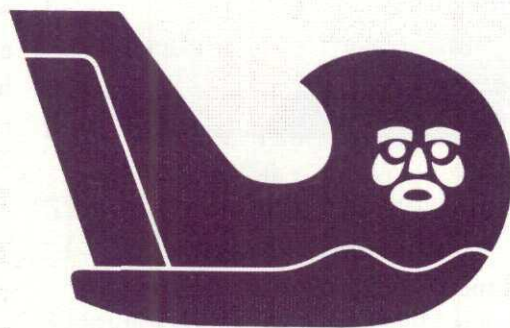


Adventures in History



Revolution's Orphans

Teachers' Guide



National
Film Board
of Canada

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national du film
du Canada

Revolution's Orphans



Level

Intermediate and Senior High School, Community College, CEGEP, University.

Subject Area

Canadian History, European History.

Summary

As her family escaped before the advance of the Russian soldiers during the collapse of the Hungarian Revolution, Clara's mother was shot and killed. Now, in preparing a documentary film on the Revolution, Clara seeks the circumstances of her mother's death so that her story may be included in the film.

Her father, a former professional historian, is outraged at the idea and insists that personal experience has no place in history. The tragedy remains unexplained and Clara is left with only fragmentary memories of her flight from Hungary.

When her mother's brother, Janos, a Hungarian trade official, visits Montréal, Clara meets him. During their evening together, Clara learns much more of her family and of the happy times before the Russian occupation.

In wanting to have the full story, Clara tricks her reluctant uncle into meeting her father. In an emotionally charged confrontation between the two men, Clara hears that her uncle had betrayed the family to the Russians and that her mother was killed during the last minute attempt to escape. Janos claims that he had thought that the family had already fled when he collaborated with the Russians. In turn, Janos accuses the father of sacrificing his family to the Revolution.

Shaken by the confrontation, Clara drives Janos to his hotel and returns home to find her father remorseful, maintaining that he would have abandoned the Revolution if he

had known that his wife would be killed. Clara returns to work on her film, now with the knowledge of her family's personal experience and suffering.

Aims of the Film

- To analyze the effects of the Hungarian Revolution on those new Canadians who were directly involved in it.
- To raise the question of conflict between personal considerations and commitment to a political ideal.
- To suggest the difficulties in arriving at an objective view of an historical event when personal experience is involved.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think Clara's father is right when he says that "personal stories are not history"?
2. Would Clara have been better off had she not pursued the truth about her family history?
3. Is her father indeed guilty of having sacrificed his family to his political ideals? Which, in your view, should take precedence, commitment to a principle or devotion to the welfare of one's family?
4. Uncle Janos has obviously prospered in part because of his behavior during the Revolution. Does his success mean that he made the right choice?
5. Do you think a refugee's attitude toward his new country differs from that of a regular immigrant? Why?
6. How does the making of a documentary film differ from writing an historical account?

Related Projects

1. Research the causes and effects of revolution in Poland (1956), Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968).
2. Compare refugees' personal accounts of revolutions with those of historians.
3. a) Compare and contrast the political, economic and social life in Hungary in the mid-1950s with life there today.
b) Are the conditions for a revolution still present in Hungary today?
4. a) Document Canada's reaction to the revolt in Hungary and to the refugee problem that followed.
b) At what other points in Canadian history has there been an influx of refugees.
5. a) What responsibilities do Canadians have to alleviate the world-wide refugee problem. b) What is a refugee? Why has the number of refugees increased throughout the world since the end of World War II?
6. Examine the historical phenomenon of revolution as a question of difficult personal choices that must be made by individuals from all strata of society.
7. Make a list of conditions that may precipitate the outbreak of armed insurrection.

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Periodicals

- "Out of Hungary, the Defiant Exiles."
E. Abel. N.Y. Times Magazine
p. 9-11 N 25 '56
- "Thirty Days that Shook the World."
L. Cherne, Saturday Review
39: 22-3 D 22 '56
- "Close-up Story of Last Fight."
C. Hiott. Life 41: 33-5 N 26 '56

Related Films from the NFB

- Bekevar Jubilee*
27:22 106C 0177 013
- Our Street Was Paved with Gold*
28:37 106C 0173 086
- Strangers at the Door*
28:02 106C 0177 233
- Solzhenitsyn's Children*
87:21 106C 0178 371
- This Is a Photograph*
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- The Immigration Experience*
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One of the most difficult tasks confronting the teacher of history or social studies is that of demonstrating the relevance of the past to the present lives of the students. The **Adventures in History** series has been designed to provide, in a lively, fictional form, a bridge to Canada's past.

Although founded on sound research, the series does not attempt to document specific events or the lives of famous people. Instead it concentrates on the effects of periods of broad social change on the lives of ordinary persons, especially young people. Each half-hour drama provides the teacher with the opportunity to encourage the class to become imaginatively involved with characters whose lives are touched by these social changes, and to develop the capacity to view the subject from a critical perspective.

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