

Remembering for a European Future

Research on local, regional and family history
done by young Europeans
from the broader Baltic Sea Region



Conducted in the framework of EUSTORY History Competitions
prior to the 1st Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

A cooperation of



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1st Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue

At the 1st Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue, 22 young Europeans from 12 different countries in the broader Baltic Sea Region were invited by the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the Körber Foundation to discuss the history and future of borders and identities. In September 2014, they met in Tallinn, Narva and Ivangorod to explore the underlying patterns of a possible Baltic Sea identity. Thus, the project actively contributed to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Coming from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Norway, the Russian Federation as well as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain, 16 of the participants are alumni of the Körber Foundation's EUSTORY Network. They have proven their potential to analyse historical material, assess questions of identity and transfer their findings to current events in the context of their successful participation in national history competitions of their home country. The location for the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue was one of the places in Europe which can be seen as a microcosm

of European history. The towns of Narva (Estonia) and Ivangorod (Russian Federation) provided an ideal location to investigate this topic in a local, regional and European context. In the past, the twin fortresses situated on each side of the Narva River were targets of Swedish, German, Estonian and Russian influence; nowadays the site represents the border between the European Union and the Russian Federation. Participants had the chance to not

only learn about the specifics of border regions in theory, but explore them firsthand.

The work of young Europeans at the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue resulted in the virtual exhibition "#balticeye" that displays visual impressions of their quest

and is open to visitors at www.balticeye.net

This brochure provides brief summaries of the historical research works the participants did in the context of national EUSTORY history competitions prior to their involvement in the Baltic Sea Youth Dialogue. The topics cover a wide range of local, regional and family history of 20th Century Europe.



The Mill in Chodovlice

“They did not die, but they live! The voice of the dead speaks in souls of their children. Their blood still passes from generation to generation in the circle of life”. These are words of Jiří Šašek, one of the owners of the ‘Lucky’ mill, which are written in the chronicle of the Šašek family. ‘Lucky’ mill, the subject of our research, is an old mill, situated near Chodovlice, a small village in the North of the Czech Republic.

Our research sums up the history of the mill from the year 1465 (first written mention in the chronicle of the village Chodovlice) to the most recent time and includes descriptions of the mill’s operation, several reconstructions and other interesting aspects of the life in the mill. The work mainly revolves around the Šašek family, for the mill is in their property since 1695, and specifically around Jiří Šašek, who was probably the most important figure in the mill’s history.

He was born in 1895 and at first was not supposed to take over the family business. He studied in Prague and in 1915 he wanted to work in a bank, but was drafted to the ongoing war before he could have started. In World War I he fought on the Eastern Front and was quite successful in his army life. But on his way home in 1918 he was severely injured and nearly died in a Ukrainian hospital. After his return he decided to work as a miller in his birthplace. He was responsible for the modernization of the mill and was an important figure not only for the mill but for the whole region. He became a chronicler of the village, wrote a work about mills in his region and was known as a Czech patriot and good

and helpful neighbour in general. He also continued in writing the family chronicle. Even in the very hard time of World War II (the mill was at the border of Sudetenland) he was helping those in need and as a patriot he organized a secret Czech theatre for children in his mill. He had a thin time and it’s even more saddening that he had to close the mill and was forced to work on a collective farm during the communist era in Czechoslovakia. But thanks to his grandson, Otakar, the mill was reconstructed and nowadays is almost functional. Otakar is caring for the mill in his free time and he wishes to open this unknown technical monument to the public some day.

At first, my co-author and I were not sure what to write about the topic “Also a Place Has Its Memory – In the Footsteps of My Region’s History”. But we talked to some archive workers and they told us about the “Lucky” mill. That’s how we met the current owner Mr. Otakar Šašek. He guided us through the mill and lent us a copy of their family chronicle, which was very special for us, because it was handwritten.



Ester Boháčková, 20
Lovosice, Czech Republic

2nd prize, History Competition
2012/2013
PANT Citizens’ Association

Sokolov – Sokolovo: The Connection between the Czech Town and the Ukrainian Village

After the Second World War, in 1948 the town Falkenau was renamed Sokolov. The main focus of my competition entry was to find out why that happened and how it occurred. But the topic of the History Competition in the Czech Republic “Also a Place has Its Memory” led me to the idea of comparing the history of Sokolov in the Czech Republic and the town Sokolovo in Ukraine.

In March 1943 the Battle of Sokolovo near Kharkiv in Ukraine took place. The German Wehrmacht was fighting at the Mzha River and for the first time the Czech military fought together with the Red Army to protect the area.

After researching common historical sources such as available literature and the local archives, it turned out that I had to speak to survivors or their relatives that are linked to both towns. There were some names of fallen soldiers who were linked to the town Sokolov in the Czech Republic and participated in the Battle of Sokolovo as well. This led to one of the most difficult parts of the work: To find someone I could talk to.

People of my hometown Sokolov were interested in my work and a museum organ-

ized an event where I shared my results. Over 70 people took part including some veterans of the Second World War. One of our special guests was Zoe Klusáková-Svobodová, the daughter of post-war President Ludvik Svoboda, who is currently over 90 years old. The battle of Sokolovo and Sokolov intrigued me a lot. In 2013, I travelled to Ukraine and visited the battlefield and locals. I also took part in a 50 km memorial march in memory of the fallen soldiers. It happened that we reconstructed the Battle of Sokolovo.

Currently, I am very concerned about the events in Ukraine. I would like to visit Kiev soon again, but unfortunately, due to the armed conflict, I don't dare to.



Jiří Klůc, 18
Sokolov, Czech Republic

8th prize, History Competition
2012/2013
PANT Citizens' Association

The Day the World ran out of Oil

In Denmark the main topic was “The Crucial Moment”. Everyone had to choose a moment of history which was a crucial one. It could have been the opening of a local football club which changed society or even the Arab Spring. I chose the topic “oil” and when the world runs out of it. It’s a historical moment that hasn’t happened yet, but it will. The following is a part of my work:

Even though Mads couldn’t understand all the words in the book he kept in his hands, he still couldn’t stop reading it. It was the diary of a girl named Anne-Katrine who lived more than 100 years ago. He found the diary at the loft of the house his family just moved in. In the last couple of days he has become almost obsessed with reading the book. He couldn’t think about anything else. For the 20th time this week he went up the stairs to read again:

“4th February 2025:

My name is Anne-Katrine Schott. I’m 18 years old and I was born on the 9th August 2006. If you read this, it might be because I’m not here anymore, that my family is not here anymore. That thought scares me. A lot.

I dance ballet and play music. Or I used to. The world has been crazy the past months. It’s a long story and it’s not over yet. I think I should start from the beginning:

Half a year ago the world ran out of oil. Like completely out of oil. Not a single drop back left in the ground. Even though the experts said that there should have been 20% left. Perhaps it doesn’t seem that bad, but when more of 85% of the world’s energy consumption is produced from oil it should lead to a serious reflection.

On the 10th of September the president of the

USA published their review of a survey which said that they couldn’t extract more oil. Right after that, the Middle East and Russia published the same reviews. All ships carrying oil around the world were called back. Oil is more worth than money is.

People began to panic. My family included.

You see, oil is used for everything. The cars we drive, the lipstick I’m wearing, the sweatshirt my mom wears and the doll my sister is playing with. Everything contains oil. So people started to hoard. My mom and I went shopping as well – it was insane.

The day after the government imposed a lot of instructions: No public transport, no unreasonable use of lights at home etc. Unemployment increased by more than 300%.

My dad was a car seller, but of course no one will buy a car if they can’t get fuel.

Only 5 days later, the supermarkets ran out of food. The ironic part is that it’s not because there is no food anymore – the food just can’t get to the stores. Hospitals are running low and even the flu can kill you. Gloves and plaster became an article in short supply.

Sometimes I’m at school. But of course I have to walk and when it’s too cold I just stay home.

Here in Denmark we’re lucky. In the US they’d import twice as much as they use. We actually produce the most ourselves. But the insane thing is that even our environmentally friendly energy is based on fossil fuels. Fantastic.”

Mads wanted to get more information so he used Google to search for it. As he read, he realized that in 1973 Denmark had already run out of oil for the first time.

“I went to visit my granddad today for an assignment in school. He told me, that in 1973 Denmark

ran out of oil for the first time. A war between Egypt, Israel and Syria made the prices go up and because the USA did support Israel, the Arabic countries decided to cut of the world's import of oil. The prices went from \$3.00 to \$11.50. At that time the USA didn't import oil, so it didn't affect them but for Europe it meant a big crisis. Governments turned out the light in the streets, car driving on Sundays became illegal and if you wanted oil, you had to have a good reason.

Because the Prime Minister of Denmark at that time, Anker Jorgensen, said in a speech that he could understand the aggressiveness of Israel, Denmark had an almost total boycott of oil.

More than 90% of Denmark's energy consumption was oil, so the government had to change dramatically.

On the 25th November 1973, it became illegal to drive on Sundays. Only the police and public services were allowed and if you needed to drive you had to call the government to ask for permission.

According to my granddad there was also a political aspect to it."



**Anne-Katrine
Schott Poulsen, 19
Frederica, Denmark**

1st prize, History Competition
2013/2014
Danish History Teachers'
Organisation for Secondary
School

Congressional Response to Civil Rights Demonstrations

In 2012/2013, the Finnish History Competition announced the topic "Two Stories" and I decided to work on the response to two civil rights demonstrations of an audience that was not directly involved in the conflicts: The US Congress. The central research question of the work was: *Why was the response of the Congress to the 'Bloody Sunday' in Selma, Alabama (1965) more extensive than to the events in Birmingham in the spring of 1963?* To compare and explain the response exhibited in detail, the research identified factors and their interactions in creating and influencing the response.

As the work focused on the reaction of the Congress, the importance was put on the opinions and statements made by the Con-

gress members, logged in the *Congressional Records*.

Firstly, the work analysed the aims of the campaigns in the Congress's perception of them. These aims would reveal a key difference in how the demonstrations were received by the federal government.

Secondly, the conduct of the involved was evaluated to see how police brutality was received by the Congress. The work went on to analyse how the national support gained by the campaigns affected the congressional response and especially their personal opinions, with the use of newspaper articles from the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, as they both had wide congressional and national readership. Finally, the work ended by

determining what other kinds of influence affected the Congress's response.

The conclusion reached was that the response of the Congress was more extensive because they perceived the goal of Selma, voting rights, as more important and righteous. This was enhanced by the popular opinion and the way the Selma campaign and its goal was represented in the media. The support of improved civil rights legislature for African-Americans from the Congress was due to their perception of how their constituents wanted them to react.

I chose this topic for several reasons: The African-American Civil Rights Movement, predominantly led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., had always fascinated me because of what they achieved in the conditions that they had to endure. It was stupefying for me to see that the rights that I regarded as universally automatic, were rights that had been, and still are being, fought for. Reading about the topic, two demonstrations were frequently mentioned and often compared. They were both regarded to have resulted in major pieces of legislation to improve the rights of non-white American citizens, which made it lucrative to thoroughly compare them.

Another reason for the choice of topic was the Arab Spring in 2010. Continuously witnessing both violent and non-violent demonstrations in the news inspired me to examine the influence and benefit of non-violent protestation on legislative bodies in governments, and whether successes in the past could be helpful to those struggling with comparable issues in the present. This explains the focus on the Congress, which exhibited such dissimilar responses to seemingly similar demonstrations.

Due to the fact that the media had a huge influence on people's reactions at the time of

the demonstrations, attention was given to the news articles that covered the events. The sources included articles from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Another consequence of the intense media coverage of the events was the production of iconic images from the demonstrations.

This image became almost synonymous to the Birmingham campaign of 1963, and its influence has been investigated by historians since. My work explored the effect of the distribution of visuals to the nation by, for example, comparing the number of times that Congress members mentioned specific images.

A continuous surprise throughout the research process was the brutality that the demonstrators faced while advocating for basic rights, such as the desegregation of lunch counters. Most of the primary sources used were original newspaper articles or speeches made by participants of the demonstrations and especially by Congress members. However, an unfortunate obstacle in the research was that the *Congressional Records* are not available electronically, which meant that the congressional speeches were largely gathered from second-hand sources and a comprehensive overview of all the opinions expressed during the congressional sessions was not achieved as thoroughly as would have been hoped for.



**Roshanna Sharon Olivia
Fokeerah, 19
Vantaa, Finland**

1st prize, History Competition
2013/2014
Association for Teachers of
History and Social Studies in
Finland (HYOL)

‘The Most Beautiful Thing about Buchholz is the View to Annaberg.’

Seen from above it looked like a city. A usual small German city with houses, squares, and parks. At a second glance, some irregularities could be discovered: For example that there were two city centres in this structure. Leaving the bird’s-eye point of view, one surely discovered that what we saw as one city was in reality two cities which were physically connected, but both tended to be independent.

Until 1945 this was the state of Annaberg and Buchholz, two small cities in the Ore Mountains with a history dating back more than 500 years. Both were founded at about 1500 with Annaberg being the first. At this time, Saxony was divided in two parts and after the discovery of valuable ores in the Ore Mountains both principalities wanted to benefit from this. That is the reason why there were two cities founded next to each other, but separated by a border. This was the beginning of a neighbourhood which was not always easy for both parties. With Annaberg being the bigger and more influential town, Buchholz always found itself in a state of dependency. Even though the people of both cities were living together peacefully, it was always obvious that both Annaberg and Buchholz should keep their legal independence, even after the reunification of Saxony.

In the 20th century the inhabitants of both cities were thinking about unifying the cities. The idea was mainly discussed for economical and practical reasons, since the cities were grown together. What inhibited the unification at that time was pride. Mainly the residents of Buchholz were afraid that they would become subordinate because of the stronger influence of Annaberg. The popula-

tion of Buchholz was then about half as big as the one in Annaberg.

When the Second World War started, the topic was forgotten or at least not discussed with priority anymore. Between 1939 and 1945, Annaberg and Buchholz did not distinguish themselves much from other German minor cities. This would only have a big influence on their situation at the end of the war. Firstly, Buchholz got bombed in 1945 and a large portion of the city was destroyed. Then, after the occupation by the Red Army, the new Russian town commander decided to unify the cities for administrative reasons. The intention of the commander was to simplify his work by creating one administrative unit. He dedicated the responsibility to take care of the details of this union to the new municipal councils.

The people in charge decided to unite both cities and not only the administrations, which would have fulfilled the demands of the commander, too. This decision was made under military law. Some years later, the new elected government of Saxony claimed that all changes concerning the municipalities made under the military law were invalid, to avoid disorder. That means the unification could have been undone. But not only did the new municipality of united Annaberg-Buchholz deny this, it even tried to convince the government to make an exception in this case. So in fact, they strongly supported a decision that had been made closed to public. It seems like they took the chance to unify both cities, which had lots of advantages for the municipalities (first of all economically) at a time that was convenient because people were unlikely to protest. Since the unification took place with-

out discussing controversies, old stereotypes and “enmities” could not be removed.

But even before the unification there has never been real hatred amongst the people. The historical thought of concurrence had been carried through the centuries and formed the collective identity of the cities. So in the 20th century, the conflict already consisted mainly of facetious sayings and jokes about the other city. One of them is used in the title, which is ‘The most beautiful thing about Buchholz is the view to Annaberg.’ The people amongst themselves did not have problems and also the municipalities even discussed to unite both cities. The independence was mainly important for the identity of the people. This explains why the sarcasm against the former neighbour even increased after the unification – to keep at least some distinction for their own identity. It shows how the neighbourhood influenced this identity of both cities. The example of Annaberg-Buchholz shows, which functions neighbourhood can have and had in history. On an abstract level, the distinction helped the people to form an identity, but in fact both cities are more powerful together. So it also shows how neighbourhood can take place on different levels and how it influences and supports different instances.

Today, some people still define themselves as inhabitant of Annaberg, some of Buchholz, some of Annaberg-Buchholz. Annaberg and Buchholz became one city and the former neighbourhood just remained in the heads of few people. Neighbourhood develops with time and can be influenced by external powers. In the end, for a good communal living, the most important thing is to see each other without prejudice.

Under the overall topic of the History Competition “Familiar Strangers – Neighbours in

History” my research focused mainly on the point of view of the inhabitants: How did they think about the people from the other city, the other city in general and the unification? Therefore I planned and conducted interviews with contemporary witnesses. I did four interviews with altogether six people from Annaberg and Buchholz. This gave me a first-hand impression on how the unification took place for the people themselves and how it concerned them. It is really notable that they all knew about the sayings and knew stereotypes about the other city, but none of them was really curious about the unification when it took place. All of them said that in this time they had bigger problems. It showed me how local politic was made in this time without participation by the people.

In some way this amount of information also surprised me, because in the beginning I was really missing sources, so I was considering it as a success that I was able to collect almost too much information in the end. Especially when I found out how minor the case was for the people when the unification really happened, it is surprising how many discussions there were in the years before. It showed me how an issue can be magnified because of some personal opinions. But of course this also shows how important it is to see all the opinions, especially in a difficult relationship between two cities.



Ephraim Bernhardt, 20
Annaberg-Buchholz,
Germany

3rd prize, History Competition
2012/2013
Körber Foundation

Turkish Guest Workers at the A.G. Weser in Bremen

Since it was founded in 1872, the shipyard A.G. Weser was one of the biggest employers of the 19th and 20th century in Bremen. Because of the rising demand for their ships, the company constantly needed more workers. So in the 20th century it began to employ workers from all over Europe, the so called “Gastarbeiter” (guest workers or migrant workers). After the work agreement between Germany and Turkey in 1961, the A.G. Weser employed a lot of Turkish guest workers. These workers mostly came from the poorer areas of Turkey and were hoping for a life in Germany under better conditions. They planned to work here for a few years and after earning a lot of money to move back to Turkey and back to their families, who were left behind. But most of them didn’t go back. They stayed in Bremen and their families joined them there. The majority of the Turkish guestworkers moved with their families to a part of Bremen called “Gröpelingen”, an area in the vicinity of the A.G. Weser, where most of their workers lived. With their move into Gröpelingen the guest workers didn’t just bring their families; they also brought a new culture, a new religion, the Islam, and different habits with them.

The A.G. Weser closed in 1983 and thousands of people in Bremen were unemployed. Some of the guest workers went back to their home countries, but the majority, among them also the majority of the Turkish guest workers, stayed in Bremen and worked in other factories.

In the last 50 years, the former German working class area Gröpelingen has gone through some major changes. Through the years, the still large number of inhabitants

with Turkish origins opened their own Turkish supermarkets, bakeries and hairdressers. Also lawyers and doctors with Turkish roots became part of a Turkish infrastructure. The most controversial development, in respect to their German neighbours, was the building of two mosques because the majority of the Turkish guest workers belonged to the Islamic faith.

In a group together with five other students I participated in the German Federal President’s History Competition 2012/2013. The main topic of the competition in that year was “Familiar Strangers – Neighbours in History”. In June 2013 our project earned one of the regional awards in Bremen. In our competition entry we tried to show how the relationship between German inhabitants and their “new” Turkish neighbours in Gröpelingen had developed. We wanted to learn something about the problems both sides had with each other, but also what the benefits and the positive experiences looked like. At least we were trying to find out what the relationship between the Germans and the Turks looks like. Are changes visible? Is their association friendly or perhaps full of hate?

To find answers to all our questions, we had several sources. We went to the national archives in Bremen, to the city- and university library and did research on the internet. Our most important sources were Turkish contemporary witnesses, who worked at the A.G. Weser. We interviewed some Turkish and one Italian guest worker and a German instructor.

The memories of the witnesses were especially interesting for me. Through them I began to have a much more personal point

of view on their topic, because I began not only to write about information I got through books, but to write on the personal experiences of people I've met.



Daniela Brandt, 17
Bremen, Germany

Regional award winner,
History Competition
2012/2013
Körber Foundation

Neighbours at Distance – The Bauhaus in Dessau

In July 2007, the two cities of Dessau and Roßlau, which are separated by the mighty Elbe river, fused in the course of the “Sachsen-Anhalt Regional Boundary Reform” and formed the independent city of Dessau-Roßlau in order to maintain its status as an independent city. Shortly thereafter, a bitter quarrel flared up about the city name – the majority of inhabitants of Dessau, by far the biggest and strongest of the twin towns and my home city, despised the double name and suggested changing it to “Bauhausstadt Dessau”. Sounds like the people of Dessau did find their love to that institution, right? But as things turned out it was not invariably the case:

Under the overall topic of the History Competition “Familiar Strangers – Neighbours in History” my competition entry “Neighbours at Distance – The Bauhaus in Dessau” dealt with the relationship between the inhabitants of Dessau and the professors, students and staff of the school of modern art and designs “Staatliches Bauhaus” during its residence in the town between 1925 and 1932. Founded in 1919 in the city of Weimar by Walter Gropius, the institution was forced to move residence by the conservative government of the state

of Thuringia in 1924. On the basis of different newspaper articles, I tried to analyse the process of the school’s controversial arrival in Dessau and distinguish between its critic’s motivation, language and action. The three major fears I was able to extract were firstly that Bauhaus would be too expensive for the city to finance, secondly it would damage the city’s craftspeople and thirdly it would harm the image of the already existing industrial school. Ultimately the move to Dessau was granted by the city council, but I was able to prove that the Bauhaus had enemies in town from the very beginning. Nevertheless, in the following years the school flourished and evolved to an institution of international distinction. Most critics were silenced by the evident success of the Bauhaus experiment combining a progressive education model with a whole new approach to art and design suitable for the modern age.

I proceeded to investigate the specific relations between the school and various local facilities and organizations. While the exchange of ideas within the scope of public housing projects and the economic cooperation with local industries such as the famous

Junkers aircraft factory were highly successful and shaped the character of Dessau strongly, the Bauhaus people remained a closed community of avant-gardists. For instance, there was hardly any communication between the Bauhaus stage and the Anhaltinian theatre and the Bauhaus students and Dessau's youth. This may be explained by the contrast between the majority of dignified, tradition-conscious and reactionary inhabitants of the former seat of ducal power and the young, shrill and confident representatives of a new, democratic and cosmopolitan Germany in the 1920's. In my opinion, the conflict for and against the Bauhaus within the citizenry was for the most part a conflict of generation and eventually of political self-understanding. But only this fact may not have been the cause of the school's downfall.

And the downfall came. In 1932 the democratic parties' support of the school within the city council crumbled and the Bauhaus was outlawed once again. This was induced by the inability of the school administration under the new director Hannes Mayer to preserve the state of productive toleration the school enjoyed and his predecessor Gropius had worked so hard on. The great depression of 1929 caused a drift of the voters towards the political extreme all over Germany. Until 1930 within the student body an influential communist movement evolved, and actively supported the German communist party KPD – for example by printing and spreading leaflets and participating in demonstrations. While the nationalistic parties – with the NSDAP leading the way – regarded the Bauhaus as an enemy all along due to its liberal minded principle, they were able to utilize the left wing political activity of some students to discredit the whole Bauhaus. After the ties to local communist forces became

public Hannes Mayer was instantly dismissed, but it was already too late. After the Bauhaus was forced to leave Dessau, the professors tried to keep the school alive in Berlin, but after Hitler seized power in 1933 the school was closed once again and for all time.

This was however not the end of the Bauhaus thought – numerous former professors and students migrated to the United States, the Soviet Union, Israel and Scandinavia and extended the Bauhaus legacy. After the campus was completely destroyed in 1945 it was ignored for a long time by the socialist government of East Germany. Due to the success of the Bauhaus people in the western countries, it was finally rediscovered, renovated and reopened after the German reunification in 1989/1990.

Today it is a neighbour again for the people living in Dessau. New traditions came to be such as the annual colour-festival and help to produce new relations. But still there is conflict – for instance about the exact location of the soon to be built Bauhaus museum. But at least there is an active communication and I am confident this will result in a better understanding and hopefully in a good and lasting neighbourliness.

In addition to the competition entry itself I presented my research in public. In order to do that I created a Prezi presentation dealing with the subject you can access at the following link: http://prezi.com/rmaatkx0dwfa/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

My choice of main source – the newspaper – demanded a careful use of the given information. It was interesting how as time went by the tone and register of the “Anhalter Anzeiger” radicalized becoming more and more a party organ of the NSDAP and spreading their anti-Marxist and anti-Semitic propa-

ganda. But even the more liberal papers made use of exaggerations and even lied in order to get their opinions across. And I can only wonder if this method has changed a bit in our time.

It is fascinating how the story of this school perfectly displays the curvy road Germany was on in the 20th century and how much decisions made on a national level interfered with local establishments. My work on this subject breathed life into this aspect of my home town's history – but I also thought a lot about the present and maybe even the future,

because human thinking and emotion does not change a bit. And this may be the value of an analysis of the past.



Gerd Richard Förster, 19
Dessau-Roßlau, Germany

3rd prize, History Competition
2012/2013
Körber Foundation

The Élysée Treaty and its Consequences Today

I have participated in the history competition three times. The last time I initially thought that I would not be able to take part because I was going to Nice in France for a three-month exchange. But then the topic was published: “Familiar Strangers – Neighbours in History”. And I knew that this would be the perfect occasion for some research on the relations between France and Germany and how they have changed. I concentrated on how the relations between France and Germany changed with the Élysée Treaty (Treaty to improve the cooperation between France and Germany made by the chancellors Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer; it celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2013).

So I did one hundred interviews in total, fifty with students of the school I was attending in Nice and fifty with adults I randomly asked on the streets. I asked about their attitudes towards Germany, if they had heard of

the Élysée Treaty, which politicians had tried to improve relations, but also if they had ever been to Germany or if they were learning to or could speak German.

I also asked the German teachers at my French school about their experiences with exchanges to Germany. At this school they offer Abibac-classes (students can make their German Abitur and the French Baccalauréat), which impressed me a lot. They also organized many exchanges to Germany.

I also did some additional research on the Élysée Treaty and its consequences for today in the French archives (I did not find a lot of information concerning my topic there) and in the DFI (Franco-German Institute) in Ludwigsburg. I read many magazines and newspapers about the subject. I also tried hard to get an interview with the mayor to ask him for example about Nice's relations to its twin town, but unfortunately, that was not possible.

When I finished my research, already back home in Germany, I had many results. I had noticed that most of the French did not know about the Élysée Treaty (many persons mixed it up with the Treaty of Versailles or a Treaty of the European Union) nor did they have knowledge of their German twin town, but that they considered the relations between the two countries to be very good. When I asked why, they would say that the political cooperation is very intensive. The Élysée Treaty was meant to not only improve the cooperation but also the relations between the two countries. The most interesting thing I found out was that the language skills are closely related to ones personal attitude towards the other country. People who could speak German had much more contact with Germany and were better informed about it.

I liked the idea of the bilingual classes a lot. I had never seen it before at a German school and think that this is probably one of the things the Élysée Treaty has changed concerning the cooperation and relations between France and Germany.

I was surprised when I realized that the Élysée Treaty was almost unknown but quite effective in France.



Liska Katharina Schöck, 17
Bietigheim-Bissingen,
Germany

Regional award winner,
History Competition
2012/2013
Körber Foundation

The Different Places of Residence for my Ancestors – Memoirs of my Grandmother Vija

School programs allow students to become acquainted with war as a global phenomenon that has changed the course of history. War has affected peoples, nations, political ties, but the hardest hit, of course, has been harmed individuals and families. The EUSTORY History Competition in 2013/2014 in Latvia focused on “Man and War. Changes in Lives of Latvian People Caused by Wars”. The topic led me to the idea to write about my own family’s story. War breaks the links between people, separates parents and children, families and homes; it takes away the possibility to live in the beloved homeland.

My family has also experienced that kind of tragedy. Twentieth-century wars destroyed the life of my ancestors, they became the victims of the political conditions, and they were driven into the “corner” and the situation deprived them of any option. They were not participating in war actions, were not fighting for an idea, but their fortunes were dramatically changed.

The aim of my work was to show how strongly political conflicts can affect the individual family’s life and change the fate of the whole family. During the first half of the 20th century, due to political conflicts, differ-

ent cities and countries became the places of residence for my ancestors, who had to flee from their native homes and never had the chance to return back.

The memoirs of my grandmother Vija were the basis for my research. Her stories are based on the memories of her mother Katri (Jekaterina), who is my great-grandmother.

In the Leningrad region in Russia the names of many villages have Finnish origins such as Aropakkuzi (Аропаккузи), Perečuļa (Перекуля), Kavelahti (Кавелахти), Jula-Pur-skaĵa (Юля-Пурская), Retsiļa (Ретсила), etc. The area is called Ingermanland and it was once inhabited by Finnish immigrants.

These people call themselves Inker. My mother's relatives are Inker, too. At the end of the 19th century, two families – Amalia Friis' family and Juhan Virolainen's family, lived in the Leningrad region in one of the Inker-settlements, called Korpisalovo (Корписалово). My great-grandmother's father Andreas (Antti) and her mother Amalia lived in St. Petersburg and were wealthy merchants.

In 1920, after the armed resistance, Finland and Soviet Russia signed a treaty for peace. However, the attitude towards the Inker (chuhoncies, as they were called by local Russians) was not favourable. In order to avoid political persecution from the new government, my great-great-grandfather adopted a new name for his family: Semjonov (in honour of the regiment in which he served).

However, a happy family was not destined to a long life. As shown by historical literature, materials and information about the history of the Ingermanland, which is available on the internet, the first Finnish village deportations took place in the early thirties.

As my grandmother was told by her mom, the Soviet government had closed all the Lu-

theran churches, pastors were arrested and all kinds of activity conducted in Finnish were banned. All national schools, magazines and newspapers were closed. The Finnish language was declared a "fascist language". Against the background of these circumstances, my ancestors decided to change their documents and Russian names appeared in their passports. So Katri (my great grandmother) became Catherine, Adolfin changed to Jelizaveta, Mikhel became Michael, Paavo for Pavlos, my great-great-grandfather Johan Semenov also changed his name and became Ivan Semjonov.

In 1939 Johan died of tuberculosis. The Second World War started. The war between Soviets and Finns in 1939–1940 became the basis for a new wave of repression in the treatment of Finns, the people who lived in Ingermanland. In 1940 the Russian Ministry of the Interior (NKVD) started the repatriation and Amalia was forced to move with her 8 children to Finland ("Go to your ethnic homeland", these are the words her daughter remembered). The rest of Amalia's relatives remained on the territory of Russia, but there is no information about their fate, as the connection was lost.

It turned out that our family is scattered through three countries: Finland, Estonia and Russia.



Anna Fjodorova, 18
Daugavpils, Latvia

2nd prize, History competition
2013/2014
History Teachers' Association
of Latvia (HTAL)

Władysław Sosulski – a Great-Grandfather in War

In 2012/2013 the Norwegian EUSTORY History Competition announced the topic: “My Family in the Light of History”. My great-grandfather, Władysław Sosulski, was born in the eastern part of Poland in 1915, which today belongs to Ukraine. He lived a good life there and in the end of 1939, as a 24 year old man, he married a young woman, my great-grandmother. But only 6 weeks after their wedding, in February 1940, they were suddenly put onto a freight train by Russian soldiers and were forcibly removed from their home, which they never ever saw again. They were a part of the Soviet repression of the people in Eastern Europe. Stalin forcibly removed millions of Poles and other Eastern European men, women and children. After 40 days in terrible conditions on a train, they ended up in the middle of nowhere, Krasnoyarsk in Siberia.

Life in Siberia was harsh with extremely cold winters and hot summers and Władysław had to cut down the forest for no reason. The poverty made people in their community to even eat meat of children.

Suddenly in May 1943, in the middle of World War II, Władysław was called into a Polish military division named “Kosciuszko Infantry Division” which was going to fight on foot with the Red Army against the Germans which were fighting and occupying much of Eastern Europe. Władysław had to say goodbye to his wife, who had to survive without him in Siberia while she was pregnant. Therefore my great-grandmother bore my grandfather in Siberia and took care of him alone. My great-grandfather Władysław went all the way from a town close to Moscow to the town of Lenino in today’s Belarus in

just 5 months. There he fought his first battle. We believe he was a lieutenant, but we don’t know for sure, since he did not talk about the war. He also took part in the gun battles, but since he was a Christian he never wanted to shoot anyone. Every time he had to shoot, he just shot straight up in the air. Władysław never killed anyone. His first battle ended with a victory for the Red Army and Kosciuszko Division in Lenino.

They went further and came to Warsaw in the beginning of 1945. This city was already 85% destroyed by the Germans. The division and the Red Army surrounded the city and fought against the Germans for three days. In this battle, Władysław was shot in the head, above his eyes, but luckily the bullet didn’t penetrate his skull and he survived. The Red Army and the Kosciuszko Division also won this battle.

Over the next few months the Germans were pushed further back. Władysław and his division came to the city at the end of April 1945, at the very end of the war in Europe. The Soviets, including Władysław, fought throughout the city. He was fighting in a battle in the Northern suburbs of the city, close to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. In this battle he got wounded by a shrapnel from a grenade which hit him in his leg.

Hitler realized Germany would fall soon and shot himself – while Władysław was in hospital in Poland. He helped to win the war, without shooting anybody. Even though he didn’t kill, he did a great job during the war and got 11 profit medals for his job, 8 Polish and 3 Russian.

Somehow, my great-grandmother got the chance to move back to Poland and thought

her husband was in Warsaw. She took the train all the way back to Poland with her son, but in Warsaw she was told that he was not there, but in Cracow. After searching for him without any results, suddenly she was standing right in front of him. In 1946, Władysław finally saw his son for the first time, and he saw his wife again, after 3 long years. They stayed in Cracow and lived there for the rest of their life and had three more children.

It was easy to figure out what I wanted to write about, because I already knew parts of my great-grandfather's story. But there was a lot more I wanted to know. My great-grandfather is dead and when he lived, he didn't talk much about what he witnessed in the war. This meant that I couldn't find out his everyday life during the war or what he felt and saw. But luckily I had some information from my grandfather that I tied into the "big" history.

In the work of writing the story, I've worked with three languages, including reading and translating a 38 paged document in Polish, which I don't know that well anymore. I've worked hard for hours in my spare time and read a lot about the topic online, while my grandfather, the son of Władysław, sent me documents and pictures. It was my hard work and the interest in the history that made my competition entry a good piece of work.



Kristoffer Moen, 16
Ottestad, Norway

2nd prize, History Competition
2013 / 2014
The Norwegian Historical
Association (HIFO)

Yours until Death, Faithfully Devoted, Anne J. Solberg

"Yours until death, faithfully devoted, Anne J. Solberg" is the title of my competition entry, and it was inspired by an old letter my parents found by accident in 2007 while staying in the United States of America. The letter was written by a young Norwegian girl named Anne Solberg (my great-great-grandfather's sister) who apparently had immigrated in 1882 to the same place as my parents and I stayed. So, by finding this letter I was suddenly interested in Anne's life. Why did she leave Norway, and what happened to her after she left for America?

Anne Solberg grew up on a small farm in Norway where she had to live in tough circumstances. The conditions for being a peasant's daughter were hard. Because she was a girl she did not get enough schooling, and at the age of thirteen she was sent away from her family to work for a middle class family. But something good also came out of her eight-year stay with the middle class family: Anne and a young man fell deeply in love with each other. Because of the poverty in Norway at that time (around 1800), the man chose to travel to America – the land of opportunities.

Anne was heartbroken. As a girl she had no inheritance rights, and the one she loved had left her. She therefore decided that she would also leave her homeland, and travelled across the Atlantic Ocean. Anne's life in America became just as hard as or maybe tougher than her life in Norway and she lost contact with her Norwegian family. She endured a lot of hardship and experienced a lot of death around her from diphtheria and other sicknesses. But I think the fact that her beloved was by her side in America kept her alive and she was happy.

As I already said, my topic was inspired by the letter Anne Soberg wrote in 1882. She signed her name by saying: "*Yours until Death, Faithfully Devoted*". And I chose to use this as the title, because I felt that it showed her deep and passionate love. She was not married to this man and she did not know if she ever would be, but Anne was still faithful to him.

The thing I was most impressed by was Anne Solberg's courage. The choice of leaving her homeland and traveling to America, uncertain of her future, would change her life forever. And I now admire her and the thousands of other people who had the strength and courage to take on this journey, waiting and wondering about how their lives would be in future. To sum up: I gained an important insight into my own family heritage and also gained a deeper understanding of a great historical event, emigration as well as migration. For nearly one million Norwegians, which immigrated to America, the migration ended in ruin.

Since Anne Solberg passed away in 1946, I will never quite know what she thought and felt, but after my careful research and comparisons of the different sources, I have learned a great deal about my great-great-grandfather's sister's life. And my parents were also happy that they were able to meet Anne's granddaughter four months before she died. I have therefore heard many stories from both, my father and my mother, about Anne. So, including the use of obituaries from local papers, the national archives, internet sights, history books, the letter written in 1882, I got information from speaking and living sources.

I have really enjoyed finding out about Anne's life, and doing that has also brought me closer to my own life. I was surprised by how similar her life was to mine, and I am now, just as she was, more sure of myself. The choices I make in life have consequences, and it is up to me to make sure those consequences change things for the better and not the opposite.



**Benedicte Samira
Popkema, 16
Løten, Norway**

1st prize, History Competition
2013/2014
The Norwegian Historical
Association (HIFO)

Grain Rising Turkestan

I was born and I still live in the Voronezh region in Russia. But my family came from Uzbekistan to live here 22 years ago. I was wondering, how, when and why my ancestors, ethnic Slavs, found themselves in Uzbekistan, among people of a different culture and religion. What was their life like in the Hungry steppe? Finding an answer to this question became the main objective of my research. The research is based on personal observations and my relatives' experience.

The first Russian villages in the territory of Turkestan, the territory of the present-day Uzbekistan, were founded in the 1880s.

The date of birth column in my mother's, grandmother's and other relative's passports reads: "Uzbekistan. Syrdaryinskaya region, Gulistan district, the village of Krestianskoye". This locality no longer exists, this village is called Dehkanobat, and the Uzbek renamed it after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Before the October revolution the Krestianskiy village was called "Romanovsky". The village was founded by Russian settlers in the Hungry steppe in 1887 with the help of the Grand Duke Nikolay Konstantinovich. He founded 12 Russian villages in the Hungry steppe and set up an irrigation system of numerous canals.

Many stories are told about my ancestors in my family. Here is one of them: "One of our distant relative's name was Filimon. He worked as a digger, dug a canal. Prince Nikolay sometimes organized fist-fighting on holidays. All adult men gathered and took part in fights. There was a very strong Uzbek there. He won over everyone, he was second to none. Prince Nikolay announced: 'Whoever defeats this athlete, I'll give my own Uzbek gown to him!' Our great-grandfather volunteered.

No one expected this to happen, but he beat that strong Uzbek. The Prince kept his word and gave him his own gown. This gown was kept by the family for a long time." It turned out that Filimon Umashev was my great-grandfather.

My father's aunt, Galina Nikolaevna Arbusova from Gulistan (she hasn't left and is still living in Uzbekistan with her husband Gennady), shared her memories of her grandmother's and grandfather's stories with us:

"At the beginning of the 20th century Uzbeks lived in small tents – kubitki – unwalled cane yurtas, and then started building houses out of chim (soil) like Russians. The Russians taught them to plant cotton and work on the land and taught the Uzbek women to wear underwear. My aunt Dynia was friends with the Uzbeks. She taught them how to wash babies in a basin and how to cook bortsch and pelmeni and preserve vegetables. The Uzbeki women wore full veil till 1950s".

It is hard to imagine that about a hundred years ago these people lived like real nomads. They didn't even do farming. The Hungry steppe turned into a blossoming land. In 1980s the village of Krestianskiy became a regional centre.

The first settlers came to Uzbekistan at the beginning of the 20th century. The next migration wave happened in the 1930s and was connected with collectivism and dispossession of the kulaks. Then there was a wave of evacuees during the Great Patriotic War. My ancestors went to these lands far away, because life in Russia was so difficult. There was a land shortage. Turkestan was called "grain-raising", people told legends about it and they called it a paradise. So they all settled there, found a new motherland and fell in love with it. They managed to preserve

their own culture, traditions and religion of their people.

The tsar's government was hoping to:

1. Develop this land for Russian peasants suffering from shortage of available land.
2. Find a market for Russian industries and sources of raw materials such as cotton, rice, silk, wine, fruit and vegetables.

Russia was not aiming to enslave the natives or destroy the traditions of the Central Asian society. Russians treated indigenous people well and even brought elements of education, culture and science with them.

Almost all Russians fled back to Russia in the 1990s. All the canals, irrigation ditches, factories, plants, pipelines, i.e. a huge infrastructure, were left to independent Uzbekistan.

My parents are still using Uzbek words in colloquial speech, and watch attentively the news coming from Uzbekistan. At home we often eat pilaf, shurpa and dumplings. Everyone worries for migrant workers from Central Asia who have to come and work in Russia now.

Now it is hard to call Uzbekistan "grain-raising". But I do hope people are living well there and are able to take care of themselves.



**Daniil Mochalov, 16
Voronezh, Russian
Federation**

1st prize, History Competition
2013/2014
MEMORIAL Society

Pictures of the Front and Slovakian Villages

My co-author and I have been working on the project "Pictures of the Front and Slovakian Village" depicted in Slovakian fictional, prose, and memoirs literature. Choosing a main theme for our work was not very easy in the beginning. In fact, we hesitated as to whether we should get involved in the competition this year since the theme of the Slovakian EUSTORY History Competition was the First World War. We found it almost impossible to find someone who had lived through and remembered what was happening at that time. Moreover, in our region were hardly any battles or events which could be connected with the First World War. Although we had some

photographs from my family, we still needed a story we could write about as my co-worker and I were lacking a conception of what it was like to live during such a milestone of world's history.

We realized that literature has dealt intensively with our subject. Therefore, we decided to work with this source of historical information.

We chose three main categories of Slovak literature. Our first step was to carefully read fictional books as the facts we have learned at school were not sufficient to write a high-quality and unique piece of historical work. This was also our first category of literature.

These books gave us a large amount of facts. However, we also needed books which would reflect the emotional side of war.

Therefore we decided to search in the prose and memoirs literature. These forms of literature have become our second and third categories. We wanted to examine books, which are not very well known among the public. Fortunately, our history teacher offered to help and recommended some books which we could work with.

When the books were chosen, we divided them into three categories. First was Austro-Hungary at the beginning of the war, second were Czechoslovakian legions in Russia and third was Czechoslovakian legions near by the river Piava in Italy. In each of these categories we chose two to three books, which represented the given category.

Out of many books we had, there was one book which caught my attention the most. The book belongs to the category of Czechoslovakian legions in Russia. It is called "Students, Love, Čeka and Death", written by Aľa Rachmanovova who is paradoxically the only non-Slovak author we chose. The book is written in the form of a diary and depicts the author's memoirs. The author writes about living conditions in imperial Russia, having come from a rich family, and how her life completely changed after World War I. She also writes about Czechoslovakian legions, but not in the usual way which Czechs and Slovaks are used to. We see our legionnaires as heroes of

our nation, but Aľa provides a point of view of Russian people. She depicts how cruel the legionnaires could be, how they treated ordinary people for rioting against soldiers who belonged to the "Red" Russian army and additionally Czechoslovak legionnaires who set villages on fire and took food from poor families and let them starve to death.

What impressed me while reading the book, was the view of the author on the October Revolution, since the author experienced that event. What also caught my attention is the way she described the Civil War, because she described it in a different way than we learn about it at school in Slovakia. Also the emotional side of the book is very catchy, because the book is not only about pure facts, although the book provides them, but they are provided in a very authentic way. The book was very touching, too, since the author was only 17, when she started to write her diary in which she depicted all events in Russia and it made me realize how much easier my life is (I'm 17, too) then hers was.



Ema Zorkóczyová, 17
Ziar nad Hronom, Slovakia

2nd prize, History Competition
2013/2014
Slovak Centre for
Communication and
Development

World War I and its Reflection in the Slovak Monuments of “The Great War” on Middle Spiš

Last year, the topic of the History Competition of Slovakia was the following: “World War I and Its Reflection in Slovak Society”. My competition entry was about places of remembrance linked to World War I in the middle Spiš region, where I come from. We do have a hospital for soldiers in the region and a cemetery for Jews.

My co-worker and I were mostly working at a library where we were looking for photos and reading different books about this war. We also went to a museum and we talked with many people who had dealt with this issue for several years. They also gave us some pictures of soldiers, wounded soldiers and nurses who cared about them. One photo is from my current school which was a hospital during the First World War. It is my class today. Some pictures I took myself in a village where my grandparents lived. For the research my co-author and I went to archives, libraries, museums and cemeteries in Spišská Nová Ves and Spišské Vlachy.

Then we went to the cemetery where we discussed the occurrence of a Jewish cemetery in Spišskej Nova Ves with the manager of the city cemeteries in our town. I also made a map of middle Spiš where you can see cities and villages that have monuments from World War I.

A history teacher often helped us with old documents. But what impressed me the most was the work in the archive because I had never been there and I had never seen any old documents about big issues.



Lívia Bosáková, 17
Smizany, Slovakia

2nd prize, History Competition
2013/2014
Slovak Centre for
Communication and
Development

Struggles for Power and their Effects on the Lives of Common People – Fate of Imrich Kružliak from Detva

In our paper, my co-author and I tried our best to describe the time after World War I and to bring it to life again. Our main aim was to unite macro-history, or world history that you can find in history books, with micro-history, which consists of the lives of ordinary people.

Through this, our paper shows how the life of a peasant can be changed completely due to a single decision made by men with governmental power.

We have chosen the story of Imrich Kružliak from Detva who is my co-author's

great-great-grandfather. He spent 5 years in Russian captivity during the war. Primarily, we wrote a letter to his son Dr. Imrich Kružliak Jr. who lives in Munich, and he described everything he remembers from the stories of his father's life. Notably, the life of a peasant was extremely challenging. Their daily work consisted of fieldwork, taking care of domestic animals and completing household chores. Therefore, when Imrich and other workers at the farm had to leave due to the military duty, life became even harder for those who stayed, such as: old people, women and children.

One problem Austria-Hungary had was that it was too multicultural. The Hungarians put a lot of pressure on all of the smaller ethnic groups within Austria-Hungary in different ways. They tried to change them into Hungarians. It was Lord Apponi who was responsible for this "Hungarization" of the local ethnic minorities. Imrich and his troops deserted their posts at the first clash with the "enemy". They did not want to fight against Russians because they felt the "Slavic blood" in their veins. So with words "Я Славянин" literally meaning "I am Slav," they deserted the Austria-Hungarian army and joined the Russian army.

Statistically, in 1914, the number of deserters wanted by gendarmerie and military authorities in Hungary was about 18,413. The number drastically increased to 452,417 in 1917, and finally the total number of deserters estimated by the Hungarian Ministry of War in 1918 was 800,000. Slovak soldiers were accused and then sent to jail for being traitors, because they refused to fight against their Slavic brothers – Serbians and Russians. The official reports of those times include the sympathies of Slovakian people with Serbians and Russians, and hate speeches addressed to

the monarch, the monarchy, Hungarian ruling classes and against national oppression.

Imrich spent 4 years in Russian captivity where he was working in the fields for a Russian farmer. From the memories his son told us, we know that he ate watermelon for the very first time during this time as a captive, and he called it "arbus". When he left home he knew that his wife was pregnant. He received a letter from her when she gave birth to their very first child but he did not know whether it was boy or girl.

He most likely returned in the winter of 1919, or in early spring 1920. Dr. Imrich Kružliak Jr. recalls a distinct memory from this time; *"as a child, it was interesting to me that he brought me a wooden spoon because I liked eating mashed potatoes."* After the war, in Czechoslovakia, Imrich was a bee-keeper; he cultivated fields and took the harvest. Imrich had 3 more children, in addition to his son Imrich, the daughters Juliána, Anna and Mária, who were born shortly after the war.

During the process of writing our paper, several problems occurred that we had to solve: The first of them was the incorrect information about the birth date of Imrich Kružliak. When we were processing these attachments, we found a Firearms License which contains the wrong date of birth. It was set on 12th August 1890, but my co-worker's grandmother told us that it is a mistake and his actual date of birth was on 3rd August 1890. This motivated us to go to the State Archive in Banská Bystrica to have a look into the book of people who had been baptized. It was not that easy because the whole book was written in the language of Roman-Catholic Church – Latin. We found out that Latin variant of name Imrich is "Emericus". We realized this thanks to the names of his parents: Anna and Josephus (the Slovak variants being

Anna and Jozef) which were easier to understand. His actual birth date was on 3rd August 1890.

The next problem that occurred was the lack of neutral information about Slovak history during the First World War. There was no problem with the number of books and information, but the problem that arose was within the literature of communistic Czechoslovakia. In my opinion it was full of Communistic propaganda. According to the books, when the Slovak deserters came back from captivity in Russia, all of them started to spread the “awesome” communistic ideology and everyone started to follow them. But as

we know from talking to Dr. Imrich Kružliak Jr., most of the Slovaks did not know about political events in Russia. Moreover, most Slovaks were Christians and they did not agree with the atheistic concept of communism.



Lucían Gontko, 18
Zisr nad Hronom, Slovakia

1st prize, History Competition
2013/2014
Slovak Centre for
Communication and
Development

Oral History: Granting a Voice to the Voiceless

The Spanish History Competition in 2013 focused on the topic: “My Family in History”. The history we know from books and other publications is a raw and often an impersonal version of the past. For that reason, this knowledge would be incredibly more complete and rich if we were able to find out the personal experiences of people who lived in certain epochs. The vision of the historical periods from the eyewitness perspective provides us with a new point of view on the same events.

One of the most recent research methods is oral history, which is based on the idea of oral tradition. The main source of information used when we want to recover life experiences of generations remote in time, are diaries and letters. However, as it is well known, the life speed and immediacy which charac-

terize modern times make this sort of documentation more and more scarce. Oral history is about saving life stories from oblivion at all costs by interviewing people about their past within a historical context. Since the respondents may be ordinary people, we could say that this type of research gives voice to the voiceless. Otherwise, all this information, family memories and stories would neither be preserved nor published.

It is worth mentioning that the strict origin of oral history as a discipline is professor Allan Nevins’ (1890–1971) merit, who founded the Oral History Research Office in 1948. Nowadays, it is the most important organization of its kind in the world. I used the same empirical procedure the Oral History Research Office is using: I have interviewed two people of different nationalities, in order

to compare both societies, cultures, lifestyles, etc. One of them was Wojciech Domosławski, born in Warsaw (Poland) in 1936; and the other was María Concepción Soria, born in Orihuela (Spain) in 1925.

The questionnaire addressed various aspects to make it possible to get a general overview of daily life in the second half of the 20th century. Apart from that, the respondents were asked about significant milestones, such as the fall of Communism in Poland and the Franco Regime in Spain, the election of Karol Wojtyła as the Pope or the entry of their countries into the EU.

The historical developments of both countries have many common points, and this fact makes the study even more interesting. Firstly, the war, in particular the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and World War II (1939–1945) which had terrible consequences. Then, authoritarian dictatorships came: Francisco Franco's semi-fascist regime in Spain and the Soviet Communism in Poland. Finally, everything seemed to turn out for the better at the end of the 20th century in both cases. Franco died in 1975 and democracy was gradually re-established. In Poland this change took place several years later. The USSR was losing power steadily until its definitive fall in 1991, so that the Polish political system was able to start turning into a democracy in 1990. Nowadays, both countries are part of the European Union.

The conclusions of this research project turned out to be satisfying, even surprising. For example, I always thought the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939), which preceded the Civil War, was a period of important ideological and political progress; so it was a very positive time. In exchange, Franco-

ism was just the opposite. After talking with Mrs. Soria, I partially changed my mind. For her, the Republic was not so good, because it led to anticlericalism. At the same time, the Franco Regime was not so bad, because it guaranteed political stability and a peaceful and comfortable life for her and her family. We have to bear in mind that each historical period has got its positive and negative points. On the other side, the conversation with Mr. Domosławski consolidated my opinion about the setback of communism and the USSR's control in Poland.

Another thought-provoking conclusion is the evidence that both undemocratic rules used the same methods to control the population, although they were extremely different regarding to their base ideologies.

There are several important fields of the research which might be developed in the future. For example, it would be interesting to compare the accounts of two or more people from the same country, in order to see the differences of the same history from different points of view. It also would be a great idea to compare life in a dictatorship and a democratic system. Is current democracy actually better? How could we improve it?



Bartłomiej Kokot, 17
La Alberca de las Torres,
Spain

2nd prize, History Competition
2012/2013
Real Maestranza de Caballería
de Ronda

History in Europe – Understanding Differences, Overcoming Divisions

The Network

EUSTORY is an international network of currently 25 independent non-governmental organisations that carry out historical research competitions for youth in their countries. The network was established in 2001, initiated by the Körber Foundation, and currently connects 25 civic organisations from Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and Wales.

The Idea

EUSTORY supports a European perspective on local, regional and national history, shunning exclusion and promoting understanding. The mandate of EUSTORY is to view European history from its grass roots and to recognize the vast diversity of experience. EUSTORY emphasises the view of history as a workshop for intercultural understanding and makes an important and pioneering contribution to European efforts toward peace and tolerance.

Learning Through Research and History Camps

The EUSTORY history competitions encourage young people to look for traces of history in their immediate environment. The students thus examine and consider history from different perspectives and draw their

own conclusions. They liberate themselves from prejudices and develop the ability to think critically. In that way they lay the foundations for active participation in civic society. The critical confrontation with controversial aspects of European history is the basis of the EUSTORY history camps, where prize winners from all national history competitions meet. Working with peers, they learn to respect this diversity and to see themselves through the eyes of others. This leads to openness, understanding and tolerance in relation with others and people from other cultures.

Network Meetings

All EUSTORY member organisations meet once a year for the Annual EUSTORY Network Meeting, where the organisers of national history competitions exchange their experiences and discuss about network issues. The Annual Network Meetings are focused on topics from the field of citizenship and history education, in order to bridge the practical experiences from the EUSTORY competitions with the more general discourse on citizenship, identity and history in Europe.

Contact

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| EUSTORY | Phone +49-40-808192-161 |
| Kehrwieder 12 | Fax +49-40-808192-302 |
| D-20457 Hamburg | E-Mail office@eustory.eu |
| Germany | www.eustory.eu |

EUSTORY is initiated by

