

The 8th Estonian History Competition
Man in History in the 20th century
2006/2007

Report

The history research competition for students was organised by the Estonian History Teachers' Association for the 8th year. The concept of this competition originates from the Körber Foundation in Hamburg that also gave its financial support to this event. The patron of the competition is the President of the Republic of Estonia.

The Estonian History Teachers' Association elected two coordinators and the organizing commission to carry out the competition.

The competition was announced on 19 September 2006. The concept of the topic was proposed during a round table discussion with organizers and sponsors. The topic was supported and precisely phrased by history teachers during the Estonian History Teachers' Association's summer conference held in August 2006. Subsequently, in September, an informative brochure consisting of requirements for participating reached all Estonian schools. Information concerning the competition can also be found on the Estonian History Teachers' Association's website. Among all it includes guiding materials on how to write a research paper. The same requirements were used by the jury at assessing the research papers.

On October 30 2006 there was an introductory meeting in Tartu. 72 students and their teachers participated. During this get-together, historians, museum and archive workers, experienced research instructors and history teachers all gave their advice, and talked about their experience in doing research.

Thus, 139 research papers from 165 students were received this year. There were 17 group-works among them. There were research papers presented from 53 schools, 72 teachers supervised the researches.

The authors of 49 research papers were written by students from basic schools, 90 papers were written by high school students. All in all, during the

8 years of competitions, there have been 1120 participants represented by 852 research papers.

All the papers presented are accessible to be read at the Estonian Literary Museum.

The research papers were assessed by a jury. They are all working as scientists either at Tartu University or at museums. The head of the jury is professor Eero Mediainen.

The award ceremony was held in Tartu on May 12 2007 in the hall of the Ministry of Education and Science.

Themes chosen this year

The research themes were mainly family stories and stories of representatives of different areas of activity (miner, artist, seaman, teacher, fisherman, sportsman etc). There were also some original themes: commonplace books of girls, the history of Orthodox Church, the Moscow Olympic Games, homeless people. The purpose of researchers was often to get new information about some people, events or phenomena.

Choice of the sources

The main primary sources were the sources of oral history. The authors interviewed their grandparents and parents, teachers, neighbours and sometimes also some famous persons of Estonian society.

The main written sources were written memories of families, in individual cases also sources of Estonian National Archive and of the archives of different schools. Sometimes pictorial materials – photos – were used. Some authors had had difficulties in finding professional literature. A number of authors did not refer to sources correctly.

Interpretation and layout of the research papers

The materials used (especially sources of oral history) often influenced the layout of the researches. The authors had difficulties in critical interpretation of the sources and they often seemed to have trusted the sources (especially oral history) without critical thinking. They had quite successfully analysed the pictorial materials. Some students had compared

different types of sources and they had achieved good results. For instance, they had drawn parallels between the materials of written and oral history, compared the same type of written materials (e.g. commonplace books of girls) of people of the different ages, confirmed the arguments of the sources of the oral history with photos.

The biggest problems were connected with formulation of text. Some researches had simply retold a life story or presented memories word for word. In general, students had well managed with the layout of their papers.

Since this year the Ministry of Education and Science of Estonia has reached an agreement that the 12th year students who have won a cash award at the research competition can enter university without competition. Thus, winning the history research competition and winning history olympiad have been equalized. This year 2 secondary school graduates can use the chance.

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