Hello everyone!

Welcome to our first workshop called "Fight for freedom".

The workshop will be based on czech history of the 20th century. It will simultaneously be a small preparation for tomorrow.

It's interesting that many historical events important for the Czech Republic happened in years that end with 8. There's around 30 such occurrences.

First, we should clarify on what is meant with the concept of fighting and freedom. And since it's a workshop, I'd be happy, if you split into groups and lets try to create a mind map. Try to answer the given questions:

1. What is freedom?

2. What types of freedom do you know?

3. How can we fight for freedom?

So on one side of the map you'll have various types of freedom and on the other various ways how to fight for it.

The most important anniversary, that we are being reminded of this year, is the creation of the Czechoslovak republic. It happened so on the 28th of October, 1918. Tomorrow, in Prague, we'll visit an exposition that is centered around the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic from various aspects. I'll mention the most important and most interesting things:

1. The Czechoslovak republic was announced before the official end of WWI, which ended on the 11th of November. 1918.

2. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was elected president, although he hadn't returned from exile yet. He returned to the republic as president.

3. The habsburg monarchy fell although emperor Karl I. wanted it to become a federation. Masaryk knew of his plan and he beat him with his proposal of the complete dismantling of the habsburg monarchy.

4. The creation of the Czechoslovak republic was supported by the world powers, especially the )USA and France.

How is it possible? Why did the world powers support the proposal of a small state?

A big role was played by Masaryk's influence during his exile (in France, England and the USA). Articles were regularly released in the New York Times, thoughts of the creation of the CSR were regularly presented on the British BBC. Masaryk met the US president W. Wilson multiple times. A very important thing was the creation of the legions and their recognition as legitimate armies. Masaryk and his associates knew, that their proposals had to be moderate and that they had to ask a bit more, so they could pretend to lower their demands. An important factor were the attempts to cut off the power of the house of habsburg. All of this lead to the creation of favorable conditions for breaking Austria and the creation of successor states, including the CSR.

Here you can see an article about the thoughts of the creation of the CSR on the front page of the New York Times. And here are some photos of the life of the legions. Czech legions were created in France but predominantly in Russia from soldiers which originally fought on the Austrian side and switched sides, where they formed independent units. Their task played a big part, especially in Russia. The return of the legions to CSR was very complicated. Due to the chaos in Russia after the outbreak of the revolution and Lenin's rise to power, the legionnaires couldn't return through the western route and had to travel through the trans siberian magistral to the distant east to Vladivostok and from there over sea (mostly through Japan and USA).

On the map, you can see the area created by the CSR, Bohemia, Moravia-silesia, Slovakia (which is an independent republic since 1993) and Sub-Carpathian Rus (which is a part of Ukraine, since World war II).

There were also many issues in the new CSR. The biggest problem was the question of the minorities. The constitution only mentions the czechoslovak people, not germans, hungarians or rusyns. And for that reason, the right of self-determination was the main argument of Adolf Hitler at the Munich conference in 1938. On the map you can see the national composition of the CSR. You can see that the german minority was quite numerous, germans were 20% of the population and the czech government neglected this problem.

Now, we have reached to the traumatic year of 1938. There was a conference of the world powers in Munich, on the end of September. They discussed (to co čtete) and they decided that the CSR will give up its borderlands to Germany, Hungary and Poland. It was one of the examples of appeasement. Here you can see Neville Chamberlain, as he holds the text of the munich agreement and is reassuring the british that he certified peace for Europe. We can listen to a recording of his speech.

A few days before the munich conference, mobilisation was announced-the czech soldiers were ready to fight. Why did our politicians decide not to fight? CSR was in fact surrounded on all sides by fascist or nazi regimes. If the dictate of the munich agreement wasn't accepted, it would get attacked from all sides. On the other hand, the army of the CSR was very well trained and equipped. During the half of the year, many of our aviators left for France and England, where they formed independent wing. So what happened?

Now here's a question: Would you fight under these conditions? I personally believe that we should have fought, because the trauma that lead us to having to give up our borderlands, including our military fortifications without a fight is still present. In the year 1939 CSR became the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Here you can see the lost of territory, which was accrued to Germany, Hungary and Poland. But! Our moment came in the year 1942. In exile in England, a secret operation called Anthropoid was being planned. The goal of the operation was the assassination of the deputy protector Reinhard Heydrich. Why was it so important to kill him? He was one of the most dangerous nazi. Paratroopers trained in the UK dropped on the protectorate's territory and finally two of them, Jozef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš were the ones who did the deed. Heydrich died a week after the assassination attempt. There was a great revenge. The paratroopers were found and killed in the church of saint Cyril and Methodius. We will visit this church and you'll see the place of their last stand. The revenge continued with the villages Lidice and Ležáky being burned down to the ground, men older than 14 were executed, women and children were sent to concentration camps, about 17 children were sent to germany for reeducation. Executioned happened daily in Prague. But the prestige of the CSR rose amongst the alliance.

On the images you can see Gabčík with Kubiš and Heydrich's car after the assassination.

On the next anniversary, I'll say one phrase. In february 1948, 3 years after the end of World War II, the communist revolt happened and the communist totality began, which lasted to 1989.

The only brighter moment during the communist rule were the 60's. 60's were times of political and cultural release, which escalated with an attempt of reformation in the year 1968. That period is called the Prague Spring. The idyl ended on the 21st of August when we were invaded by communist-lead armies. The people first rioted, they try to explain to the soldiers that there is a bad situation here, but they progressively become apathetic and are embracing the situation. The 70's and 80's are called the period of normalization. Despite that, some people that wanted to awaken the people from their apathy appeared. You are familiar with the story of Jan Palach, but he wasn't alone. He was joined by Jan Zajíc, Evžen Plocek and even the polish Ryszard Siwiec.

You all saw the movie Burning Bush and have worked out the worksheet. I'm interested your opinion on such an extreme act, on this extreme kind of fight. Do you think that Jan Palach's, Jan Zajíc's and the others's sacrifice was pointless? or not?

We will be on location where Jan Palach became a living torch and we can impart something more. On the image, you can see shots from Jan Palach's funeral, which became a proper national demonstration. The participants in the funeral were persecuted by the government. And finally, we are moving to the year 1989. An important anniversary, which doesn't end in 8. 17th November is the international day of students and czech students protested already in the year 1939 (back then, one of the students was killed and as a payback, all universities were closed for germans). In the year 1989, students went into the streets in Prague, and their pacific protest was brutally suppressed by the police. The result was a very spontaneous series of strikes lasting until the december of 1989. Since during this revolution nobody was killed, we call it the velvet revolution. Thanks to velvet revolution, the communist rule ended and the CSR returned to democracy. Václav Havel became president.

From the images, I think it's clear that it was truly a massive demonstration, which wasn't confined just to Prague, but it manifested all across the CSR. Since mobile phones or landlines were not yet common, students had to travel to various regions and had to spread their information and thoughts personally. The last video summarizes nicely what was just said.

Finally, I'll add that the last important anniversary was the year 1998. when our hockey players won the gold medal at the nagano olympics, when we beat USA, Canada and Russia, in this order.