RESOURCES

Update is a quarterly newsletter for K-12 teachers published by the four area studies centers at the University of Illinois. The fall ’99 issue was on agriculture. This second issue of the year is a review of curricular materials and resources on the respective regions. The remaining issues for the year will explore the topics of elections and folk art. We encourage you to photocopy and share the Update with your colleagues and students. We are also happy to announce that the Update will be available on the Internet, starting with this issue, at: http://www.ips.uiuc.edu/io/default.html We appreciate your support of the newsletter and welcome any comments and suggestions. If you would like to get on the mailing list, you can write to any of the four centers, or contact Lynda Park by e-mail at lypark@uiuc.edu

RESOURCES ON RUSSIA, EURASIA AND EASTERN EUROPE
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The Russian and East European Center is a National Resource Center, committed to providing information and services to K-12 teachers. If you are interested in the Center’s workshops, onsite presentations or curricular materials, please contact the Center or check its webpage. The webpage features a special section for K-12 teachers, which includes an extensive annotated bibliography of resources, information on the Center’s video library, an annotated and linked list of relevant web sites, and much more.

BOOKS


Books in this series have two-page entries on basic geography and cultural topics such as food, work, home and school. The print is large to accommodate young readers and most pages have no more than two sentences of text with appealing photographs. However, more attention should have been paid to the text and captions because some egregious errors occur in all three.


In a slender volume, short introductions to the country are followed by three chapters on special days, religious holidays and/or national days of celebration with simple recipes. The idea for the books is an appealing one.
Unfortunately, the book is riddled with errors and mistaken cultural stereotypes.


Nine well-researched chapters on the life of Peter the Great and the significance of his reign form the bulk of the book. The second section focuses on everyday life in Tsarist Russia. Much of the material, such as the description of the interior of peasant homes, will intrigue young readers. However, at times too much emphasis is given to the exotic and brutal in Russian life, especially in the chapter on food and drink, which emphasizes the misuse of alcohol by Russians. However, Greenblatt’s writing is graceful and lively and should be engaging for middle school readers.


About half of the chapters are on social studies topics; the others focus on the people, lifestyles, and the arts. In general, the text is well-written; however, in some places readers will probably get bogged down by too many names or details. For younger readers, *Estonia* (Lerner, 1992) is a better choice.


In both volumes, introductory chapters on history are followed by individual sections on government, religion, economy, culture, cities and daily life. Present problems and future solutions are discussed in the concluding chapter. Otfinoski spends less time describing the transition period; instead he includes a chapter on cities that reads like an upbeat travel guide. This may confuse the reader because its optimism seems to clash with information elsewhere about economic difficulties. There are also a few serious internal contradictions, but the book does have sparks of good writing.


Unlike Russia’s other museums, such as the Hermitage in St. Petersburg or the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg is devoted exclusively to Russian art, and hence offers the most complete picture of the nation’s art history. This book has large, color illustrations of hundreds of works, from the 10th century to the present, housed in the Russian Museum. Brief introductions describing the history of the museum and the different periods in art and their most well-known artists provide informative but unintimidating background reading for students.


Aspiring ballerinas may devour much of this book or at least its illustrations and photographs, but for most readers, it will be useful mainly as a reference. While the book is informative and is well illustrated, the sheer number of names introduced in the text may limit its usefulness to a narrow group of readers. However, students of Russian/Soviet art forms may find the book of great interest because they will see parallels between the development of ballet and that of other arts.

VIDEOS


This thought-provoking series on Kosovo raises important questions about war and conflict at the end of the twentieth century. In *The Environmental Impact of War*, long and short-term damage resulting from defoliation chemicals, the bombing of chemical plants, the use of land mines and other tactics used in Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the Balkans by the U.S. and other countries is investigated. The program is not saying that the use of these means is always wrong. Nonetheless, the question of our moral responsibility is raised.

*Casualty Phobia* examines media coverage of the wars in Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and Kosovo and its effect on public opinion. It examines the U.S. military’s decision in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo to restrict the press in order to prevent the dissemination of images that might have an adverse effect. It also questions NATO’s decision and announcement that it...
would not use ground troops and the effect of such a decision on non-NATO civilian casualties. This theme recurs in *The Limits of Air Power* in which retired military strategists argue for the need of concerted efforts by all the branches of the military. While air power can destroy buildings and bridges, it is not useful in attacking entrenched ground troops.

There is some graphic footage of war carnage, but its use is not gratuitous. The videos are appropriate for classes studying many different issues. In addition, teachers have access to the transcripts and expanded interviews with political and military figures for each video on the website of the Center for Defense Information at: http://www.cdi.org/adm/schedule

**ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS**


This excellent essay discusses the difficult topic of the post-Soviet Russian economy in a language that is relatively easy to understand. Aslund argues that the financial crisis of August 1998 could be a turning point for a better economic future in Russia because it diminished the dominance of the state and the financial oligarchs.


This article gives a clear account of the economic, political, and environmental difficulties facing the people and nation of Azerbaijan, a country confronted with the Armenian conflict, corruption, and supposedly rich oil reserves in the Caspian which have not yet lived up to expectations.


Sergei Khrushchev, son of Nikita Khrushchev, provides an insider’s view of the events of the Cold War and describes what his father was thinking during the various turning points in history, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. On a side note, he recently became a U.S. citizen.


“Thirty years ago, the Soviets lost the race to the moon. They might have won—if only they had acted like good communists.” Keller’s article describes the personalities, such as chief aerospace designer Sergei Korolev, and technological developments and setbacks on the Soviet side of the space race, revealing internal squabbling and only a half-hearted commitment by officials to pull off a manned moon landing before the United States. This fascinating article makes good use of interviews with living participants of the Soviet space program, memoirs and biographies, and previously classified files.


“The United States has made Russia a geopolitical offer that it can neither accept nor refuse: a subordinate role in an American-dominated Eurasian security system.” Lieven discusses the largely conflicting interests of Russian and U.S. foreign policies, arguing that the U.S. has elicited numerous concessions from Russia while providing little in return. The October issue of *Current History* is on Russia.


Rutland writes that the events of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe indeed mark “a victory for the individual over the state,” but ten years later the true significance of communism’s fall is still not clear. Ethnic revanchism, economic inequality both within and between nations, and even the growth of consumer capitalism in some countries raise many questions about 1989’s enduring outcomes.

**USEFUL WEBSITES**

World Wide News Online
http://www.worldwidewwnews.com/wwno.htm

You can access newspapers from all over the world through this website. Search by country.

The Library of Congress Country Studies
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/
A continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. This online series presently contains studies of 100 countries.

**Diana's Gourmet Corner: Links to International Recipes**
http://titan.glo.be/~gi30255/all.htm

Top off your world culture units with food from any or all of the countries your classes have studied! This site has links to recipes of dishes eaten in the various countries of the world, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

**Forced Labor Camps: Online Exhibition**
http://www.osa.ceu.hu/gulag/index.htm

A website on the Gulag, established by Open Society Archives, with pictures, historical information, and links to related sites.

**Washington Post Timeline: Yeltsin’s Reforms and Economic Turmoil**

A nice, concise chronology, with linked articles, of Boris Yeltsin's political career and policy decisions since 1985.

**Brama Gateway Ukraine**
http://www.brama.com/

**The Ukrainian Information Project**
http://www.uazone.net/

These are two good sites to get information about Ukraine. Brama is a major search engine on Ukraine. UA Zone has a factbook on Ukraine and an excellent photo gallery.

**Ukrainian Icon Gallery**
http://www.ugkc.lviv.ua/Gallery/MainHall.html

This site has thumbnails and larger images of 25 Ukrainian icons from the 11th to 16th centuries. A paragraph explaining the subject and the work’s origins accompanies each icon.

**Virtual Guide to Belarus**

**Belarusian Heritage**
http://jurix.jura.uni-sb.de/~serko/heritage/heritage.html

These web sites have information about Belarusian history and culture, towns and cities, architecture, famous Belarusians, and more. They feature many nice images.

**Eesti Rahva Muuseum / The Estonian National Museum**
http://www.erm.ee/

Designed to be a complete treasury of Estonian cultural heritage, the museum in Tartu primarily features ethnographical objects. The web site, available in Estonian and English, includes some nice "virtual exhibitions."

**The American Institute of Polish Culture**
http://www.ampolinstitute.org/

Established in 1972, the web site features a nice "history of Poland" page and links to other Polish culture sites.

**Chechen Republic Online**
http://www.amina.com/

Monitored by the government of the Chechen Republic, this web site offers articles about current news, the history of Chechnya, people, images, maps, and more.

**Welcome to Uzbekistan**
http://www.uznet.net/frame2.html

The culture page of the official Uzbekistan webpage with good and interesting images, examples of folk art, etc. In English and Uzbek.

**PROGRAM FOR TEACHERS**

The American Councils for International Education ACTR/ACCELS has several teacher exchange programs with institutions in eastern Europe, Russia, and Eurasia. American Councils programs include academic exchange, professional training, institution building, research, materials development, technical assistance, and consulting. Among these programs are the Armenian School Connectivity Project, the High School Academic Partnership Exchange Program, the Secondary School Excellence Program, the United States-NIS Awards for Excellence in Teaching project development program, and the Partners in Education Program. For more information, visit their web site at http://www.actr.org or contact: The American Councils ACTR/ACCELS, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036. tel: 202-833-7522. fax: 202-833-7523. email: general@actr