



A SINGLE NATION.

A MILLION VOICES.

THE FALL OF AN EMPIRE.

THE SINGING REVOLUTION

LESSON PLANS | GRADES 7-12





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Psychology & Sociology

14. The Psychology of Brutality

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How do situational influences cause people to act brutally?

Philosophy

9. The Soviet Union vs. Human Nature

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How did the Soviet Union require changing the nature of people?

Media Literacy

24. Three Times the Appeal: Persuasive Techniques in Media

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How are persuasive techniques enhanced by adding images and music to the message?

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*One Period=50 min.

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Two Periods*

- 2. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Estonia:
Lessons in Non-Violence** 23
How does Estonia’s non-violent movement compare and contrast with others?
- 22. What is a Hero? The Life of Alfred Käärman** 53
Is it worth it to be a hero?

Three Periods*

- 11. A 20th Century Primer to *The Singing Revolution*** 35
How did historical and geopolitical events lead to *The Singing Revolution*?
- 13. Patience is a Weapon, Caution a Virtue** 38
How do we write a “critical lens” essay based on *The Singing Revolution*?

Four Periods*

- 4. Understanding the Cold War through *The Singing Revolution*** 25
How does the experience of Estonia reflect the political evolution of the Cold War?
- 7. *The Singing Revolution* Document Based Question (DBQ) Essay** 29
Based on the documentary, *The Singing Revolution*, were the Estonians justified in their claim of independent national sovereignty from the Soviet Union?
- 20. The Estonian Barometer:
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How has Estonia’s geography impacted its geopolitical value throughout history?

Five Periods*

- 4. Understanding the Cold War through *The Singing Revolution*** 25
How does the experience of Estonia reflect the political evolution of the Cold War?
- 19. Estonia and Hungary: A Case Study in the Soviet Experience** 48
How do the experiences of Eastern European countries, such as Estonia and Hungary, help us understand the regional impact of the World War II occupations by the Axis powers?

THE FILM

Most people don't think about singing when they think about revolution. But song was the weapon of choice when Estonians sought to free themselves from decades of Soviet occupation. *The Singing Revolution* is an inspiring account of one nation's dramatic rebirth. It is the story of humankind's irrepressible drive for freedom and self-determination.

The Singing Revolution documents how, between 1987 and 1991, hundreds of thousands of Estonians gathered publicly to sing forbidden patriotic songs and to listen to protest speeches, risking their lives to proclaim their desire for independence. The revolutionary songs they created anchored Estonia's struggle for freedom, which was ultimately accomplished without the loss of a single life.

“Imagine the scene in *Casablanca* in which the French patrons sing *La Marseillaise* in defiance of the Germans: then multiply its power by a factor of thousands, and you've only begun to imagine the force of *The Singing Revolution*.”

—*The New York Times*

For more information about the Singing Revolution,
go to www.singingrevolution.com.

EDUCATIONAL VERSION 1.1

The educational version of the film contains 2 full DVD discs of additional materials:

- 4 hours of additional interview segments categorized by subject
- 30 printable historical documents
- 7 relevant newsreels from the 1930s to the 1950s
- 15 European maps in PowerPoint from 180 A.D. – 1997
- Estonian history timelines
- Filmmaker commentary
- Live performances of two songs from the song festival featured in the film

These 25 lesson plans for Art, Music, History, English, and other classes utilize parts of *The Singing Revolution* feature film itself, along with some of the above additional DVD materials.

Not all additional materials on the DVDs are used in the 25 lesson plans provided. We encourage teachers to further explore the encyclopedic collection of reference materials on discs 2 & 3, and use them to customize any of the lessons offered in this book, or for any other lesson plan where the materials can augment student learning.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

In this book are 25 lesson plans utilizing Educational Version 1.1 of *The Singing Revolution*. They are listed in order of appearance in the book, by relevant subject areas, and by the number of class sessions needed for each lesson.

This book contains a summary for each of the lesson plans, including:

- The Aim/Essential Question
- An Overview
- A List of Needed Materials and Technology
- The Lesson Time
- Student Objectives
- Relevant Subject Areas

This book does not contain the lesson instructions, question sheets, PowerPoints, maps, handouts, graphic organizers, or other additional materials available.

These materials can be downloaded for free.

For Full Lesson Plans and Supplemental Materials:

1. Go to www.izzit.org
2. Click on *Educational Videos*.
3. Click on *The Singing Revolution*

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK (CONTINUED)

There you will find a Word document that has the full lesson plan, with additional materials and a PowerPoint for those plans that include a slide show presentation.

Standards Alignment

On the izzit.org website there is an interactive standards alignment tool for all fifty U.S. states, and for all lesson plans.

Go to:

1. www.izzit.org
2. Click on *Standards Alignment*.

There you can sort by specific lesson plan to see which state standards it aligns with, or you can type in your state, grade, and subject to see which lesson plans are appropriate for your classes.

The screenshot shows the Izzit.org website interface for the Standards Alignment tool. At the top left is the Izzit.org logo. Below it is a navigation menu with links for Educational Videos, Standards Alignment, Current Events Lessons, Games and Contexts, Exclusive Offers, WebStore, Izzit PLUS Page, Schools using Izzit.org, What others say about us, and Izzit.org on Facebook. The main content area is titled "Educational Videos - Standards Alignment" and "Izzit Standards Alignment". It features two search sections: "Standards Search" and "Title Search". The "Standards Search" section has dropdown menus for "Standards" (set to "New York standards"), "Grade" (set to "5"), and "Subject" (set to "Arts Education"), with a "Search" button. The "Title Search" section has dropdown menus for "Select Title" (set to "2081"), "Grade" (set to "Please select a grade"), "Subject" (set to "Please select a subject"), and "Standards" (set to "Please select standards"), with a "Search" button. A search bar is also visible at the top of the page.

LESSON PLANS

Totalitarianism in George Orwell's *1984* and in Estonia

Aim / Essential Question

How did the Soviets dominate Estonia and control the Estonian people?

Overview

George Orwell, in his novel *1984*, described very well the shape totalitarian governments would take in the wake of World War II. In *1984*, Big Brother employed various means to crush the individual and dominate the society at large. This lesson compares the techniques Big Brother used in *1984* with the techniques used by Stalin and the Soviets on the Estonians during and after World War II.

Materials and Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1 and 2)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Copies of the graphic organizer
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify totalitarian techniques of acquiring and maintaining power.
- Compare and contrast the use of totalitarian techniques in Orwell's *1984* with the use of totalitarian techniques in Estonia under the Soviets.
- Connect the use of totalitarian techniques to a current situation somewhere in the world.

Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Estonia: Lessons in Non-Violence

Aim / Essential Question

How does Estonia's non-violent movement compare and contrast with others?

Overview

Most high school students are familiar with Martin Luther King's non-violent civil rights movement in the 1960s, as well as Mohandas Gandhi's earlier non-violent movement that influenced Martin Luther King. But how many students are familiar with Estonia's non-violent movement? The documentary film *The Singing Revolution* offers a fascinating look at a lesser-known non-violent movement.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1, and 5-9)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class set of handouts
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Two 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Compare and contrast the non-violent movements of Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and the Estonian people.
- Analyze the effectiveness of non-violence in achieving one's goal.
- Hypothesize about the relationship between Martin Luther King's teachings on non-violence, those of Mohandas Gandhi, and the non-violent movement in Estonia.

The Language of Liberty

Aim / Essential Question

How did glasnost inadvertently help Estonia achieve independence?

Overview

Glasnost, part of the Soviet Union's plan to overhaul its economy, was not intended for Soviet Union subjects such as Estonia to get heady ideas about liberty. But that is exactly what happened. Glasnost allowed Estonians to assert greater confidence in their culture and, ultimately, find a game plan for freedom.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1 and 5)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class set of chapter questions and homework handout
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the purpose of glasnost as a free-speech policy designed to encourage debate as an avenue to root out corruption among Communist Party members, and to overhaul the moribund Soviet Union economy.
- Examine how glasnost encouraged Estonians to organize a protest against strip mining.
- Analyze how Estonia's Heritage Society used glasnost to highlight the abuses of Soviet occupation.

Understanding the Cold War through the Singing Revolution

Aim / Essential Question

How does the experience of Estonia reflect the political evolution of the Cold War?

Overview

Students will learn about the Cold War through the experiences of Estonia. This 4-5 day lesson shows the Cold War through a four-phase, issue analysis model. The lesson includes video clips, a slide show presentation, a four-page graphic organizer, and a culminating writing task explaining Estonia's experience in the political evolution of the conflict.

Materials & Technology

- Slide show presentation of activities
(from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of graphic organizers for students
(from www.izzit.org)
- Teacher-developed guidelines for final paper
- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 5)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Newsreel: Yalta
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations / Newsreels)
- Newsreel: 1956 Hungarian Revolution
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations / Newsreels / 1956 Hungarian Revolution)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Four to five 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Apply a four-phase, issue analysis model to study the Cold War.
- Analyze written and film resources, and document their findings on a graphic organizer.
- Write a summative essay using a four-phase analysis model, and information gained from lesson and film to demonstrate understanding of the Cold War.

Arts and Media in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Periods

Aim / Essential Question

How did the role of the arts and media in Estonia change as the political system changed?

Overview

On the DVDs, various Estonians discuss the changing role of the arts in Estonia. The arts—books, theater, films, music, literary criticism—had an important role during the Soviet period. What was the role of the arts during this time? How was the role of education and the media different back then? When Estonia gained its independence in 1991, the role of the arts changed. What was the role of the arts after independence? This lesson aims to have students understand the relationship between politics and the arts in a totalitarian society.

Materials & Technology

- “Soviet Education & Youth” video clip
(from Disc Two / Section 2: 1957-1986: The Stagnation Years)
- “The Role of Finnish TV, Voice of America & Radio Free Europe” video clip
(from Disc Two / Section 2: 1957-1986: The Stagnation Years)
- “Role of Culture Under Soviet Occupation” video clip
(from Disc Three / Section 4: 1987-1991: *The Singing Revolution*)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify various genres within the arts.
- Compare and contrast the role of the arts before and after independence.
- Analyze how the Soviets controlled thought and expression in Estonia.

The Chorus of Culture

Aim / Essential Question

How do folk songs preserve cultural identity?

Overview

This lesson shows how folk songs helped the people of Estonia keep their cultural identity during Soviet occupation. Stirring demonstrated in the documentary, *The Singing Revolution*, Estonians sang their way to freedom, a unique contrast to more familiar non-violent movements, such as Martin Luther King's civil rights protests in the U.S.

Materials & Technology

- Class set of questions on Chapters 1 and 6 of *The Singing Revolution* (from www.izzit.org)
- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1 and 6) (from Disc One / Chapters)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify Estonia as a Baltic country long desired by other nations throughout its history.
- Characterize the Estonian people, who were able to withstand Soviet occupation.
- Analyze how Estonia's tradition of singing was instrumental in standing up to Soviet occupation.

***The Singing Revolution* Document Based Question (DBQ) Essay**

Aim / Essential Question

Based on the documentary *The Singing Revolution*, were the Estonians justified in their claim of independent national sovereignty from the Soviet Union?

Overview

Students will watch *The Singing Revolution*, complete a series of document analysis activities, and write an essay that answers the Aim/Essential Question.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (entire film)
(from Disc One / Play Film)
- Class set of the DBQ packet
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Four 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify key events and write notes while observing a documentary film.
- Analyze historical documents and respond to guiding questions.
- Write a persuasive essay that answers the essential question, using the included documents and additional information from the film/student-generated notes.

Freedom of Speech Topples the Soviet Union

Aim / Essential Question

How did Gorbachev inadvertently bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union through his policies of glasnost and perestroika?

Overview

For decades, the Soviet Union controlled people's lives, the production of goods and services, education, and information that was presented in the media. In the mid 1980s, because of dire economic conditions, Gorbachev established new policies known as glasnost and perestroika. Once Gorbachev allowed free speech, occupied countries used that new free speech to speak out against the occupation by the Soviet Union, thus leading to their independence.

Materials & Technology

- Slide show presentation of activities
(from www.izzit.org)
- “Comments on Gorbachev” video clip
(from Disc Three / Section 4: 1987-1991: *The Singing Revolution*)
- “Details on the 1987 Hirve Park Demonstration” video clip
(from Disc Three / Section 4: 1987-1991: *The Singing Revolution*)
- Class set of homework worksheet
(from www.izzit.org)
- Optional follow up: *Freedom's Sound*, a 12-minute video about the Estonia Piano Company: http://www.izzit.org/products/index.php?video=freedoms_sound
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit
- Computer with projection capability

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify economic events that led to the new policies of glasnost and perestroika.
- Differentiate between glasnost and perestroika.
- Explain why glasnost was more important than perestroika in terms of freedom.
- Hypothesize the fate of the Hirve Park demonstrators had the protest occurred in 1941.
- Analyze the role of free speech in the progress made by Estonians seeking liberation.

The Soviet Union vs. Human Nature

Aim / Essential Question

How did the Soviet Union require changing the nature of people?

Overview

Many people regard human beings as having a fixed nature, and base their thinking about right and wrong on that nature. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, sought to create a new society based on a “new Soviet man”—a “selfless, better kind” of person. For the Soviets, the question would be: How to create such a society? If they couldn’t, did that mean there was something wrong with human beings, or with the Soviets’ ideal? Are human beings, as we know them, incompatible with this “new man”?

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Soviet Propaganda Film
(from Disc One / Extra: Soviet Propaganda Film)
- Class set of handouts
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Explore the concept of human nature.
- Explain the Soviet view of human nature.
- Compare and contrast the actions of the Soviet state and its propaganda.
- Evaluate the attempt to remake human beings.

Freedom Calling

Aim / Essential Question

How are freedom and sovereignty common themes in the Declaration of Independence and Tiit Madisson's speech?

Overview

This lesson looks at the idea of sovereignty—freedom from external control—as it relates to the Declaration of Independence and Estonian freedom fighter Tiit Madisson's speech at Hirve Park in 1987. Both texts employ arguments to advance the cause of liberty. Tiit Madisson, as did Thomas Jefferson more than 200 years earlier, airs grievances to jump-start the march toward freedom.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapter 5)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class-set of the Declaration of Independence
(from www.izzit.org)
- Tiit Madisson's Hirve Park speech
(from www.izzit.org)
- Question-answer sheet handout
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Compare the texts of the Declaration of Independence and Tiit Madisson's Hirve Park speech.
- Examine how both Thomas Jefferson and Tiit Madisson lay out a litany of grievances to advance their argument for freedom and sovereignty.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the grievances laid out in both texts.

A 20th Century Primer to the Singing Revolution

Aim / Essential Question

How did historical and geopolitical events lead to the Singing Revolution?

Overview

Students will engage in a gallery walk/stations activity to gain an understanding of the social and political climate of Europe that led to the Cold War. Students will gather information on a worksheet, and create a visual representation of *The Singing Revolution* documentary.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapter 1)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Slide show presentation of activities
(from www.izzit.org)
- Printouts of slide show slides #9 – #17 for the gallery walk stations
- Class set of graphic organizers for gallery walk
(from www.izzit.org)
- Poster paper, colored pencils
- Computer with projection capability
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Three 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Use prior knowledge to understand the role of a nation's resources and history in affecting the present.
- Observe, collect, and analyze data using maps, photos, illustrations, and written primary/secondary source texts.
- Create a visual representation of the events and social factors that led to the Cold War.
- Present, evaluate, and discuss their projects, and those of their peers.

The Power of a Song

Aim / Essential Question

Why did the song, “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” have such a powerful impact on the Estonian people at the 1969 Song Festival?

Overview

The defiant singing of, “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” at the end of the 1969 Song Festival resonated powerfully with the Estonian audience, while it troubled the Soviet authorities. It also foreshadowed events that would occur two decades later, the events leading up to independence in 1991. In this lesson, we will examine the symbolic power of the song festival and the power of the song itself, which combined to make that day a signal moment in Estonian history. How did the singing of this specific song that day enliven the spirit of the Estonian people?

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 3 and 4)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class set of copies of the lyrics to, “Mu isamaa on minu arm.”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu / Printable Documents)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify and explain the symbolism surrounding the 1969 Song Festival.
- Analyze the lyrics of the song to understand its emotional impact on the audience.
- Hypothesize how the events of that day in 1969 could have turned out differently had the Soviets been even more repressive.

“Patience is a Weapon, Caution a Virtue”

Aim / Essential Question

How do we write a critical lens essay based on *The Singing Revolution*?

Overview

In this lesson we take a quotation, “Patience is a weapon; caution a virtue,” from this documentary and use it as a “lens” to analyze the historical events depicted. The task is to write a basic four-paragraph essay in which the students apply the quotation to the film. Particular attention will be paid to teaching an appropriate introduction for a critical lens essay.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (entire film)
(from Disc One / Play Film)
- Critical lens Worksheet
(from www.izzit.org)
- Viewing Guide for *The Singing Revolution*. This is a stand-alone essay, and should be written after the class has viewed the entire film in previous periods. (from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period after film is viewed in its entirety and the film is assigned as homework. Three 50-minute classes if the film is viewed in class (allowing two classes to view the 97-minute film).

Objectives

Students will:

- Evaluate and analyze the events depicted in the film.
- Identify events in the documentary that relate to the quotation.
- Write a critical essay based upon their analyses of the film.

The Psychology of Brutality

Aim / Essential Question

How do situational influences cause people to act brutally?

Overview

The Singing Revolution includes interviews and footage of people who experienced brutality and murder at the hands of Soviet guards and occupiers, which begs the question: What can drive a person to act so one-sidedly violent? This lesson will use situational influences as explored in the Stanford Prison Experiment to consider an answer.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution*, Disc 1, Scene 1
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- “Estonians Fleeing Stalin-Waiting to Return” video clip
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations)
- The Psychology of Brutality: Discussion Questions handout
(from www.izzit.org)
- Website on the Stanford Prison Experiment: <http://www.prisonexp.org/>
- Computers for student use (optional)
- Index cards for closing activity
- Extension Project List
(from www.izzit.org)
- Computer with projection capability and internet access
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze the perspectives of military occupiers.
- Investigate the role of situational influences on brutality.
- Compare and contrast the Stanford Prison Experiment with the Estonian occupation.

The Role of Free Speech in Music and the Arts

Aim / Essential Question

How does free speech play an important role in the creation of music, art, and culture?

Overview

Music and the arts continue to be a celebration of free speech, and have played an important role in cultural endurance. Students will be asked to consider how the free speech of Western culture helped the Estonian people to endure, and how gaining some free speech rights helped win Estonia's independence.

Materials & Technology

- Article: "SC attorney general won't let libraries have 'offensive' CDs" (from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of Free Speech in Music and the Arts: Discussion Questions handout (from www.izzit.org)
- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapter 5) (from Disc One / Chapters)
- "The Role of Finnish TV, Voice of America & Radio Free Europe" video clip (from Disc Two / Section 2: 1957-1986: The Stagnation Years)
- Class set of First Amendment Journal (from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify positive and negative ramifications of free speech.
- Evaluate the personal desire for freedom of speech, based on the video clips from *The Singing Revolution*.
- Discuss and debate the impact of free speech on Estonian independence.
- Reflect on the role of free speech in their own lives.

Conflict in Art: An Unlikely Muse

Aim / Essential Question

How does conflict inspire meaningful music and other lasting art?

Overview

During times of violent conflict and cultural oppression, music and art take on a deeper meaning and enduring significance. In this lesson, students will examine the role of conflict in art by comparing the “Star-Spangled Banner” and “Ilus maa/Beautiful Land” from *The Singing Revolution*.

Materials & Technology

- Class set of The Role of Conflict in Art question sheet (from www.izzit.org)
- “Ilus maa / Beautiful Land” video clip (from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu)
- Class set of the lyrics to Francis Scott Key’s *Star-Spangled Banner* (from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of the lyrics to *Ilus maa / Beautiful Land* (from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu / Printable Documents)
- Class set of 3-2-1 Summary Chart (from www.izzit.org)
- Guernica Painting Website: http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/guernica_nav/main_guerfrm.html
- Francis Scott Key Biography and Creation of the national anthem: <http://www.star-spangled-banner.info/who-wrote/>
- History of *The Singing Revolution*: <http://www.singingrevolution.com/cgi-local/content.cgi?pg=3&p=19>
- Computer with projection capability

- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Recognize and explain the role of conflict in various examples of art.
- Compare and contrast two patriotic songs inspired by conflict.
- Distinguish and list lyrics that relate to conflict.

Evaluating Political Economies: What Does Communism Look Like?

Aim / Essential Question

How does the concept/definition of communism match the reality of what communism is, according to those who have lived through it?

Overview

The concept of communism seems, to some, to be a workable theory. Life under communist rule, however, has led to meager living conditions, at best. Tiia-Ester Loitme explains the reality of communism, based on her own experiences during the Stalinist occupation of Estonia.

Materials & Technology

- “Tiia-Ester Loitme: Conductor, Deported at Age 14” video clip (from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations / Deportation Stories)
- Slide show presentation. The slides can also be printed and distributed to the students (from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of Definition of Communism handout (from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit
- Computer with projection capability

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Compare and contrast the perception and reality of communism.
- Analyze the reality of a communist command economy.
- Evaluate why the Stalinist communist system resorted to using force and intimidation to implement a system of shared wealth and a classless society.

The Meaning in the Music: Emotional Connections

Aim / Essential Question

How does music inspire emotional response from an audience?

Overview

Composers and artists often write to capture a certain emotional perspective. In classical and orchestral music, the conductor helps communicate these emotions to the musicians, and, in turn, the audience. This lesson will consider how music can convey emotion, as students examine a clip and lyrics from *The Singing Revolution*.

Materials & Technology

- A brief, teacher-selected recording of a song
(Optional: www.freeplaymusic.com)
- Song Festival Performance: “Ilus maa/Beautiful Land”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu)
- Class set of the lyrics of “Ilus maa/Beautiful Land”
(from Disc Three / Section 5: Song Festival / Laulupidu / Printable Documents)
- Class set of Word Association Chart and discussion questions for student groups (from www.izzit.org)
- Index cards or small paper slips for “ticket out the door”
- An audio player to play the teacher-selected recording
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Listen to several examples of music and associate emotional words and phrases.
- Compare associated emotional words with the lyrics of “Ilus Maa/ Beautiful Land.”
- Evaluate the benefits of major vs. minor keys, and the differences in the emotions each conveys.
- Discuss the emotions conveyed through gestures, facial expressions, and harmonies along with the music and lyrics.

Estonia and Hungary: A Case Study in the Soviet Experience

Aim / Essential Question

How do the experiences of Eastern European countries, such as Estonia and Hungary, help us understand the regional impact of the World War II occupations by the Axis powers?

Overview

Students will compare the experiences of the Soviet and Nazi Occupations of Estonia and Hungary by viewing film clips and conducting a Web Quest. They will select, investigate, and present a third country's comparative experience to the class.

Materials & Technology

- Slide show presentation of activities
(from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of Student handout # 1 – Notes and Cartoon Analysis
(from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of Your Teachable Moment Rubric
(from www.izzit.org)
- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1-3)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Hungarian Revolution video clip, Part I: Oct. 28, 1956
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations / Newsreels / 1956 Hungarian Revolution)
- Hungarian Revolution video clip, Summary: “Year in Review”
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations / Newsreels / 1956 Hungarian Revolution)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit
- Computer with projection capability and internet access

Lesson Time: Five 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Use prior knowledge to demonstrate understanding of region as a concept.
- Observe, collect, and compare information of two countries' World War II experiences.
- Conduct research using internet websites.
- Present findings to class.

The Estonian Barometer: A Geopolitical Study of Estonia Through Historical Maps

Aim / Essential Question

How has Estonia's geography impacted its geopolitical value throughout history?

Overview

Students will create a physiographic map of Eastern Europe, compare it to historical maps in a gallery walk, and answer guiding questions on a hand-out. They will then use their collected information to produce a timeline.

Materials & Technology

- Slide show presentation of activities
(from www.izzit.org)
- Printed color copy of slide show slides #8 - #19
- Class set of student handout
(from www.izzit.org)
- Estonia PowerPoint maps with text
(from Disc Three / Section 6: Maps & Chronologies, Filmmakers' Interview / Printable Documents)
- World atlas or textbook maps
- Computer with projection capability

Lesson Time: Four 50-minute class periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Create a map with both physical and political elements of Eastern Europe.
- Observe, collect, and compare information from historical maps.
- Evaluate the extent of a nation's liberty at various historical periods.
- Create a spectrum upon which to measure liberty.
- Write a summative essay bringing together the concepts of Estonian independence and geography.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: The Document of Occupation and Liberation

Aim / Essential Question

What role did the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact play in the history of Estonia? Or, how did a “non-aggression” pact between the Nazis and the Soviets lead to the occupation *and* liberation of Estonia?

Overview

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was an agreement between the Nazis and the Soviets that contained a secret protocol. This secret would be the basis for Soviet occupation in the Baltic States for the next 50 years. This lesson will show the progression of events that led to the occupation and eventual independence of the Baltic States.

Materials & Technology

- Class set of Bell Ringer / Do Now activity handout (from www.izzit.org)
- Class set of one map for homework assignment. (from Disc Three / Section 6: Maps & Chronologies, Filmmakers’ Interview / Printable Documents)
- “Comments on the Atlantic Charter/Yalta/ Hungarian Uprising” video clip (from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations)
- “Details on the Hirve Park Demonstration” video clip (from Disc Three / Section 4: 1987-1991: *The Singing Revolution*)
- “The Baltic Bloc-MRP Acknowledged in Moscow” video clip (from Disc Three / Section 4: 1987-1991: *The Singing Revolution*)
- Slide show presentation of activities (from www.izzit.org)
- Computer with projection capability

- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period
(Note: Videos will take up 21 minutes.)

Objectives

Students will:

- Create a timeline of events that will show the significance of the Nazi violation of the MRP.
- Analyze the legality of international agreements and their impact on other countries.
- Evaluate the status of Eastern Europe had the MRP been adhered to by the Germans.

What is a Hero? The Life of Alfred Käärmann

Aim / Essential Question

Is it worth it to be a hero?

Overview

This lesson, over the course of two days, takes us through the important events of Alfred Käärmann's life. We will be using it as a lens to understand the man himself and to understand the inner workings of the resistance organization he belonged to, the Forest Brothers. After finishing any autobiographical or biographical work, the reader or viewer is left to judge the quality of a life, and the students will be asked to do the same by answering the following essay question: Is it worth it to be a hero?

Materials & Technology

- “Forest Brother Alfred Käärmann Extended Story” video clip (from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations)
- Class set of the question sheet on the Alfred Käärmann interview (from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: Two 50-minute periods

Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the emergence of political resistance to Soviet authority.
- Analyze the resistance actions of the Forest Brothers.
- Evaluate the life of one member of the Forest Brothers, Alfred Käärmann.

Hitler's Nazism vs. Stalin's Communism: What's The Difference?

Aim / Essential Question

How different were Hitler's Nazism and Stalin's Communism?

Overview

It is often said that nazism was a right-wing ideological movement and communism a left-wing ideological movement. But how different were they in practice? This lesson takes a brief look at two of the major ideological movements of the 20th Century, and shows some similarities and differences between them, both in theory and in practice.

Materials & Technology

- “Deportation Stories” video clip
(from Disc Two / Section 1: 1939-1956: The Soviet & Nazi Occupations)
- Slide show presentation of activities
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit
- Computer with projection capability

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Distinguish between the stated intentions of ideological movements and governments, and their results.
- Analyze how both ideologies, while different, each led to mass murder.
- Compare the types of governments and the results of their rule.

Three Times the Appeal: Persuasive Techniques in Media

Aim / Essential Question

How are persuasive techniques enhanced by adding images and music to the message?

Overview

The Singing Revolution has a powerful beginning because it effectively combines logical, ethical, and emotional appeals through a written/narrated script, enhanced by pictures and video clips along with music. In this lesson, students will use *TSR* to examine levels of persuasive appeal enhanced by multiple modes of delivery.

Materials & Technology

- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapter 1)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Class set of the graphic organizer
(from www.izzit.org)
- Teacher's Guide for graphic organizer
(from www.izzit.org)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Define and classify the types of appeal and the modes of delivery.
- Identify and differentiate between examples of appeal and modes of delivery in the opening of *The Singing Revolution*.
- Evaluate the persuasiveness of the overall message of the film's opening, as well as another media example of the student's choosing.

The Pull of Propaganda

Aim / Essential Question

How did the Estonian people resist Soviet propaganda?

Overview

This lesson shows how even powerful Soviet propaganda could not break the spirit of the people of Estonia. The spirited Estonian culture of singing helped resist the Soviets' coercive literature and songs. The Estonian resistance was helped in part by the media of Western countries, such as Finland and the United States.

Materials & Technology

- “The Role of Finnish TV, Voice of America & Radio Free Europe” video clip
(from Disc Two / Section 2: 1957-1986: The Stagnation Years)
- *The Singing Revolution* (Chapters 1 and 4)
(from Disc One / Chapters)
- Any DVD-compatible player that will allow distinct chapters to be shown
- A television or video projection unit

Lesson Time: One 50-minute class period

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the role of propaganda as it relates to the Soviet Union and Estonia.
- Examine how the history of Estonia produced a people able to withstand the powerful propaganda of the Soviet Union.
- Analyze how Estonians resisted Soviet propaganda by singing their own songs at song festivals.
- Evaluate how Finnish television and *Voice of America* acted as pipelines of vital information for Estonians, who were denied news of the outside world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The lesson plans in this book were developed by izzit.org, a not-for-profit educational organization which provides teachers across the country with compelling educational DVDs and current events lessons that encourage students to think critically.

Izzit.org's daily current events service, (available to all U.S. teachers at www.izzit.org), was recently selected by the National Education Association as a national top 10 resource for teachers.

The team that developed these lesson plans was led by teacher Rob Schimenz, teacher associate for izzit.org, and Candy Mead, director of curriculum development for izzit.org.

Teachers on the writing and lesson plan development team include James Buchanan, William Burke, Adam Frank, Jason Griffith, and James Samuelson.

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MATERIALS AVAILABLE ON THE DVDS

Disc One

Full-length Film: English Language Version

Filmmakers' Commentary

Soviet Propaganda Film

Disc Two:

(Included in Collector's and Educational Versions Only)

SECTION 1: 1939-1956: THE SOVIET & NAZI OCCUPATIONS

VIDEO INTERVIEW COMMENTS & NEWSREELS

- Comments on the Atlantic Charter/Yalta/Hungarian Uprising (7:31)
- Estonians Fleeing Stalin–Waiting to Return (12:44)
- Deportation Stories:
 - Introduction: Mari-Ann Kelam (1:29)
 - Enn Sarv: Survivor Nazi Concentration Camp & Soviet Gulag (6:10)
 - Heiki Ahonen: Dissident, Parents Deported (3:15)
 - Heino Noor: Psychiatrist, Deported at Age 16 (8:15)
 - Tiia-Ester Loitme: Conductor, Deported at Age 14 (9:52)
 - Matti Päts: Deported Grandson of Estonian President (6:19)
- Forest Brother Alfred Käärman Extended Story (50:41)
- Soviet Propaganda Film (1:40)
- Newreels:
 - 1939 German Newsreel of Soviet/Nazi Joint Victory Parade in Poland (4:14)
 - 1945 Yalta Newsreel (7:17)
 - 1956 Hungarian Revolution
 - Part I: October 28, 1956 (1:05)
 - Part II: November 5, 1956 (0:59)
 - Part III: November 8, 1956 (0:42)
 - Summary: 1956 “Year in Review” (0:45)

PRINT DOCUMENTS

- 1920 Treaty of Tartu
- 1939 The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
- 1939 Transcripts of Soviet-Estonian “Negotiations” with Stalin
- 1940-55 Personal Memories: Fate of Estonian President Päts’ Family

- 1941 Executions in Kuessaare Castle
- 1941 Request for Names of Those Executed in 1940-41
- 1941 The Fate of Estonian Army Staff Officers
- 1942 The Fate of Professor Ants Piip
- 1945 Crossing the Atlantic Ocean in a 37-foot Boat

SECTION 2: 1957-1986: THE STAGNATION YEARS

VIDEO INTERVIEW COMMENTS

- The Role of Finnish TV, Voice of America & Radio Free Europe (6:20)
- Comments from Trivimi Velliste: The Acorn Book Club (8:52)
- Estonian Dissidents (6:48)
- Soviet Education & Youth (13:12)
- Estonian Independence Day (1:57)

PRINT DOCUMENTS

- 1973 Congressional Resolution of Non-Recognition
- 1986 Letter to the West from a Gulag Prisoner

SECTION 3: PRODUCTION STILLS & SELECT PHOTOS

Disc Three:

(Included in Collector's and Educational Versions Only)

SECTION 4: 1987-1991: THE SINGING REVOLUTION

VIDEO INTERVIEW COMMENTS

- Details on the 1987 Hirve Park Demonstration (10:53)
- Comments on the Popular Front (9:02)
- Tunne Kelam on the Citizens Registration (9:56)
- Comments on Gorbachev (6:54)
- Role of Culture Under Soviet Occupation (7:00)
- Comments on the Role of Vaino Väljas (31:16)
- The Baltic Bloc—MRP Acknowledged in Moscow (8:56)
- Comments on the August 1991 Coup (19:45)

PRINT DOCUMENTS

- 1987 Political Prisoners Languish under Gorbachev
- 1987 Open Letter to Gorbachev
- 1987 Demonstration at Hirve Park—All Speeches
- 1987 Hirve Park Eye Witness Account
- 1987 Interview with Lagle Parek
- 1988 Creation of the Estonian National Independence Party

- 1988 Firsthand Account of the Sovereignty Vote
- 1988 Speeches at the Estonian Cultural Union Meeting
- 1988 Memorandum to the United Nations
- 1989 Republic of Estonia Citizens Registration
- 1989 Citizens Committee Response to Criticism
- 1989 Independence Day Speech by Tunne Kelam
- 1989 Interview with Trivimi Velliste
- 1990 Explanation: Importance of Congress of Estonia Elections

SECTION 5: SONG FESTIVAL/LAULUPIDU

VIDEO INTERVIEW COMMENTS

- Importance of the Song Festival/Laulupidu (13:37)

2004 SONG FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES

- *Ilus maa/Beautiful Land* (7:28)
- Boys Choirs (2:56)

PRINT DOCUMENTS

- Song Lyrics/Translation *Mu isamaa on minu arm/Land of My Fathers, Land that I Love*
- Song Lyrics/Translation *Ilus maa/Beautiful Land*

SECTION 6: MAPS & CHRONOLOGIES, FILMMAKERS' INTERVIEW

VIDEO

- Interview with Filmmakers James & Maureen Tusty (7:37)
- Maps: Borders of Europe Over Time (0:45)

PRINT DOCUMENTS & MAPS

- 1986-1988 Chronology of Selected Estonian Events
- 1989 Chronology of Selected Estonian Events
- 1208-1994 Estonian History
- 15 Historical Maps of Europe from 180 AD-1997 (Wide View with Text)
- 15 Historical Maps of Europe from 180 AD-1997 (Wide View without Text)
- 15 Historical Maps of Estonia from 180 AD-1997 (Close Up View with Text)
- 15 Historical Maps of Estonia from 180 AD-1997 (Close Up View without Text)



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ESTONIA

ELAGU EESTI NSV 10. AASTAPÄEV!



**KÕIK NÕUKOGUDE EESTI
1950. A. ÜLDLAULUPEOLE!**

HOW CULTURE SAVED A NATION

*Taken from the introduction to the book **The Singing Revolution** by Preet Vesilind with James and Maureen Tusty*

Estonia sang its way to freedom.

No, Soviet leaders were not mesmerized by the music; patriotic songs did not stop their tanks. But the force of the human voice massed in song was the cultural catalyst that energized, awoke, and united the nation of Estonia. It was the political and cultural statement—intimate, imaginative, poetic—that brought all Estonians together and gave them courage to rebel.

They called it the Singing Revolution, the bloodless but powerful force that helped Estonia break from the crumbling Soviet Union.

Estonia had been occupied for more than 50 years by the Soviets. It had no army, no weapons. Estonians could not gain freedom through force. They had to do it their own way, with their spirit.

The Estonian nation, barely a million people, living on a flat glacial plain of the eastern Baltic Sea, has always been in the path of invaders and intruders. But only twice in recent centuries, the first time between the world wars, and now after the collapse of the Soviet Union, have they been free—a total of 35 years out of the 800 that have passed since the pagan tribes called Aestii were beset by the more powerful peoples of the Baltic rim.

The Soviet Union occupied Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in 1940, at the beginning of World War II. The Soviets were quickly driven out by the advancing German army, but surged back in 1944 to swallow the Baltic nations into their wrenching 70-year experiment in Communism—nothing less than the attempt to change the spirit and nature of man on earth. All three Baltic nations suffered and bled in this laboratory, all used the forces of music and culture to voice their resistance, but the film and this booklet are mostly confined to the story of Estonia.

In brief, here is what happened: Moscow stationed some 80,000 Soviet troops in Estonia, one soldier for every 12 citizens. Still, it took

more than a few decades to grind Estonia into a vassal state—one of the 15 Soviet Socialist Republics—economically and militarily subordinate to central powers in Moscow. Throughout the occupation, many Estonians kept the faith that they might once again be free. They rallied around their language and their music, and for years supported a partisan war by the Forest Brothers, guerrillas who slipped into the woods to resist the regime. The last of the Forest Brothers was not captured until 1978.

Less than ten years later, in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union began to collapse from economic



disaster, corruption, and an ideology grown hollow. As Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev's attempts to salvage the empire by offering perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (free speech) backfired, Estonians saw the new policies as an opportunity to set straight the historical record.

The incorporation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania was obviously illegal, political

activists in the Baltic States argued. Why? Because it was based on an unacknowledged secret protocol written into a 1939 non-aggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany—the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. According to the protocol, Germany and the Soviet Union would carve Eastern Europe into spheres of influence between them. The Baltic nations and Finland would go to the Soviets. Poland was to be divided between the two aggressors.

By the end of 1939 Soviet troops had already forced their way into garrisons in the Baltic states. In 1940 the Soviets forcibly annexed all three states into the USSR. But in 1941 Hitler double-crossed Stalin. He launched an attack on the Soviet Union. The Baltic nations were caught in the middle of the treachery. In 1945, when the war ended, Estonia remained occupied by the Soviets.

After nearly 50 years of Soviet occupation, when agitations for independence came in the late 1980s, the protestors pointed right back to the Soviet-Nazi pact. If the Kremlin were to acknowledge the existence of this protocol, they reasoned, it would be admitting that the Baltic States had no legal “marriage” with Moscow, but that these nations were forcibly abducted with the collusion of the world’s most heinous fascist regime. So the occupied nations had every right to ask for their freedom, and with no need for a legal “divorce.”

The Baltic countries had been morally supported with the firm stand taken in 1940 by the United States not to recognize the legality of the forceful annexation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

But politics were effective only if the Estonians had some other leverage. A nation of barely one million, burdened with half a million foreign settlers and 100,000 Soviet troops, could not threaten the Soviet Union militarily or economically, so it had to do it with the force of its culture. Estonia had always been a nation of singers. Its wealth of folk songs gave rhythm to village life and work, and its earnest anthems often invoked the longing for self-determination. Estonians had lived for centuries in servitude, and the themes of their



music were often grim: sorrow, slavery, soil, blood, birch forests, and sacrifice. But there was always hope in their hearts.

Early in their national awakening, about 140 years ago, Estonians established a history of mass song festivals, held when money and politics allowed—celebrations that would kindle and fortify the courage to express their love of language and nation, and their reluctance to be absorbed by anyone. The festivals were a nationwide phenomenon, as were similar festivals held in Latvia and Lithuania.

In Tallinn the massive modern song stage held some 30,000 singers and the outdoor amphitheater could accommodate as many as 300,000. Often, 30 percent of all Estonians would be there—at a single concert. During the Soviet years the festivals were forced to pay tribute to Communist icons and the solidarity of the Soviet peoples. Choirs from other parts of the vast empire would come and all would whip up a rousing tribute to Stalin or Lenin. To these mandatory performances Estonians would introduce patriotic songs disguised as love songs or folk music. An unofficial national anthem, by the popular choir director Gustav Ernesaks, established itself in 1947, and survived the Soviet occupation despite a serious attempt by officials to eliminate it in the 1960s.



By the late 1980s the nation was simmering. A movement of young historians was already defying Soviet authority in speeches that lay history bare under the cover of Gorbachev's policy of "glasnost," or "free speech." And the burden of protest songs had passed to rock-and-rollers, young men whose energized patriotic tunes blared from every radio.



Momentum built to a crescendo in the summer of 1988 when a rock concert in Tallinn's Old Town spilled into the Song Festival grounds and massive crowds gathered for six straight nights to lift arms, sway in unison, and sing patriotic songs. Emboldened, Estonians brought out forbidden blue-black-and-white national flags, some from attics and basements where they had been hidden since 1940. Shockingly, no one stopped them. For the finale of these "Night Song Festivals" more than 200,000 Estonians gathered.

This was the heart of "the Singing Revolution," a spontaneous, nonviolent, but powerful political movement that united Estonians with poetry and music. After that there was no backing up. Sedition hung in the wind, waiting to be denied.



ESTONIAN HISTORY IN BRIEF

Early Times

Estonians are among the world's oldest peoples, having continuously inhabited their land for thousands of years. Experts estimate that Estonians have lived on their land for between 5,000 and 8,000 years.

From approximately 6,000 B.C. until 1208 A.D., Estonians were independent, successfully fending off attacks from outsiders while building wealth. Their long coastline was a defensive advantage.

In 1201, German merchants and missionaries established a trading post in Riga, south of Estonia, in the land of the ethnically kindred Livonians. They noted the region's wealth and saw vast opportunities.

With the blessing of Pope Innocent III, the German bishop Albert assembled a mercenary army to conquer the region. "The Baltic Crusade" was launched on the pretext of bringing Christianity to the heathens.

Attacks on Estonia began in 1208, a time when Estonia's population was around 175,000. The invasion lasted nineteen years, with Estonia assaulted by German mercenaries from the south, Danes from the north, Swedes from the west, and Slavs from the east. Primarily farmers and fishermen who assembled militias only when needed, the Estonians were no match for four professional armies with superior weaponry.



“Baltic Germans”, the descendants of these original occupiers, controlled the land for centuries, even though Estonian rule passed from Germans and Danes to Swedes and Poles, and finally to the Russians in 1721. Throughout these occupations, the Baltic Germans formed the local ruling bureaucracy, while native Estonians essentially remained serfs.

By the 1860s, Estonia’s “National Awakening” had begun. This period marked a time of increased interest in Estonia’s language, literature, art, and music. During this decade, the national epic “Kalevipoeg” was published, and the poet and playwright Lydia Koidula penned numerous works honoring Estonia. The first song festival (Laulupidu) was held in 1869.

“The National Awakening” expressed an increasing desire among Estonians for national self-determination. That desire built until Estonia declared independence in 1918.

The War for Independence

On March 15, 1917, Czar Nikolai II abdicated the Russian throne amid the chaos created by Russia’s involvement in World War I and socialist revolutionary action at home. On October 23 of that year, twelve socialist revolutionaries calling themselves Bolsheviks met in Petrograd and decided forcibly to overthrow Russia’s Provisional Government.



They succeeded on November 8, 1917. Vladimir Lenin emerged as “Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars.”

An Estonian Diet (Maapäev) had been formed in Czar Nikolai’s absence. Seeing an opportunity in the Bolshevik takeover of



Russia, the Diet declared sovereignty over Estonia on November 28, 1917. The Bolsheviks quickly dissolved the Maapäev and drove pro-independence Estonians underground.

But a few months later, as the Bolsheviks retreated from the advancing German army, the underground Maapäev seized the opportunity on February 24, 1918 to formally declare Estonia's independence.

German troops entered Tallinn the next day, and by March 4, 1918 the German army occupied all of Estonia. However, Germany's defeat at the end of the World War I forced the German army to vacate Estonia in November of 1918.

The Russian Bolsheviks invaded again on November 28, 1918. A newly formed Estonian army fought back in a bloody conflict. For a short while, the Estonian army had to fight a war of independence on two fronts. The Baltic Germans, who did not want to give up their power in Estonia, recruited a mercenary army to fight for their interests. They attacked from the south on June 5, 1919, but were soundly defeated by Estonian and Latvian forces at a major battle in Võnnu on June 23, 1919.

Estonia eventually defeated the Russian army. On February 2, 1920, the Treaty of Tartu was signed between Estonia and Soviet Russia. The treaty recognized Estonia's independence and sovereignty and Russia

renounced in perpetuity all rights to the territory of Estonia.

Estonians won their independence at a heavy toll. Estonia suffered nearly twice the number of casualties that the United States did during its revolution—even though Estonia’s population was about a one-fourth that of the colonies in 1776.

First Independence

After establishing independence, Estonia was admitted to the League of Nations in 1921. Having been occupied by Czarist Russia for nearly two centuries, Estonia was initially poor compared to other Western nations, but the country quickly adapted. Estonia’s first constitution was roughly based on Switzerland’s. A six-day, forty-eight-hour work week became the norm. Unemployment never rose above 2% (1% being the average) during these years, and Estonia’s literacy rates ranked among the highest in the world, as they still do. Estonia exported goods around the world. Free speech and religious liberty were guaranteed by law.

Political stability was occasionally challenged by the Soviet Union. In 1924, a Moscow-instigated team of Communist “revolutionaries” attacked various government installations. Estonian government troops repelled the attacks in one day.



Estonia modernized quickly, emerging from two hundred years of Czarist rule to become a Western European-style democracy. By 1938, the Baltic countries were importing goods valued at \$293 million, with the value of exports being \$292 million. In the same year, Soviet Russia's imports totaled \$261 million and exports totaled \$250 million.

In just twenty years, Estonia had worked economic and political miracles. Its economy was roughly equivalent to that of its northern neighbor, Finland. In 1939, growth and prosperity seemed right around the corner for Estonia.

Soviet Occupation

On August 23, 1939, Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin signed a treaty called the "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact" (MRP). The MRP made Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union allies, and through secret protocols they divided Europe between the two empires. One week later, on September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland from the west; shortly thereafter, Stalin invaded Poland from the east. These invasions marked the start of World War II.

On September 24, 1939, Stalin issued an ultimatum, threatening to invade and occupy Estonia if it did not permit him to maintain military bases there. The carrot he offered was a promise to honor Estonia's sovereignty. He issued similar ultimatums to Latvia and Lithuania. Having seen the fate of Poland, the three Baltic countries saw no alternative but to yield.

In June of 1940, the Soviets broke their promises, took over the Estonian government, and killed or deported virtually all the country's political and business leaders. The same thing happened in Latvia and Lithuania. Stalin subsequently declared that the Baltic countries had "volunteered" to become part of the Soviet Union.



With other nations distracted by the war with Nazi Germany, no one came to the Baltics' assistance. Diplomatically, the United States condemned the attack and refused to recognize the legality of the Soviet Union's occupation and annexation of these countries. For the next fifty years, the U.S. and much of the Western World, never recognized the legality of the Soviet occupation of Estonia.

The Soviet policy of "Russification", implemented soon after the occupation, amounted to cultural genocide. It forbade the Estonian flag, imprisoned resisters, and made Russian the official language of the country. Over time, hundreds of thousands of Russian workers were brought in to dilute the ethnic Estonian population.

Estonians became serfs to their masters in Moscow. Within six years of the first Soviet troops arriving in Estonia, the country lost about 25% of its population to execution, imprisonment, deportation, and escape.

The occupation lasted fifty long years. Estonians became second-class citizens in their own country. Farms were collectivized and ruined, and the prosperity built up during independence was destroyed. Arrest and deportation remained a constant threat.

The Singing Revolution

Most people don't think about singing when thinking about revolutions. But in Estonia song was the weapon of choice when, between 1987 and 1991, Estonians wanted to end the decades of Soviet occupation.

The Singing Revolution is the name given to the step-by-step process that led to the reestablishment of Estonian independence in 1991. This was a non-violent revolution that overthrew a very violent occupation.

It was called the Singing Revolution because of the role singing played in the protests of the mid-1980s. But singing had always been a major unifying force for Estonians while they endured fifty years of Soviet rule.

In 1947, during the first song festival (Laulupidu) held after the Soviet occupation, Gustav Ernesaks wrote music set to the lyrics of a century-old national poem written by Lydia Koidula, *Mu isamaa on minu arm* (Land of My Fathers, Land That I Love). This song miraculously

slipped by the Soviet censors, and for the next fifty years it became a musical statement of every Estonian's desire for freedom.

But the song was not allowed on the song festival program in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, Estonians sporadically sang the song defying Soviet wishes, and by 1965 it was again included in the song festival program. At the hundredth anniversary of the song festival in 1969, the choirs on stage and the audience as well started singing the song a second time in the face of stern Soviet orders to leave the stage. No one did. The Soviets ordered a military band to play and drown out the singers. But a hundred instruments is no match for over a hundred thousand singers. The song was sung repeatedly in the face of authorities. There was nothing the Soviets could do but invite the composer, Gustav Ernesaks, on stage to conduct the choir for yet another encore and pretend they intended to allow this all along.

When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Estonians began testing his policies of perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (free speech) to see how far they could go. The first test was in 1986, when Estonians protested a plan to build phosphorite mines throughout the country.



The environmental issue provided a relatively safe means of testing whether people could truly speak openly without Soviet permission. Protestors did not suffer significant repercussions, and the mining project was eventually stopped. The first test was a success. A short while later, a more radical demonstration in Tallinn's Hirve Park openly spoke of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (the secret agreement between Hitler and Stalin that led to the Soviet invasion of Estonia in 1939–40). The KGB observed this event, names were taken, leaders were harassed, but, much to the demonstrators' surprise, no one was arrested.

It was illegal to own an Estonian flag during the Soviet years. Estonians next tested this law at a demonstration in 1988 by flying three separate blue, black, and white banners that effectively became the flag when flown side by side.

In the mid-1980s, six new rock songs became rallying cries for independence. These songs were repeatedly sung in large public gatherings. Local Soviet authorities wanted to ban them, but weren't sure what to do in light of glasnost.

Momentum and courage grew. The Estonians calculated that as long as they shed no blood, Gorbachev wouldn't be able to send in tanks to squash demonstrations. Such blatant censorship would be an international embarrassment to his carefully cultivated image. So people pushed Moscow as far as they could, taking great care to stay non-violent.

In this sense, the Singing Revolution was a strategically non-violent movement.

But there were several different political approaches to gaining independence. These largely fell into three organized groups: The Popular Front, The Estonian National Independence Party, and The Heritage Society. Each group had a different philosophy about how to gain freedom...even how to define freedom.

Many Estonians supported more than one of these organizations; some supported all three. Others felt more loyal to one or the other. There was significant tension among some of the leaders. Those who moved more cautiously felt that the "radicals" would bring Soviet retribution on Estonia, as had happened in Hungary in 1956 and in

Czechoslovakia in 1968; the “radicals” felt that working within the Communist system betrayed their country and dishonored those who had died and suffered under Soviet rule.

Matters came to a head in 1991 when Moscow hard-liners staged a coup d'état and placed Gorbachev under house arrest. As troops rolled into Estonia to quell any independence-minded thinking, Estonians decided to escalate their bid for freedom. Unarmed people faced down soldiers and tanks, while political leaders assembled to reaffirm Estonia's independence.

The fifty-year struggle was about to be won.

Acknowledgment: Some of the early history presented here draws from Ago Koeru's "An Introduction to Estonia".



ESTONIAN MUSIC

Music has been central to Estonian culture for centuries. Although Estonia is one of the smallest countries in the world, it nonetheless has one of the largest collections of folk songs.

But Estonians have historically used music as a political weapon as well. It is said that song was used in protest of the German invaders of the 13th century, and also in resistance to the Russian occupation under Peter the Great in the 18th century.

In the 19th century, Estonians started a song festival tradition called *Laulupidu*, where choirs from around the country come together to sing for days. Some 25,000 to 30,000 people sing on stage at the same time. But the founding of *Laulupidu* was as much an expression of the desire for self-determination and independence as about song.

In the late 1980s music was once again used as a unifying force when hundreds of thousands gathered to sing forbidden Estonian songs, demanding their right for self-determination from a brutal Soviet occupier.

To truly understand Estonia, one must understand Estonian music.

Estonian Folk Music

Estonia's traditional folk song form is called *regilaul*. Sung primarily by women, *regilaul* is comprised of eight-syllable verses sung by a primary singer and typically repeated by a secondary singer or group of singers. These songs often focus on work, ballads, or legends. They are marked by alliteration, parallelism, and rich poetic and mythic language. Rhyme is typically not used.

In the 1860s, Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald used *regilaul* as the basis for the national epic poem “*Kalevipoeg*”. But by the twentieth century, due to the infusion of western European musical forms, *regilaul* had nearly disappeared from Estonia, with vibrant traditions

existing only in Setumaa and Kihnu. In the late twentieth century, musician and scholar Veljo Tormis led the movement to rediscover and preserve regilaul for future generations.

Laulupidu

Since 1869, Estonians have held massive song festivals where more than 30,000 people have taken the stage to sing. Choirs and singers have to audition to participate, and the end result is stunning to see and hear.

The first song festival was held as a national unification event while Estonia was under Czarist rule. 1869 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the elimination of serfdom in Estonia.

Mu isamaa on minu arm

Mu isamaa on minu arm (*Land of my Fathers, Land that I Love*) was arguably the most important Estonian song during the Soviet occupation. Its lyrics come from a poem written during the “National Awakening” by poet Lydia Koidula. The poem was set to music for the first song festival (Laulupidu) in 1869.

The importance of the lyrics was magnified when Gustav Ernesaks set them to new music in 1947 for the first song festival allowed under Stalinist rule. The song slipped by the Soviet censors, and after two days of singing compulsory Russian songs glorifying Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, Estonians all sang *Mu isamaa on minu arm* in their native tongue, with the common and unspoken knowledge that it expressed hope for a free Estonia.

But the song was not allowed on the song festival program in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, Estonians sporadically sang the song defying Soviet wishes, and by 1965 it was again included in the song festival program. At the hundredth anniversary of the song festival in 1969, the choirs on stage and the audience as well started singing the song a second time in the face of stern Soviet orders to leave the stage. No one did. The Soviets ordered a military band to play and drown out the singers. But a hundred instruments is no match for over a hundred

thousand singers. The song was sung repeatedly in the face of authorities. There was nothing the Soviets could do but invite the composer on stage to conduct the choir for yet another encore and pretend they intended to allow this all along.

Mu isamaa on minu arm was never forbidden again. It is truly the song that united Estonia during its long occupation.

MU ISAMAA ON MINU ARM

ESTONIAN

Mu isamaa on minu arm,
kell' südant annud ma,
sull' laulan ma, mu ülem õnn,

mu õitsev Eestimaa.
sull' laulan ma, mu ülem õnn,

mu õitsev Eestimaa.
Su valu südames mul keeb,
su õnn ja rõõm mind rõõmsaks
teeb,
su õnn ja rõõm mind rõõmsaks
teeb,
mu isamaa.
mu isamaa.

Mu isamaa on minu arm,
ei teda jäta ma,
ja peaksin sada surma ma
ta pärast surema.
ja peaksin sada surma ma
ta pärast surema.
Kas laimab võõra kadedus
sa siiski elad südames,

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I've given my heart to her,
I sing to you, my supreme
happiness,
My flourishing Estonia!
I sing to you, my supreme
happiness,
My flourishing Estonia!
Your pain boils in my heart,
Your happiness and joy make me
happy too!
Your happiness and joy make me
happy too!
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers!

Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I can't abandon her.
For her a hundred times
I shall give my life
For her a hundred times
I shall give my life
Envy makes strangers slander you
You are still alive in my heart

sa siiski elad südames,
mu isamaa.
mu isamaa.
Mu isamaa on minu arm,
ja tahan puhata,
su rüppe heidan unele

Mu püha Eestimaa.
su rüppe heidan unele

mu püha Eestimaa.
Su linnud und mull' laulavad,
mu põrmust lilled õitsetad,
mu põrmust lilled õitsetad,
mu isamaa.
mu isamaa.

You are still alive in my heart
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers!
Land of my fathers, land that I love,
I want to have a rest.
I will lie down in your lap for
eternal sleep
My holy Estonia
I will lie down in your lap for
eternal sleep
My holy Estonia
Your birds are singing me to sleep
Flowers are blooming from me
Flowers are blooming from me
Land of my fathers.
Land of my fathers.



THE SINGING REVOLUTION

www.singingrevolution.com

The Baltic Experience

The Singing Revolution tells the story of Estonia's non-violent struggle for freedom from Soviet occupation. Estonia's neighboring Baltic countries, Latvia and Lithuania, unfortunately experienced similar recent histories.

In each country, Josef Stalin sent in the Red Army to subjugate the people and occupy the nation. In each country, the Soviets instituted a reign of terror, deporting masses of citizens to slave labor camps in Siberia, while mercilessly killing any who resisted. As in Estonia, native Latvians and Lithuanians never wanted or accepted the Soviet annexation of their homeland. And by the late 1980s, several populist groups had sprung up in each country, increasingly bold in their attempts to rid their nation of the Kremlin's stranglehold.

At times the three nations coordinated on certain strategic events and protests, supporting each other's right to reclaim independence. When Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania coordinated their political efforts in Moscow in the late 1980s they became known as "The Baltic Bloc"...which was not a term of endearment to those in Soviet power. We wish to acknowledge the very similar struggle fought by Estonia's Latvian and Lithuanian neighbors.

This particular project tells the story of the Estonian people, and through them the greater stories of humankind's ability to overcome oppression through intelligent non-violent means, and the indomitable human drive for freedom and self-determination.



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