

OPENING THE RED DOOR

Curriculum Guides – Discussion Questions



LEADER'S GUIDE

Evaluating the Response of Western Governments and Advisors

1. When you read about the remarkable changes in the USSR under Gorbachev, how do you explain these revolutionary changes after seventy years of top-down, autocratic leadership by the Communist Party?
 - pp. 1-7 – Discussion of Gorbachev's reforms
 - pp. 62-63 – Meeting with Gorbachev – his insights
 - pp. 72-75 – Pressures from Russian writers/critics
2. The author is critical of western analyses of developments that lead to the collapse of the USSR (pp. 69-77)? What are your thoughts on this?
3. The secular mindset of western scholars and policy analysts lead to “blind spots” that resulted in mistaken recommendations offered to Russian reformers, according to the author? What were these “blind spots”?
 - pp. 75-77 – The wrong cures
4. Do you agree that the failure of both Russian reformers and western advisors to recognize the potential role of churches, especially the Russian Orthodox Church, proved to be costly mistake? What difference might this have made?
 - pp. 238-239 – Comprehensive network of RO churches ignored
5. How do you explain the tone-deafness of the Russian reformers and western analysts to the cries of the Russian people? Is it a surprise to you that the average Russian who lived through the 1990s, following the collapse of the USSR, viewed democracy advocated by the West as the source of their poverty?
 - pp. 76-77 – Rebuilding from the rubble of Communism

- p. 145 – Democracy – a “dirty word”
6. What did some of the leading western advisors say about the advice they offered to the Russian government? Is the “servant posture” proposed by the author unrealistic for government advisors from the West?
- pp. 224-226 – Western experts speak up
 - pp. 75-77 – “Servant posture” needed
7. What lessons can we learn from this experience in Russia? Planting democracy is not an easy task, especially in a country where traditional cultural patterns pose serious obstacles. Any ideas about how to deal with this structural challenge?
- pp. 75-77 – The challenge of exporting democracy
 - pp. 235-241 – Are changes in traditional culture possible?
 - pp. 243-244 – Peter Deyneka’s perspective