering/opportunities_en).

<sup>121</sup> See for example: Ukraine World (2019): 'Why Ukraine would not be European without Volunteers?'. Available at: <https://ukraineworld.org/articles/ukraine-explained/why-ukraine-would-not-be-european-without-volunteers>.



## APPENDIX

### SOURCES – Unit I

#### SOURCE A: Quotes

Quotes by Christoph Eichhorn, German diplomat. The quotes are part of a discussion (histoTALK) on the particular role of civil society at the end of a totalitarian regime and the beginning of the transition to democracy.<sup>122</sup>

##### Quote 1:

“A democracy without democrats does not work and democrats means democratic parties organized in a democratic parliament, voting in a government, and voting it out, but also democrats in the general public who are deeply convinced about the importance of democracy – all of it was not there in Germany until 1945.<sup>123</sup> To a certain extent it was there, but very very limited. [...] East Germany from 1945 to 1989<sup>124</sup> was another totalitarian regime, another dictatorship, a communist ruled system. There was no such thing as civil society. Society was organized in all sorts of groups depending on the one Communist Party and whatever the Communist Party ordered these so-called groups in society implemented and executed. But this has nothing to do with a civil society in a free democratic country.” [min. 08:50 – 10:21]

##### Quote 2:

“I think we can discuss our joint – German, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Baltic, Ukrainian etc. experience, our joint experience, throughout the night. If we have one word where it all comes down to then it is the word freedom. And the point I would like to make is... you know, when I walk through the Brandenburg Gate<sup>125</sup> in the middle of Berlin, this is the symbol of freedom denied, freedom lost, and freedom regained in 1989. The point I’d like to make is this: sometimes in our discussions we question (you know) was all of this a big illusion. Were we dreaming of paradise 30 years ago and look where we are now? So much more difficult, so many illusions gone. And I would argue that we have to sort of reconsider the fundamental element of what we are talking about here and that is freedom. The fact that things take longer or that there are setbacks or that there are illusions that certainly bust, does not mean that the

<sup>122</sup> The full discussion is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SofiaPlatform/videos/2936072426612483>.

<sup>123</sup> 1945 marks the defeat of Germany in World War II (1939-1945) and the end of the Nazi dictatorship.

<sup>124</sup> At the end of World War II, in 1945, Germany was divided into the Western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR). The latter was ruled under a communist dictatorship till the reunification with Western Germany in 1989/90.

<sup>125</sup> The Brandenburg Gate is an eighteenth-century neoclassical monument, located in the centre of the German capital, Berlin. Being a site for many major historical events it is today considered as both a symbol of the turbulent history of Europe and Germany and of European unity and peace.

*fundamental importance of freedom is an illusion or that we should stop investing in it. This is fundamentally important. When you are looking at the East German experience; I mentioned earlier all these groups which were organized by the Party and that would not really count as civil society. But at the same time, you had people writing songs, you had people working to improve the environment where they lived, you had people doing Samizdat<sup>126</sup>, you know, writing down the stories which their parents and their grandparents were telling them and circulating them, writing it themselves and circulating them to their friends. So, all of this existed despite the fact that the larger system was a repressive system. So, the fundamental desire of every human being to be free was always there and will always be there.” [min. 37:52 – 40:41]*

### SOURCE B:

#### Pictures SET I: A “fake” civil society organized by the regime

- Lithuania – May 1<sup>st</sup> parade



Photo by Vincas Tumosa (private)

<sup>126</sup> Samizdat was a form of dissident activity across the former Eastern Bloc countries, in which individuals reproduced publications censored by the Soviet dictatorship. This often happened manually because most typewriters or printing devices required permission to access which was only granted by the Soviet forces. The written documents were then passed from reader to reader.

Source:

- **Poland – 1<sup>st</sup> May celebration in the city of Wrocław in 1982**



Credits: Julo, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wroclaw1maja1982.jpg>

**Pictures SET II: genuine civil society and protest actions**

- **Bulgaria – The first civic protest organized in Ruse in 1987 against air pollution coming from the Verahim plant in neighboring, then-communist Romania**



Credits: State Archive Ruse, source: [socbg.com](http://socbg.com).

- Participants of the strike at the Gdańsk Shipyard Lenin in August 1980



Photo by Zygmunt Błażek. Credits: European Solidarity Centre, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 PL license via Wikimedia Commons.

Source: [https://histmag.org/grafika/2016\\_articles/skorzynski/solidarnosc4.jpg](https://histmag.org/grafika/2016_articles/skorzynski/solidarnosc4.jpg).

## SOURCES – Unit II

### SOURCE C: Quotes

#### Quote 1:



1989 represents a break-away of the entire region of Europe from political oppression and a leap towards democracy. On the other side of this spectrum is the meaning of 1989 as the promise of western standards of living that tipped a resistance movement of intellectuals and dissidents towards a mass protest movement. [...] It can be argued that the person who strived for civil liberties and the person who wanted better jeans are not necessarily two different people. What is common to both of them is self-determination, which comes in plural and diverse forms. Thus, 1989 can be viewed as a resistance to endless intervention of politics into the lives of citizens, when governments decide how one can get married, what songs to sing, or how much flour or sugar one can receive.

*(Simona Merkinaite. What 1989 can (and cannot) teach us, New Eastern Europe, 2021)*

## Quote 2:



1989 symbolizes the limits of attempting to endlessly reshape and remake society and reattributing the meaning to prosperity, which in reality meant deficiency when a lack of choice meant freedom, military invasion. In 1989, the reality of lived experiences prevailed over ideology and fiction. Seen in this light, the year 2020 became a point of “1989 reoccurrence”, through a new wave of mass revolts against political fictions. The outrage of people in Belarus was sparked by the outrageous lies about the free democratic election and the blunt attempts to conceal the almost universal support for Alyaksandr Lukashenka. The commonality between the workers, students, women, and pensioners' protests is the shared feeling of having enough of living a double life – the private life of isolation, repression, and shortage versus the performative public life of happiness, freedom and community.

*Simona Merkinaite. What 1989 can (and cannot) teach us, New Eastern Europe, 2021).*

## Quote 3:



Documentary project created by the Public Interest Journalism Lab (UA) about the protests of Ukrainian miners in 1989 “Чуєш згуким казок?”<sup>127</sup>

## Quote 4:



In August 1989, the three Baltic states were still under Soviet rule. On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1989, inhabitants of the three countries decided to make their wish for independence heard by joining hands [in a human chain of more than 600 km]. Euronews spoke to Andres Kasekamp, a professor of Estonian studies at the University of Toronto, about the historic event. “The people behind the event were the leaders of the Estonian People’s Front and they did this together with Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues. It was a magnificent display of Baltic cooperation amongst the three peoples. It was very important to send a signal to the world because the narrative from Moscow about the Baltic movements of freedom, democracy, and eventually independence was that it was only a small fringe group of extremists, nationalists, who wanted independence. But with this chain across all three countries, it was clear that narrative that Moscow was trying to convince the world [...] was simply not true. This reflected the desire of the vast majority of the people.” (Cristina Abellan Matamoros. *Baltic Way: 30 years since the 600km human chain that helped trigger the collapse of communism*, 2019).

<sup>127</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyzpiY7md6k> (min. 02:13 – 05:23).



### Quote 5:



*“In the 1980s in Poland, if you asked people why they are engaged in civil movements – they would not answer that they are fighting for liberal democracy. I personally do not recall any debates about liberal democracy as a model ... It was pluralism, that was a remedy against ideology in the ‘80s and the real power of the democratic movements in ‘80-‘81 and then 1989, the intrinsic belief in pluralism; but, as it turns out, it is not an easy lesson to learn. I would say that pluralism is the challenge of our time – it is hard to imagine the West without pluralism,” – Professor Marek Aleksander Cichocki, philosopher, editor-in-chief of Teologia Polityczna. (Simona Merkinaitė. What 1989 can (and cannot) teach us, New Eastern Europe, 2021).*

### SOURCE D: Videos

- Video: End of Communism: How 1989 Changed Europe<sup>128</sup>
- Additional sources:
  - Radio Free Europe, The Revolutions of 1989<sup>129</sup>
  - Brian Velez on the Baltic Way<sup>130</sup>

### SOURCES – Unit III

#### SOURCE E: Civil society in totalitarian regimes today

- a. Article: Exploring Belarusian civil society<sup>131</sup>.
- b. Films about totalitarian societies<sup>132</sup>.
- c. How To Dystopia when 2019 already sucks: YEARS AND YEARS | Why You Should Watch [No Spoilers]<sup>133</sup>.

#### SOURCE F: Activities of community organizations

Activities of civil society organizations<sup>134</sup>

- We are building a community – Budujemy wspólnotę
- We protect the climate – Chronimy klimat

<sup>128</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKXjIZKPjMA> (Length: 3:44).

<sup>129</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hc2XGHA7NK4>.

<sup>130</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npBjtdiVDAU>.

<sup>131</sup> D'Anieri, A. (2021): Exploring Belarussian civil society. Atlantic Council. Available at: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/exploring-belarusian-civil-society/>.

<sup>132</sup> See at: <https://mubi.com/lists/films-about-totalitarian-societies-dystopia>.

<sup>133</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_nY-Xj9xm0&list=RDCMUCKUm503onGg3NatpBtTWHkQ&start\\_radio=1&t=71s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_nY-Xj9xm0&list=RDCMUCKUm503onGg3NatpBtTWHkQ&start_radio=1&t=71s).

<sup>134</sup> Available at: <https://publicystyka.ngo.pl/swietuj-z-nami-dzien-organizacji-spoecznych>.

- We help each other learn – Pomagamy się uczyć
- We protect health – Ratujemy zdrowie
- We make connections – Łączymy
- We develop passions – Rozwijamy pasje
- We defend rights – Bronimy praw
- We create culture – Tworzymy kulturę
- #it works – #to działa



## THE ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TRANSITION TAUGHT THROUGH THE ACCIDENTS OF BIRTH GAME

Examples from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, and Poland

Authors: Vedrana Pribičević & Bistra Stoimenova

### I. Overview

This lesson plan uses storytelling and characterization to describe the economic and institutional landscape of communism/socialism and explains how three main pillars of transformation – stabilization, privatization, and liberalization – aimed to create modern market economies in post-communist countries in Europe. It uses the concept of “*accidents of birth*” to illustrate and compare how the everyday lives of various inhabitants of transition countries changed as the economy transformed. With the help of economic data, we tell the story of the fates of workers, entrepreneurs, peasants and landowners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and East Germany who were all born in 1971 and experienced a communist regime, and both transition and post-transition economies during their working life.

### II. Objectives

- Understand the different pre-transition institutional systems across different transition economies.
- Understand the key aspects of transformation: privatization, liberalization, and stabilization.
- Be able to identify the key failures of transition – on a local, national, and transnational level while distinguishing between the winners and losers of transition, both internationally and intra-nationally.

### III. Key concepts

**Communism/Socialism** – Umbrella terms referring to two left-wing schools of economic thought which oppose capitalism; a way of organizing a society in which major industries are owned and controlled by the government rather than by individual people and companies, and economic decisions and the pricing of goods and services are governed or guided by a central government plan.

**Market Economy** – An economic system in which major industries are owned and controlled by individuals or companies rather than government, and economic decisions and the pricing of goods and services are guided by the interactions of a country’s individual citizens and businesses.



**Economic transition** – Directed institutional change aimed at transforming an economy from a centrally planned to market economy, consisting of stabilization, liberalization, and privatization.

**Privatization** – Privatization refers to the transfer of the ownership and control over assets, firms, and operations, from the government or the state to private investors.

**Liberalization** – The economic processes of loosening government regulation restricting the freedom of private owners to run their business, including government policies that promote free trade, deregulation, the elimination of subsidies, price controls and rationing systems, and, often, the downsizing or privatization of public services.

**Stabilization** – A government policy or set of measures intended to stabilize a financial system or the economy, usually by employing fiscal and monetary policy to increase economic activity (raise GDP), reduce price inflation, expand employment, and reduce a trade deficit (an unfavourable imbalance in trade between two states).

#### IV. Key question

How do experiences of the economic effects of transition differ across the countries and social classes of the Eastern Bloc?

#### V. Step-by-step description of the lesson

##### **Introduction: What is economic transition and why do we need to understand it?**

In the broadest sense, transition can be defined as the process a country undergoes to shift its economy from a centrally planned economic system to a free market system. In the language of New Institutional Economics – a separate branch of economic thought focusing on the roles of institutions in explaining emergent economic phenomena – transition can be viewed as a coordinated effort of directed institutional change unmatched in scope and magnitude in human history.

The rise of the economic and political institutions that made capitalism possible were a result of a series of critical junctures. The concept of a critical juncture refers to situations of uncertainty in which the decisions of important actors are decisive in the selection of one path of institutional development over other possible paths. Often, the landscape of the decision space was shaped by purely exogenous events, (i.e., outside of the influence of decision makers), that severely affected the probability of the emergence of certain types of political and economic institutions which we now consider prerequisites for capitalism. An

example of an exogenous event creating a critical juncture was the Black Death of 1349 which decimated Europe's population in a very short period, creating labour shortages which led to the slow, but certain demise of manorialism in medieval Europe as the bargaining power of serfs increased. The resulting institutional change, the Ordinance of Labourers issued by King Edward III, aimed at curbing the soaring wages of workers who survived the plague – albeit being largely ineffective – is considered to be the origin of labour laws regulating relationships between employers and employees. In this sense, the institutions of capitalism evolved over time, but the path was both uncharted and influenced by external factors ranging from pathogens to changes in climate. Transition, on the other hand, was a process with a charted path and desired end result.

The process of transformation entailed a transition from some form of socialism to some form of capitalism. Generally, we can distinguish between two models of transition: the East European model and the Chinese model, with the latter not being discussed at any length in this text. The East European model was centered around reforms which were intended to emulate a system of economic and political institutions as similar as possible to those of Western Europe, as fast as possible. The foundation of the proposed reforms was the establishment of well-defined, private property rights, which are considered an absolute prerequisite for modern capitalism by all mainstream economists. From the standpoint of economic policy, economists favoured the big bang approach to transition, advocating quick reforms bundled together, as laid out concisely by Blanchard et.al (1993). The prescribed policy mix had three main ingredients: stabilization, liberalization, and privatization.

Stabilization emerged as a *conditio sine qua non* (necessary condition) of further reforms, as all countries of the socialist bloc had for decades endured endemic hyperinflation. For instance, estimated annual inflation in Yugoslavia on the eve of its dissolution in 1990 was 2700%. Hyperinflation distorts the use of money as a medium of exchange, destroys incentives to save, distorts relative prices and is generally considered detrimental to economic growth. The only way to stop hyperinflation was shock therapy, in which a drastic reduction in money supply the only way to dampen the inflation expectations of economic agents. Once hyperinflation was eradicated, complementary reforms of liberalization and privatization could be implemented.

Economic liberalization refers to the loosening of government regulations and restrictions on the economy to encourage private initiative, which in turn enables economic development. This included the removal of price controls, trade liberalization, which entailed reduction or removal of trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas, and other measures aimed at increasing levels of competition. Privatization refers to the transfer of the property rights of enterprises from the state

to private entities. The goal of privatization is to increase economic efficiency and better align operations with profit incentives. The policy mix described above is a part of a wider standard reform package dubbed the Washington Consensus, mainly prescribed by the International Monetary Fund to developing countries hit by systemic economic crisis. Structural reforms that included fiscal prudence (tax reform) and deregulation were also an integral part of the transition recipe. These policies met with varying degrees of success and completion across the socialist block. Aid from international institutions, however, was at that point conditional on meeting the aforementioned transition goals.

**Accidents of birth in the transition context**

Data on the distribution of global incomes between countries shows that inequality between countries is by far the greatest driver of inequality in the world. A recent research paper by Branko Milanovic, one of the foremost global experts on inequality, shows that where you stand in the distribution of incomes across the world is determined largely by where you live, or even by where you are born. In other words, how well off you are before, during and after transition is determined predominantly by where you are born in the Eastern Bloc, and less by how well off you were compared to others in your country. Since a person cannot choose their country of birth, this is called an **“accident of birth”**.

This lesson plan focuses on four different “classes” of citizens – workers, peasants, entrepreneurs, and landowners, across four countries with a differing economic and institutional arrangement and variants of socialism. The aim is to compare and to contrast not only between classes of citizens in each country, but across countries and over time. Where were the workers initially better off – Croatia or Bulgaria? Where did transition work out better for entrepreneurs – in Poland or Germany?

**Characters**

	Bulgaria	Croatia	Germany	Poland
Worker	Simeon	Nika	Emil	Lena
Landowner	Vasil	Nikola	Anna	Jan
Entrepreneur	Zora	Katarina	Charlotte	Marek
Peasant	Nadya	Tomislav	Noah	Julia

**Materials required:** six-sided dice, pen and paper, projector, or interactive white-board

**Methods of instruction:** Students throw the die to determine their country of birth (1 for Bulgaria, 2 for Croatia, 3 for Germany, 4 for Poland, and 5 or 6 for a re-throw). Students can choose the class to which they belong. They can change country and class when instructed. The teacher reads the introductions to each of the cards to explain the setting and key concepts. Students are given activity cards 1-10 in sequence. Students throw the die, add, or subtract as instructed, and record their results.

## UNIT I: HEALTH AND WEALTH IN PRE-TRANSITION ECONOMIES

### ACTIVITY 1: Does it matter where you were born in the Eastern Bloc? (10 minutes)



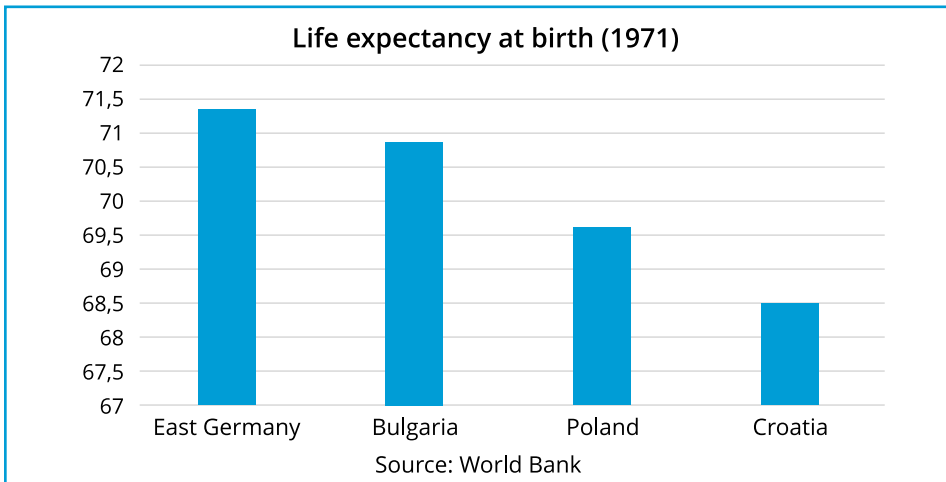
**Aim:** Students will be able to understand how country of birth, education, and institutional setup affected individuals at the very beginning of transition, where the variance in these initial conditions affected both the success of transformation as well as public perception of transitional justice.



**Description:** The teacher displays the graphs on Cards 1-3 on an overhead projector and reads the accompanying text while students record their scores.

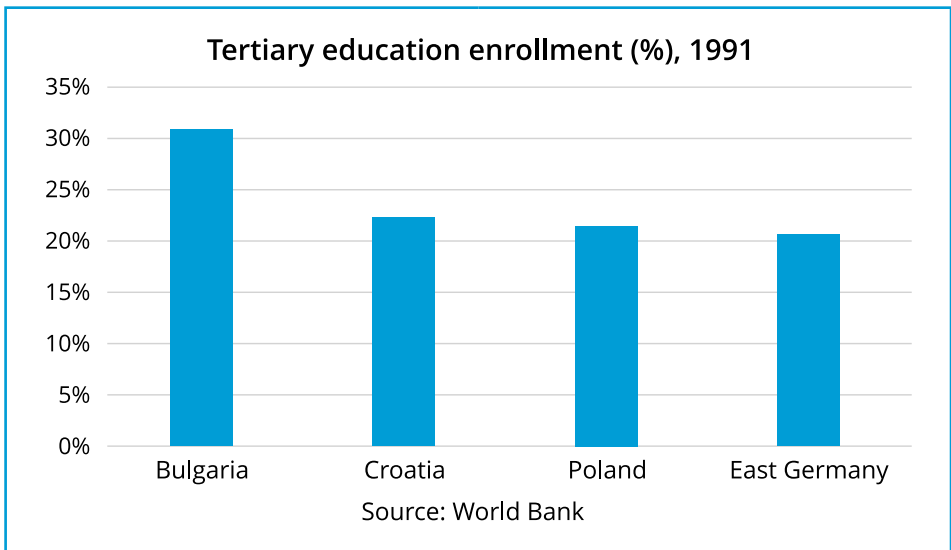
#### Card 1: Life expectancy

The term “life expectancy” refers to the average number of years a person can expect to live. Life expectancy is based on an estimate of the average age that members of a particular population group will be when they die. Differences in life expectancy between countries emerge due to disparities in income, health-care spending, urbanization, nutrition, education, sanitation, and other forms of public infrastructure directly affecting their standard of living.



<p>1971 was a good year for technological advancements; microprocessors, LCDs, floppy disks, and email were first invented. The Apollo 15 crew were the first humans to ride a lunar rover on the surface of the Moon. Elon Musk was born in South Africa. What about you? Regardless of where you were born, you were better off than the average inhabitant of Earth whose life expectancy at birth was 59.11 years.</p>	<p>Throw the dice once. Add 4 if you were born in East Germany, 2 if you were born in Bulgaria, 0 if you were born in Poland. Subtract 1 if you were born in Croatia. Life expectancy in the European Union in 1971 was 70.94; if you were born in East Germany where life expectancy is higher than the average inhabitant of the European Union, you get a bonus: add 1 to the total score.</p>
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**Card 2: Education**



<p>In 1991, you've just finished high school and were thinking of enrolling at a university. Three in ten of your fellow pupils who were born in the European Union will start university this year. Will you? To find out, throw the dice once.</p>	<p>If you live in Bulgaria and you roll a 5 or a 6 on the dice, congratulations, you're enrolled at a university! Add 3 to your score. If you live in other countries and you get a 6 on the dice, congratulations, you're enrolled at a university! Add 3 to your score.</p>
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### Card 3: Property rights

Under communism, expropriation was the act of taking privately owned property by the government against the wishes of the owners, ostensibly to be used for the benefit of the public. Property did not cease to exist under communism, however, but took on two distinct forms. The first was known as “the people’s property,” or *Volkseigentum*, which was based on the collective ownership of the means of production. The second, the issue of private property was trickier. While the term was officially banished as a form of ideological pollution, one’s own belongings were delicately referred to as “personal property” instead. Personal property encompassed the objects and possessions designated in the 1936 Soviet Constitution – and in their equivalent constitutions across Eastern Bloc satellites after 1945 – as embodying the so-called “satisfaction of material and cultural needs”, such as consumer goods and property items produced, bought, inherited, won, or given. Not surprisingly, the legal presence of personal property in socialist life was a source of great concern for communist authorities.



Socialist housing, St. Petersburg.  
Photo by Damian Entwistle, under a CC BY-NC 2.0 license.

Poland was the only country of the Eastern Bloc which did not have large-scale land expropriation. If you are a Landowner in any other country, subtract 2 from your score.

If you are any other occupation other than Landowner, toss the dice and add the result to your score. Croatia was the only country to allow private property of land and real estate, so add 2 if you live in Croatia.

**ACTIVITY 2: Comparing fates across the Eastern Bloc I (3 minutes)**

**Aim:** Students will be able to compare and to contrast their own positions vis-à-vis peers from other countries and/or classes before the start of transition.



**Description:** The teacher pauses the game to establish an intermediate ranking and asks students from each country for their scores and classes, then draws up a scoreboard on the board and briefly comments on the rankings, letting students reflect on their progress as well.

**UNIT II: THE TRANSFORMATION TO A MARKET ECONOMY****ACTIVITY 1: The three pillars of economic transformation (10 minutes)**

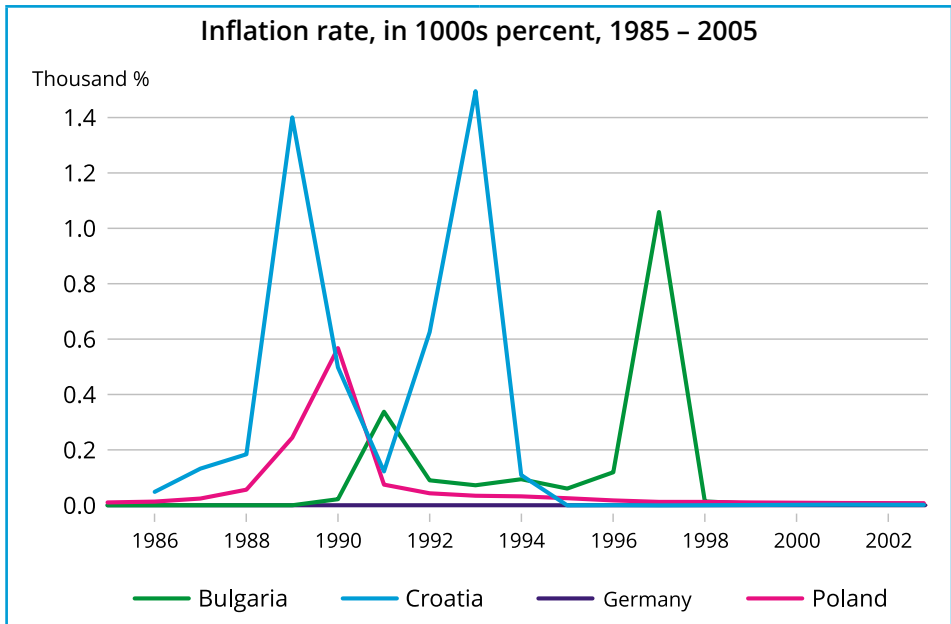
**Aim:** Students will become familiar with the three main pillars of transformation: stabilization, liberalization, and privatization.



**Description:** Before the next round, the teacher instructs all Landowners to add two points to their total score before continuing, as private property rights are created and sometimes restituted (given back to the original private owner), at the start of transition. The teacher displays the graphs on Cards 4-6 on the overhead projector and reads the accompanying text while students record their scores.

**Card 4: Stabilization**

Macroeconomic stabilization is a condition in which a complex framework for monetary and fiscal institutions and policies is established to reduce volatility and encourage welfare-enhancing growth. Achieving this condition requires aligning currency to market levels, managing inflation, establishing foreign exchange facilities, developing a national budget, generating revenue, creating a transparent system of public expenditure, and preventing predatory actors from controlling the country's resources. It also requires a framework of economic laws and regulations that govern budgetary processes, central bank operations, international trade, domestic commerce, and economic governance institutions. Stabilization of the economy is a prerequisite for economic growth. Empirical evidence shows that creating an environment that is conducive to higher rates of investment can reduce the likelihood of violence, while economic growth has a positive correlation with job creation and higher living standards. Monetary stability involves stabilizing the currency, bringing inflation and foreign-exchange rates to levels consistent with sustainable growth, promoting predictability and good management in the banking system, and managing foreign debt. The primary authority is usually an independent central bank that controls or stimulates the overall economy by manipulating the money supply and interest rates, within the parameters of monetary policy.



Hyperinflation is a term to describe the rapid, excessive, and out-of-control general price increases in an economy. Hyperinflation has several consequences for an economy. People may hoard goods, including perishables such as food, because of rising prices, which, in turn, can create food supply shortages. When prices rise excessively, cash, or savings deposited in banks, decrease in value, or become worthless since the money has far less purchasing power. Consumers' financial situation deteriorates and can lead to bankruptcy.

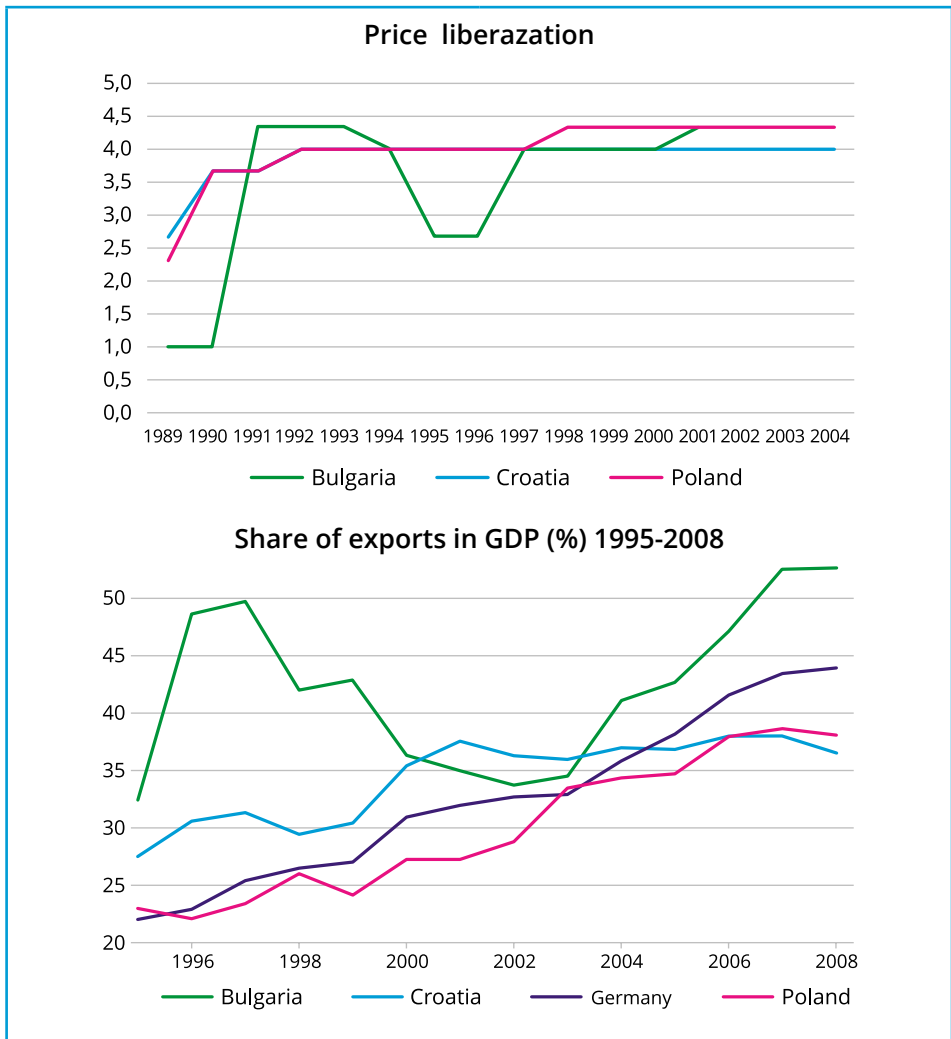
Also, people might not deposit their money in financial institutions, leading to banks and other lenders going out of business.

Tax revenues may also fall if consumers and businesses can't pay, which could result in governments failing to provide basic services. If you live in Croatia, you've experienced two bouts of hyperinflation. Subtract 1 from your score. If you live in East Germany, you've experienced stable prices. Add 1 to your score. If you are a worker in Croatia, Bulgaria, or Poland, you may be able to renegotiate your paycheck to account for inflation. Throw the dice once and subtract 1, then add the remainder to your score.



**Card 5: Liberalization**

Economic liberalization encompasses the processes, including government policies that promote free trade, deregulation, elimination of subsidies, price controls and rationing systems, and, often, the downsizing or privatization of public services. During transition, government policies were redirected to follow a non-interventionist, or laissez-faire, approach to economic activity, relying on market forces for the allocation of resources. It was argued that market-oriented policy reforms would spur growth and accelerate poverty reduction. Trade liberalization is the removal or reduction of restrictions or barriers on the free exchange of goods between nations which leads to higher trade openness and higher economic growth.



Price liberalization was relatively rapid in all countries, reaching the levels of liberalization of industrialized capitalist countries by the end of transition. Everyone add 1 to your score. The share of exports in GDP rose substantially as the economy became more open.

Rising exports present new opportunities for entrepreneurs. If you are an entrepreneur, throw the dice once and add it to your score. Openness also includes freedom of movement and labour. If you are a Worker, you can now change country if you like.

### Card 6: Privatization

Privatization describes the process by which a piece of property or business goes from being owned by the government to being privately owned. There are several types of privatization models:

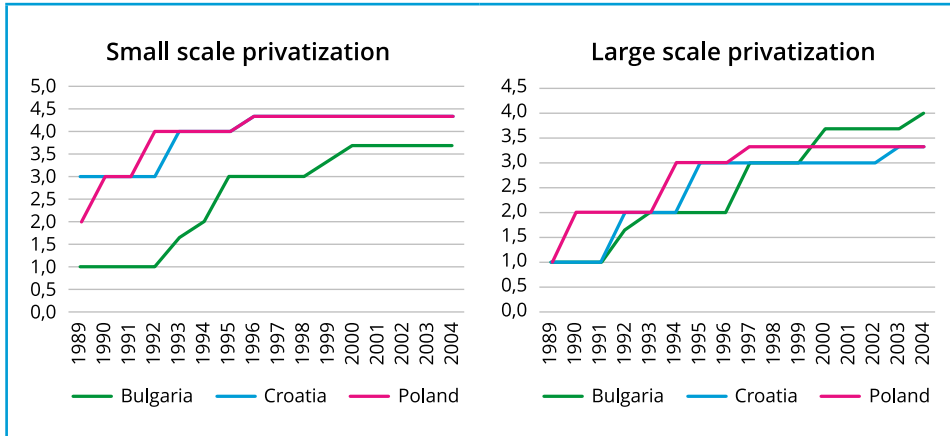
**Restitution.** Restitution attempts to return state assets to their former private owners in situations where the government's original acquisition is seen as unjust, such as nationalization (uncompensated seizure).

**Direct Sales and Equity Offerings.** The initial goal was to sell state assets to outside investors in view of the underdeveloped state of domestic capital markets. Policymakers expected three gains: revenue earnings for the state, the rapid infusion of outside expertise, and the likelihood that management by outside owners would be more effective. Among the practical drawbacks, the inadequacy of the national stock markets and the lack of domestic capital proved to be greater handicaps than expected, and foreign investors, unable to obtain sound information on the enterprises offered, were not confident enough to invest. Politically, direct sales and equity offerings could be stalled when the public saw the process as unfair. Powerful local interest groups, such as workers and managers, sometimes blocked the direct sale privatizations.

**Management-Employee Buyouts.** Under this approach, shares of an enterprise are sold or given to some combination of managers and other employees. The powerful positions of employees, and of managers, give this approach the twin advantages of feasibility and political popularity. It is also rapid and easy to implement. Well-structured management-employee buyouts can sometimes lead to success and efficiency since they align the incentives of workers and owners.

**Mass Privatization.** In mass, or equal-access, voucher privatization, the government generally gives away, or sells for a nominal fee, vouchers that can be used to purchase shares in enterprises. Voucher privatization helps to overcome the shortage of domestic capital. At the outset of transition, voucher schemes were politically popular because they addressed the perceived unfairness of other approaches and avoided accusations of selling national assets to foreigners. The difficulties associated with valuing enterprises before privatization are also

avoided. Mass privatization has its downside, however. The main risk is that a dispersed ownership structure lacks the focus and power to direct effective corporate management. This, in turn, may scare off potential new sources of capital.



By the end of the transition, all countries had reached the level of small-scale privatization of capitalist countries, while large scale privatization lagged slightly behind. East Germany successfully employed a direct sales privatization method. If you are a German Entrepreneur, throw the dice once and add the result to your score.

Croatia and Poland implemented the management-employee buyout model. If you are a Croatian or Polish worker, throw the dice once and add the result to your score. Bulgaria implemented the mass privatization model. If you are Bulgarian, from any class, throw the dice once and add the result to your score. Here you can also decide to change your class from Worker to Entrepreneur if you want.

**ACTIVITY 2: Comparing fates across the Eastern Bloc II (3 minutes)**



**Aim:** Students will be able to compare and to contrast their own positions vis-à-vis peers from other countries and/or classes during the period of transition.



**Description:** The teacher pauses the game to establish an intermediate ranking once again and asks students from each country for their scores and classes, then draws up a scoreboard on the board and briefly comments on the rankings, letting students reflect on their progress as well.

## UNIT III: DID TRANSITION DELIVER A BETTER TOMORROW, AS IT PROMISED?

## ACTIVITY 1: Failures of transition (12 minutes)



**Aim:** Students will understand the main failures of transition stemming from bankruptcy, an increase in unemployment, an increase in economic inequality and rampant corruption.



**Description:** The teacher displays the graphs on Cards 7-10 on the overhead projector and reads the accompanying text while students record their scores.

## Card 7: Bankruptcy

One of the ultimate goals of economic transformation in transition countries, and its Achilles heel, is the selection of viable firms among newly established undertakings, as well as identifying which of the former state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can be successfully reorganized to survive the free market environment. Bankruptcy is a market-driven legal process which solves that problem. There are three possible reasons why a firm may be forced to declare bankruptcy. The first one is as a result of a long-term structural circumstance. For example, in which the allocation of assets is considered to be economically inappropriate (meaning, the enterprise which currently owns the asset lacks the labour or complementary assets required to begin to exploit it at all, or to exploit it over the long term). The assets are usually industry-specific, and bankruptcy is a mean of re-allocating them (meaning, an investor buys the asset from the administrator of the insolvent enterprise, at a price lower than the now bankrupt enterprise was prepared to sell it for). The second reason for bankruptcy is of a short-term financial nature. The firm has the right structure of assets, but suffers liquidity constraints (meaning, it cannot finance its running costs during the process of production, usually because banks are not prepared to provide short term financial support). This means that even if the firm is viable in the long run, it has to declare bankruptcy in the short run. The last reason for declaring bankruptcy is that the firm has the proper asset and financial structure but is managed badly. Inefficiency forces the firm out of the market as a consequence of unsolved problems in corporate governance.



Gdansk shipyard. Photo by Astrid Westvang under a CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 license.

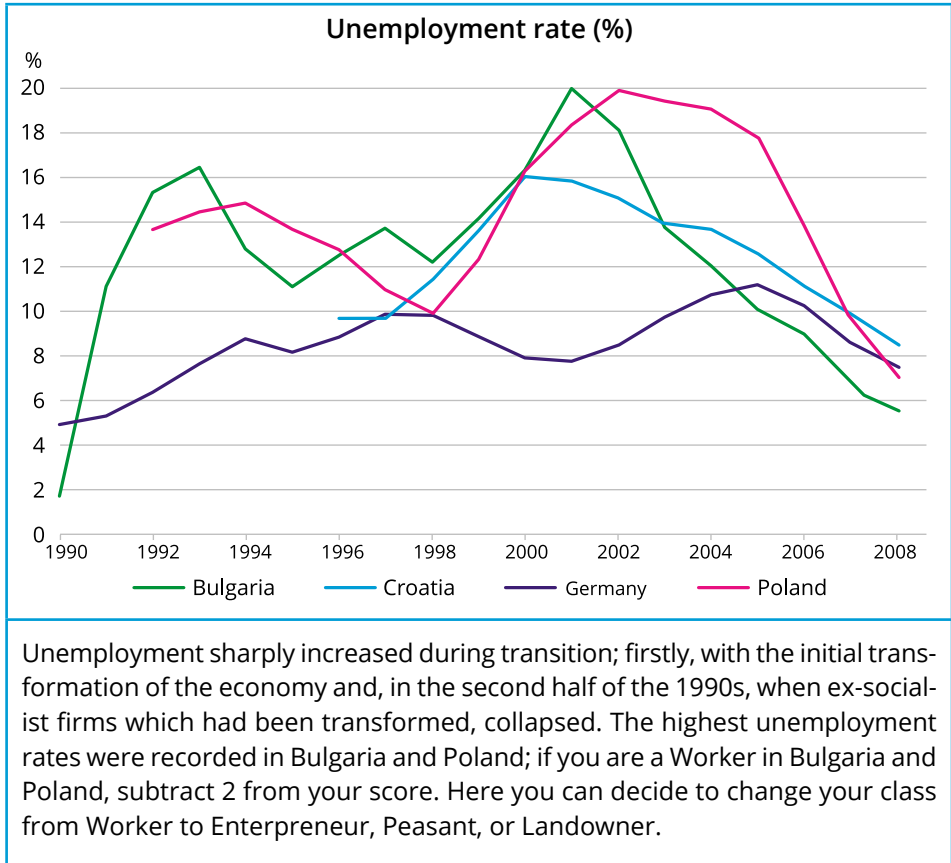
From textile industry to shipbuilding, transformed companies in all the selected countries experienced difficulties in adjusting to foreign competition in international markets. If you are a Worker or Entrepreneur, subtract one from your total score.

### Card 8: Unemployment

The situation of the labour market in former centrally-planned economies, at the onset of transition, was characterized by full employment, no open unemployment (with the exception of the former Yugoslavia) and an excess of labour demand over supply. However, full employment was achieved at the cost of low wages, with a demotivating effect on workers. Widespread overstaffing (labour hoarding) occurred in many sectors and serious distortions in the allocation of labour in industry contributed to low levels of labour productivity. The economic reforms launched in the wake of political changes were directed at reversing these negative characteristics, while social reforms were aimed at making these changes socially acceptable and fiscally affordable.

Practically overnight, national economies had opened to world markets through the introduction of economic measures that also allowed rapid price liberalization, combined with a strict macroeconomic stabilization policy. The result was

a sharp decline in the economic performance of these countries, much steeper than originally expected. Demand for labour collapsed immediately and, after a short lull, employment also started to decline. The transition process was characterized by extensive changes to existing institutions, particularly the creation of private-owned enterprises. These changes resulted in a sizeable reallocation of labor away from state-owned enterprises, some of which was absorbed by private enterprises and some of which resulted in unemployment.



**Card 9: Inequality**

Income is defined as a household’s disposable income in a particular year. It consists of earnings, self-employment and capital income, and public cash transfers; income taxes and social security contributions paid by households are deducted. The income of the household is attributed to each of its members, with an adjustment to reflect differences in needs for households of different sizes. Income inequality among individuals is measured here by The Gini coefficient

which is based on the comparison of cumulative proportions of the population against cumulative proportions of the income they receive, and it ranges between 0 in the case of perfect equality and 1 in the case of perfect inequality. A higher Gini coefficient means higher income inequality.

Inequality in the distribution of income during the period of transition increased. The explanation for this increase is rather simple. The social structure before the transition looks as follows; by far the largest percentage of household heads are working in the state sector, where wage differentiation is relatively small and wage levels are moderate. Some heads of household (say, 10 percent) are self-employed. Their average income is higher than that in the state sector, and the distribution of their income is more unequal. Finally, some heads of household (say, 10-20 percent) are pensioners with relatively low income per head and particularly low income differentiation.

During the transition, the large group of state sector workers, with an average income between those of the other two sectors, was divided into different employment sectors. Some workers remained in the state sector. However, others transferred into the private sector, and still others lost their jobs. Whereas 60 or 70 percent of heads of household, before the transition, were state sector employees, with a fairly moderate income differentiation, after the transition, this sector was hollowed out, with some people moving into highly paid private sector jobs and others joining the unemployment rolls. This increased inequality in distribution of income.

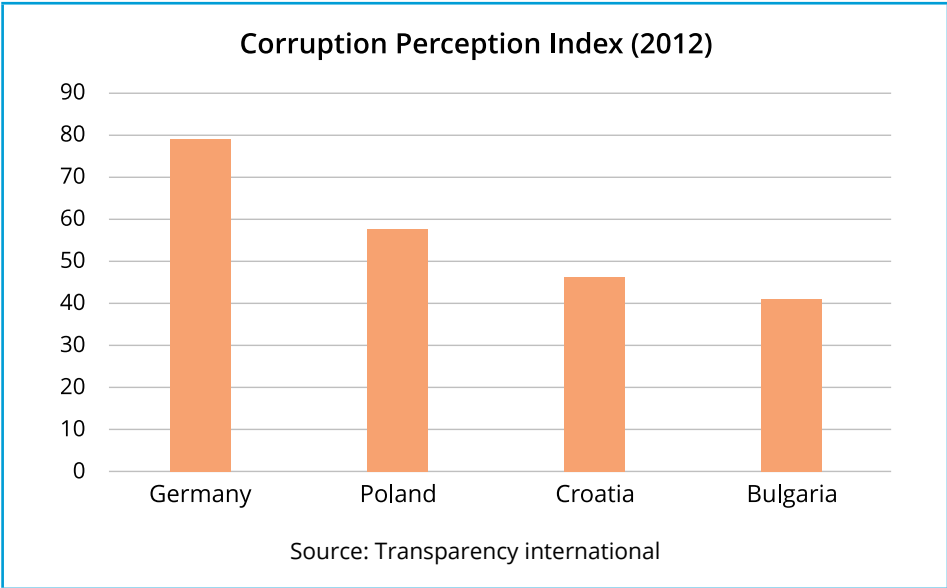
	Pre transition GINI coefficient (1987-1990)	Post transition GINI coefficient, 1988
<b>Bulgaria</b>	0,245	0,345
<b>Croatia</b>	0,251	0,333
<b>Poland</b>	0,255	0,326
<b>East Germany</b>	0,291	0,250

Source: UNICEF TRANSMONEE 2005 edition

Apart from East Germany, inequality in income distribution, as measured by the Gini coefficient, has increased during transition. Entrepreneurs and Land-owners add one 1 to total score. If you are German, add 1 to your score. If you are a Worker, throw the die once – if you roll a 1,2 or 3, lose one point. If you roll a 4,5,6 gain one point. If you are a Peasant, throw the die once, if you roll a 1,2 or 3, you gain one point. If you roll higher, you gain zero points.

**Card 10: Corruption**

The drastic reform of the economic system has provided great benefits for former socialist states. Despite remarkable economic growth in recent years, however, these countries are face several grave social issues. Above all, the spread of corruption throughout all aspects of civil life is one of the most serious problems. In the communist era, corruption was common and considered by citizens as a necessary evil. It functioned as a social mechanism used to overcome the obstacles created by rigid bureaucratic systems and chronic supply shortages that could affect business operations and everyday activities. In contrast, in the process of the systemic transformation to a capitalist market economy, corruption was motivated by self-interest rather than socially necessity in the former socialist states. This was due to faltering enforcement of the law and weakening police authority, as well as widespread poor living conditions against the background of a culture of abuse which was cultivated in socialist life. Today, in comparison to life under the communist regime, bribing bureaucrats to turn a blind eye to illegal conduct or tax evasion, to procure state-owned assets or receive government subsidies or contracts in an illicit way, has become more widespread in the transition economies.



The corruption perception index ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business-people – the higher the index, the lower the perception of corruption. Since it affects everyone in society, if you are from Poland, Croatia, or Bulgaria, throw the die once. If you get a number higher than 3 subtract 1 from your total score.



## ACTIVITY 2: The winners and losers in a period of transition (7 minutes)



**Aim:** Students will be able to compare and to contrast their own positions vis-à-vis peers from other countries and/or classes after the period of transition.



**Description:** The teacher pauses the game to establish a final ranking and asks students from each country for their scores and classes, then draws up a scoreboard on the board. Students are asked to compare positions amongst themselves but also with respect to the period prior to transition. Questions for discussion are

- Who is better off, and who is worse off after transition?
- What was the main factor which determined differences in your scores?
- Which factor is more significant in determining social welfare; country or class?

## PUBLIC MEMORY, DEALING WITH THE PAST, COMPETING MEMORIES

### Examples from Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland

Authors: Bistra Stoimenova, Alicja Pacewicz & Aiguste Starkutė

#### I. Overview

The lesson focuses on issues related to public memory, dealing with the communist past, and competing memories in three countries: Bulgaria, Poland, and Lithuania. Throughout the lesson students will work with different types of sources that represent diverse perspectives and will use active methods of learning.

#### II. Objectives

Students will be able to (this is based on the European Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture<sup>135</sup>):

- Develop their knowledge and critical understanding of the complexity of public memory, dealing with the communist past, and competing memories in society during the period of transition.
- Analyse diverse types of historical sources and identify different viewpoints.
- Discuss and express their opinions using concrete facts.
- Develop their skills of listening and observing.
- Develop cooperation skills.
- Encourage civic awareness in issues of transition related to public memory of the past.
- Value democracy and human rights.

#### III. Key concepts

**Public memory** – The term refers to the circulation of recollections among members of a given community. These recollections are far from being perfect records of the past; rather, they entail what we remember, the ways we frame it, and what aspects we forget. Broadly, public memory differs from official histories in that the former is more informal, diverse, and mutable where the latter is often *presented* as formal, singular, and stable.

**Civil society** – Civil society is an arena of voluntary collective actions around shared interests, purposes, and values, distinct from families, state and profit

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<sup>135</sup> Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/reference-framework-of-competences-for-democratic-culture>.

seeking institutions. The term includes the full range of formal and informal organizations that are outside the state and the market – including social movements, voluntary organizations, mass-based membership organizations, faith-based groups, NGOs, and community-based organizations, as well as communities and citizens acting individually and collectively.

**Heritage** – The term refers to features belonging to the culture of a particular society such as traditions, languages or buildings that were created in the past and still have historical importance.

#### IV. Key question

In the post-communist period, what should we do with the buildings and monuments that were symbolic for the former communist regime?

#### V. Step-by-step description

**Time: 80 minutes** (2 x 40 minutes)

##### **ACTIVITY 1: Dealing with communist era monuments in public spaces. Ice-breaker activity on the topic of the lesson**

Time: 5 minutes



**Aim:** To introduce students to the topic of the lesson and establish what they already know of this issue.



**Description:** Brainstorming with students

Ask the students if they have heard about communist-era monuments in public spaces; are they still there or have they been demolished? Do they know about street names or public buildings which have been renamed?

If students cannot identify any such cases or can recall only a few individual examples, encourage them to search online. You may also want to display a few photos yourself on the interactive whiteboard. Work together to identify examples of such architectonic objects and places in different spots on local, national, and international levels.

Explain to the students that the debate on the legitimacy of monuments and names from the past is not limited to post-communist countries. Over recent years, such controversies, and conflicts, over symbols of the past have taken place in many countries, including the United States of America, Great Britain and other former colonial empires – with different outcomes. Many monuments are torn down, some of them are destroyed, or transformed and moved to special places

such as themed museums and parks or, at the very least, new inscriptions have been added to them explaining these historic figures or events from a different, critical perspective.

You can ask the students to read short descriptive articles on this process (at home), or to summarize the key points and answer one of the questions on which the lesson focuses; in light of all these arguments, should the monuments to controversial historical figures or events be removed, or is this doing a disservice to history, making us victims of it rather than subjects who can understand and engage with it? **The teacher can use as additional materials the paper “Monuments to historical figures should remain”<sup>136</sup>.**

### ACTIVITY 2: Demolition or rebranding? Working with historical sources

Time: 35 minutes



**Aim:** To extract information from historical sources, analysing them critically and constructing arguments for a debate on what should happen to communist heritage in the post-communist period.



**Description:** The class is split into small groups of 3-4 students. Each group works for 35 minutes with historical sources and learns about cases from Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland (see APPENDIX – WORKSHEETS 1-3, from p.xx). Students’ groups are analysing those sources looking for answers to the key question of the worksheet: in the post-communist period, what should happen to buildings which were symbolic for the communist regime? The examples from these three countries offer them arguments for both demolishing and rebranding. Students working in smaller groups should develop their arguments based on specific sources.

**Note:** The annex provides material from Bulgaria, Lithuania, and Poland. You can contextualize the learning materials and use similar activities/questions to analyse the heritage of the communist regime in your respective countries. Students can also search the web looking for public opinion polls and opinions from their own countries. Regardless of the national and cultural context, debates on “demolishing vs rebranding” were always controversial. The public strategies used by authorities in each case were also similar.

For *Worksheet 1 (Bulgaria)* – Possible tasks and questions (for source 2):

1. Discuss the photo of the mausoleum and the comments on it.
2. Cluster the opinions that people shared about the photo into two groups: positive and negative.

<sup>136</sup> Available at: <https://debatingmatters.com/topic/monuments-to-historical-figures-should-remain/>.

**OR**

1. What opinions are there on the photo of the mausoleum?
2. How did people react?
3. Which comments are more common: positive or negative?
4. What do you think of this photo?

**Possible tasks and questions (source 3 and 4):**

1. Present the source: type, author, time of creation, topic.
2. How is the demolition of the mausoleum presented? Find specific words and phrases in the text.
3. What is the author's attitude to the event described?
4. What do people remember about this mausoleum?

**Possible tasks and questions (source 5):**

1. Find words and expressions in the text that reflect the changes in people's attitudes towards the mausoleum. Underline them once.
2. What possible solutions for handling the mausoleum can you find in the written source? Underline them twice.

**ACTIVITY 3: Is communist heritage worth preserving? Discussion**

Time: 40 minutes



**Aim:** To understand the complexity of public memory when dealing with the communist past and competing memories in society in the post-communist period.



**Description:** As a continuation of the previous activity (2), split the class into pairs. Give the students 10 minutes to discuss in pairs the overall question: is it important to preserve public memory of the heritage of the communist regime after 1989?

Gather as a class and discuss their opinions for 20 minutes. Emphasize the persistence of public memory when dealing with the communist regime and the existence of competing memories in post-communist times.

To encourage participation, teachers can use the "Four corners" strategy. This strategy provides a structure in which students present their viewpoint about a statement or claim. Every member of the class takes part and gives their opinion in the discussion which follows. It can be used several times in a lesson to show changing opinions as more knowledge is gained. It can help students to think through and justify their opinions before a written task. The basic strategy:

- Identify the four corners of the classroom as ‘strongly disagree’, ‘disagree’, ‘agree’, ‘strongly agree’.
- Give students a statement or assertion and ask them to go to the corner that reflects their viewpoint. Some students may stand between corners and that is OK. It is likely that students will automatically introduce nuance by standing between corners. Do not discourage this but ask students to articulate their thoughts.
- Ask students to explain the reasoning for their choice of position. Give all students a chance to shift if they are persuaded by others’ arguments.
- By articulating their reasoning and hearing the arguments of others, students are able to deepen and broaden their discussion of topics. Students from each corner can respectfully question and challenge the views of those in other corners.

### Additional information for teachers:

#### Bulgaria:

Teachers can use the following video materials on the topic of the lesson:

1) *Episode 1: Symbols of power: the Mausoleum, State Security and Fear* (in Bulgarian, with English subtitles)<sup>137</sup>. A short film about the Mausoleum with writer Georgi Gospodinov.

2) *In the footsteps of a revolution (the whole tour)*<sup>138</sup>

#### Lithuania:

##### The case of Lithuania – Grūtas park

Monuments from the Soviet era can be treated in different ways. After the restoration of independence in Lithuania, various Soviet sculptures and monuments, especially those depicting communist political figures, began to be rapidly destroyed. The dismantled monuments were abandoned in warehouses, basements, and garages, as no formal procedure was established for the storage of such monuments and there was no clear decision on what to do with such sculptures; whether to demolish them or rebrand them.

Some people, especially those who experienced Soviet repression, wanted all the sculptures representing socialist ideology to be destroyed. They feared that preserving such sculptures and monuments might lead to their use in communist

<sup>137</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfVHiyhDH8w&list=PLfLx3IDPtE3Lpgbo4K0p-4E5T3\\_e7U6yj&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfVHiyhDH8w&list=PLfLx3IDPtE3Lpgbo4K0p-4E5T3_e7U6yj&index=1) (approx. min 2:00 to 6:30).

<sup>138</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik9J0Zb7Tnk&list=PLfLx3IDPtE3Lpgbo4K0p-4E5T3\\_e7U6yj&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ik9J0Zb7Tnk&list=PLfLx3IDPtE3Lpgbo4K0p-4E5T3_e7U6yj&index=4).

nostalgia and propaganda. These people believe that socialist sculptures should not be considered works of art, but only as useless relics of an unpleasant past. For them, the demolition of all monuments marks their liberation from a hated system. Another group of people wanted Soviet monuments to be preserved, kept in a museum, and used as source for teaching history. Formal monuments might still have the status of cultural objects, so destroying them would not have been so straightforward.

In 1998, the Ministry of Culture announced a tender for an exhibition of dismantled Soviet-era monumental sculptures. It was won by a public institution run by a local businessman, Viliumas Malinauskas. During the Soviet era, Malinauskas worked as the chairman of a collective farm. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, he established a successful mushroom and berry business. According to Malinauskas, he never belonged to the Communist Party and did not support the Soviet regime. The idea to establish a park of socialist sculptures – an open-air museum – came to him when he saw the head of a Lenin sculpture lying on the ground in the yard of an art factory in Vilnius. 20 hectares of swampy forest by the village of Grūtas was dedicated to the Open-Air Museum of Socialist Sculptures. It is located near the resort of Druskininkai and 125 km from the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. Preparations for the exhibition started in 1999. The park was officially opened in 2001 and features about 100 different sculptures.

The aim of Grūtas Park is to preserve icons of Soviet ideology and reveal their negative roles. These socialist monuments, removed from their original context, no longer look as majestic as they did before and allow visitors to see works of Soviet propaganda in a different light. However, the Grūtas Park Museum still has an ambivalent reception in Lithuania. Even though the museum is successful and visited by many tourists from all over the world, people who wanted these socialist sculptures to be destroyed criticise the Grūtas Park Museum. They argue that the crimes of the people immortalized in the monuments are not visible in the way those socialist sculptures are exhibited. For them the establishment of Grūtas Park represents a restoration of these Soviet monuments. They believe the Park may encourage nostalgia for rather than rejection of these Soviet monuments and the ideology they represent. As a result, these socialist monuments still perform an ideological function even after the collapse of the system. Young people who have not experienced the Soviet era or foreigners from the West cannot understand the concept of the museum as they do not know the whole context and they perceive Grūtas Park as a museum of Soviet relics, as entertainment rather than a space for education. Thus, removing socialist sculptures and installing them in an open-air museum could be seen as a way to commemorate the socialist past, as well as a questionable means of attracting tourists, rather than a way of reflecting the difficulty of the past experiences they represent.

### **Poland:**

A debate about the material traces of the communist regime in public spaces has been held in Poland as well. Numerous monuments were destroyed, immediately following 1989, as unwanted symbols of the totalitarian regime. This was the fate of the monument to Feliks Dzierżyński, a Polish communist and one of Lenin's close collaborators. This statue was located on one of the main squares in Warsaw. It was demolished and replaced later by the sculpture of a romantic poet, Juliusz Słowacki.

At its demolition in November 1989, which became a symbolic public event, Varsovians cheered when the statue of "bloody Felix", having lost its head, fell onto the pavement.

Until recently there were still hundreds of communist monuments standing in Polish towns. Such monuments were meant to be removed under the special Decommunization Act which was passed in 2016. This Act was intended to remove the communist names of roads, streets, bridges, and squares. In 2017, the Polish parliament adopted an amendment, extending decommunization to include, inter alia, monuments, obelisks, sculptures, statues, stones, and commemorative plaques. Local governments had until the end of March 2018 to remove them, after which local governments (voivodes) would undertake the process of dismantling this communist era infrastructure.

Many monuments were demolished or removed during that time, very often despite opposition from some parts of the public or representatives of local left-wing parties. Most often such statues were not destroyed but transferred to other places, like themed museums or open-air ethnographic museums, such as the Museum of the Polish People's Republic (PPR) in Silesia<sup>139</sup>. The "relics of the PPR" from Strzelce Krajeńskie were removed and will find a place in an open-air ethnographic museum in the Surmówka, in the Warmian-Masurian region, north of Poland<sup>140</sup>.

More information for monuments in Poland: Project "Monuments of Remembrance 1918-2018"<sup>141</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> More information available at: <http://www.muzeumprl-u.pl/index.php?id=55> (in Polish).

<sup>140</sup> Video available at: <https://zachod.pl/559622/strzelce-pomniki-relikty-prl-u-rozebrane/> (in Polish).

<sup>141</sup> See at: <http://monuments-remembrance.eu/en/o-projekcie-3>.



## APPENDIX

### WORKSHEET 1 – BULGARIA

#### SYMBOLS OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME AFTER 1989: DEMOLITION OR REBRANDING



##### Key question:

In the post-communist period, what should we do with the buildings and monuments that were symbolic for the former communist regime?

- **The Mausoleum (the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum) in Sofia, Bulgaria**



##### Chronology

2-10 July 1949	<p>The Mausoleum was built to house the embalmed body of Georgi Dimitrov (1882-1949), the first leader of communist Bulgaria.</p> <p>The building was constructed from white marble by the architects, Georgi Ovcharov, Racho Ribarov and Ivan Danchov.</p> <p>The tribune of the mausoleum was used by communist leaders for important events, such as parades.</p>
August 1990	<p>Dimitrov's remains were cremated and the ashes buried in Central Sofia Cemetery.</p>
1999	<p>Decision taken by a centre-right government of Ivan Kostov (United Democratic Forces) after a heated nationwide debate.</p> <p>The prime minister and his party, Union of Democratic Forces, claimed that retaining the mausoleum was inappropriate following the fall of communism in 1989, because it represented Bulgaria's repressive past.</p>
21-27 August 1999	<p>The government made four attempts to demolish the building. The first three failed because they relied on a single powerful explosion. The building did not collapse after the first two attempts and was only slightly damaged after the third. The fourth (and successful) attempt was carried out using a series of consecutive, less powerful explosions.</p>

**2 Social media and opinions on the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum, February 2021. Photo of the mausoleum published on Facebook with comments.**



Credits: FOTO:Fortepan / AR, under a CC BY-SA 3.0 license via Wikimedia Commons.



Selection of comments:

- It could be a museum. Demolishing it doesn't mean that history has changed.
- The biggest national traitor, Goshko the Plank [Georgi Dimitrov], who gave the Aegean Sea coast to the Greek communists, made presents to Western parts [of Bulgaria, since 1919 they are in Serbia] to Tito and ideologue of the macedonism.
- It is not true! This is the Leader and Teacher of the Bulgarian people!

- *And where is the mummy?*
- *I was four years old, and my granny knew that they will destroy the building and we went there to see him. It was so cold inside this tomb.*
- *It could be a wonderful sightseeing destination for tourists.*
- *This should be a museum of communism and it will be full of tourists 24/7 wanting to give their money and see the idiocy of the recent past.*

### 3 Demolition of Georgi Dimitrov mausoleum, 27 August 1999.



See at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcgN2n\\_BTTY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcgN2n_BTTY)

### 4 Goodbye, Mausoleum!

On a suffocating day at the end of August 1999, a group of people have climbed a tribune erected on the square opposite the mausoleum – ministers, deputies, journalists, public figures, in short, the “*crème de la crème*” of Sofia. One strange detail: everyone has opened umbrellas, black or coloured.

The mausoleum will be demolished today. The spectators wait impatiently, but when the signal is given, they stretch out solemnly. The explosion raises a dense cloud of dust. The audience begins to get excited:

“Impressive!”

“They overdid it!”

“Good thing we were warned to get umbrellas.”

The smoke dissipates and the mausoleum emerges from it. Untouched. A crack between two granite slabs. It will take several days and several explosions,

excavators, cranes, and trucks to demolish the building and remove the wreckage. It looked like it was under construction.

Should the mausoleum have been preserved and turned into a monument to communism? With or without graffiti? I do not know. But as they tore it down, I felt the burden of the regime. I felt how long and painful it would be to destroy the reflexes he had bequeathed to us. Only the visible part of the mausoleum disappeared; the foundations and underground corridors remained, like tough roots embedded in the ground. [...]

In the place where the mausoleum once stood, the third millennium (after 2001) threw a handful of sequins: cafes and advertising umbrellas.

Several years passed and the mausoleum was forgotten.

Rouja Lazarova\*, *Mausolée*. Paris, Flammarion, 2009, pp. 211-212.

\* Rouja Lazarova (born 1968) is a Bulgarian French language writer who has lived in Paris since 1991. She has written several novels and plays.

### **5 National debate on the Mausoleum**

The decision to destroy the Dimitrov Mausoleum was taken after a heated national debate.

The former leader was embalmed and interred in the building in 1949. Mr. Dimitrov's body was removed from the mausoleum and cremated in 1990, a year after the collapse of communism in Bulgaria.

The fate of the empty building remained a thorny issue.

While ministers said that the mausoleum was an obstacle to redeveloping the capital, some political opponents alleged that the plan was pure politicking ahead of local elections.

One opinion poll found that about two-thirds of the population disapproved of demolition and wanted the monument preserved.

BBC News, *World: Europe Communist bastion finally crumbles*, 27 August 1999.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/431854.stm>



**OVERALL QUESTION: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PRESERVE THE HERITAGE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN PUBLIC MEMORY AFTER 1989?**

## WORKSHEET 2 – LITHUANIA

### THE CASE OF LITHUANIA – GRŪTAS PARK



**Key question:** In the post-communist period, what should happen to the buildings and monuments that were symbolic for the former communist regime?

**Lenin monument in the forest Grūtas Park. This monument used to stand on a high pedestal in the city centre of Vilnius.**

#### 1 More about Viliumas Malinauskas

Viliumas Malinauskas is a local businessman based near the spa town of Druskininkai. During the Soviet era, Malinauskas worked as the chairman of the collective farm, but after the collapse of Soviet Union, he founded a successful mushroom and berry business. According to Malinauskas, he never belonged to the Communist Party and did not support the Soviet regime. The idea to establish a park of socialist sculptures – an open-air museum – came to him when he saw the head of a Lenin sculpture lying on the ground in the yard of an art factory in Vilnius.



Source: personal archive (Aiguste Starkutė)

#### 2 Grūtas Park, South Lithuania

**Grūto parkas**

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+370-682-42320

**About us**

From 1989-91, during the restoration of Lithuanian independence, many ideological monuments from the Soviet times were dismantled and, with the absence of any storage procedure, piled in storerooms and backyards, most frequently on the premises of utility companies. Thanks to such "irregular" actions, many monuments were damaged (some of them "suffered" during dismantling while others caught the eye of metal traders, etc.), and eventually could have been totally destroyed, as happened in the neighbouring republics. There were various opinions and proposals regarding the fate of the dismantled Soviet sculptures. Destroy? Preserve?

Heronas Klėbas public agency located in Grūtas near Druskininkai was the winner of the tender called by the Ministry of Culture in 1998 for the establishment of an exposition of dismantled monumental sculptures from the Soviet period. A strong argument for choosing this undertaking was that its manager, Viliumas Malinauskas, was planning to establish the exposition using private funds earned from his family's mushroom and berry business without asking for financial support from the state. The project submitted for tender also stressed the importance of the new tourist site for the development of this region in Southern Lithuania.

The work of preparing the exposition started in early 1999. Grūtas Park was officially opened on 1 April 2001.

See at: [http://grutoparkas.lt/en\\_US/](http://grutoparkas.lt/en_US/)



### 3 Discussion over the concept of the museum Grūtas Park

The Grūtas Park Museum still has an ambivalent reception in Lithuania. Even though the museum is successful and visited by many tourists from all over the world, some people, mainly former political prisoners, deportees, and dissidents, want these socialist sculptures to be destroyed and criticise the Grūtas Park Museum. Later they were joined by famous academics such as historian Edvardas Gudavičius, linguist and politician Zigmas Zinkevičius, architect Eduardas Budreika, mathematician Bronius Grigelionis and others. The critics of Grūtas park argue that the way those socialist sculptures are displayed doesn't reflect the crimes of the people immortalized in the monuments. For them, the establishment of the Grūtas Park exhibition equals the restoration of the Soviet monuments. They believe the Park may encourage nostalgia for, rather than rejection of, these Soviet monuments and the ideology they represent. As a result, these socialist monuments still perform an ideological function even after the collapse of the system. "Grūtas Park is already the focus of the humiliation and opposition of many Lithuanians [...] The historical memory created in Grūtas park is immoral," wrote the dissident and Archbishop of Kaunas, Sigitas Tamkevičius, in a letter to the Parliament, Prime Minister and the President. Young people who have not experienced the Soviet era or foreigners from the West cannot understand the concept of the museum as they do not know the whole context and they perceive Grūtas Park as a museum of Soviet relics, as entertainment rather than a space for education. As the researcher Malcolm Miles has observed, "the extent to which the park, with its restaurant and play area, and even a small zoo in plain sight of the signs of power (including a deportation train parked at the site entrance), offers a full day of family entertainment, denotes its appropriation by the tourist industry." Thus, removing socialist sculptures and installing them in an open-air museum could be seen as a way to commemorate the socialist past, as well as a questionable means of attracting tourists, rather than a way of reflecting the difficulty of the past experiences they represent.<sup>142</sup>

### 4 Re-writing history?

Historian and broadcaster, Professor Mary Beard, contends that instead of tearing down memorials to controversial figures, it is "more important [...] to look history in the eye and reflect on our awkward relationship to it...not to simply photoshop the nasty bits out." In a similar vein, some are cautious about the idea of subjecting historical figures to modern standards of moral judgement, and question what good removing a statue of Rhodes will do in a practical sense, as: "Rhodes cannot be expunged from the history of Oxford, Britain and South Africa."<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Jurašienė J. (2016): Ambivalentiškumo problema Grūto parke. Atvejo studija (baigiamasis magistro darbas), [The problem of ambivalence in Grūtas Park. Case study (master's thesis)], Vilniaus Dailės akademija, p.37; Miles M. (2007): 'Appropriating the ex-Cold War'. In: *Art History & Criticism*, no. 3, p.173. Available at: <https://www.vdu.lt/cris/handle/20.500.12259/33635>.

<sup>143</sup> Debating Matters: Monuments to historical figures should remain. Available at: <https://debatingmatters.com/topic/monuments-to-historical-figures-should-remain/>.

## WORKSHEET 3 – POLAND



### Key question:

In the post-communist period, what should we do with the buildings and monuments that were symbolic for the former communist regime?

### 1 A legal framework for dismantling communist monuments in Poland

According to the provisions of the Act of April 1, 2016, on the prohibition of the promotion of communism or other totalitarian systems, the names of buildings, facilities, and public utilities as well as monuments, may not commemorate people, organizations, events, or dates symbolizing communism or other totalitarian systems. The monuments referring to persons, organizations, events, or dates symbolizing the repressive, authoritarian, and non-sovereign system of power in Poland in the years 1944–1989 are to be removed by 2018. The word “monument” also includes mounds, obelisks, columns, sculptures, statues, busts, commemorative stones, commemorative plaques and plaques, inscriptions and signs. In particular this act applies to monuments dedicated to:

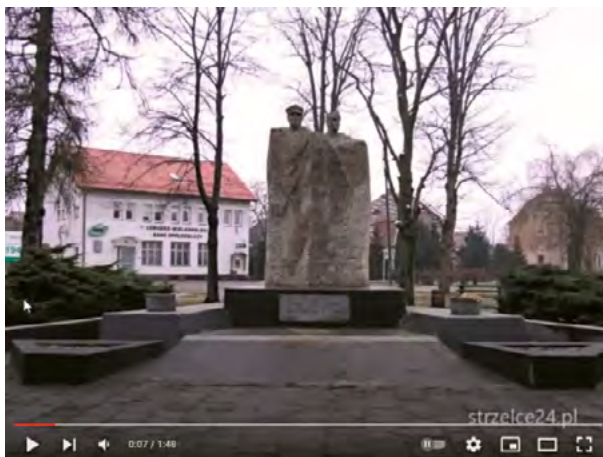
- The Red Army, including the so-called monuments of gratitude, brotherhood, and Soviet partisans.
- Activists of the Polish Workers’ Party.
- The People’s Guard/People’s Army.
- The fight against the Polish Independence Underground after 1944 by the institutions of the Polish People’s Republic (PPR) and the USSR.
- To functionaries of the PPR or communist activists from other countries.
- The Communist Party of Poland.
- Commemorating the construction of buildings on the occasion of an anniversary of the PPR.

The Act does not apply to monuments not displayed for public view; located in cemeteries or other resting places; exposed to the public as part of artistic, educational, collector’s, scientific or similar activities, for purposes other than promoting the totalitarian system; entered – independently or as part of a larger whole – in the register of monuments.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Institute of National Remembrance: ‘Dekomunizacja pomników’ [‘Decommunization of monuments’]. Available at: <https://ipn.gov.pl/pl/upamietnianie/dekomunizacja/dekomunizacja-pomnikow/45390,Komunikat-w-sprawie-usuwania-z-przestrzeni-publicznej-pomnikow-propagujacych-kom.html>.

**2 Dismantling the monument in Strzelcach Krajeńskich, 23 March 2019**

The “relics of the Polish People’s Republic” from Strzelce Krajeńskie were demolished and will find a place in an open-air ethnographic museum in Surmówka, in the Warmian-Masurian region, north of Poland.



See at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osWFEqbMdKE&t=48s>.

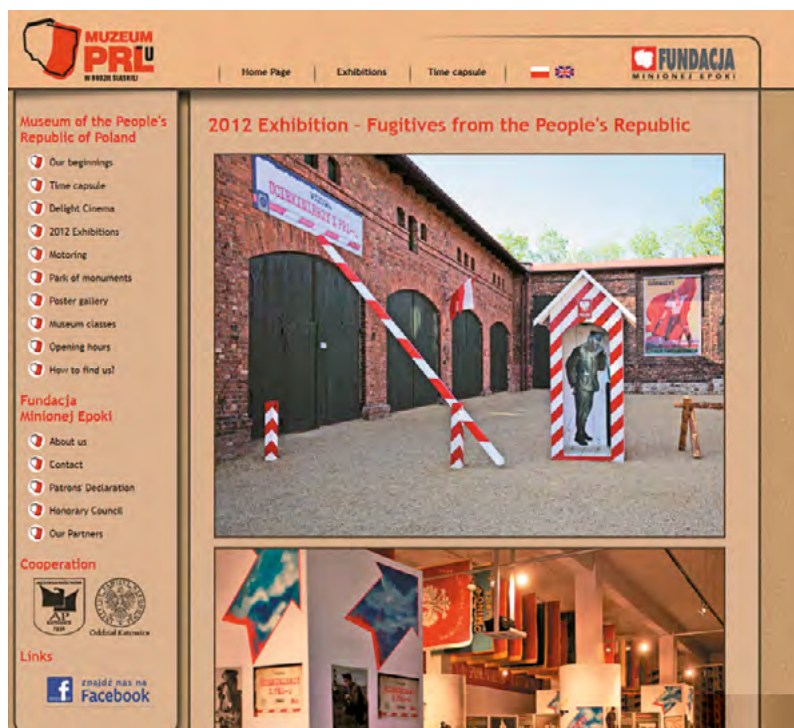
**3 Monument to the Soviet-Polish Brotherhood of Arms, Warsaw**



Photo by Cezary Piwowarski, under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license via Wikimedia Commons.  
Source: <https://bit.ly/3IR61JD>



#### 4 Museum to the PPR in Silesia



See at: <http://www.muzeumprl-u.pl/index.php?id=111>.

#### 5 Division amongst historians

There are two schools of historians in Poland: the first says that such monuments, as evidence of history, should not be removed. The second allows for the possibility of finding more suitable places for such traces of the past. The monument is, of course, a trace of history and deserves respect. Monuments must not be demolished, but this does not mean that they must be accepted indiscriminately. Zygmunt Woźniczka, a historian from Silesia said in a debate on a monument in Zabrze: "So let's start with who built this monument in the 1980s? It was decided by politicians. It was an expression of the policy implemented at that time, that is, the promotion of friendship and alliance with the Soviet Union. Removing such a souvenir from the city centre is not distorting history. On the contrary. Of course, this is a picture of those times, but it is a false picture. The content of such obelisks not only does not have much to do with the truth, but also does not fit in any way with the traditional Silesian or Zabrze. For many inhabitants of the city or region, they can be even offensive. The Red Army soldiers do not associate them with liberation and brotherhood in arms, but

with a plundered and burnt city, with rapes and deportations to the East. With the Upper Silesian Tragedy, which definitely deserves more commemoration in Zabrze.” Paweł Czechowski from an online Histmag portal has a slightly different opinion on a similar monument in Czeladź, also a Silesian town: “Would I handcuff it, destroy it, annihilate it? Have we razed the Auschwitz camp to the ground, or have we made it a sad and painful, but also important place of remembrance of these terrible times? The same should be done with monuments – a good solution is to add plaques explaining the historical context in which the monuments are placed. Then, instead of a pile of rubble, we have an important lesson that a given monument was not an expression of social enthusiasm but, for example, something imposed from above by the regime.”<sup>145</sup>

## 6 In defence of monuments

Despite the Decommunization Act, today many traces of the communist times can still be found all over the country, such as the Monument to the Revolutionary Deed which towers over the city of Rzeszów in South-East Poland. It is almost 40 metres high and includes the figures of a peasant, soldier, and worker with the banner of the revolution. Due to its communist connotations, it should no longer be there after March 2018. However, it is still standing, like other monuments in city centres. In Rzeszów, the city authorities want the monument to be preserved and are trying to include it in the register of historic monuments. In turn, in the case of the Rzeszów Monument of Gratitude to the Red Army, the court overruled the opinion of the Institute of National Remembrance, and the mayor of the town stated that the monument is one of the most famous and recognizable buildings in Rzeszów and should remain “as a testimony to the history of the city.” It is not the only big city with a monument commemorating the past regime.

In Olsztyn, you can still see the monument to the Liberation of the Warmian-Masurian Land, commonly known as the gallows, and in the centre of Dąbrowa Górnicza there is a monument to the Heroes of the Red Banners, and at the Citadel in Poznań there is a 23-metre obelisk dedicated to the heroes of the Red Army. The monument in Olsztyn has been in the register of historical monuments since 1993. The Red Banners in Dąbrowa Górnicza will also be preserved, as local government and most of the inhabitants want to keep it as a “symbol of the city”.

*Source: Alicja Pacewicz*

<sup>145</sup> Histomag (2017): ‘Goń z pomnika... wszystkich naraz. Jak świat opanowała wojna na pomniki’ [‘Chase the monument ... all at once. How the world was taken over by the war on monuments’]. Available at: <https://histmag.org/Gon-z-pomnika...-wszystkich-naraz.-Jak-swiat-opanowala-wojna-na-pomniki-15730>.

## Monument to the Revolutionary Deed, Project “Monuments of Remembrance 1918-2018”.

The screenshot shows a website page for the 'Monument to the Revolutionary Deed (Monument to Revolutionary Fights)'. The page has an orange header with a navigation menu: 'Start', 'About the project', 'Monuments', 'Partners', 'Contact', a language selector (UK flag), and a search icon. Below the header is a logo for 'MONUMENTS OF REMEMBRANCE' and a 'PRINT' button. The main content area features the title 'Monument to the Revolutionary Deed (Monument to Revolutionary Fights)' and three sections: 'Year of unveiling' (1974), 'Person/persons/event to whom the monument is dedicated' (It commemorates the fighting revolutionaries, heroes of the revolutionary struggle for the People's Republic of Poland (unveiled in the XXXth anniversary of People's Poland).), and 'Localization' (Rzeszów, Łukasz Ciepliński Avenue). To the right of the text is a photograph of the monument, which is a tall, white, sail-shaped structure with a dark, rectangular object at the top. A red information icon is visible on the right side of the page.

See at: <https://bit.ly/3pPIWRI>.

### 7 Debate on controversial historical figures and their monuments

For supporters, the Rhodes Must Fall campaign, “operates on the premise that these present discrepancies are rooted in history, and the present and the past must, together, be critically engaged with.” However, a number of critics have begun to express concern at campaigns to ‘whitewash’ history, with columnist Matthew D’Ancona arguing that: “There is a modernist urge to wipe away the past and replace it with the new, but we should resist it.” At its heart, the debate is about our relationship with history, and whether removing statues and monuments has a role to play in reappraising historic wrongs, or whether they encourage us to airbrush out difficult and contentious parts of our history, rather than engage with and understand them. Should monuments to controversial historical figures remain?<sup>146</sup>

<sup>146</sup> Debating Matters: *Monuments to historical figures should remain*. Available at: <https://debatingmatters.com/topic/monuments-to-historical-figures-should-remain/>.

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT? TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN POST-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Examples from Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania and Poland.

Authors: Stanisław Zakroczyński, Aiguste Starkutė, Momchil Metodiev & Alicja Pacewicz

### I. Overview

This lesson offers insight into complex issues connected with transitional justice in post-communist countries. The pivotal questions which students consider include: How should we deal with the communist past and the people who were responsible for communist repressions and crimes? What approaches were adopted in our country, and in other countries, during the transition period? What is the difference between legal prosecution, lustration and decommunization? The learning experience is based on concise descriptions of real cases from four countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, and Poland) and builds on critical analysis and role playing.

### II. Objectives

- To explain the need for – and difficulties with – transitional justice as a way of dealing with the totalitarian past in post-communist countries.
- To compare different approaches to the criminal prosecution of former communist officials by analysing cases from two different countries.
- To identify the main goals of criminal prosecution, decommunization and lustration in their own state and illustrate this with examples.
- To take part in the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of transitional justice in their country.

### III. Key concepts

- **Transition** – radical change of a political, social, and economic system caused by the fall of communist dictatorships in the former Eastern Bloc, connected with the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the free market democracies aspiring to membership in Western political structures such as the European Union or NATO.
- **Transitional justice** – a set of legal and ethical problems concerning the way in which new democracies are dealing with the totalitarian past. For example, how are the crimes committed by the officials of the dictatorship treated and judged? Are the politicians of the former communist parties entitled to take part in the political life of the new, democratic countries?

- **Criminal prosecution** – the investigation and accusation of the people who are suspected of committing crimes. It is the state’s (parliament’s) role to define what kinds of behaviour are perceived as criminal. It is also the state’s (prosecutor’s office) role to decide whether to prosecute people suspected of committing crimes.
- **Decommunization** – banning politicians and officials of the Communist Party and state from participation in public life, i.e., running in elections or holding important offices.
- **Lustration** – disclosing information on someone’s collaboration with the services (such as the secret police) of the communist regime. Its rationale was first to reveal the historical truth and prevent the possibility of blackmailing and influencing the decisions of individuals holding important positions with the undisclosed materials from the communist past.
- **Radbruch formula** – the legal theory formulated after WWII by the German lawyer, Gustav Radbruch. According to this approach, in case of the conflict between an ‘immoral’ statute and what someone perceives as just and moral, a judge may decide not to apply the statute if he finds it “unbearably unjust” or in “deliberate disregard” of human equality before the law.

#### IV. Key questions

- Should the officials, soldiers, and secret agents of the communist past be punished?
- Should the former leaders of the Communist Party and its collaborators be entitled to hold important public posts?
- What are the models of transitional justice and which of them were used in our countries?

#### V. Prior knowledge

The students need basic knowledge about the transition from communism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. They should be able to understand the differences between totalitarian, authoritarian and democratic political systems and know about the violations of human rights during the communist period. The basic comprehension of legal rules, procedures and notions is also necessary, including such terms as: crime, criminal prosecution, perpetrator, sentence, investigation, and acquittal.

#### VI. Step-by-step description of the lesson

## UNIT I: IN SEARCH OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

### ACTIVITY 1 How to deal with communist crimes



**Aim:** To introduce students to the problems and challenges connected with different ways of bringing to justice communist officials and perpetrators of human rights violations.



**Description:** Begin the lesson by showing photos of the communist officials (use any search engine, e.g., Google by image). Ask if anyone recognizes who they are. Ask them why you might be interested in these individuals and what the topic of this unit might be. Outline the key questions you will be examining together (see above). Explain that after the fall of the communist regime, the new governments – among many other decisions – had to decide what to do with symbols, organizations, officials, and leaders of authoritarian systems. Bringing people to justice was the most difficult task, for many reasons.

Ask the students how they understand the notion “transitional justice”. After a short discussion, give the short lecture based on the text “In search of transitional justice” or suggest reading the text (see APPENDIX – SOURCE A, p. 265). Ask the students to take notes on the main challenges faced in the punishment of the communist officials and perpetrators and to identify the four different models of doing this. Check that students have identified all the key points as this knowledge will be necessary for the next class activity.

### ACTIVITY 2: Four cases, four approaches



**Aim:** A critical analysis and interpretation of four court cases from the transition period.



**Description:** After this introduction the students will be working in smaller groups. This activity has two stages – in the first stage, each group, consisting of 3-4 students, will receive written material on a case from one country (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Germany, or Bulgaria: see APPENDIX – SOURCE B, p. 268) with a set of questions for analysis and reflection.

- A. What case does the text describe? When and where did all this happen? Who were the perpetrators and what were their crimes?
- B. What model of transitional justice was implemented in this case: “liberal abandonment of criminal prosecution”, “conditional resignation”, “limited prosecution” or “comprehensive prosecution”?
- C. What is your judgement on this ruling? In your opinion, was this the right judgement (students may have different perspectives on the issue)? If not, what should have been done?

**ACTIVITY 3: Compare and contrast**

**Aim:** To compare and contrast different legal strategies against the background of their political and legal contexts.



**Description:** In the next stage of analysis, groups merge to work together and examine a small comparative study of cases from two different countries. This work will be done in two blocks: cases from I. Poland and Germany and II. Bulgaria and Lithuania. Ask the students to form the appropriate teams and give them questions for the comparison of two countries:

- A. What are the differences and similarities between the legal approaches used in these two cases?
- B. What are the circumstances that help us to understand why this approach was implemented in these two national cases? If possible, try to find additional information from reliable sources online to get more insight.

In order to answer question B it might be necessary to search online (using smartphones, laptops, etc.). If this is not possible, this might be a task for students interested in the topic or in the history of the particular country to undertake as homework.

Ask students to share the results of their group work briefly – possibly on a chart or through 1-2 slides of short PowerPoint/Jamboard presentations.

**ACTIVITY 4: Flaws and merits of transitional justice in our country**

**Aim:** To discuss the model for administering justice adopted by your country; searching for both positive and negative implications and phrasing arguments for and against this approach.



**Description:** Invite all the students to take part in the class discussion on transitional justice in your country – coming back to the four models from the opening lecture/text and to the comparison with other post-communist states. Was the approach closer to the “Radbruch formula” or to the liberal philosophy of abandonment of criminal prosecution? What were the flaws and positive effects of this approach?

You can also ask the students to take a more distanced approach by asking: If you were in the position of an advisor to the country undergoing transition now (imaginary or real) – which approach would you recommend and why? What are the arguments for this solution and what are the potential traps one should foresee?

Depending on time constraints, the teacher can also highlight the role of transitional justice in building collective memory and narratives about recent history, the atrocities committed by the communist regimes and the effectiveness

of the new states to establish a democratic system. The trials of the perpetrators may be understood to have both affective and cognitive functions which contribute to the unconscious or conscious role of the law in the construction of collective memory.

### UNIT II: DECOMMUNIZATION AND LUSTRATION – MODELS AND DILEMMAS

#### ACTIVITY 1: Three legal procedures



**Aim:** To understand the difference between three of the legal procedures which were used in the cases against the former officials of totalitarian regimes: executing justice, decommunization and lustration.



**Description:** Begin the lesson by reminding students of the last section of the introductory text from the previous unit on the differences between the three different legal procedures which were used in the cases against former communist officials – leaders, decision makers and collaborators. This part of the text begins with “Apart from...”. Check if they can grasp the main differences between a) executing justice, b) decommunization, and c) the process of lustration. Discuss as a class to answer any questions and define the main goals which each procedure serves. If the students have access to the internet during the lesson, the teacher can ask them to find examples of each of the procedures online (through a Google search) and share with their classmates to develop their understanding.

Invite the students to identify the differences between these institutional responses and their more general meaning. What other purposes do they serve? They implement justice – this is clear, but usually they mean much more. Explain that responses such as trials, decommunization, and lustration, in addition to other procedures, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, provide compensation for the victims, commemoration, and public acknowledgement. These procedures can also be seen as methods which protect against denial in collective memory. Furthermore, asserting this respect for the law challenges the absence of legal procedure under the previous regime and strengthens critical perspectives on its crimes.

#### ACTIVITY 2: Understanding lustration – purpose, procedure, and challenges



**Aim:** To develop an understanding of lustration as a public procedure for disclosing information on collaboration with the communist regime. To prepare a poster or slides as a simple teaching aid on lustration.





**Description:** In this section, students will be given brief handouts outlining the lustration processes in the same four countries as in the first lesson (see APPENDIX – SOURCE C, p.273). Lustration is the exclusion from particular types of occupations of certain categories of people involved in previous regimes. The texts describe the general approach to lustration and the work of national institutes of memory created to deal with the disclosure of information on collaboration with the communist regimes. Explain to students that in all post-communist countries there was a commitment to gathering such information and making it accessible to individuals and to the general public. However, these procedures and accusations could also be misused in political struggles.

Students are asked to read texts (in pairs or small groups) and to produce one slide or one poster with key information on lustration in a given country. Students will then present their posters concerning each of the four states and compare them. The accompanying task (during the lesson or as homework for volunteers) would be to produce a joint presentation, consisting of 8 slides. Each pair or group would contribute two slides: 1) country and name of the institution, with a photograph 2) key issues and controversies.

Ask students to comment on the role of such institutions in post-transition countries with a special focus on their own state. How many people were dismissed or excluded from holding important positions through this procedure? Is the situation always black and white? Is there a possibility of self-lustration in your country and does it work smoothly? What is the role of the archives in the process of lustration? Who is in control of those archives – is this institution completely independent? Can the documents gathered by the totalitarian regime and its secret service be trusted? It is widely acknowledged that the facts described in the archives may not reflect the full context of events or may present falsified data, and consequently do not always accurately reflect events.

It is also worth recalling Václav Havel, the Czech dissident and then president who was one of the first public figures to call for lustration: “Our society has a great need to face that past, to get rid of the people who terrorized the nation and conspicuously violated human rights, to remove them from the positions that they are still holding”.<sup>147</sup> Lustration laws were passed in the 1990s in almost all CEE countries. The first Lustration Act was adopted in Czechoslovakia on October 4, 1991, on December 21, 1991, the German Bundesrat approved the Stasi Records Act, which established the so-called Gauck Office. On March 9, 1994, the Lustration Act followed in Hungary, on November 30, 1995 – Albania. In Bulgaria, the Lustration Act was adopted on July 30, 1997. In Poland, the first lustration law which was adopted on April 11, 1997, was replaced by the current law on October 18, 2006.

<sup>147</sup> Michnik, A. & Havel, V. (1993): ‘Justice or Revenge’, p.23. In: *Journal of Democracy*, January 1993, 4.

It might be also useful to note that all lustration models adopted in post-communist countries meet the standards of international law in the field of human rights protection. They are justified by the concept of ‘a democracy capable of defending itself’, developed in the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. The level of loyalty of public officials and the society’s trust in their credibility are crucial for a democratic society and its morale. Unreliable public officials constitute a threat to democracy, and the democratic state has the right to defend itself against this peril by adopting diverse means that help to eliminate it.

### ACTIVITY 3: Debating the political and moral aspects of decommunization



**Aim: To** prepare for and participate in an open debate on the political and moral aspects of decommunization. This debate can take the form of “a parliamentary commission” or a “student seminar”.



**Description:** Invite students to participate in a role-playing debate (fish-bowl discussion<sup>148</sup>) on the problems and challenges connected with decommunization. Before the fish-bowl debate you can ask students to prepare for the discussion by talking about or writing (in bullet points) the pros and cons of banning the former party and state officials from active participation in the public life of a country after transition, i.e., running in elections or taking public posts.

The debate on decommunization can take the form of “a parliamentary commission” or “a student seminar”. One or two moderators ask the class to form two circles of speakers and take a seat in the inner one. The students who are ready to take part in the first round sit in the inner circle, the rest surround them, leaving some space for changing seats. The introductory questions for the debate can include: “Should former party and state officials be allowed to take part in public life?” Speakers have 2-3 minutes to present their position and they can refer to the previous speakers and cite examples from other countries. Once a student has spoken, they leave their seat to a classmate from the outer circle who presents their argument. Continue to switch participants in and out of the conversation as long as there is engagement and input from the group. From the start, ask the students entering the dialogue to put into practice arguments and positions they had considered helpful to the dialogue while observing the discussion.

The debate ends when everyone who wants to have a say has had a chance to do so. If possible, the teacher could summarize the debate with the main arguments raised by students (one can choose the students to speak randomly or

<sup>148</sup> A fishbowl debate is a strategy for organizing medium-to large group discussions. Participants are separated into an inner and outer circle. In the inner circle, or fishbowl, participants debate; in the outer circle participants listen to the discussion and take notes. Participants take turns in these roles, so that they participate as both contributors and listeners in the discussion.

ask for volunteers) and his/her own reflections on the content and process of the dialogue. If no time is left – these reflections can be included in the closing activity of the lesson.

#### ACTIVITY 4: Exit cards with key take-aways from the lesson



**Aim:** To formulate the key conclusion or key question for further research. To get feedback from students on their learning experience.



**Description:** To sum up the lesson (both units), every student writes a one sentence “exit card” – it can be a reflection, a statement, a question or even a doubt with which he/she ends the “Crime and Punishment” units. These reflections can be written on a Jamboard or take any other form of “post-it” note (virtual or material). This is a valuable activity for students and can offer a useful record of the learning experience. Such exit cards provide feedback for the teacher and help him/her to plan further lessons.

## APPENDIX

### SOURCES – Unit I

#### SOURCE A: Text – In search for transitional justice (Stanisław Zakroczyński)

The problem of transitional justice has been broadly discussed in legal, historical, and sociological literature. The dilemmas of transitional justice may be summarized in the expression used by Nelson Mandela in his foreword to the monograph concerning this problem, i.e., “**search for equilibria**”. *Equilibrium* between the natural claims of victims for criminal justice, punishment for the perpetrators, and social peace. *Equilibrium* between the restoration of unlawfully taken goods and the limited resources of public finances. *Equilibrium* between the undemocratic ideas (and deeds) of the *ancien regime’s* leaders and their constitutional right to participation in the political life of the new, democratic state. These are only a few of the many *equilibria* to be found by societies and states emerging from dictatorship. Finding those *equilibria*, transforming them into concrete legal solutions and putting them into practice is a great political and social challenge, raising many challenging questions and conflicts.

Several approaches to the main problems of transitional justice were introduced and implemented in countries which were undergoing this process (not only in Eastern Europe, but also in Portugal, Spain, Greece, as well as in many countries of Latin America and North Africa, for instance). Some symbols of the different approaches to transitional justice persists in collective memory: the

sham criminal trial of Nicolae Ceaușescu on the one side, and the ‘smooth’ treatment of Augusto Pinochet in Chile after his brutal dictatorship.

**Generally, the ‘punitive’ aspects of transitional justice may be divided into the subsections: criminal sanctions *stricto sensu*, and non-criminal (administrative, constitutional) sanctions.** A persuasive classification of these approaches to criminal sanctions against the officials of the *ancien regime* was presented (in line with the findings of the Max Planck Institute in Freiburg) by the eminent polish philosopher of Law Jerzy Zajadło. In his famous essay “Five minutes of anti-legal anti-philosophy” he distinguished four such approaches:

- The first approach is the most ‘liberal’ – i.e., the deliberate abandonment of the prosecution of the past crimes. This approach was introduced in Chile, Russia, and Belarus, for instance.
- The second and third approach may be called ‘medium’:
  - One approach is the ‘conditional resignation of the criminal prosecution’ and was introduced in South Africa.
  - Another is ‘limited prosecution’, and this is the most popular solution, followed by countries such as Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Argentina, Greece or Portugal.
  - The last approach, i.e., comprehensive, all-embracing criminal prosecution may be considered the most rigorous and was introduced only in Germany after 1990.

There are many specific dilemmas concerning the criminal prosecution and punishment of the *ancien regime’s* officials. I will describe two of them. First, **the problem of the statute of limitations – can the democratic state’s prosecutors and judges investigate and punish crimes which have been committed nearly 50 years earlier, for instance, where a statute of limitation has already expired?** On the one hand, the prohibition of such behaviour by the state in normal cases is one of the most important principles of the rule of law. On the other hand, it is obvious that the dictatorship’s law enforcement authorities were not interested in the prosecution of criminals serving their regime. There is no single answer to such a dilemma. The best proof of this is the fact that, in 1992, the Constitutional Tribunal of the Czech Republic found the law permitting for the temporary restoration of the possibility of persecution of such crimes constitutional, while the Hungarian Court rejected a similar law.

The second, and maybe more important challenge, is **whether the officials (i.e., the judges, prosecutors, policemen, soldiers etc.) serving the dictatorship may be punished for the immoral deeds they committed, which were, at the same time, legal under the legal system of the dictatorship.** This problem was, of course, broadly discussed after World War II, when German philosopher of law, Gustav Radbruch proposed his famous ‘Radbruch formula’

quoting the Latin paremia '*Lex iniustissima non est lex*' which means that the statutory law, even legally adopted by parliament, should not be applied if it is so unjust that it should be considered 'erroneous'. This formula is very much in line with human rights ideals, which are based on the assumption that fundamental rights are inherent and derived from human dignity, not from the political will of a country's rulers.

This formula was applied by German courts not only with regard to Nazi criminals, but also during the trials of Mauerschützen, i.e., the soldiers who were shooting and killing the people escaping Eastern Berlin through the Berlin Wall. In contrast to this, Polish courts refused to apply this formula against the judges who were convicting opposition activists on the basis of the unjust Decree on Martial Law in 1981-1983.

Apart from the criminal *sensu stricto* sanctions, there is also a wide range of administrative or constitutional sanctions that may be imposed on the officials of the *ancien regime* and their collaborators. The two most popular sanctions, applied, to differing extents, in many countries of the former Eastern Bloc, were lustration and decommunization. The former refers to the revelation of individuals who were involved in collaborating with the secret police of the communist regimes. The rationale behind this sanction was to reveal the historical truth and to prevent the possibility of blackmailing individuals later holding important positions of state with materials from the communist past. The latter refers to the prohibition of some politicians and officials of the Communist Party and state from participating in public life (i.e., running in an election or holding important offices).

There were several ways to approach this problem. In the Czech Republic a law was implemented that denied top-ranking communists from running in parliamentary elections, while in most of the countries decommunization was limited to positions in the secret services and judiciary. In most Eastern European Countries, post-communists were already back in power by the 1990s (this did not, however, reverse the course of democratic change). The scope and the timing of lustration also varied (i.e., in Germany in 1990s, all the files of the Stasi were made accessible, while in Poland a limited lustration process started in 1998).

Of course, the aforementioned problems do not exhaust the list of the issues concerning transitional justice. An important aspect of transitional justice concerns the problem of the re-privatization of goods improperly (or illegally) taken by the communist state. While in most post-communist countries there were special legal acts concerning this very complex social problem, in Poland the 'normal' provisions of civil law were applicable (which led to many irregularities and crimes).

To sum up, transitional justice is a very complex and multi-faceted problem. It consists of numerous 'sub-problems' which were, and still are, solved in differ-

ent ways. The choices of which concrete solutions to implement in this matter are some of the most important political decisions which must be taken by each society undergoing transition. These choices and its effects weigh on the lives of many members of these societies for decades.

### **SOURCE B: Real cases of transitional justice from Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, and Poland**

- Bulgaria: THE CHERNOBYL CASE (Momchil Metodiev), available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.
- Lithuania: THE CASE OF JANUARY 13<sup>th</sup> (Aiguste Starkutė), available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.

### **Germany**

#### **THE CASE OF THE MAUERSCHÜTZEN (“WALL-SHOOTERS”)**

The erection of the Berlin Wall, and the shooting of those who tried to flee the GDR, is a key aspect of the history of divided Germany. After reunification, the country was faced with the question of who should be held responsible for murders on the border between East and West Germany. The case of the so-called “Mauerschützenprozesse” is especially significant because they dealt with a noteworthy controversy: Can certain actions be punished in unified Germany, even though there were not punishable under the law of the GDR? This included the Schießbefehl considered in the so-called “Politbüroprozess” as well as its execution.

The last fatality at the Berlin Wall was Chris Gueffroy – he was shot by border guards in February 1989. In January 1990, his mother, Karin Gueffroy, turned to the East Berlin prosecutor’s office and demanded the prosecution of her son’s murderers. The first trial of the shooters finally began in unified Germany in September 1991 at the criminal court in Berlin. The defendants were four border guards who had participated in the shootings that led to the death of Chris Gueffroy.

In preparing for the trials of the Mauerschützen, a 1953 ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court came into focus. In sentencing officials of the National Socialist regime, the judges invoked the ideas of the jurist and political scientist, Gustav Radbruch, and argued for the so-called “legal exemption”. This means that actions that do not violate existing laws can and should be prosecuted if individual provisions of these laws contradict the notions of justice enshrined in legal systems. Accordingly, a law that blatantly violates the foundations of the rule of law should not be recognized as legitimate merely because it is applied by state authorities. The legal force of any law can be questioned if its basis is in open contradiction to fundamental principles of justice.

In deciding between prison sentences or suspended sentences for the Wall shooters on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1992, the Berlin judges provided a precedent for proceedings in other cases. The verdict was groundbreaking for most of the subsequent Mauerschützen trials. They confronted the fundamental question of whether members of the former GDR border troops could be prosecuted in court, even though the use of firearms was legal under GDR law, and the Basic Law, the German Constitution, states that there cannot be retroactive prosecution. The courts did not consider the ex post facto law to have been violated, but merely postponed it in favour of establishing justice. The case law was also confirmed by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in the spring of 2001.

According to the court, the deliberate killing of refugees by gunfire or mines was an intolerable violation of the elementary precepts of justice. Even if it was hotly debated among lawyers in unified Germany, the verdict had great symbolic value: a German court had ruled that neither the conditions of an authoritarian regime, nor enforced military discipline could override responsibility for the killing of defenseless people.



Three Border Troops guards in a watch tower on the Inner German border in 1984.

Credits: SPC5 Vincent Kitts, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3CzHYfV>.

## **Poland (Stanisław Zakroczyński)**

### **MARTIAL LAW UNDER TRIAL**

Martial law was introduced by the Communist leaders of Poland (first by General Wojciech Jaruzelski, then the First Secretary of the Polish Workers Party and the Prime Minister) on the night of 12-13<sup>th</sup>, December 1981. Its goal was to stop the so-called 'Carnival of Solidarity', the peaceful revolution led by the only independent trade-union in the Eastern Bloc (to which about 10 million Polish citizens belonged) and its leader, Lech Wałęsa. During that fateful night thousands of opposition activists were arrested, 'Solidarity' was banned and many severe restrictions, concerning freedom of speech, movement, and assemblies, among others, were introduced. Over the following days hundreds of thousands of people took part in protests against this immoral decision. The most infamous events took place at the 'Wujek' Coal Mine in the Silesia Region, where nine protesting miners were fatally shot by police special forces troops. Numerous activists protesting against the introduction of martial law were sent to prison after sham, *ad hoc* trials (often by military judges).

Settling accounts with the instigators of this Martial Law and the officials taking part in its implementation and execution took more than two decades in free Poland. The history of this process reveals the complexity, and the paradoxes, of criminal transitional justice.

### **The Legality of the introduction of Martial Law and trials of the top Communists**

Let's start with the most important question. It is clear that the very introduction of the Martial Law was immoral and unjust, but was it illegal within the existing legal system? Of course, the judges at that time generally were not in doubt and implemented the legal acts of Martial Law (however, some attempted to do so in such a way as to avoid harming the opposition activists). In 1981, the independent Constitutional Tribunal who would decide on the legality of this action did not yet exist. But in 2011, the Constitutional Tribunal of free Poland proclaimed that the decrees introducing Martial Law were unconstitutional with regard to the Constitution of Communist Poland and infringed upon the Human Right Acts of the United Nations. This verdict should be understood as symbolic: free and democratic Poland does not recognize and condemns the decision of the Communist Polish state.

General Jaruzelski and his collaborators in the government were never found guilty of introducing Martial Law. They were prosecuted and accused of being a part of the armed criminal group running the *coup d'etat* but the trial proceeded slowly and they all died before a verdict could be reached. There were many controversies surrounding this criminal trial. Numerous public figures, including



former anti-communist activists were against treating Jaruzelski as a criminal, because, at the end of the 1980s he was a key figure in the peaceful transition, one of the authors of the Round Table Agreements and the first president of free Poland. Others raised the argument that his later actions did not negate Jaruzelski's role in 1981.

### **The legal responsibility of policemen and judges**

The other controversial problem was the responsibility of those who took part in suppressing the protests against Martial Law. The most eminent example of this issue was the urgent need to punish the armed policemen who had fatally shot the miners from 'Wujek' Coal Mine. The trials lasted 15 years – from 1993 to 2008. Initially, the policemen were acquitted due to a lack of evidence, many of the relevant official documents had been destroyed or were never produced. Directly following the massacre, the policemen were cleared as having taken the 'necessary defence' (a position which was obviously untrue, as the protesters did not have guns). The effect of these judgements made it difficult to say precisely which policemen had murdered the miners. The breakthrough in this criminal process occurred when three polish alpinists who had been conducting mountain training for the policemen in the 1980s admitted that during that training some of the policemen had confessed to them that they had shot at the miners. These new testimonials led to the conviction of 15 policemen for their participation in a fight with the use of firearms with a fatal outcome. Because of the lack of sufficient evidence, it was impossible to convict any of the higher-ranking commanders of the police.

Another group responsible for the execution of Martial Law and the oppression of participants of the resistance against it were the judges who sent them to prison. Here the problem of the Radbruch formula was present in its entirety. None of the judges was criminally convicted for his deeds. When it comes to administrative punishment, 63 judges-pensioners were denied the right to the special pensions for their activity in the years of communism. The process of 'purification' of the judiciary system was generally seen as unsatisfactory.



T-55 tanks on the streets of Zbąszyń under martial law.  
Photo by J. Żołnierkiewicz, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.  
Source: <https://bit.ly/3vRzUFT>.



Wojciech Jaruzelski preparing to read a speech informing citizens of the introduction of martial law; Warsaw, December 13, 1981. Jaruzelski was a Polish army general and political leader who served as premier (1981-85), chairman of the Council of State (1985-89), and president (1989-90) during the final years of Communist rule in Poland.

Author unknown, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Source: <https://bit.ly/375nGPE>.

## SOURCES – Unit II

### SOURCE C: Lustration processes

- Twists and turns of lustration and decommunization in Poland (by Stanisław Zakroczyński), available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.
- Lustration in Germany – quick and systematic (by Stanisław Zakroczyński), available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.

### Lithuania (Aiguste Starkutė)

#### CONTROVERSIES AROUND LUSTRATION IN LITHUANIA

Lithuania never underwent full lustration. According to data available from 2005, there were around 4000 former KGB agents whose identities had not yet been disclosed. The process of decommunization had not gone smoothly and, even today, it is seen as a very complicated and highly controversial topic.

After the declaration of Lithuania's independence, the part of the Communist Party that had separated from Moscow and had become independent changed its name to the Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (LDDP) and won the 1992 parliamentary elections, gaining 73 seats (out of 141) in the Seimas (Lithuanian Parliament). Hence, Lithuania was departing from communism with a strong ex-Communist Party which even won the elections and ruled Lithuania during the transition to a free market economy. This could be the reason why legislation related to the rights of victims of the communist system developed very slowly and the basic laws were adopted only after 1996. Though the former Communist Party (LDDP) and its government did not return to its communist roots in the political and economic sphere, they were pursuing a policy of "gradual reform".

It was only when the anti-communist Conservative Party won the election that the adoption of the main legislative acts related to the situation of victims of the communist crimes began. This period lasted from 1996 to 2000, during this time the law "on the registration, confession and record of natural persons in the Lithuanian Republic, who collaborated with the secret services of the former USSR, and on the protection of the personal data of those who confessed" (The Law of Lustration, November 23, 1999) was passed. This law declared the formation of the so-called Lustration Commission and was the legal basis for the start of the process of lustration.

This conception of lustration was chosen according to guidelines released by the Supreme Council of Lithuania in 1990. It stated that the quarrels and disagreements between both sides, victims and perpetrators, were not conducive to the recreation of the new state. Such inner divisions were seen as dangerous because they could play into the hands of the forces seeking to destroy Lithuanian independence and to restore its status as part of the USSR. Thus, the document states that there cannot be a division between the "bad" and the "good," and "even those

who degraded, relentlessly crushed, misguided, made mischief, who spied, [...] and deceitfully accused” their neighbours, colleagues, family members, and so forth, “are the children of the very same mother Lithuania”. Moreover, “no one should be prevented from taking the chance to rise up, confess their guilt and come back to the path of justice”. Therefore, extra-judicial institutions, in which the perpetrators are directly confronted with the victims, do not exist in Lithuania.

The institution responsible for the rights of victims, investigation of all kinds of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as the persecution of Lithuanian inhabitants during the occupations and the processes of armed and unarmed resistance is called The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (LGGRTC). It also initiates the legal evaluation of the organizers and executors of the genocide and other crimes, as well as crimes of the communist regime, and coordinates the work of other institutions that is related to these issues. LGGRTC was established in 1997 after several other institutions responsible for the research and commemoration of the occupation period were merged.

The activity of this centre often sparks debate and controversy. For instance, from 2012 to 2018 the LGGRTC published a list made up of former KGB agents. However, at the end of September 2020 it was decided to remove the document from LGGRTC website, justifying this decision by arguing that, while the KGB had attempted to recruit all the people included in the list, not all of them were actually collaborating with the KGB. Publishing the list would make it too easy to manipulate the data and mistakenly accuse individuals. Meanwhile, other historians point out that it is a KGB document, so while it may be understandable that it is unpleasant, people still have the right to see it. Hence, not only historians and politicians, but also Lithuanian society is still very much divided over what to do with its Soviet past.



The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (LGGRTC).  
Photos by Aiguste Starkutė (private).

## Bulgaria (Momchil Metodiev)

### TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN BULGARIA: TOO SLOW AND TOO LATE

In the early stage of transition, Bulgaria was unable to provide justice, a fact that contributed to the spread of nostalgia for the communist past and to cynical social attitudes regarding justice in general. While lustration, the declassification of the archives of the former State Security, finally happened in 2007, attempts at decommunization remained unsuccessful.

In the 1990s, several unsuccessful attempts were made at opening up the State Security archives. In 1990, parliament created a Special Parliamentary Commission to examine them, but it was unable to survive the public scandal following the publication in a minor newspaper of a list of members of parliament with ties to the State Security, allegedly obtained by the Commission. In 1997, parliament adopted the Law on Access to State Security Documents, which made it possible for Bulgarian citizens to access their own secret files. The Law also created a Commission, authorized to unmask State Security informers from within the post-communist political elite. Its authority, however, was seriously limited by a Constitutional Court ruling which forbade the Commission to publicly release the names of tainted people for whom there was only a name card in the State Security card-index, but for whom no file was found in the secret archive, because their files were destroyed in 1989-1990. In 2001, parliament revised the Law and created a Commission, active between April 2001 and March 2002, which prepared nine reports revealing the identity of some State Security informers and officers. In its final report the Commission claimed that it had investigated 7,000 individuals, verified 517 of them as former collaborators, but disclosed the names of only 208 due to the Constitutional Court ruling.

A concerted effort at lustration in Bulgaria happened as late as December 2006, when parliament adopted the Law for the Access and Disclosure of the Documents and Announcing Affiliation of Bulgarian Citizens to the State Security and the Intelligence Services of the Bulgarian National Army. Within weeks, parliament elected the Commission that became known as *the Dossier Commission*, which first created a “centralized archive” of all communist security agencies. Then it started to verify the public officials who worked for the post-communist legislative, executive, and judiciary at the national level, the members of the local government, state agencies, and the opinion makers (that is, owners, managers, and journalists of all private and public media). In the period 2007-2020, after several amendments of the Law aimed at broadening the scope of verified officials, the Commission has verified the past of 351,948 people, identified 17,958 of them as former State Security collaborators, and officially released the names of 13,921 people (the Commission is not authorized to announce the names of deceased people). The Commission reports are publicly available on its website and widely reported in the media. It could be concluded that it is the first successful Bulgarian transitional justice institution.

## TEACHING HISTORY OF TRANSITION IN EUROPE

The disclosures of the Commission have informative and instructive effects because the attempts at decommunization in Bulgaria have remained unsuccessful. Since the early 1990s, several attempts at decommunization were incorporated in different Laws (i.e., Law on Banks and Banking, Law regulating the universities and scientific institutions, Law on Public Radio and Television) but all of them were blocked by the Constitutional court, which consistently ruled them unconstitutional, on the grounds that they represented a violation of the human and political rights of those officials. The idea of decommunization gained new momentum in late 2010, when the Dossier Commission disclosed that 50 percent of Bulgarian ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions in the period 1991-2010 were affiliated with the Communist State Security, including 45 of acting Bulgarian ambassadors at that time. As a result, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, supported by the parliament, withdrew those ambassadors, despite the resistance of the President at that time. Although there is no legal obstacle, since then, ambassadors affiliated with the State Security have not been appointed.



The main archival building of the Bulgarian Dossier Commission.  
Photo by the Bulgarian Dossier Commission.

## Teaching transition:

## In search of better approaches and methods

Author: Alicja Pacewicz

### SHORTCOMINGS IN TEACHING TRANSITION

- **Not enough time and educational gravity**

Education on transition often remains superficial. Regardless of the specific problems with the individual education systems and the various curricula, one thing is common (with the exception of Germany): political and social changes connected to the fall of communism are not being treated in depth. They are neither “fully fledged history”, nor “current events”. Therefore, there is no place to engage them during civic education classes either. In addition, in most national curriculums, transition related topics are discussed near the end of the chronologically arranged course, which means they are taught either at the end of the school year or... not at all. Lack of time for teaching recent history is also quite a common problem. (CR): *One has to bear in mind the limited amount of time provided for history teaching compared to other subjects, and for the transition period tackled in history teaching in relation to other historical periods.*

Teaching transition in the classroom is limited to presenting mostly key facts and figures, sometimes illustrated by a few contemporary anecdotes related by the teacher or by playing a few fragments of randomly selected video recordings. This makes it seem as if the history of transition were a chain of events, rather than several interdependent and complex processes.

Polish students who took part in a debate concerning contemporary history, organized by the Centre for Citizenship Education, said in fact that they resented the education system for not teaching them enough about transformation, and that they had to fill in the gaps themselves, sometimes only once they went on to university. At the same time, young people feel that the fall of communism and the systemic changes that followed, together with the Second World War, are the most significant historical events of the twentieth century. Both young people and adults are aware that the way transition is presented in schools and in textbooks influences, to some extent, not only their attitudes towards those events, but also towards current social and political challenges.

They would like more time and space to learn about contemporary history, but our educational systems often seem stuck on “real history” – antiquity, the



middle-ages, enlightenment, 19<sup>th</sup> century developments and, in the twentieth century, both World Wars. Once again, Germany is an exception. In the words of a Polish educator (PL): *History is a very important subject because it impacts national identity and the cultural code. We need not include every fact since 966 (the year of Polish baptism) in this code. In schools and classes where history is not a priority subject, e.g., vocational schools, we should emphasize the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because knowledge of these periods is necessary for understanding the processes and relationships which surround us now and to prevent us from becoming susceptible to manipulation (Dr Piotr Kroll).*

In Germany, where we have identified a stronger focus on recent history, other dilemmas are visible. For instance, there is a debate between the proponents of two opposing views: *“(1) Some observers argue that schools as a rule do not offer enough factual knowledge about the repressive character of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) regime and thus unwillingly contribute to the reproduction of nostalgia. (2) Others claim that history teaching fails to have an impact on students’ minds because it offers one-sided accounts of the GDR past, ignoring the heterogeneity of the German culture(s) of memory. They see a solution to the problem in the production of truly polyphonic storylines which would resonate with the experience of different people.*

Regardless of which point of view we agree with – that there is not enough criticism of communism, or that, conversely, transition is presented in an overly one-dimensional manner – such debate is undoubtedly valuable and helps enliven history and citizenship education. It is much worse when such discussions do not take place at all or are focused, as in the case of Poland, only on which narrative is most appropriate, or most compatible with, the dominant ideology. *The present curriculum is clearly biased, which can be seen both in concrete omissions (e.g., it does not mention Lech Wałęsa and Tadeusz Mazowiecki) and in more general terms, as it offers significantly less space to the European and international context of transition.*

### • Lack of zooming out

The didactic approach most commonly used in most schools involves presenting a number of significant dates and events, identifying the important people involved in them. In many textbooks one can also find a reminder that the “nation” was behind all these emancipatory efforts, with the implication that “we” were the ones who have started or brought about the fall of communism. The international context is sometimes overlooked – with the main focus on national perspectives. The broader transition landscape usually is presented too briefly, which doesn’t allow students to see the differences and similarities, nor the geopolitical interdependencies. Lithuanian experts point out this deficit: *Other examples of countries in Eastern Europe with key roles are mostly absent in Lithuanian*



*textbooks, and Lithuania is presented as the country that caused the collapse of the Soviet Union and as a country undergoing a unique transformation.*

In Bulgaria the international context is present in teaching about the very beginning of transformation, including “perestroika”, the end of the cold war, the Velvet Revolutions and Bloody Christmas in Romania. Polish textbooks also bring up the events of “the Autumn of Nations” (1989-1990), but so superficially as not to allow for any analysis of general patterns of change, common dilemmas or even “bigger ideas”. The situation is similar in Germany. *German textbook stories tend to tell rather narrow-minded national stories about transition while largely neglecting the international context. None of the books broadens perspectives and discusses the global context of transition. It would definitely make sense to focus on the role that the global hegemony of neoliberalism played in shaping the agenda in many post-socialist societies or to point to parallels between privatization processes in the East and the West.*

Thus, the story of the fall of communism and the time of transition often becomes dangerously intertwined with the national mythos. As we learn from “Teaching 20<sup>th</sup> Century European History”, published by the Council of Europe, this might be problematic. “A problem arises when we move from national history to nationalistic history, as very often happens. History is then used for propaganda and indoctrination purposes. [...] It emphasizes differences in relation to neighbouring countries, exalts uniformism, conceals the history of regions and minorities and always defines itself in relation to external enemies.<sup>149</sup>”

In the case of transition narratives, it is Russia that plays the role of “the external enemy” (in Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine). In Croatia – Serbia plays this role. And in all countries, another obvious enemy is identified – an internal one this time – namely the proponents and defendants of the “old system”. It is allegedly their actions and conspiracies, and not, for instance, structural economic problems or struggles between various political factions, which are responsible for the troubles and failures encountered in the process.

The national story of transition comes dangerously close to the tradition of treating history as a source of comfort, and a defense of the country's reputation. Transition is in fact the perfect topic for analysing the inherent difficulties of a systemic change, the flaws and merits of various political strategies, and the consequences of the barriers which have been encountered in different countries. **It is a mistake to limit ourselves solely to a narrow context as we then lose sight of both universal tendencies and national characteristics.**

<sup>149</sup> Stradling, R. (2001): Teaching 20-th Century European History.  
Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494235>.

*For a comparative analysis and teaching of the transition period in post-socialist countries it would be useful to recognize that the actual development of post-socialist countries has shown that their transformation trajectories do not always lead to the establishment of democratic regimes. For instance, the transition of the Russian Federation has turned out to be neither particularly market-oriented nor democratic.* This observation is valid not only for Russia. All post-communist countries experience problems with liberal democracy, respect for the rule of law and civic engagement. Comparative analysis in schools is probably an overly ambitious goal. But looking for similar patterns and major differences in the trajectories of transition might shed light on how local (national) contexts determine its process and outcomes – and what went well or wrong in different societies.

This is the reasoning behind our “international lesson plans” which answer this need through creating a cross-border lens to examine the last 30 years. This chapter of the transformations in Eastern and Central Europe is not yet closed. We can still draw conclusions from it, and improve upon it...

### • The limitations of zooming in

A shortage of time and good examples in both textbooks and courses, means that teaching on the transition period lacks not only zooming out, but also zooming in. Students are offered general descriptions of main events and characters, sometimes illustrated with their photos, but there is not enough material for deeper engagement. **There is not enough focus on specific issues, like the dynamics of protests in Poland and Lithuania, the mechanics and tricks of negotiations, or on human stories and the tough decisions people had to make during transformation.**

We are aware that it is not feasible to introduce too many topics, but why not take one interesting case and study it thoroughly? Maybe one will treat more loosely one of the core curriculum content standards, but such close engagement is an opportunity for deep learning. Lessons developed as part of Transition Dialogue, like the German lesson on the *Mauerschützenprozesse*, the Croatian lesson on tourism before and after the transition, and the Polish lesson on the beginnings of local governance, serve as examples of how this may be done. And these lessons on concrete cases offer a chance to reflect on “big ideas”, such as the legal and moral responsibility of the communist regime functionaries, the process of decentralization or the economic transformation towards a market economy (and its pitfalls).

The Bulgarian lesson “People and monuments during times of transition” (see on p. 105) focuses on attitudes towards the cultural heritage of the communist regime; that is, monuments and other architectural sites. Should monuments of the communist past and controversial figures be removed, or is this doing a

disservice to history by “photoshopping” it? The lesson invites students to consider possible solutions to this dilemma referring to the case of the Soviet Army Memorial in Sofia.

- **A lack of multi-perspectivity**

Teaching transition repeats the most common error of historical education – namely, mono-perspectivity. This is not limited to the domination of the national perspective, but also involves the omission of the experiences and participation of various social groups which function as part of that nation. The participation of women in the transition is overlooked in lessons or textbooks. It is also hard to find examples illustrating the perspective of the “losers’ of the transition – such as labourers, the employees of state run companies going bankrupt, and agricultural workers on state owned farms.

In Russian schools, little is said of national and ethnic minorities. In Lithuania, not much time is dedicated to discussing the Russian minority and their attitudes and transition experiences. In Croatian textbooks, the viewpoint of civilians is neglected, whether as direct or indirect victims (and survivors) of the war. Although the numbers of casualties are stated, an in-depth perspective of how the war affected them is absent. The whole frame of reference is mono-national. The Serbian national minority is the only one mentioned, primarily through their involvement in the rebellion at the beginning of the war. Their exodus after operation Storm is also shown, but also only through numbers.

Bulgarian textbooks often refer to the fact, that one of the main reasons for the international isolation of Todor Zhivkov’s regime during the ‘80s was its policy towards the minority of Bulgarian Turks, the change of their names and their migration to Turkey in the summer of 1989 (so called “big excursion”). During the period of transition after 1989 the perspective of this minority is omitted (except for the restoration of their names), including the role of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (Party of Bulgarian Turks). In general, issues of national origin and demography are not present including the large, permanent migration of Bulgarians to different parts of Europe and the world. Multi-perspectivity as an approach (regarding different perspectives, the viewpoints of diverse social groups, and a variety of types of sources) which is used in a very limited way in the chapters on the transition period, even if, in the same history textbook, such an approach is present in other chapters (for example on Antiquity, the Middle Ages or in Modern times).

In countries which participated in the Transition Dialogue project, we can sometimes spot references to two conflicting narratives, usually backed by opposing political parties, but usually no other voices can be heard. It creates the false impression that the history of transformation was made only by key political fig-

ures (usually men) and their loyal followers. Meanwhile transformation, even if it has its most prominent heroes, was possible thanks to complicated political (and geopolitical), social (and cultural), economic (and microeconomic) drivers. And has many actors and groups, without whom this process would not have happened – or would have taken a completely different path. The perspective of diverse actors, especially before and after the breakthrough moment, creates a more real and reliable representation of transition dynamics.

The analysis of Lithuanian teaching practice points to the same lack of sociological insights: *Radical change in the political system caused significant transformations in society; for instance, many people lost their jobs and had to struggle to find another occupation in order to survive. Also, people lost their savings as the currency rate dropped and the still unfamiliar market economy was used by financial scammers to take advantage and get rich quick. This led to drastic changes in social status; many people that had once held reputable jobs became market traders (an occupation which had been marginalized in the Soviet period).*

Although the multi-perspective approach to the transition period in Lithuanian history textbooks remains rather weak, there have been some attempts to use it to foster students' critical thinking and empathy. For example, the following tasks were offered in the methodological recommendations for teaching 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> grades<sup>150</sup>:

1. *According to the sources presented (e.g., a teacher's impression from that period; results of roll-call votes on the Act of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania on the Restoration of the Independence; a letter to newspaper from a Russian living in Klaipėda; the ethnic composition of the Lithuanian population in 1990; the number of members of the Lithuanian Communist Party etc.), identify three categories of people who might have assessed the restoration of Lithuania's independence on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990 differently: A) enjoy and support; B) grieve and behave hostilely; C) adhere to neutrality. Please justify your decision.*

2. *Divide the strata of the current Lithuanian population into groups according to public attitudes towards the restoration of independence on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1990, from today's perspective. Compare it with the attitudes of people on the eve of the restoration of independence. Do you see any differences? Similarities? What are the factors that determine these differences or similarities?*

This is also true of Poland: *It has to be noted that there are topics avoided by virtually all consequent curricula and textbooks, e.g., the perspective of such neglected groups as women, marginalized groups or different national or ethnic minorities. The*

<sup>150</sup> K. Vilkelienė, E. Bakonis and L. Jašinauskas (2012): 'Methodological recommendations for the implementation of history module programs in 9-10 grades'. Available at: [http://www.esparama.lt/es\\_parama\\_pletra/failai/ESFproduktai/2012\\_Istorijos\\_moduliu\\_programu\\_metodines\\_rekomendacijos\\_9-10\\_kl.pdf](http://www.esparama.lt/es_parama_pletra/failai/ESFproduktai/2012_Istorijos_moduliu_programu_metodines_rekomendacijos_9-10_kl.pdf).

*history of transition is far from being “herstory” in Poland. Mainstreaming stories of marginalized groups is still not a part of history teaching in Poland – it looks like it might be easier to introduce diverse perspectives into teaching civics.*

It is worth noting that teaching contemporary history presents a good opportunity to examine events from different perspectives. One of the leading experts on teaching controversial issues in twentieth century European history, Robert Stradling recommends such an approach: “Some events, topics and issues in the twentieth century clearly lend themselves to the multi-perspectival approach, even in circumstances where only a very limited range of teaching materials are available. Wars and conflicts, internal revolutions, changes of regime and major changes and upheavals in people’s lives are frequently presented in textbooks and television documentaries by including quotes from key actors in the events, eyewitnesses, historians, and expert commentators. It is often possible to identify their points of view, their perspectives and their personal biases by analysing the language they use: the emphasis they give to some points rather than others, the points which are positive and the ones which are negative, the people they praise and the ones they condemn, and the loaded words which they choose to use (for example betrayal, misguided, evil, primitive, etc.)”<sup>151</sup>

However, it is not always possible to identify different perspectives on a particular event or developments solely by reference to a specific historical source. Pupils and students need analytical tools and teacher’s assistance to be able to contextualize the voices of other groups. The same is needed when analysing different narratives on transition – both past and present. Simply presenting diverse judgements on the flaws and successes of those changes may not be enough, a broader political and sociological frame of reference must be offered. For example, the short movie produced by The Centre for Citizenship Education “Understanding Transition. Five Perspectives”<sup>152</sup> will be incomprehensible for young people without insight into the political profiles of the media outlets with which the interviewed journalists collaborate.

- **“Dealing with controversies” through avoidance**

Transitions are always disputed – and should be disputed. Social and economic changes come at a cost, and it is never clear which of these costs are inevitable and who is going to carry the heaviest burden. Different political factions are formed with diverse ideas and often conflicting visions of what society should look like. Liberal, conservative, and socialist models are introduced, usually without continuation and coordination, at subsequent elections and with a strong

<sup>151</sup> Stradling, R. (2001): Teaching 20-th Century European History. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680494235>.

<sup>152</sup> Available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.

element of fortuity. Conflicts arise and there is a tendency to always look for the culprits of the failures and misfortunes of the new system.

Political discourse is increasingly polarized today; the bipolar image of “us” and “them” is the easiest way to deal with ambiguities. As noted by Barbara Christophe, in the mapping of German textbooks (see on p. 50), if ambiguities are presented with no clues to critical judgement, it leaves students with a mosaic made of different pieces, but without the cognitive and axiological tools to build deeper understanding. And yet the textbooks in Germany probably offer a much more pluralistic image than those of other countries.

*German textbooks to some extent adequately reflect societal controversies on how to assess transition by offering a variety of viewpoints on one the same topic. Furthermore, slightly different accounts in textbooks from different publishing houses also ensure some plurality. At the same time, there are still quite a lot of issues on which textbooks try to render societal controversies invisible by taking refuge in ambivalent or vague statements. Vague and ambivalent statements seem to serve the function of pleasing different constituencies.*

However, presenting ambiguities without context is a better option than a “mono-narrative” with no ambiguities whatsoever. This second option is more dangerous, and more common. Educational and curricular policies are compatible with the ruling political ideology and thus tend to be biased if not one-sided. In Russian textbooks, transition is explained in one way: *Alternative perspectives are not presented at all in five out of six of the textbooks studied. In the exceptional case, this is a rhetorical device to reveal the absurdity or hostility of alternative perspectives.*

This creates tensions which eventually appear in classrooms. Teachers are often unprepared to tackle controversies and the most popular defensive strategy is omission. The same approach is applied by most of the textbook authors: if you do not know how to deal with controversial issues, just ignore them, or present them with such ambiguity, that no one can criticise your chapter on contemporary history.

And yet conflict is inevitable. Teaching students this notion can prevent polarization. Professor Van Alstein provides three suggestions for pedagogical practices when dealing with controversy in the classroom. “First, tailor your approach to the function of what is happening in the classroom. Second, defuse harmful forms of polarization, but keep the space as open as possible. And finally, a good conversation often starts with a good question”

As one experienced Polish history teachers notes: “Teachers do not always have the time to discuss difficult topics with students during lessons, when in fact that should be the preferred method of teaching history. When teaching history, a good educator should present facts and their various interpretations. In teacher training we should emphasize the importance of developing an apolitical attitude in students. Manipulating the curriculum, omitting some uncomfortable

facts from our history, is a road to nowhere as, when we only know one interpretation, we become helpless in a discussion in which we are presented with an alternative interpretation.”<sup>153</sup>

## FROM TRANSMISSIVE TO INQUIRY AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

- **How and why to change teaching practices**

A discussion regarding the methods of teaching transition is part of the broader debate concerning methods of teaching history in general. More and more we hear the opinion that, in a world where we have access to almost any piece of information at almost any time, we should focus more on “deeper learning” which helps students not only to understand specific historical events, but also teaches them to see “big ideas and schemes” and how to identify cause-and-effect relationships and historical analogies. There is also consensus that history lessons are a good space for obtaining meta-skills, such as the basics of historical research and thinking, as well as transversal competences such as the critical analysis of sources or problem solving.

Debates on teaching history in the twenty-first century are far from over but most researchers and educators agree that the modern paradigm should be based on teaching historical thinking. This learning experience should help students to demythologize the past and develop the habit – and the skill – of critically approaching messages and sources.

The Dutch researchers, Jannet van Drie and Carla van Boxtel, define historical thinking as an activity in which a person organizes information about the past to describe, compare or explain historical phenomena. Peter Seixas and his team at the University of British Columbia highlight six components of historical thinking: cause-and-effect thinking, understanding continuity and change, looking for evidence, assessing historical significance, taking into account the perspectives of people from the past, and the ethical dimension of the past.

Historical thinking may be defined in different ways, but the overall goal of teaching is to allow students to drop the habit of mindlessly adopting generally accepted statements about the past and to build their own understanding of history by examining sources embedded in their contexts. Historical thinking cannot be learned in theory or by heart but must be practiced using historical sources related to the selected content.

<sup>153</sup> Monika Sewastianowicz, *Historia w szkole – nauka czy polityka historyczna?*, 29.09.2019. [History at school – science or politics of history?] Retrieved from: <https://www.prawo.pl/oswiata/upolitycznienie-podstawy-programowej-z-historii,478107.html>.

Peter Seixas distinguished three basic models of teaching history at school. In short they can be called: the model of history as memory, the disciplinary model and the postmodern model.

1. The model of history as memory focuses on the educational functions of historical education, shaping collective memory and the feeling of belonging to a community, especially national (but also local). Learning consists in acquiring a teacher's or textbook's narrative containing a simple, clearly evaluative message, referring mainly to the political history of his own country.
2. The second, disciplinary model departs from simple factographic information and aims at building the historian's scientific workshop. It emphasizes practical skills, e.g., reading maps, interpretation of written, iconographic or statistical sources, especially searching for specific data in them. The student has to point out arguments confirming a given historical message in the sources – like a historian in the traditional positivist model whose task is establishing what it was like, based on scientific research methods.
3. In turn, in the last model it is assumed, following postmodern historians, that every message about the past it is a story, and the researcher's job is not to choose or create the only one „correct” narrative, but try to understand where the different interpretations come from. Of course, it does not recognize that all narratives are equal and that nothing for certain can be said about the past. Scientists have developed methods that help to verify judgments about the past and refute statements that are not confirmed in the sources.<sup>154</sup>

In almost all the countries researched here, the education systems still lean heavily towards traditional teaching methods, and not only during lessons on history or civics. It is the teacher who leads, gives a lecture, and explains historical processes, while students listen, take notes, answer questions, and sometimes complete a task. Active learning methods are used sporadically, more as an “extra” or a short interlude.

In general, the variability of methods, means and strategies allows for better achievement of didactic goals than even the best didactic “monoculture”. Where a teacher's lecture or reading of a textbook chapter and class exercises are still dominant, it may be hard for a student to learn historical thinking. Skills related to analysing information and sources, developing historical narration, cause-and-

<sup>154</sup> Wojdon, J. (2019): 'Thinking about Multiethnicity', Center for Citizenship Education (Poland). Available at: <https://repozytorium.uni.wroc.pl/dlibra/publication/118568/edition/108895>.



effect thinking, taking the perspective of people from the past or using history to understand the present, are often still marginalized. However, individual authors and teachers are developing more competence-based teaching approaches. Here is just one example from Germany.

In all its different federal curricula history learning in Germany is about developing narrative competencies enabling learners to individually narrate history, that is histories, and remaining flexible about that narration due to history's constructiveness. "This means to go beyond a mere repetition of a historical narration written and told by someone else. Instead, the learners are trained in the (basic) skills and rules of the historiographer of how to develop historical narration."<sup>155</sup> The hermeneutics of these skills involve asking controversial questions of the past that allow for open answers which help the learners understand their present and navigate the future. Answers will evolve on the premises of multi-perspectivity and controversy regarding the different sources, as well as a variety of their existing interpretations so far. In de- and reconstructing history that way the learners come up with their own and different narrations and answers to the historical questions asked. Allowing for and appreciating the plurality of students' opinions completes the above didactic principles. How could these premises of history learning in Germany be made productive for teaching the transition period? The following two outlines give an idea:

1. Focusing on the perspective of youth and how transition affected its adolescence creates a reference to students' own life and thereby enhances intrinsic motivation in asking and finding questions and hypotheses. Since history always also happens in front of your own door, students could investigate different biographies and developments related to youth in their own neighbourhood. Narrative- and action-oriented products could be writing diaries, biographies, or creating a newspaper, a movie, or an Instagram profile.
2. A different and more theoretical analytical approach would be to edit existing schoolbook narratives and expand them to certain aspects of the transition period only mentioned so far. Analysing and comparing existing schoolbook narrations on transition from different publishers, in different countries, on selected aspects would prepare students for evaluating a broader context, and lead to questions on the missing gaps which would shape and determine the investigation.

*Provided by Eva Rohland, history teacher and researcher.*

<sup>155</sup> Lücke, M., Tibbitts, F., Engel, E., Fenner, L. (Eds.) (2016): 'CHANGE – Handbook for History Learning and Human Rights Education. For Educators in Formal, Non-Formal and Higher Education', p.55.

### • Mixing conventional and interactive teaching methods

Teaching methods and techniques can be categorised in many various ways. There are conventional methods (commonly used) and unconventional methods (less popular). Depending on student activity levels, conventional methods can be classified as expository (lectures, reading the textbook chapter) or exploratory (instructional discussion, working under the guidance of the teacher, debate, an excursion). No matter what classification we want to choose, the general recommendation for teachers would be to overcome the dominant transmissive, teacher-centered schemes during lessons.

Interactive, exploratory, and engaging teaching methods can be a good response to the challenges of teaching transition. Their benefits include: • independently gathering knowledge from various sources, engaging with history in a subjective, personal way • going from specific cases to more general patterns • a sense of agency and ownership of one's own learning process • gaining know-how and know-why of historical thinking • creating conditions for exchange and cooperation in learning "relatable" history and civics.

In school, a number of active learning methods and techniques are used during history and civics lessons. They include: • case studies, • introductory text, • situational method, • iconography, • staging and role playing, • educational games, • student-led seminars, • diverse forms of discussion and debate (a meta-plan, a round table, brainstorming, a panel discussion, an Oxford-style debate). One lesson can include several complementary methods or techniques, not only to make the class more interesting, but also to encourage cooperation in deeper analysis and deeper learning. They can be used to organize student work in various ways: individual or group activities. Such a "poly-methodic approach" usually leads to better learning experiences and outcomes than a "mono-methodic" class routine.

Teaching methods used by Polish history educators (quality study)<sup>156</sup>

1. Direct (frontal) teaching methods – the teacher or the textbook is the source of knowledge.
2. Upgraded direct teaching methods with a twist: multimedia presentations (prepared by the teacher or students), fragments of films and music played during lessons, presentation of images or photos.
3. Inquiry-based methods – the student, with the guidance of a teacher, independently searches for a solution to the problem.

<sup>156</sup> Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych (2013): 'Dobre praktyki w nauczaniu historii' ['Good practices in teaching history], p.17. Available at: [http://produkty.ibe.edu.pl/docs/raporty/ibe-ee-1-10-raport-dobre\\_praktyki\\_historia.pdf](http://produkty.ibe.edu.pl/docs/raporty/ibe-ee-1-10-raport-dobre_praktyki_historia.pdf).

- A) The use of various source materials and their interpretation  
Examples: working with a source text, map (traditional or interactive), case studies, iconography, a work of art; filling tables and graphs; preparing short written statements on a given topic.
  - B) Teamwork  
Examples: work in groups or in pairs (e.g., during the implementation of joint projects, tasks, and the preparation of presentations), or the project method.
  - C) Creative and critical thinking methods  
Examples: brainstorming, decision trees, mental maps, SWOT analysis, discussions, debates on the meaning of historical figures and events, defending your own opinion, or blogging on a historical website co-created by the teacher and students.
  - D) Imagination and social skills shaping methods  
Examples: drama, genre scenes, simulations, short class or school performances, historical and musical performances, historical cabaret, making props or costumes of historical figures.
4. Activities carried out outside the classroom  
Examples: historical role-playing, field games, excursions, museum trips, city tours and observation of historic architecture, meetings with eyewitnesses.

However, it is worth noting that teachers see and appreciate the benefits of such methods, but at the same time many of them are reluctant to use them on an everyday basis. This reluctance is primarily due to how time-consuming preparation can be, a lack of sufficient familiarity with the techniques or difficulty with coming up with new teaching formats (a lack of ideas, no ready-to-use lesson plan or activity scripts).

This is also connected with a deeply rooted fear of introducing innovation into a system and the routine way in which the school organises its work. Even simple discussion can prove to be unrealistic if the teachers are focused on student discipline or on revision before a test. Educational games tend to be noisy – or need a good internet connection and laptops, if they are virtual. Inviting eyewitnesses is time consuming and sometimes also risky from a political point of view, as most of them have very strong opinions which do not always align easily with an official narrative.

Many Polish teachers would be willing to organize historical or civic education expeditions to visit Gdansk Shipyard where Solidarność was born, or to the post-transition ghost towns, where the only state-owned factory went bankrupt and all its inhabitants lost their source of income. However, it takes more time than the usual lesson, it requires extra organization, and there is the question of safety (more than one teacher is often needed). The result is predictable – very few teachers actually do it.

Considering the limitations of active learning methods, it might be reasonable to work more on those forms that are most feasible in the classroom. Working with documents and other primary sources, constructing graphic or video representations of problems, looking for “big ideas” and “patterns” in teaching the specific topics, recognizing similarities and differences, or asking open questions that facilitate deeper learning – these might be the most realistic strategies.

As in this case of good teaching practice: *Instead of asking “What were the consequences of the restoration of Lithuania’s independence?”, we could ask “What would have happened, if Lithuania had not restored its independence on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990?” Students should present their arguments, writing them on a board or sheet of paper, without any argument being rejected. At the next stage, students analyse the arguments, make hypotheses, and test them. At the end, generalized conclusions are formulated. In this way students present their opinion, develop the ability to look at historical events and phenomena from a different perspective, and reinterpret the problem.*

National and international lesson plans provide examples of mixing such interactive activities with expository teaching such as mini lectures by teachers or reading introductory texts prepared by experts. In each lesson plan educators are invited to use both approaches, such as a scenario about local government in Poland which is based on reading the EU document on local governance and watching a short video on Polish decentralization, together with a class discussion and a final project set as homework (see on pp. 171-184).

In the transnational lesson on competing public memories, students analyse images of monuments from periods of totalitarian rule and research, debate, and judge different ways of dealing with them. They participate in a discussion, formulating, and confronting arguments “for” and “against” keeping the Monument of the Soviet Army in Sofia and/or such monuments in other CCE countries. Students can also be invited to take part in the simulation of a town hall meeting on the motion to change the name of the street connected with communist hero (or victory). However, these engaging activities build upon the background knowledge of totalitarian regimes in their countries and of the specific events those monuments and names commemorate (see on pp. 240-257 TLP public memories).

- **Which methods and for what purpose?**

This does not mean that all traditional teaching methods are “rote”. On the contrary – they are effective tools for offering background information or explaining the political context. But if the educational goals of the lesson also include critical interpretation or the construction of arguments, they might not be enough. Methods are instrumental to the purpose of the lesson, and to history and citizenship education in general.

For this reason, in the lesson plans created in the Transition Dialogue project, diverse models of organizing “the learning situation” are implemented. In a lesson on “Crime and punishment” (see on *pp. 258-276*), in order to achieve the aforementioned “zooming out effect”, the authors propose to work in smaller groups which read and interpret information and photos illustrating the different legal approach to persons responsible for crimes committed under the communist regimes in Poland, Germany, Bulgaria and Lithuania. Then they are asked to look for general rules, similarities, and differences, in order to come up with information-based conclusions and judgements on transitional justice in their own country. This method suits the educational goal of “zooming out”. At the same time, it allows students to formulate and confront ethical judgements about the past which are related to deeper historical thinking (see Peter Seixas’s proposal).

In a lesson plan on civil society (see on *pp. 205-221*), after the introduction of a large amount of information, citations and source material on the role of civil society before, during and after transition, one of the concluding educational activities is based on identifying the issues that students, as members of civil society, could try to address themselves. They identify existing practices and may research the legal procedures for creating their own NGO and plan its first activities. Once again, the method is not random; it helps to engage young people in thinking about their own actions and familiarizes them with the idea of local, national or maybe even global involvement (e.g., local actions to prevent climate change or smog). The educational goal of this lesson is not only to be able to define civil society and its functions in a democracy, but also to envisage one’s own involvement in concrete civic action.

Students who are not passionate about history, even contemporary history, might need some extra help, which may be provided by gamification and quizzing. History teaching games have become popular, but the trick is to find a balance between fun and the insight they are able to provide. The lesson plan on economic transformation (see on *pp. 222-239*) uses the simple game to paint the economic and institutional landscape of different models of shock therapies in post-communist countries. It uses the concept of *accidents of birth* to illustrate and compare the everyday lives of inhabitants in transition countries. “With the help of economic data we tell a story of the fates of workers, entrepreneurs, peasants

and landowners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, and East Germany, who were all born in 1971 and experienced both the communist regime, the transition process, and the post-transition period, during their working life.” While playing the game, students try to grasp the meaning of three main pillars of transition; stabilization, privatization, and liberalization, and identify how these processes shaped contemporary market economies in this part of Europe.

A different example of attracting students (and adults) to contemporary history through games is an online quiz on transition created by the Open Lithuanian Foundation<sup>157</sup>. As its authors’ state: “30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of transition in Eastern Europe, witnesses of those events are still actively shaping social, political and cultural life. Meanwhile, the young generation has no direct memory of communism or of transition. Their knowledge and perceptions of this recent past is mostly based on stories of the older generations and on politicized and instrumentalized discourses”. Such quizzes can also be created by the students themselves, for example, on Kahoot, Quizzez or similar platforms, giving young people a chance to experience both the hard work of preparing the questions and curiosity in solving them.

Audiovisual materials are one of the most obvious choices for teachers of all grades. Videos and recordings can become historical sources, but students can also be asked to produce such artifacts by themselves. Guidance by teachers, a simple format and a clear instruction might be enough in many cases.

Whatever method or technique the teacher is using, the choice should be thoughtful and based on students’ profiles and their educational needs. The method should fit the educational goals. Though sometimes the byproducts or side effects of unconventional strategies are unexpected, they are still valuable.



Please note that all the additional materials are also available at:  
<https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>.

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<sup>157</sup> Available at: <https://transition-dialogue.org/teaching-transition/>) and <https://olf.lt/testas/>.

## Teaching transition: Reflections on challenges, strategies, and conceptual approaches.

**Author:** Barbara Christophe

As an anthropologist based at the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany, I have been researching history textbooks and interactions in the history classroom since 2008. I primarily explore which facts attract the attention of teachers and students, and which are ignored by them, which interpretations are kept, and which are rejected or simply sidelined. Even though I approach history teaching from a perspective informed by memory theory and less by didactic considerations, my research intervenes in one decisive aspect into genuine didactic debates. Time and again, my observations have shown me that students' and teachers' practices of doing history, contrary to what approaches towards historical thinking or historical consciousness teach us to expect, do not only follow rational considerations and procedures. They are largely shaped by common-sense assumptions that usually remain implicit and unconscious. For a Swiss teacher educated during the Cold War, the image of the USA as a power destined to fight for freedom and democracy was so self-evident to her that she spent an entire lesson on the Vietnam War explaining that the Western superpower had betrayed its own values in that war. As we can learn from this example, it is culturally formed common-sense assumptions and frames of interpretation that determine which events and which facts, which explanations and causal connections are marked as relevant. If we take this insight seriously, we will say goodbye to the idea that history teaching is primarily about rational processes and procedures. We can render visible what usually remains invisible, all the many implicit assumptions, frames and categorizations that shape our view of the world in general and the past in particular. In a very special way, of course, this applies to those pasts about which we argue passionately because we view them from the perspective of different common-sense assumptions.

Most societies are a far cry away from having reached a consensus on how to talk about or how to teach transition in the history or civics classroom. And although this is to a certain extent a typical situation in the diverse and pluralistic societies of our times, in which people have increasingly polarized views on almost

everything, not at least because they inhabit completely different media spaces, disagreement on how to come to terms with the 1990s involves some peculiar challenges as well. Contestation seems to be rather fundamental in nature as we can already learn from the lack of an established and widely accepted label for the historical events we are actually talking about. Apparently, opposing views do not only result from differences in *how to evaluate* certain events or processes. They are also connected to the much more radical question of *which* of these events or processes are *perceived to be relevant* when it comes to judging transition.

To illustrate this crucial point with some examples; most people would, nowadays, probably agree that democratization and liberalization are good things to do and to have. Almost nobody would deny that having the opportunity to choose one's own government from several opposing parties or enjoying the freedom of expression are positive achievements. Arguments may however in all likelihood start with the question of whether these two processes really form the bottom line of all that happened in the 1990s. The private lives of millions of people, some observers object, were much less shaped by the cheerful outcomes of breaking free from communist dictatorship and liberating culture from bureaucratic oversight than by the uncountable tragedies that were the results of economic hardship, the collapse of public order and the eruption of violence and war. It all boils down to the question of what counts more, politics or economics; the increase in political and cultural freedom which led to the emergence of a vibrant culture and civil society or the everyday experience of millions of children whose parents had to work abroad or engage in petty trade to make a living and who were thus left to the custody of relatives, many of whom were alcoholics.

As we can see from these uncomfortable questions, none of which can be answered easily, rival ideas about how to grasp what transition was actually about, will presumably keep on triggering passionate debate, controversy, and contestation among many people at many places for quite some time.

This leaves teaching with a bundle of rich opportunities and tough tasks. In order to help teachers to tackle and master the challenges ahead of them, this chapter will critically review and discuss the potential of three rather established teaching concepts that were developed in the last couple of decades as tools for dealing with contested issues in the classroom. Summing up numerous academic debates, we will look at the concepts of (i) historical thinking, (ii) multi-perspectivity and (iii) oral history all of which are regularly discussed and praised in the guidelines of international organizations like Euroclio or the Council of Europe. Pondering on the question of the origins, affordances, contradictions and limits of these concepts, we will ultimately reflect on how they can help to meet the specific challenges of teaching transition.



## THE AFFORDANCES, CONTRADICTIONS, AND LIMITS OF HISTORICAL THINKING

### Historical roots, basic assumptions, affordances, and versions of the paradigm

In the 1970s, Western history educators started to challenge the idea that history teaching should mainly serve the aim of turning students into loyal citizens of their respective nation states by passing on to them collectively shared master narratives which usually glorify the national self and vilify others. They furthermore confronted the widespread practice of rote learning and of letting students memorize huge lists of facts and figures. Translating their criticism into a positive agenda, they suggested training students in what they called **historical thinking**.

The main idea was to expose learners not only and not primarily to substantial knowledge on selected historical events and processes, but to equip them with the procedural knowledge and disciplinary skills they would need in order to construct their own historical accounts and to deconstruct the accounts of others. **Inquiry based learning** was perceived to be crucial for this new type of history education. Students should learn to raise their own question and to seek **evidence-based answers** to these questions by critically analysing sources. They should not passively consume ready-made narratives imposed on them by historians, textbook-authors and teachers but actively construct their own images of the past seeking explanation for historical events and processes, social institutions, and practices. In the last four decades, this approach was further developed, refined, and modified. Here we discuss the three most influential versions internationally.

**British** history educators stress the need to familiarize students with two types of concepts. **First order concepts** like 'feudalism' or 'colonialism' should help them to organize and structure substantial knowledge about concrete historical events or processes. **Second order concepts** like '**evidence**' or '**explanation**' should help them to understand the challenges historians are faced with when undertaking historical research.

Dealing with the concept of **evidence**, students should for example realize that history is not a collection of information, but an interpretation based on evidence obtained from sources which might contradict each other. In order to come to terms with these kinds of contradictions, they should be trained to analyse what knowledge the person who wrote the source was in a position to

hold or which interests might have influenced her or his perception of (historical) reality.<sup>158</sup>

Elaborating **explanations** of historical events or processes, students should comprehend that stating and explaining facts are two different things which come with varying degrees of certainty. While we can prove with some certainty whether an event took place or not if we have enough sources, explanations are much more dependent on the interpretations of these sources and can thus only be more or less plausible. To give an example: We can be sure that the Soviet Union collapsed. We can also state with a great deal of certainty that military spending consumed an increasing share of the Soviet budget in the 1980s. But in the presence of numerous alternative explanations, we can never prove with utmost certainty that, among all the other potentially relevant factors, it was the increase in military spending imposed on the USSR by its rivalry with the USA, that ultimately caused its collapse.

For **American** history educators thinking historically first and foremost means **dealing critically with sources** as the only relics we have from the past.<sup>159</sup> Wineburg, for example, suggested a four-step program which students should learn to perform. The first step is **sourcing**. Taking into account that sources do not reflect past realities but rather the understanding a concrete person had about these realities, students should be alerted to the necessity to pay attention to who has written a source with which intentions and motives. The second step is **contextualization**. Students should seek information on the concrete circumstances in which a source emerged and to which it responded. The third step is **close reading**. Students should focus not only on overt claims and arguments, but also on minor linguistic details which may tell us a lot about the position the author of a source is taking. The fourth and final step is **corroborating**. Students should compare information from different sources in order to check on the robustness of factual claims made in each of them.

**German** history didactics does not focus so much on the mental operations historical thinking is based upon. It is much more interested in the aims and purposes historical thinking serves. The central notion is '**historical consciousness**', defined as the ability to make sense of past experiences by constructing a link between past, present and the future. Historical thinking is thus conceptualized as a tool meant to help people make sense of their experiences. Accordingly, students are not primarily thought of as deficient beings who get it all wrong in

<sup>158</sup> Lee, P.; Dickinson, A.; Ashby, R.(1996): 'Children making sense of history', *Education* 3-13, 24(1), 1996, p.6.

<sup>159</sup> Wineburg, S. S. (1991): 'Historical problem solving: A study of the cognitive processes used in the evaluation of documentary and pictorial evidence', *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1991, 83(1), pp.73-87.

their dealings with the past. They are rather construed as individuals who need three things.

First of all, they need to be encouraged to approach the past with **questions** they would come up with against the background of their specific situation in the present.

Second, they need to obtain some **methods** in order to make sources speak to the questions they raise and to critically engage with already existing historical accounts.

Third, they need criteria for judging the **plausibility** of their own accounts and the accounts of others. These criteria are defined as *empirical plausibility* referring to the question of whether all historical facts mentioned in an account are supported by evidence, *normative plausibility* referring to the question of whether the historical interpretation given in an account is based on socially acceptable norms and values and *narrative plausibility* referring to the question of whether the implicit assumptions an account is built upon e.g., about the motives and interests of historical actors do not contradict what we know about human beings in general. In conclusion, historical consciousness is defined as both a process governed by the individual need for orientation and a set of skills one needs to develop in order to think historically.<sup>160</sup>

Despite the differences and nuances that have emerged in the course of debates, all the different versions of historical thinking that we have today, depart from **two shared assumptions**. Firstly, **historical knowledge is different from other types of knowledge** because it deals with the past which is, by definition, gone and therefore cannot be accessed in order to check the validity of propositions. Secondly, the **past and history are two fundamentally different things**. The past is what was and is no longer. History is the result of historians' efforts to understand what has passed. And although historians may do their best and pay attention to as many different known facts about the past as possible, they will never be able to fully reconstruct it. They will always be limited by the availability of archival sources which are frequently only a tiny share of all the documents that have existed once but are now lost.<sup>161</sup> Their historical reconstructions will furthermore bear the heavy footprint of the questions they are able to raise. Historians in other places and in other times may feel compelled to raise completely different questions and thus arrive at completely different historical accounts. Hence, history is inevitably selective, partial, and bound to a certain perspective. There can be no final history.

<sup>160</sup> Körber, A. (2015): 'Historical consciousness, historical competencies – and beyond? Some conceptual development within German history didactics;', *Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation*, 2015, pp.1–56.

<sup>161</sup> Landwehr, A.(2017): 'Die anwesende Abwesenheit der Vergangenheit. Essay zur Geschichtstheorie' [The present absence of the past. Essay on historical theory].

## Ambivalences

Without doubt, all the approaches mentioned so far enabled history teaching to make a big step forward. Classroom practices informed by them are no longer aimed at making students passively internalize predefined master narratives. Students are rather encouraged to actively construct their own version and to embrace a plurality of accounts all of which are unavoidably constructed under the influence of a certain political, cultural, and economic context. At the same time, all versions of historical thinking are marked by a certain ambivalence.

To start with, the **German approach** puts emphasis on the **subjective nature of all meaning making about the past** in a first step. It argues that every connection that is constructed between past, present, and future is always driven by the contingent interests and desires of shifting presents. However, in a second step it introduces certain **standards of rationality** which should help us to distinguish between plausible and less plausible historical accounts.<sup>162</sup> The crucial aspect here is that gaining plausibility is thought to emerge from compliance with standards, procedures and criteria described as being universal. Whereas universality might be applicable to the criteria of empirical plausibility, the other two criteria – normative and narrative plausibility – are heavily fraught with culturally shaped common-sense assumptions.

**British and American approaches** start from the opposite angle. They first draw attention to the presumably **logical and universally applicable procedures and concepts** one must adhere to if one wants to elaborate acceptable historical accounts. However, the idea that **stories about the past are culturally and socially framed**, becomes visible as soon as some of the concepts are explained in more detail. Dealing with the concept of historical significance, Seixas<sup>163</sup> thus points out that interests and experiences in the present play a decisive role in determining whether a question addressed to the past is perceived to be relevant and significant or not. Lee<sup>164</sup> explains that evidence, another central concept, is always related to the questions historians raise under the influence of the challenges they face in their respective presents.

<sup>162</sup> Körber, A. (2015): 'Historical consciousness, historical competencies'; Körber, A. (2017): 'Historical consciousness and the moral dimension', In: *Historical Encounters*, 4(1), pp.81–89.

<sup>163</sup> Seixas, P. (2017): 'A model of historical thinking'. In: *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(6), pp. 593–605.

<sup>164</sup> Lee, P., & Shemilt, D.(2004): "'I just wish we could go back in the past and find out what really happened": Progression in understanding about historical accounts'. In: *Teaching History*, 117, pp.25–31. Lee, P.: 'Understanding History', pp.129-164. In: Seixas, P.(2004): 'Theorizing Historical Consciousness'. University of Toronto Press.

## Limits: Four types of criticism



*Is the paradigm of historical thinking coherent?*

As we have just seen, there is some tension between putting an emphasis on the **contingency** and incompleteness inherent to all history on the one hand, and the somewhat triumphant **certainty** with which the predefined procedures, concepts, and strategies on which historical thinking is said to rely on, are presented as the only game in town, as the only acceptable way to arrive at valid historical accounts



*Is historical thinking describing adequately what historians, textbook authors and history teachers do when they do history?*

As soon as we focus on historical thinking not as an ideal but as a concrete practice we can observe in textbooks and in the history classroom, we cannot but realize the **eminent role played by cultural frames and common-sense assumptions**, both of which are, as a rule, not invoked consciously, in the process of perceiving and interpreting the past. Accordingly, teaching and learning history is apparently **not only guided by carefully designed cognitive procedures**. It must be understood as a culturally contingent practice which is to a large extent shaped by implicit assumptions and ideas which are usually not subject to conscious reflection.

To give an example. Some studies on history education in Germany point to nationalism, Eurocentrism and racism as implicit ideas which still inform the interpretation and representation of history despite explicit commitments to equality and tolerance. This can be seen from a textbook which on the explicit level deals rather self-critically with the German colonial genocide of the Herero and Nama in Namibia, but at the same time describes the Nama as a belligerent tribe prone to steal from others. Apparently, the still deeply ingrained stereotypes of wild African tribes prevent the authors from realizing that it would have been much more plausible to apply the same label to colonial invaders like the Germans who were brutally killing, looting, and pilfering the resources of others in the course of the violent colonial project.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Mielke, P. (2020): 'The enacting of belonging and difference. An ethnographic discourse analysis'. In: *Historical Encounters: A journal of historical consciousness, historical cultures, and history education*, 7(2), pp.97–102; Mielke, P. (2020): 'Die Aushandlung von Zugehörigkeit und Differenz im Geschichtsunterricht. Eine ethnographische Diskursanalyse' [The negotiation of belonging and difference in history lessons. An ethnographic discourse analysis], Georg-August-Universität Göttingen.



*The paradigm of historical thinking exclusively focuses on the question of how to teach history. The question of what to teach, and which historical topics deserve to be dealt with in the history classroom of our times is widely neglected. Is that helpful?*

The paradigm seems to assume that discussions on the content of history teaching have become obsolete in times which seem to have left behind the tradition of imposing national master narratives on students. But is that true? Recent studies<sup>166</sup> have convincingly argued that much of history teaching in Germany for instance is still heavily informed by latent Eurocentrism and common-sense assumptions inherited from the period of the Cold War, both of which do not really match the requirements of the globalized and heterogeneous societies of our days. To give just a few examples:

On a fundamental level, the chronological structure of the history curriculum which introduces students year after year to new parts of a standard narrative clearly contradicts the explicitly stated goal to foster historical thinking. The implicit idea of a master narrative which is presupposed by the chronological structure re-enters the classroom through the backdoor. Furthermore, the selection decision curricula are based upon, clearly follow a Eurocentric logic, not only in Germany. When teaching about ancient times, most European countries focus on Ancient Rome and Greece, maybe on Egypt and Mesopotamia. But none of them would ever mention the ancient civilization let alone philosophies, arts and literatures in ancient China or India. Postcolonial approaches are widely ignored in curricula, which would hardly ever point to the role colonial exploitation played in the history of modernity and capitalism, an omission which implicitly and thus all the more powerfully contributes to the reliable reproduction of the old idea about the exceptional capabilities of the Europeans. When writing or talking about the origins of the Cold War, students learn a lot about the whereabouts of Soviet troops in Europe, but close to nothing about the no less heavy military presence of the Americans. While Soviet violations of human rights are carefully described in order to point to discrepancies between ideological claims and somewhat different realities, racial segregation or the support of seemingly 'Western' dictatorships all over the world are hardly ever mentioned as facts which might compromise the official American commitment to freedom and democracy. Students learn a lot about the crackdown of protest movements in the GDR, Hungary, Poland, and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR). The mass murder of up to three million members or supporters of the Communist Party in Indonesia

<sup>166</sup> Mielke, P. (2020): 'The enacting of belonging and difference'; Christophe, B., Halder, L. (2018): 'Concepts of the Past. Socialism', pp.293–304. In: Bock, A. & Fuchs, E. (2018): 'Palgrave Handbook on Textbook Studies'; Christophe, B., Gautschi, P., Thorp, R. (2019): 'The Cold War in the Classroom. International Perspectives on Textbooks and Memory Practices'. Palgrave Macmillan.

in 1965 is hardly ever mentioned. *Historical thinking is almost exclusively focused on checking **evidence** while largely ignoring the issue of determining **relevance** which gains in significance in the diverse and plural societies of our days.*

While the concept is **well equipped to address issues of evidence** and to train students in fact-checking when dealing with competing accounts of the past, it does **not appear to be as well prepared to tackle issues of relevance** which are increasingly gaining in significance. In times of pluralization and individualization, all of us belong to different social groups from families to religious or ethnic communities to political parties, all of which may focus on different aspects when negotiating stories of the past. In times of deep mediatization, all of us retrieve information about the world from increasingly heterogeneous media repertoires, many of which are transnationally produced and consumed. As a result, the sheer number of facts from which we can choose to build compelling, but at the same time diverse and even oppositional stories about the world, rapidly multiplies. If we want to navigate between these diverse stories, we cannot refer only to truth claims. In a hopefully self-reflexive manner, we must make value-based decisions on the facts we want to emphasize as being relevant to us or de-emphasize as being negligible.

A good case in point would be narratives of transition which put emphasis on either political and cultural liberation or on economic crisis. Without a chance to refer to objective criteria when defining their position vis-à-vis the competing stories, students should be trained to accept or even appreciate the open-endedness, uncertainty and ambiguity that comes with the coexistence of rival versions of the past. This **requires more than mastering disciplinary skills** trained by practicing historical thinking. It **requires a certain mind-set**.

## Thinking historically about transition

Transition is a socially disputed issue on which even academic historians do not agree. Presenting students with many different sources from the past as well as with many different accounts of the past and equipping them with the methodological tools they need in order to understand the selectivity, perspectivity and partiality inherent to all of them, would thus be an important step forward. Students would be enabled to understand the different positions and perspectives with which they are faced. They would, moreover, learn to deconstruct them as being reflective of different values, interests, and decisions on what is perceived as relevant and what is not. Furthermore, they would get the chance to make their own informed decisions on how to interpret a historical past which had a profound impact on the lives of close relatives.

### *Limits*

Behind the selection choices made by curriculum designers and textbook authors we see the politically charged frames and ideologies as well as unquestioned common-sense assumptions at work which determine what is worth mentioning and what should be left out when it comes to teaching transition.

In Germany, transition is mostly reduced to an almost linear process which had to end with re-unification as its ultimate goal once it was set in motion. Regaining national unity is thus constructed as the natural and logical culmination point of the history of transition, a culmination point which then steers the selection of events and processes singled out as being relevant. Obviously, all this singling out of some events and processes, like the opening of the Berlin wall, takes place at the heavy expense of omitting many other events and processes which might be still very important in the memories of participants. German textbooks thus hardly ever mention the many meetings which took place in thousands of enterprises all over the former GDR during which workers assumed the right to elect their directors. It was events like these, which gave a sense of self-empowerment to many people who felt that they were experimenting with new and revolutionary forms of organizing society. It was events like these which brought with them the flavour of a revolution in the last days of the GDR. While the memory of this peaceful revolution is constantly evoked in history and civic classrooms in unified Germany, students often do not get the opportunity to grasp the sense of excitement that many people experienced in these weeks and months.

The same phenomenon, perhaps in a more outspoken manner, can be observed in the history classroom where a lot of seemingly self-evident, highly ideological common-sense assumptions shape the interaction between teachers and students. In a brainstorming exercise on why many people in Eastern Germany turned out to be rather dissatisfied with the outcomes of economic transformation after the reunification of Germany, one student pointed out that many former citizens of the GDR were not able to grasp the opportunities of transition because they did not understand the importance of individual achievements. This statement was quickly accepted by his classmates as well as by his teacher – probably because it fits well into dominant ideologies and stereotypes. On the one hand, the student's claim seems to resonate well with hegemonic neo-liberal ideas about the unquestioned importance of achievement-oriented individualism. On the other hand, it ties in neatly with the publicly circulating assumption that the ability of people to take initiative had been crippled by the GDR dictatorship as well as by the provision of stable though meagre welfare by the socialist system.



## THE AFFORDANCES, CONTRADICTIONS, AND LIMITS OF MULTI-PERSPECTIVITY

### Basic assumptions, affordances, and versions of the paradigm

From its very beginning, *multi-perspectivity*, i.e., the principle of letting students regularly deal with a multitude of different voices *on* as well as *from* the past, has served as a pivotal building block in the concept of historical thinking. The main idea behind this principle was to prevent the teaching of history and civics from indoctrinating students by making sure that all positions and views discussed and contested in a society are sooner or later presented in the classroom. Beyond that major goal, which clearly breaks with the tradition of using school instruction as a tool to turn students into obedient subjects of a certain regime, we can distinguish between two different lines of explaining why this multi-perspectivity is perceived to be so central, especially in teaching history.

On the one hand, multi-perspectivity is seen as *rendering history more complex and nuanced*. Getting to know how contemporaries, like the local head of a Communist Party and a dissident intellectual who had lost her or his university position during socialism, perceived and experienced transition differently in many formerly socialist countries, would help students to get a fuller picture of what has happened in the late eighties and early nineties. On the other hand, multi-perspectivity is appreciated as a *valuable tool which reminds students of the unsurmountable gap that separates the past from history*. Being exposed to the diverse and at times even outrightly opposing stories told about transition by people with either different political beliefs or diverging life trajectories, provides students with an important epistemological insight: *All we have from the past are the selective, partial, and perspective-dependent accounts* offered by people, all of whom select what appears to be relevant to them under the influence of the present moment in which they are living and narrating.

Taking the considerations discussed above one step forward, a study published in 2018 suggested distinguishing between *three different modes of multi-perspectivity* all of which serve different functions.

The *first mode* refers to multiple and hopefully *opposing perspectives on a single event voiced by differently positioned contemporaries* and reflected in primary sources. A good example would be statements by leading party officials during an emergency meeting convened in response to mass demonstrations and reported in a protocol, compared to the diary entry of a protester who took part in one of these demonstrations. The aim of using this mode of multi-perspectivity in the classroom would be to *alert students to the fact that historical agents*

**with different backgrounds may perceive and evaluate the same historical event differently.** Learners would moreover be encouraged to understand why different people thought what they thought and did what they did.

The **second mode** is realized by giving voice not to contemporaries but to **multiple commentators who talk and judge the historical events in retrospect** and who did so **at different times**. The sources which students would be expected to handle would be mainly historical or journalistic accounts, and at times views expressed and communicated by ordinary citizens, for example in letters to the editors of newspapers. A good example would be to compare the rather enthusiastic comments written on transition in the euphoric 1990s, when many observers were convinced that the third wave of democracy has liberated the world from all evil and brought freedom and prosperity to everyone, with the much more pessimistic views expressed by many after the financial crisis of 2008, the electoral success stories of populists all over the world and the emergence of idea of a crisis of the West, which had lost some of its allure. The educational function of this mode of multi-perspectivity is a bit more complex and challenging as **students would be tasked with taking into account the different present settings commentators were acting and writing in**. At the same time, students would be given the opportunity to **fully grasp** a rather complex matter, namely **how all history is contingent**. They would learn, through concrete examples, how the shifting moments in the present from which we reconstruct the past, exercise a significant influence on the stories we tell. They would understand that decisions on what counts as a relevant fact change over time.

The **third mode** represents **different voices raised in the present on issues of the past**. Although there is of course considerable overlap with the second mode, the educational function of dealing exclusively with comments and views that emerged in present is a bit different. Students would not need to reconstruct the different historical contexts under which positions were formulated as they themselves can be perceived as experts of their times. They would rather **be invited to reflect on their own position and thus to understand how inevitably personal it is to take a perspective on the past**. It is especially with regard to this third mode of multi-perspectivity that students would benefit from teachers who would not take themselves out of the game but would rather be open and transparent about their own preferences when it comes to discussing the pros and cons of different accounts. If teachers would render visible how their own positions are influenced by the social and cultural contexts they are living in as well as by the values they are committed to, students would have the unique chance to understand the contingency and the embeddedness of all historical accounts.

Being aware of the different logics and educational goals connected with the three modes we have just outlined, would probably already increase the

chances of successfully implementing multi-perspectivity. To start with, in many history classrooms and in many history textbooks there is a certain **tendency to equate multi-perspectivity with the first mode**. German textbooks for example often excel when it comes to making space for the multiple and opposing voices of contemporaries from different social strata on a certain historical event. The same textbooks would however much less frequently offer students different journalistic accounts from the present on socially disputed issues like transition as would be required by the third mode. It seems that a certain reluctance to do so results from the concern that students may fall victim to **presentism**, i.e., to the **bad habit of judging the past according to the ethical or political standards of the present**, when they deal too often with conflicting accounts from that present. However, this concern can be overcome if it is clear right from the beginning that the ultimate aim of enacting the third mode of multi-perspectivity is to encourage students to take a stance and recognize the subjectivity of all accounts of the past.

## Contradictions

In critical discussions about multi-perspectivity authors have mainly emphasized one crucial problem which is linked to the fact that state funded teaching of history and civics pursues two partly contradictory aims. It strives to **enlighten students as individuals** but at the same time works to **discipline them as citizens**<sup>167</sup>, it **invites students to think independently** but at the same time it **grades the outcome of their thinking** and their ability to **reproduce what counts as acceptable 'knowledge'**<sup>168</sup>

How is this general predicament reflected in making use of the principle of multi-perspectivity in the classroom? The answer is rather simple. No teacher in the world will ever succeed in discussing all the multiple perspectives that have been raised in global discourses on a certain topic. The sheer **multitude of views** will simply **overwhelm** him or her. He or she will have to select what is worth mentioning and what not.

This involves some **tough decisions**. Which positions deserve to be mentioned and which can be legitimately disregarded? And what are the criteria we would like to apply in these decisions? Do we have to deal with the positions of all parties represented in parliament or do we thus only contribute to reproducing existing relations of power by excluding the views of outsiders whose voices will

<sup>167</sup> Nieuwenhuyse, K. v.; Wils, K.: 'Remembrance education between history teaching and citizenship education', *Citizenship Teaching and Learning*, 2012, 7(2), p. 167.

<sup>168</sup> Schär, B. C. & Sperisen, V.: 'Switzerland and the Holocaust: Teaching contested history', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2010, 42(5), 649–669. Sperisen, V. & Schär, B.: 'Akteure versus Strukturen-zum Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Lehrbuch- und Lehrpersonenkonzepten im Geschichtsunterricht. Das Schweizer Beispiel «Hinschauen und NachFragen»', in *Zur Professionalisierung von Geschichtslehrerinnen und Geschichtslehrern. Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, 2013.

never be heard? Do we exclude the voices of agents who openly disrespect ethical and legal standards like human rights and openly propagate exclusive or even racist views? Or do we consciously decide to train students in dealing with these positions they will have to face in the world outside the safe space of the classroom anyway? Do we outsource the decision to the anonymous, but nevertheless power-driven algorithms of search engines like google? Or do we give the final say to the teacher who is assumed to teach the lesson?

All these questions escape simple answers. An important guideline would probably be **to do whatever you decide to do in a transparent and self-reflective way**. Hence, students should be given explanations now and then on **why and how the perspectives they are faced with were selected**. They should also be alerted to the fact that a different decision might have been taken by another teacher or at another time.

However, **being self-reflective and transparent** with regard to these issues, **requires the awareness that everything could be done differently**. It presupposes to at least render visible the cultural common-sense assumptions which often steer us unconsciously. To illustrate that point with some examples: When we talk about Churchill as the hero of the Second World War who relentlessly fought Hitler, we should at least know that in post-colonial countries like India he is remembered as a racist who openly disregarded the lives of colonial people. When teachers and students celebrate reunification as the outcome of transition in Germany, they should at least comprehend that the same time period is often associated with bloody war and violence in places like Bosnia or Chechnya or with economic hardship, constant cuts in power supplies and raging hyper-inflation in countries like Russia, Ukraine or Georgia.

## Limits

*Do we practice multi-perspectivity when it would be most useful?* Recent research<sup>169</sup> came up with the disturbing revelation that history **educators tend to shrink back from using multi-perspectivity** as a teaching tool when it would be most useful. Musing about topics they would feel most comfortable to teach when using a multitude of sources with rival and even opposing views, teachers mostly named more or less settled events from ancient times or the Middle

<sup>169</sup> Wansink, B. et al. (2017): 'Measuring epistemological beliefs in history education: An exploration of naïve and nuanced beliefs'. In: *International Journal of Educational Research*, 83, pp.120–134; Wansink, B. et al. (2018): 'Where Does Teaching Multi-perspectivity in History Education Begin and End? An Analysis of the Uses of Temporality'. In: *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 46(4), pp.495–527; Wansink, B. (2017): 'Between fact and interpretation: Teachers' beliefs and practices in interpretational history teaching' (Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University, 2017).

Ages. At the same time, they were much ***less enthusiastic about using the same approach with regard to currently contested issues.***

Thinking about convincing explanations for this phenomenon which appears to be surprising only at first glance, several things come to mind. To start with, in many societies, teachers have reason to be insecure about how to define their own role in classroom discussions on hotly disputed issues. Should they be as neutral as possible trying to hide their own point of view in order not to manipulate students? Is neutrality even possible given the widely accepted assumption that we cannot but take a certain position if we talk about reality because we put emphasis on certain issues while rendering invisible others and because we constantly use culturally contingent frames and categorization? And would teachers not lose credibility in the eyes of their students who are compelled to spell out their opinion and make themselves vulnerable if they themselves would hide behind neutrality? At the same time, would teachers not discourage students clinging to opposite beliefs if they openly speak their mind?

These questions and the dilemmas they touch upon, have been dealt with extensively in the literature with most authors coming to the conclusion that ***all answers come with certain advantages and disadvantages.*** Apparently, there is ***no perfect solution*** that would fit to all situations.<sup>170</sup> Teachers are thus left with the advice to ***carefully weigh pros and cons*** and to make their own decision taking into account their own perspective, the situation in the classroom as well as societal debates around the topic they are going to talk about with their students.

## Teaching multiple perspectives on transition

We can see clear differences in the degree to which multi-perspectivity is reflected in different textbooks

### Fake multi-perspectivity in Russian textbook accounts of the collapse of the USSR?

**Textbook example:** “What are the reasons for the collapse of the USSR?”

1. “M.S. Gorbachev really sought to democratize the Soviet system. He was going to improve the economic situation, get rid of the old communist elite which hindered the country from developing... But his plans did not include the collapse of the socialist system, the loss of power by the CPSU, as well as the collapse of the USSR. This was in many ways an unexpected result of

<sup>170</sup> Christophe, B. & Tribukait, M (2019): ‘Learning to disagree: Needs assessment’, Eckert. *Dossiers* 5, 2019.

ill-considered and impulsive reforms combined with the deteriorating position of the country's citizens."

2. "The communist system collapsed along with the weakening of Gorbachev's power – first its outer shell in the form of the socialist camp, then the communist regime in the USSR after the failed August putsch, and eventually the Soviet Union itself. He was defeated not by pressure from outside, but, on the contrary, by the detente of international relations and a failed attempt at internal modernization... At the same time, one cannot discount the factor of the long-term purposeful work of the political elites of the Western countries aimed at weakening and disintegrating the USSR, at destroying the Union for Mutual Economic Assistance (SEV) and the Warsaw Pact Organization."

3. "V.V. Putin called the collapse of the USSR the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century... Was the collapse of the Soviet Union a disaster? If a foreign country disintegrates, especially, when you view it as an adversary for centuries, then of course not. If your country falls apart, then yes. Especially when this decay is accompanied by many human tragedies."<sup>171</sup>

**What is going on in the text:** In a formal sense, the textbook offers three perspectives on the collapse of the USSR. However, in fact, the first and the second perspectives logically lead to the third. Upon closer examination we can thus conclude that the authors try to impose Putin's and only Putin's version of the events on students according to which the collapse of the USSR was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe in the history of these nations.

**Discussing the advantages and disadvantages:** This is fake multi-perspectivity. This is manipulation. All three explanations treat the collapse the USSR as something negative that could have been either prevented by better reforms or that was the outright result of a Western conspiracy. One must understand that in the mentality of Russian political elites a big state, an empire, a military power, and so forth, are very important and positive values which they want to instill in students. In fact, all three explanations support the same political point of view, which is identical with the positions taken by Putin and other officials. Alternative viewpoints expressed by scholars, politicians, or journalists are completely missing .

*By Andrey Suslov*

<sup>171</sup> Karpov, S. et al.: 'Istorija Rossii. 10 klass. 1914 g. – nachalo XXI. v. Uchebnik. V 2-x chastjach. Chast 2. 1945–2016'. Russkoe Slovo, 2019 [The History of Russia. 1914 – early 21st century. A textbook for 10<sup>th</sup> Grade comprehensive schools. Basic and advanced levels: in 2 parts. Part 2. 1945-2016'. Russkoe slovo, 2019], p.112.

## Multi-perspectivity in a Bulgarian textbook

### *Textbook example:*

**(i) Georgi Mishev**, writer: "Hello citizens! Happy first day of Bulgarian democracy! [...] And as it is written in the wise books: to each his own! To the peasant – the land, with lasting guarantees of ownership. To the worker – stocks from the factory. To the man with a pen – freedom for creativity, for self-expression, for self-improvement." **Task for students:** With what did Georgi Mishev connect the first days of democracy? Explain. **(ii) Radoy Ralin**, satirist, poet and writer: "Suffering compatriots! Unfulfilled, crossed out three generations! November 10<sup>th</sup> is the re-liberation of Bulgaria! But I hope there is not only one romantic endeavor left, only one heroic intention [...] We have been lied to a lot as a nation, we have no soul left for more vain illusions." **Task for students:** Why, according to Radoy Ralin, is November 10<sup>th</sup> a re-liberation for Bulgaria? Are his fears justified? Provide evidence for your answers.

**(iii) Angel Wagenstein**, director, screenwriter and writer: "From the bloodied Tiananmen Square in Beijing to the Square of the overrun "Prague spring" – Wenceslas square, from the Great Wall of China through the ancient walls of the Kremlin to the collapsed Wall of shame in Berlin, a process runs like a powerful icebreaker, paving the way through the icy spaces of the false socialism, sweeps general secretaries and until yesterday unshakable icebergs of partocracy, destroys and collapses the omnipotent and omnipresent command-repressive apparatus [...]." **Task for students:** Which words and expressions in the text characterize the transition to democracy?<sup>172</sup>

**What is going on:** The example is taken from the textbook rubric "Evidence of the time", where three speakers of the first democratic meeting of the opposition on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1989 in Sofia, Bulgaria are represented. Who: the three people are intellectuals, R. Ralin is a "dissident" (under socialism). What: their speeches of the first free meeting after the changes on 10<sup>th</sup> November. They are speaking about the Bulgarian past, repressions against the people and they express their strong will for freedom, with different focuses, for ex. A. Wagenstein gave a panoramic view of the revolts in Eastern Bloc, the end of Cold war and events in China.

**Discussing the advantages and disadvantages:** Speeches are proof of the changes in Bulgaria, they represent the feelings among Bulgarian intellectuals. There are three separate tasks for each text. There are options to compare their opinions in this very early moment of transition in Bulgaria and their ideas some months later. The video of the meeting could be also a good source on the emotions and feelings of opposition.

*By Bistra Stoimenova*

<sup>172</sup> Boteva, D., Angelov, P., Tutundjiev, I., Mitev, P., Poppetrov, N., Kalinova, E., Baeva, I., Vasseva, N., Pavlova, V., Ivanova, V. (2019): 'Istorija i civilizacii za 10. Klas' [History and Civilizations for 10th grade], Bulvest-2000/Klett, 2019, p. 341.

## Replacing multi-perspectivity with ambivalent narratives in German textbooks

**Textbook example:** (1) On a personal level, many people in East Germany experienced the years after the fall of the Wall not as a liberation but as a humiliation. (2) Older people in particular saw their life achievements called into question. (3) Some of them experienced long periods of unemployment. (4) While well-educated young people found new jobs in the old states, cities and regions in eastern Germany shrank and aged. (5) A glorified view of the GDR as a haven of social security, justice and solidarity set in. (6) This was reflected in the 1990s in the revival of GDR brand products, Ostalgie parties and the election results of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the successor party to the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). (164)

Source: *Geschichte und Geschehen*, 9/10, Berlin, Gymnasium Klett Verlag, p. 164<sup>173</sup>.

**What is going on?** The first three sentences are dominated by statements that explain to us why many East Germans, who have lost their jobs and feel that their life's work has not been appreciated, perceived transition as a humiliation. Just as an aside, we, the readers, are presented here as people to whom all this needs to be explained again. The fourth sentence, on the other hand, implicitly undermines the readiness for understanding that has just been generated. When it says that well-educated people found work in the new federal states, this also tends to invite us to assume that only the poorly educated, the lazy shirkers fell by the wayside. In sentences 5 and 6, the criticism of the eternally clamouring East Germans is then quite blunt. In a sarcastic tone, there is talk of a glorifying view of the GDR as a haven of social security. In addition, quite different things are lumped together here. Apparently, celebrating Ostalgie parties is more or less the same as voting for the PDS, which is presented not as a normal left-wing party but as the successor organization to the SED.

**Discussing the advantages and disadvantages:** In six sentences, we find traces of rival positions on the rather simple question of how to deal with the political dissatisfaction of many East Germans. Apparently, the authors did not want to admit to the fact that the issue of how to assess the transition period is very much contested in the German publics. At the same time, they seem to have been eager to somehow integrate competing voices and perspectives. The result is a very much ambivalent and to some extent contradictory text which can be read and interpreted differently by different people.

By Barbara Christophe

<sup>173</sup> Sauer, M. (2018): 'Geschichte und Geschehen 9/10' ['History and events 9/10'], Ausgabe Berlin, Brandenburg. Gymnasium, Klett.



## Authentic multi-perspectivity in a German textbook

**Textbook example:** (i) An Appeal signed in November 1989 by famous writers: Our country is in a deep crisis. We can no longer live the way we have lived until now, nor do we want to... Without violence, through mass demonstrations, the people have forced the process of revolutionary renewal. [...] Either we can insist on the independence of the GDR and try [...] to develop in our country a society based on solidarity, in which peace and social justice, freedom of the individual, freedom of movement for all and the preservation of the environment are guaranteed. Or we must tolerate that [...] a sellout of our material and moral values begins and that sooner or later the GDR is appropriated by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). (ii) A critique of the appeal: Despite overwhelming knowledge of the bleak situation [...] the long-mummified utopia is invoked. [...] They seriously think that now the time has come to usher in “democratic socialism”: to build the kingdom of heaven already on earth. The demand for a renewal of the system [...] seems like a late and misplaced joke. Now at last, it is said, a truly habitable house will be erected on the ruins of the collapsed one. [...] This hope is deceptive. For it ignores the economic and ecological condition of the country. [...] After four decades of an order imposed on the majority of the population at the green table, a modification of this [...] order can no longer stand a chance.

Source: Cornelsen 2018: *Forum Geschichte*, 9/10, Berlin/Brandenburg; Gymnasium, p. 246.<sup>174</sup>

**What is going on?** The textbook presents two radically different views that had been voiced in the former GDR at the height of the political upheaval in 1989. While well-known writers such as Christa Wolf warned against the takeover of the GDR by the FRG and called for the crisis of the SED regime to be used to build a genuine and democratic socialism, Günther Kunert, also a writer who had fled the GDR already in 1979, criticized the call for the renewal of a politically and economically collapsed system that no one had ever wanted as a bad joke.

**Discussing advantages and disadvantages:** Undoubtedly, in accordance with the guidelines of multi-perspectivity, radically different positions from the 1989 debate on the future of the GDR are represented here. In addition, clever questions make it easier for students to engage with these texts. They are asked to (i) gather information on who had written the two texts at which time, (ii) to compare statements about the current situation in the GDR as well as ideas about the future and (iii) to check whether the claims made by the

<sup>174</sup> Bäuml-Stosiek, D. et al. (2018): ‘Forum Geschichte. Neue Ausgabe’ [‘Forum history. New edition’] Berlin/Brandenburg, 9./10. grade. Cornelsen Verlag.

authors are backed by evidence. What seems problematic to me, however, is that the students are not given any tools to reflect on the fact that the authors mark different aspects of the manifold reality as relevant. They are thus not prepared to deal in any meaningful way with the fact that both the assumption of the first text about the threatened sell-out of the GDR to the FRG **and** the argument of the second text about the economically catastrophic situation in the GDR are equally evident.

*By Barbara Christophe*

## THE AFFORDANCES, CONTRADICTIONS, AND LIMITS OF ORAL HISTORY

**Oral history**, that is producing oral accounts of ordinary citizens who had been eyewitnesses of certain events by interviewing them, had already become prominent in the 1970s as a means to undertake **history from below**. The overall aim was to produce **alternative historical accounts** that would shed light on how the **everyday life of ordinary people** has been affected by the big politics decided by powerful men. The whole approach was rooted in the intention to **democratize history** and to **render visible the agency of so-called normal people** who all too often have been portrayed as passive subjects.

Since the 1980s, working with the testimonies of eyewitnesses belongs to the standard repertoire of history teaching in many societies.<sup>175</sup> A lot of history educators have pointed to the positive effects of using oral history in the classroom by either using already published accounts or by instructing students to interview people who took part in the events discussed in school themselves. They have mainly singled out **three different benefits**.

**Firstly**, on a very fundamental level, life stories are a particularly valuable resource for history teaching, because they are **simultaneously a source and an account**.<sup>176</sup> Hence, they **provide information on many different levels**. They tell us as much about the past the eyewitness is talking about as about the present in which the talking is taking place. We get to know how he or she saw the world back then **and** nowadays. We are offered insights into the inner and outer world of contemporaries: we learn about thoughts and feelings, but also about the pos-

<sup>175</sup> Barricelli, M. (2010): 'Lebendiges Erinnern und historisches Lernen. Herausforderungen an Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtsunterricht zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts' [Vivid memories and historical learning. Challenges for historical didactics and teaching in the beginning of the 21st century], SEMINAR, 16, pp.37-48.

<sup>176</sup> Bertram, C. (2017): 'Lebendige Erinnerung oder Erinnerungskonserven und ihre Wirksamkeit im Hinblick auf historisches Lernen. BIOS-Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung'. BIOS-Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung, in: *Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen*, 28(1+2), pp.19-20.

sibilities for actions they saw or the constraints they felt. We understand the rules and routines that governed life at that time; we comprehend what was perceived to be normal and we grasp what were the hopes, desires and fears that moved people. Life stories offer all these insights because they **usually consist of narrations about concrete events, descriptions of daily routines and arguments in which eyewitnesses take a position**<sup>177</sup>.

**Secondly**, and this may be of utmost importance for teaching transition, biographical accounts render visible **how the history of the everyday and the history of exercising power interact with one another**. They reveal how much conformism people had to display, according to their own perception, and how much stubbornness they felt able to show.

**Thirdly**, engaging with life stories we not only have the chance to learn about the past experiences of different people, but we also get to know **how differently they reflect on these experiences in their memories**.

## Contradictions and limits

All in all, empirical research<sup>178</sup> has proved that students indeed learn better and with more motivation if they have the chance to get first-hand knowledge about the past. At the same time, for quite some time history educators discuss the **challenges and problems that might arise from using the accounts of eyewitnesses in the classroom**. Time and again, some warn, **students are overwhelmed by the authenticity they ascribe to the stories** they hear from contemporaries.<sup>179</sup> As a result, students are often tempted to **confuse the accounts of contemporaries with the past itself**.<sup>180</sup> At times this confusion is increased by teachers who

<sup>177</sup> Rosenthal, G. (1995): 'Erlebte und erzählte Lebensgeschichte: Gestalt und Struktur biographischer Selbstbeschreibungen' ['Experience and narration of life stories: Form and structure of biographical self-description'], Campus Verlag.

<sup>178</sup> Bertram, C. (2017): 'Zeitzeugen im Geschichtsunterricht. Chance oder Risiko für historisches Lernen. Eine randomisierte Interventionsstudie' ['Contemporary witnesses in history lessons. Opportunities and risks for historical learning. A randomised intervention study'], Wochenschau Verlag.

<sup>179</sup> chreiber, W. (2008): 'Kategoriale Schulbuchforschung als Grundlage für empirische Untersuchungen zu kompetenzorientiertem Geschichtsunterricht' ['Categorical textbook research as a foundation for empirical studies for competence-based history teaching']. In: Jan-Patrick Bauer, J.-P.; Meyer-Hamme, J.; Körber, A.: *'Geschichtslernen – Innovationen und Reflexionen: Geschichtsdidaktik im Spannungsfeld von theoretischen Zuspitzungen, empirischen Erkundungen, normativen Überlegungen und pragmatischen Wendungen'* ['Learning history – Innovation and reflexion: history didactics between theoretical aggravation, empirical reconaissions, normative considerations and pragmatic twists'], Centaurus Verlag & Media.

<sup>180</sup> Borries, B. v. (2010): 'Wie wirken Schulbücher in den Köpfen der Schüler? Empirie am Beispiel des Faches Geschichte' ['How do textbooks affect the minds of students? Empiricism using the case of history'], pp.102–117. In: Fuchs, E. et al.: *'Schulbuch konkret. Kontexte – Produktion – Unterricht'* ['Textbook in focus. Contexts – Production – Teaching'], Klinkhardt.

use emotionally moving stories about a certain event in an illustrative manner to make a certain point<sup>181</sup>. Accounts of eyewitnesses are thus hardly ever taken seriously in their double role as being sources and accounts which are always shaped by both, the past they deal with and the present in which they are told.<sup>182</sup>

However, to date we have some suggestions on the table on how to deal with these problems and challenges in a proactive manner. When dealing with the accounts of eyewitnesses, **students need the help of teachers and carefully designed tasks** in order to better understand that these eyewitnesses cannot but provide a subjective, selective and partial perspective on events past (Bodenhäuser 2012). Furthermore, **students should not be given short excerpts from a life story** which deals only with isolated events. They should rather be **provided with the whole life story**.<sup>183</sup> Only then would they be able to discover the traces the interviewees' situation in the present has left in the stories they tell about the past.

To illustrate that with an example on transition, students would gain from knowing how the life of the eyewitnesses whose accounts they are dealing with has developed after transition. Only then would they be able to understand why the story of a former Communist Party boss, for example, who managed to make a career in post-communist times, would differ from the story of another party boss who lost all his power, wealth, and status after the regime change.

Making a similar point, Baricelli<sup>184</sup> demands that we **turn the narrations of eyewitnesses into an object of textual interpretation**. He wants students to **focus on controversial perspectives**. Schreiber<sup>185</sup> has offered several concrete

<sup>181</sup> Plato, A. v. (2001): 'Chancen und Gefahren des Einsatzes von Zeitzeugen im Unterricht' ['Opportunities and risks when working with contemporary witnesses in class']. In: *BIOS*, 14, pp.134–138.

<sup>182</sup> Bertram, C. (2017): 'Lebendige Erinnerung oder Erinnerungskonserven und ihre Wirksamkeit im Hinblick auf historisches Lernen. BIOS-Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung'. *BIOS-Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung*, in: *Oral History und Lebensverlaufsanalysen*, 28(1+2), pp. 178–199.

<sup>183</sup> Plato, A. v. (2001): 'Chancen und Gefahren des Einsatzes von Zeitzeugen im Unterricht' ['Opportunities and risks when working with contemporary witnesses in class']. In: *BIOS*, 14, pp.134–138.

<sup>184</sup> Baricelli, M. (2010): 'Lebendiges Erinnern und historisches Lernen. Herausforderungen an Geschichtsdidaktik und Geschichtsunterricht zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts' ['Vivid memories and historical learning. Challenges for historical didactics and teaching in the beginning of the 21st century'], *SEMINAR*, 16, pp.37-48.

<sup>185</sup> Schreiber, W. (2008): 'Kategoriale Schulbuchforschung als Grundlage für empirische Untersuchungen zu kompetenzorientiertem Geschichtsunterricht' ['Categorical textbook research as a foundation for empirical studies for competence-based history teaching']. In: Jan-Patrick Bauer, J.-P.; Meyer-Hamme, J.; Körber, A.: 'Geschichtslernen — Innovationen und Reflexionen: Geschichtsdidaktik im Spannungsfeld von theoretischen Zuspitzungen, empirischen Erkundungen, normativen Überlegungen und pragmatischen Wendungen' ['Learning history – Innovation and reflexion: history didactics between theoretical aggravation, empirical reconstructions, normative considerations and pragmatic twists'], Centaurus Verlag & Media.

ideas as to how students could accomplish the aim of **deconstructing oral history accounts**. She suggests drawing students' attention to three issues: (i) they should focus on **what different contemporaries mark as being relevant**, (ii) pay attention to **who is presenting himself as an active agent or as a passive victim** and (iii) practice **close reading** in order to figure out how interviewees express explicit or implicit judgements through the use of certain words.

## The impact of the public discourse on teaching transition

BASED ON THE MAPPING RESULTS FROM BULGARIA, CROATIA,  
GERMANY, LITHUANIA, POLAND, RUSSIA, AND UKRAINE.

Author: Stanisław Zakroczyński

### State, politics, and teaching history – general remarks

Since the publication of Eric Hobsbawm's book on the 'invented tradition', it has been commonly agreed that states shape public memory in order to legitimize themselves. The British historian noted that the goals of the 'new traditions' invented by the state are: *'to establish or symbolize social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities'; 'to establish or legitimize institutions, status or relations of authority' 'to socialize, inculcate of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behaviour.'*<sup>186</sup> It would not be an exaggeration, if we say that the history lessons in schools, introduced along with mass education in the nineteenth century, traditionally served as the instrument to achieve all of these goals. Their objective was to create and/or strengthen the national identity of the students, by teaching them the 'canonical version' of the nation's history, determined by the government. Moreover, to some extent, they serve this purpose today. As it was stated in the introduction to one of the most recent volumes of the *International Review of History Education*, 'to date, history education – and our reflection on it – seems to have retained a perdurable link with national identity, even if history teachers and history educators often find this link somewhat challenging.' Although, as they say, 'History education with a traditional national perspective can no longer suffice as an exclusive framework of analysis or for the education of contemporary citizens'.<sup>187</sup>

Those in power still have a decisive say in what is taught in history classes and the methods by which this content is taught, as they can pass laws on the school curricula (adopted in many cases by the regulations of the Ministry of Education). Of course, depending on the political system, their opportunities to impose their will in this matter, and their willingness to do so, vary. The general rule is simple – the more authoritarian a country is, the less freedom is left to

<sup>186</sup> Hobsbawm, E. & Ranger, T. (1983): 'The Invention of Tradition'. Cambridge University Press, p.9.

<sup>187</sup> Nieuwenhuys, K. v. & Valentim, J. P. (2018): 'The Colonial Past in History Textbooks: Historical and Social Psychological Perspectives'. Information Age Publishing, p.ix–x.

the teachers or local governments in choosing programs and teaching methods. While history teaching in Russia depends completely on a government-produced 'single truth', for instance, certain elements of the ruling party's own vision of history are also found in Polish history textbooks for elementary school pupils. Researchers from Estonia and Finland have claimed that 'while in several European countries' textbooks a nation-centric story is replaced by a Eurocentric story, nationalism is rising in Central Europe. In the wake of right-wing governments coming to power during the last years in Hungary, Poland and others, a new disturbing development can be observed. Politicians more or less openly press for a narrow nationalist interpretation of the past in school history teaching.<sup>188</sup>

It should be noted that in three countries – Croatia, Bulgaria, and Poland – public controversy has arisen concerning the contents of school textbooks covering the transition period. In Croatia, this controversy was related to the reform of the national curricula, introduced by the centre-left government in 2014, which stalled after the centre-right party had been elected in 2016. This provoked one of the largest protests in Croatia's history. In consequence, though the reform has been introduced, the content of the curricula has been altered.

In summer 2019, in Bulgaria, a 'quarrel over history textbooks' arose which concerned the representation of the communist regime and the transition period in Bulgaria in history textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Following an intervention by the minister of education and strong opposition from historians and journalists, some textbooks, and the chapters on the communist regime and the transition period in particular, were edited once more.<sup>189</sup>

### Discussion on history textbooks for 10<sup>th</sup> grade in Bulgaria, August 2019.

The main focus of this discussion was the representation of the communist regime in Bulgaria in history textbooks for the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, however, some concerns over the representation of the transition period, were also raised. The interpretation of events, processes, and persons, and the choice of sources, are especially controversial. The so-called "tank's words" of former president Petar Mladenov (December 1989) offer one example: "It is better for the tanks to come".

<sup>188</sup> Wagner, W., Kello, K., & Saki, I. (2018): 'Politics, identity, and perspectives in history textbooks'. In: Pires, J. & Nieuwenhuys, K. v.: *Representations of colonial pasts in (post) colonial presents: Historical and social psychological perspectives through textbook analysis*. Information Age Publishers, pp.31–50.

<sup>189</sup> There is a two-level procedure of approval for textbooks in Bulgaria. During the first stage, two commissions led by historians and by specialists in design and publishing, review the textbook. During the second stage, teachers are asked to give their opinion about the new textbooks.

His words (on videotape and its interpretations) in front of the Parliament, where a huge mass of protesters had gathered to call for the suspension of Article 1 of the Zhivkov Constitution (Todor Zhivkov had been the *de facto* leader of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (1954-1989)) which had enshrined the leading role of the Bulgarian Communist Party in the state:<sup>190</sup>

*By Bistra Stoimenova*

#### ОЩЕ ЗА...

##### Танковата реплика

На митинга от 14 декември 1989 г. поискват отмяна на чл. 1 от Конституцията. П. Младенов се опитва да успокои множеството, но не искат да го чуят и той казва на околните думи, заснети от Евгений Михайлов. След половин година в предизборен клип на СДС прозвучава записът с фразата: „По-добре е танковете да дойдат“. Избухва скандал, от БСП оспорват автентичността на записа и твърдят, че Младенов е казал: „По-добре е Станко (Тодоров – председател на НС) да дойде“. Експертна комисия направи заключение, че той е казал „танковете“.

• Потърсете в интернет повече информация за събитието и коментирайте в клас.



3 Петър Младенов на митинг в София. На 6 юли 1990 г. той подава оставка заради „танковата реплика“.

• Прочетете кога той окончателно се оттегля от политическия живот.

Source: Boteva, D. et al.: History and Civilisations for 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Bulvest-2000/Klett, 2019, p. 345.<sup>191</sup>

In Poland, there have been two occasions during the last decade on which history curricula for schools have given rise to public discussion. In 2012, right-wing history teachers protested against orienting the curriculum towards international themes, as well as against reducing the number of compulsory hours of history lessons in high schools. The protests were supported by the Law & Justice Party. In 2017, after this party came to power, a new curriculum was introduced which returned to a nationally oriented paradigm. Once again, numerous circles, including the Academic Council of the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw, expressed their opposition. They declared that ‘history is not a collection of patriotic episodes or a gallery of heroes. Omitting controversial and negative figures distorts the image of history’.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>190</sup> Boteva, D. et al.: ‘Istoriya i civilizacii za 10. Klas’. [‘History and Civilizations. 10th grade’], Bulvest-2000/Klett, 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p.345.

<sup>192</sup> Uchwała Rady Naukowej Instytutu Historycznego Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego z dnia 25 stycznia 2017.

[Resolution of the Academic Council of the Warsaw University History Department].

Available at: [http://www.ihuw.pl/sites/ihuw.pl/files/documents/uchwala\\_rn\\_ih\\_uw\\_25\\_01\\_2017.pdf](http://www.ihuw.pl/sites/ihuw.pl/files/documents/uchwala_rn_ih_uw_25_01_2017.pdf).



## Challenges

Considering the influence of public discourse on teaching of the transition period as a part of school curricula in Central and Eastern European countries is both interesting and challenging in this context. An analysis of educational practices concerning this period in the countries taking part in the Transition Dialogue project has highlighted several striking reasons for this.

- **Experiences – common but different:** The diversity of experiences across this region is the first and most important challenge. On the one hand, the transition process, that is, the experience of sudden, quick, and widespread political, social, and economic changes provoked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and fall of communism is, to some extent, common for the region. On the other hand, the causes, course, and outcomes of the transition process was very different in the countries participating in the project. For Croatia, Ukraine, and Lithuania, transition meant, first of all, regaining state sovereignty (in the Croatian case, through the war); in Germany the main event of the transition period was reunification, while in Russia, it was the creation of the nation state after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The transition process may be understood as ‘simply’ a change of political, economic, and social systems within the borders of the same state only in the cases of Poland and Bulgaria. These differences have a significant impact on the way public discourse influences the teaching of the transition period. While the change of political system is always a problem for the community, regaining independence must be ranked even higher. In which case, forming a ‘canonical’ narrative of the history of independence may be even more important for a government and a society than in the case of ‘simple’ transition processes.
- **Chronology:** The other basic problem is chronology, especially the question of identifying the beginning and the end of the transition period. The two most extreme cases seem to be, on the one hand, Germany, where the transition period *sensu stricto* is limited to the early 1990s and, on the other hand, Ukraine, where the transition process has not yet finished. Between the above-mentioned countries are the cases of Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, and Poland, where the transition seems to be defined as the period between the late 1980s, and the fall of the Soviet Union (and Eastern Bloc), and the accession of those states to the Euro-Atlantic institutions, such as NATO and EU (between 2004 and 2013). The case of Russia is different, as the official collective memory there is built on the contrast between the 1990s – as the era of criminal hegemony, corruption, and chaos – and the 2000s – as the period of a new ‘law and order’, and prosperity. This issue is particularly important in considering the influence of public discourse on teaching the transition period. There

is a great difference between public discourse concerning current events or the recent past, and public discourse concerning the events of 20 or 30 years ago, even if they still influence the socio-political situation today.

- **The state of public discourse:** The state of public discourse on the transition period varies from country to country. In Poland, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 1989, there was much discussion in the media of the ‘winners and losers’ of the transition process, including several very influential books issued on this subject by the main actors in the democratic changes of 1989. Karol Modzelewski (one of the ‘legends’ of Polish democratic opposition), for example, stated in his autobiography that ‘our Liberty lacks Fraternity and Equality’.<sup>193</sup> In Germany, a similar discussion, concerning the ‘ownership of the peaceful revolution’ took place five years later, on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events of 1989. In Russia, there is no public discussion of this topic ‘in the full sense of this word’, because an authoritarian regime controls the vast majority of media outlets and imposes its own vision of the transition.

### Main issues

In this section, I would like to briefly present the main themes through which the influence of public discourse on the teaching the transition period is visible.

- **Nationalism and minority issues**

In Croatian textbooks, there are biased questions concerning the Homeland War, as the following question illustrates; *Do you agree with the statement that the fact that an incomparably higher number of Hague Tribunal defendants were Serbs compared to Croats and Bosnians explains the characteristics of the war in former Yugoslavia?* This question implies that only one side of the conflict was guilty. In Bulgarian textbooks, the role of the Movement for Rights and Freedom (Party of Bulgarian Turks) was among the topics omitted. In Ukrainian public discourse and educational programs, the notion of ‘decolonization’ and resisting Russian cultural expansion is mentioned in the context of leaving the Russian zone of influence. This notion does not appear in the contexts of other countries. Some German textbooks fail to offer a coherent account of the role of nationalism in the transition period in the former Soviet Union.

- **Socio-economic issues**

It is generally accepted that neoliberalism was the predominant social narrative of the economic transition process in the 1990s and 2000s; this took the form of a ‘shock therapy’ model of change from a socialist

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<sup>193</sup> Modzelewski, K. (2013): *Zajeżdżymy kobyłę historii: Wyznania poobijanego jeźdźca*. Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Iskry, 2013.

to a market economy. Since the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, along with the global economic crisis and the rise of populist political forces, there is much more criticism of this ideology. This is reflected in some textbooks. Some German textbooks, for instance, contain critical remarks regarding the activity of the “Treuhand” (trust) agency, which was responsible for the privatization of Eastern Germany’s state-owned companies, deviating from a previous, ‘sanitized’ view of its activity. In new Polish textbooks, more attention is paid to a balanced view of the economic transition than in previous textbooks. Among the source materials included, for instance, there are the opinions of economists in support of and in opposition to the ‘shock therapy’ policy of the first governments of the 1990s. In Russian textbooks, as mentioned above, the picture of the economy and society in the 1990s is predominantly one-sided and negative. Also, in Ukrainian textbooks, the 1990s are perceived mostly in the context of socio-economic crises. In Croatian textbooks the problem of the privatization of the economy is omitted, which also may be seen as a result of the implied influence of public discourse.

- **Political and legal issues**

It is difficult to define a narrative of recent political events in handbooks, as their actors are frequently still alive and active in political life. The current Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, for instance, was an important politician during the transition period, as was the Polish president of the ruling party, Jarosław Kaczyński. In addition to this, the assessment of political events of the 1980s or 1990s is still far from politically neutral. Ukraine stands out among the countries discussed here as the transition process is ongoing; the Revolution of Dignity, for example, happened only six years ago. The question of coming to terms with the legacy of the authoritarian regimes is another challenge associated with the transition period. This challenge is especially visible in German textbooks, which struggle to come to terms with the character of the former GDR and its interpretation as either a legitimate or illegitimate state. In new Polish textbooks, it is also evident that criticism is increasingly directed at the limited extent of decommunization and lustration.

## Conclusion

The mapping results provide enough data to indicate that teaching on the transition period is vulnerable to the influence of public discourse and, especially, the point of view of the governing forces, as this is an issue which still provokes social and political debate in societies. However, this phenomenon has different dimensions in the various countries taking part in the Transition Dialogue project.

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## Acronyms

- AfD – Alternative for Germany party  
BSP – The Bulgarian Socialist Party  
CCE – Center for Citizenship Education  
CEE – Central and Eastern Europe  
CIS – Commonwealth of Independent States  
CSOs – Civil society organizations  
EBRD – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development  
ECFR – European Council on Foreign Relations  
EMU – Economic and Monetary Union  
EPAN – Education Policy Advisors' Network  
EU-EaP – Eastern Partnership  
FRG – Federal Republic of Germany  
GDR – German Democratic Republic  
LDDP – Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania  
LGGRTC – The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania  
MZO – Croatian Ministry of Science and Education  
NDH – Independent State of Croatia  
NGOs – Non-governmental organizations  
NUS – New Ukrainian School  
OLF – Open Lithuania Foundation  
PDS – Party of Democratic Socialism  
PPR – Polish People's Republic  
SANU – Serbian Academy of Arts and Science  
SED – Socialist Unity Party of Germany  
SKJ – League of Communists of Yugoslavia  
SOEs – State-owned enterprises  
SRH – Socialist Republic of Croatia  
TD – Transition Dialogue  
TLP – Transnational Lesson Plan  
UDF – Union of Democratic Forces  
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics



## Partners

### Austausch

The Austausch is an NGO that strives to strengthen European civil society, with a particular focus on exchange and cooperation between Germany and Eastern Europe. With partners in various countries, over 30 years Austausch works in areas such as international cooperation and conflict transformation, civil society, human and civil rights, education, youth work, environment, social issues, inclusion etc. Typical work formats involve networking activities, advocacy and monitoring, volunteer exchange, trainings, conferences, expert consultations, and publications.

### Center for Citizenship Education

The Center for Citizenship Education (CCE) is the largest educational non-governmental organization in Poland. With CCE support teachers use methods and topics that help students engage in their education and better cope with challenges of a modern world. The programs help to develop openness, responsibility and critical thinking, encourage to engagement in public life and social activities. CCE has over 25 years of experience and expert knowledge, about 20 thousand teachers and several thousand of school's directors from all over Poland use their support.

### Congress of Cultural Activists

The Congress of Cultural Activists contributes to the development of the cultural sphere and creative industries and promotes civil society development and the emergence of creative communities in Ukraine. The Congress develops networks in the field of cultural activism and contributes to the implementation of interdisciplinary projects in cooperation with international experts and regional action alliances.

### Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar

The Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar is a public institute of the Republic of Croatia. Its primary mission is to conduct high-quality interdisciplinary scientific research in the field of social sciences and humanities. The Institute has developed a comprehensive network of cooperation with foreign and local institutions, organizations, and researchers, and with international and regional governmental organizations, institutions and associations, and NGOs.

### **Open Lithuania Foundation**

Open Lithuania Foundation (OLF) was established in 1995 as a non-profit public benefit operational and grant-making foundation. Since 2008 it has operated as an active NGO promoting progressive change towards an open society through joining forces and executing advocacy and educational initiatives, awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building programmes, civic initiatives, etc. Currently, the OLF works in 3 main areas: promoting open and active civil society, strengthening the CSO sector, and administrating the Active Citizens Fund in Lithuania.

### **Sofia Platform Foundation**

The Sofia Platform Foundation is an NGO focused on enhancing democratic political culture with the means of civic education. It informs the debate on historical legacy, transition and democracy consolidation through research, public dialogue and discussions. The foundation develops and conducts educational formats and trainings and supports the development of capacities and skills of individuals and organizations to strengthen their active citizenship.

### **Znanje na djelu / Wissen am Werk**

Non-profit organization offering programs which address the skills gap between education and business sector to tackle the problem of employability in Croatia. Developed in partnership with local educational institutions and companies, programs reach out to pupils as well as teachers on all levels of education. For pupils job-shadowing opportunities are offered, while for educators workshops to support practice-orientation are organized.



This handbook aims to support history and civic education practitioners, in both formal and non-formal settings, in teaching the period of transition out of communism in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989/91. It comprises: a background on the concept of transition and its ongoing development; seven mappings of public discourse, school curricula and textbooks from Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine; and hands-on teaching materials including both lesson plans with detailed instructions as well as methodological approaches to tackling blind spots and neglected topics and dealing with controversial issues in the classroom.

