NEW RESOURCES ON RUSSIA, EURASIA, AND EASTERN EUROPE

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 lending library, an annotated and linked list of relevant web sites, and more.

BOOKS


This travelogue of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk and their environs is presented in the form of postcards from a young traveler to a friend. The text often reads like an uninspired travel guide with too many lists of objects in museums, products produced by industries, etc. More attractive, engaging and informative are Deborah Kent’s **Moscow** (see below) and **St. Petersburg** (Children’s Press, 1997).

Nickles, Greg. **Russia: The Land (vol. 1); The People (vol. 2); The Culture (vol. 3).** “The Lands, Peoples, and Culture” series. Crabtree Publishing Co., 2000. Gr. 4-6.

In each volume, a well-chosen format of short chapters with many photographs or illustrations introduces the young reader to Russia. A few topics, such as basic history and information about peoples, are covered in each book. The Land focuses on the country’s basic geography and concludes with a chapter on Russians in space. The history section in The People has some misleading oversimplifications that mar an otherwise useful text with good information on daily life. Topics ranging from religious holidays to the circus are presented in The Culture, which does not neglect the minority ethnic groups in Russia.


**Moscow** is an attractive book with superb visuals ranging from illustrations of historical events to photographs of contemporary Moscow. Graceful, lively, and informative writing that truly makes this book outstanding. The many dimensions of Moscow are broken down into easily digestible sections on its landmarks, geography, history, and cultural life. It is a fine complement to **St. Petersburg** (Children’s Press, 1997) by the same author.


This book is divided into twelve units focusing on topics of geographic, historic, and cultural interest. Although they are subdivided into shorter themes, too many of the units are densely packed with factual details, especially the sections on geography and history, which need to be given a broader context to make them more palatable for the reader. **Latvia** is most useful as a reference book to identify places, events and people. For middle
school students Latvia (Lerner, 1992) remains a better choice.


The subject of the book is Edi Fejzullahu, a twelve year old boy from Kosovo, and his family who were living in a refugee camp in Macedonia when the author and a photographer spent time with them. A very short introduction gives some background on the conflict in Kosovo, but includes some erroneous statements. Although the writing is clear, it lacks an immediacy that the story warrants. Nonetheless, the author and photographer are to be commended for bringing the topic of refugees to the attention of middle school students.


*Its title accurately describes this survey of the Soviet Union from its origins to its breakup. There is a strong emphasis on the political history of the USSR and its relations with the rest of the world. The writing generally is clear. The section of Michael Kort’s *Russia* (Facts on File, 1998) on the history of the Soviet Union is a better read.*


*Theories of the origins of the Cold War and its key events are clearly sketched in the opening chapter. Next is an examination of the arms race, the development of weapons systems and the agreements to reduce nuclear arsenals. He also pays attention to the cost of the arms race for both sides. He is on less firm ground in the next three chapters entitled “Communism’s Basic Flaw,” “Soviet Dissent,” and “Glasnost and Perestroika.” In this half of the book he tries to cover too many topics results in oversimplifications. On the other hand, the final section under the heading, “War Is No Option,” is balanced and eloquent.*


Articles or excerpts written between 1996 and 1999 are divided into four chapters dealing with sources of Russia’s domestic problems, prospects for democracy, the danger of Russia as a threat to the rest of the world, and U.S. foreign policy toward that country. Each article has a short introduction that includes three questions for the reader to consider, and each section concludes with a bibliography. Further discussion questions, an annotated compilation of organizations concerned with these issues, and a two-page bibliography of books conclude the volume and would be very useful to anyone teaching about Russia. However, most of the articles assume a working knowledge of recent Soviet and Russian history, and there is no glossary to help the reader.


*This excellent reference book contains more than 300 pages of alphabetically organized entries on the Stalinist period on topics related to WWII, broad subjects such as education, religion, and science, in addition to policies (e.g., socialist realism) and special terms of that era (e.g., NKVD). The entries are cross-referenced and frequently enlivened with well-selected quotes that convey a sense of the times.*

**CURRICULUM UNITS**

*Common People, Uncommon Strength: Teaching the Rest of the Story: Events of the Common People of Russia*. Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Kansas, 1998. Gr. 5-12.

*This unit examines the historical events that affected the Russian common people, or narod. It is divided into three sections corresponding with the medieval, imperial, and Soviet periods. Each section includes a timeline, additional resources (bibliography, maps) and a glossary. For more information, contact the Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Kansas, at (785) 864-4236; crees@ukans.edu*

*Polishing the Mirror: A Teaching Unit on Central and Inner Eurasia*. Center for Middle Eastern and
This unit brings together text, activities, visuals and resources on Inner Eurasia for use by classroom teachers. The unit as lesson plans on physical and human geography, religion, history, culture and the arts. Each section of the unit contains materials, learning objectives, class guidelines, product suggestion and assessment criteria. Included at the end are handouts, "Teacher Resources," and 49 color slides. To order a copy, contact the Center for Middle Eastern and North African Studies, University of Michigan, at (734) 764-0350; cmenas@umich.edu

ARTICLES FROM PERIODICALS

Boulat, Alexandra. “Eyewitness Kosovo,” National Geographic, February 2000. During the grim months before NATO intervened in Kosovo, a French photographer witnessed the anguish and upheaval of the Balkans’ recurring bloodbath.


Vesilind, Pritt J. “Albanians: A People Undone,” National Geographic, February 2000. Scattered from the Balkans to the Bronx, Albanians hold fast to what they have left—an impoverished Eastern European homeland and deep ethnic pride.

March/April 2000 issue of Foreign Affairs has the following three articles on Russia: Rajan Menon and Graham Fuller, “Russia's Ruinous Chechen War”; Lee Wolosky, “Putin's Plutocrat Problem”; Sam Nunn and Adam Stulberg, “The Many Faces of Modern Russia.”


VIDEOS

Yanks for Stalin. History Channel Production, 1999. 50 min. Gr. 9-12.

In the 1930s, when the US was wracked by the Great Depression, several prominent Americans played crucial roles in helping Stalin industrialize the Soviet Union. This film looks at the little known contributions of Armand Hammer, John Scott, Henry Ford, and Victor and Walter Reuther to help found the Russian car and steel industries. Students may be intrigued by the US connection to Stalinist Russia.

The Center for Defense Information distributes short educational films on timely issues. The contents of these videos are usually excellent and thought-provoking. Descriptions of two such videos are listed below. For more information about price and availability of these and other programs, visit the website of the Center for Defense Information at: http://www.cdi.org/adm/schedule


This video examines why the US’s efforts to work with post-Soviet Russia have been generally bungled and asks if there are paths to different relationship with that would be more advantageous and fruitful.

America’s Impact on Russia. 1998. Gr. 9-12.

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union were enemies. When the USSR fell apart in 1991 there was a honeymoon in US-Russia relations. But what has been the impact of America on Russian in recent years? How do Russians feel about the U.S. now? The video addresses these questions.
WEBSITES
Peace Corps World Wide Schools Education Resources
The Peace Corps site has lesson plans (3-5, 6-9, 10-12), teacher guides, and opportunities to have volunteer speakers come to the classroom. Check out the lesson plans on Kyrgyzstan.

http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/ The Hermitage Museum has a very attractive web site (in Russian or English), with a virtual tour and enough reading material to keep you busy for quite a while. A nice technological innovation allows you to zoom in for an even closer look at some of the pieces.

http://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/mainpage.html Alexander Palace At this site, created by Bob Atchison, take a tour of Russian palaces and access biographies, diaries and Romanov memorabilia.


http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mft/html/mfsplash.html Meeting of Frontiers This web site is a bilingual, multimedia English-Russian digital library that tells the story of the American exploration and settlement of the West, the parallel Russian exploration and settlement of Siberia and the Russian Far East, and the meeting of the Russian-American frontier in Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. It includes more than 2,500 items, comprising some 70,000 images, from the Library of Congress rare book, manuscript, map, film and sound recording collections.

http://www.unesco.org/webworld/asicent/capmem.html “The Virtual Memory of Central Asia” - A UNESCO site with maps, texts, images, and sounds presenting the cultures of all the Central Asian countries.

CURRICULUM MATERIALS at REEC

Russia in Transition: Lesson Plans on Russian Government, Politics, and US-Russian Relations.

2000. The three lesson plans in this curriculum unit covers the following topics: “Comparing US and Russian Governments,” “Russian Political Parties,” and “American-Russian Relations: Cold War II?” Each lesson has classroom activities and suggestions for text and multimedia supplemental materials.

Curriculum Workshop on Russian Politics and the 2000 Russian Presidential Election. Video. 2000. Originally aired on the Illinois Satellite Network, the program provides information about the Russian government structure and the election process for the State Duma and presidency and offers curricular suggestions for incorporating such material into secondary and post-secondary instruction. Presenters are Lynda Park (REEC Assistant Director), Professor Carol Leff (Political Science, University of Illinois), and Professor Michael McFaul (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Political Science, Stanford University).


The Russian and East European Center at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, invites secondary and post-secondary instructors to take part in this five-day workshop to develop a more effective and interactive curriculum in Russian and Balkan studies.

REEC will provide free lodging for the participants. Some travel assistance may be available.

For more information, please contact Lynda Park at 217-333-6022 or lypark@uiuc.edu; www.reec.uiuc.edu