

## Training:

# “Understanding the mechanisms of 89 – a simulation game on regime change for youth and adult education”

*Marta Kozłowska, Wilhelmina Welsch*

*(Humanity in Action Deutschland e.V. / Fundacja Humanity in Action Polska)*

## Foreword

This simulation is a collaborative work in progress. It was developed and tested by *Humanity in Action Deutschland e.V.* ([www.humanityinaction.org/germany](http://www.humanityinaction.org/germany)) during a seminar on the 1989 regime changes with 15 international students in spring 2009. The experts' support by Simon Raiser and Björn Warkalla (*Planpolitik*, [www.planpolitik.de](http://www.planpolitik.de)) and the guidance and financial support of the German *Bundesstiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur* ([www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de](http://www.stiftung-aufarbeitung.de)) helped to create a pilot format of the simulation, allowing dissemination and further use in adult education.

The simulation proved to be an excellent educational tool for understanding the political and social dynamics of the 1989 regime changes in Europe:

- Through active role play, participants have to immerse into the positions of all relevant groups.
- In the negotiation phase participants experience liberties as well as boundaries of action.
- A simulation focuses on solutions and compromises – like in real-life politics.
- The inclusion of all important stakeholder groups and a minimum duration of 4 hours allows to raise awareness for complexity and uniqueness of the 1989 revolutions

In cooperation with *DARE – Democracy and Human Rights Education in Adult Learning* ([www.dare-network.de](http://www.dare-network.de)) and the Polish partner organisation *Fundacja Humanity in Action Polska* the simulation was publicly presented at the *Geschichtsforum09 / History forum09* (May 2009 in Berlin) and tested with an audience of 30 European educators.

The results of this second “test run” are documented here. For a full manual of the simulation, containing all information for game facilitators and a complete set of actors cards, please check [www.dare-network.eu](http://www.dare-network.eu), [www.humanityinaction.org/germany](http://www.humanityinaction.org/germany), or contact Georg Pirker at AdB Germany ([pirker@adb.de](mailto:pirker@adb.de)) or Anne Stalfort at Humanity in Action ([a.stalfort@humanityinaction.org](mailto:a.stalfort@humanityinaction.org)).

## **1. Information for simulation game facilitators (abbreviated version!)**

### **1.1 Some basics about simulations as an educational tool:**

*“In a simulation, participants take the roles of the relevant protagonists, having to make a convincing presentation of their positions and aims. Exploring these mechanisms through active role play leads to a more sustained, in-depth understanding of the subject matter – and it’s a lot of fun!*

*Politics is a matter of negotiation. Who gets what? And how much? The aim is to unite conflicting interests and to reach decisions concerning the distribution of money, power, security, autonomy etc. Usually, negotiations consist of tough and lengthy wrangling about what appear to be small steps of progress and minor compromises. Outside observers often find it difficult to understand why negotiations or attempts to settle conflicts succeed or fail. Which concessions have made an agreement possible or which demands have prevented it? Which strategic considerations are the actors led by? What scope are they given within institutional, domestic and other constraints? Which negotiation strategies are successful?*

*Simulating conflicts and negotiations provides a playful way of learning and understanding the political dynamics behind them. This is the exact goal of simulation games. After a negotiation or conflict situation has been chosen, the participants of the game proceed to assume the roles of the different parties and agents relevant to that situation. They have to represent their “character’s” interests convincingly and aim to make them prevail in negotiations. In order to achieve this, they must determine any existing scope for negotiation, use it to their advantage and recognise situations which call for compromise.*

*A simulation will, of course, never perfectly reflect reality. A simulation game is an abstraction which inevitably involves a certain amount of simplification. The main focus lies with the aim of exposing the main driving forces and mechanisms of political decision making. Also, in a reflection of reality, crucial steps of negotiation are usually reached in an informal fashion.”*

(Quote from <http://www.planpolitik.de/en/simulationgames.htm>)

### **1.2 Scenario outline**

- The simulation is set in “Allonia”, a fictitious communist country, member of the likewise fictitious Marxist Union, an international coalition of Communist Nations.
- There is a general climate of discontent and economic depression. Demonstrations because of recent food shortages have started and are quickly getting more powerful.

- If the status quo is maintained, the demonstrations threaten to become so massive that revolution will occur. Therefore the simulation participants (7 parties / interest groups / other important stakeholders; all in all 16-30 participants) have to take action.
- The goal of the game is *to* find a solution that is acceptable for all the parties to the negotiations – a common statement accepted unanimously is to be reached.
- The common statement should have three sections (= paragraphs / top issues): changes in the state's political system / economic/labour issues / political/civil freedoms.

### **1.3 The Actors**

Each participant is assigned by chance to a stakeholder group and gets an actor card with detailed information on interests and positions. (Example of an actor card see below.)

- A) Representatives of the Marxist Union/Moderators:
- B) Members of The Party:
  - B1) The Party, Hard-Liners
  - B2) The Party, Soft-Liners
- C) Security Service
- D) Social Movements (Peace and Religiously motivated movements)
- E) Trade Unions
- F) Intellectuals
  - F1) Diehard communistic ideologist
  - F2) Two catholic intellectuals
    - F2a) workers' oriented journalist - Kaylene de Mag
    - F2b) a secret agent priest – Falco Zach

#### **Recommended number of participants:**

The party: hard-liners 3 -5; soft-liners 3–5 / Security service: 2 / Peace & Religion Movements 3- 6 / Trade Unions 3- 6 / Intellectuals 3 / Moderators:2  
 Minimum - 18 people, maximum – 30.

### **1.4 Simulation structure / schedule for game facilitators** **(6 hour game / 4 hour simulation)**

1. Introduction (20 min / 10 min)
2. Reading phase (20 min / 15min)  
*(Consider sending the background info in advance to all the participants)*
3. Developing opinions / planning strategy (30 min / 30min)  
*(Approach each team/participant and make sure they know what to do, what the game is about and what their concrete task is)*
4. Separate talks in the party and opposition milieu (45 min / 30min)
5. Informal talks (all together 40 min / 30min) \*
6. Formal negotiations – 1<sup>st</sup> round (45 min / 30min)  
*(After a short opening it is recommended that groups divide into subcommissions that will work on several variations of statement's paragraphs)*
7. Informal talks – 2<sup>nd</sup> round (40 min / 20min)
8. Formal negotiations – 2<sup>nd</sup> round (60 min / 30min)
9. Debriefing ( 60 min / 45min)

## **2. Information for the simulation participants (abbreviated version)**

### **2.1 Scenario:**

Revolution! The word appears to be upon everyone's lips. For the first time in decades, the citizens of Allonia have taken to the streets. On the streets of the Sipa, the capital city, 80,000 demonstrators rallied in the city square and agitated for increased civil and political liberties. In the industrial center of Coslow, laborers protesting oppressive work conditions openly clashed with officers of the once-feared Secretariat for Internal Security (SIS). In the coming days, the demonstrations threaten to become ever bigger, the demands ever greater, and the possibility of revolution, ever more real ...

### **2.2 Basic information on Allonia:**

- Population: 18 millions, 98% Allonian
- Geography: lowlands 46%, highlands 54% - of which 12% mountains; sea border – 291 km
- Religion: 71% Catholics, 19% atheists, 6% Muslim, 3% other
- Currency: alute (ALU)
- Agriculture: organized in the State Agricultural Farms (SAF)
- Public television: ALTV, 2 programmes, state-controlled
- Capital: Sipa (2,5 million inhabitants)

- Other cities over 1 million inhabitants: Coslow – the biggest industrial center (mining, heavy industry, military production); Chwaleq – port city, shipyard; Gadegard – textile industry

### **2.3 Example of an actor card:**

**Prof. Dr. Erich Morar**

**Diehard communistic ideologist**

*You are a professor emeritus at the Sipa University, however you are still active within the academia, publishing books, giving lectures and working at the National Academy of Sciences. Your scientific output is continuously respected and very often cited. You are a popular and widely respected individual, often commenting on current events on the national TV channel, ALTV. You are perceived as the state's best specialist on the communistic doctrine and one of the best worldwide.*

*You have read all that was written concerning communism and socialism since 19<sup>th</sup> century and you are still a strong believer that the scientific communism is both the best philosophical system and political ideology ever. You know by heart all the Marx's publications, even woken up in the middle of the night you would be able to recite the Communist Manifesto without any single mistake.*

*You take pride of the fact that you have chosen the communistic path as a teenager already, volunteering at the age of 15 as a member of communistic guerrilla that subsequently, after receiving the Marxist Union help and support, took over the power in the state of Allonia.*

*Graduating summa cum laude from political science at the Sipa University, you followed to obtain a Ph.D. at the University of Wenberg, the capital city of MU, which was known for its best centre for interdisciplinary studies on communism. Afterwards you came back to Sipa as an assistant professor and after a few years became a full professor. Moreover, for many years already you are a teacher at the National School of Public Governance and most of the top politicians of the state were your students at some point. Therefore the Party members respect you and fear to openly introduce any reform that you might dislike.*

*You naturally support the Marxist Union and the hardliners within the Party, although you do not spare criticisms, when they introduce politics you find detrimental to the path to the 'ideal' socialistic state. You accept the fact that the current system is only the imperfect 'real socialism', but believe that the politicians could do better with aiming and achieving steps to reach the ideal socialism. You are aware of the tangible situation on the streets, but you do not really get it, why the workers turned out against the state that was created in their class interest. You are not sure, whether this will lead to a revolution*

*and you are not sure, whether revolution might be a good opportunity for introducing the ideal socialistic system.*

*You have many influential friends in the Marxist Union and Allonia, as well as in other fraternal communistic states. Your social network is very expanded, although it is mostly among academicians. Your best friend is the former head of SIS, who during his time in office gave you his protection umbrella, so you were never tempted to become an agent. Actually, you were serving the system openly, so in your opinion there has never been a need for you to enroll as an agent.*

*You have little political sense and are pretty academic. However, you believe that your experience and knowledge entitles you to claim for attention when it comes to the state's governance.*

*You use the 'communistic' vocabulary – all these social class, revisionists, proletariat, class conflict, public enemy, exploitation of workers, alienation of work, means of production, bourgeois etc.*

*A few days ago some important representatives of the Party asked you for a meeting. The Party is truly concerned about the situation in the state and decided to meet with the social movements to somehow calm the pressure in the nation. They presented to you their ideas, which basically are nothing else than some sort of façade-reforms aiming on cooling down the people, but preserving the system itself. You decided to help them. However, you are willing to somehow use the situation to push the reforms towards the 'ideal' system.*

*You understand the gravity of the situation and therefore you will rather restrain from criticizing the government openly. Nevertheless, if they want your help and your support, they'd rather stick to the rules of communism!*

---

For regular updates, additions, alterations and other improvements of this of this manual please check: [www.dare-network.eu](http://www.dare-network.eu) or [www.humanityinaction.org/germany](http://www.humanityinaction.org/germany).

Are you interested in using the simulation? Please contact us and share your experiences! With your help, we can update and improve the simulation manual constantly. Please contact Anne Stalfort at Humanity in Action ([a.stalfort@humanityinaction.org](mailto:a.stalfort@humanityinaction.org)), or Georg Pirker at AdB Germany ([pirker@adb.de](mailto:pirker@adb.de)).

**This simulation was made possible by countless contributions of many volunteers – be it outlining the actor's profiles, leading and evaluating workshops, or writing, editing and proofreading texts. Thank you!**