

Third Estonian History Competition

“The Soviet Republic of Estonia” 2001 / 2002

Report

The 2001/ 2002-research competition in history for the students of Estonia on the awards of the President of the Republic was under the topic: *The Soviet Republic of Estonia*.

- The research work competitions are organised by the Estonian Society of Teachers of History.
- The Körber Foundation in Germany sponsors the competition.
- The patron of the competition is the President of the Republic of Estonia.
- A five-member independent jury, consisting of historians from Tartu University and scholars from the Estonian National Museum, Estonian Literature Museum, and the Art Museum of Estonia, assesses the student research works.
- Money prizes for the authors and the Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic, special awards, awards instructors of the best works and book prizes are funded by the Ministry of Education.
- The selection of the best research works from the previous two years appeared in a bulletin. The Cultural Endowment of Estonia, the Gambling Tax Council, and Cultural Foundation of the President of the Republic covered the publishing cost.

In September 2001, the third competition for the student research papers was announced. The topic of the competition was *The Soviet Republic of Estonia*. The deadline for the papers was March 31, 2002.

In October 2001, two information days for the students and their instructors were organised, one in Tartu and the other in Tallinn. There were presentations from leading historians and teachers of history. Bulletins describing the rules and instructions of the competition were sent to all schools in Estonia. The details of the competition were also published on the web page of the Estonian Society of Teachers of History.

The results of the third competition were announced in the hall of the Ministry of Education on May 4, 2002. Among the participants at the final conference were 139 students and 64 instructors, Arnold Rüütel, the President of the Republic of Estonia, Dr. Wolf Schmidt, the board member of Körber Foundation, Andreas Hess, the attaché of Tallinn embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mailis Rand, the Minister of Education, Eva-Clarita Onken, Körber Foundation, the organising committee, the jury, and guests from the Latvian Society of the Teachers of History.

The aims of the 2001/2002 competition were the following:

- to reconsider national values and foster ties between generations;
- to deepen students' interest in history and thus widen their horizon of understanding;
- to promote the students' ability of individual research work;
- to collect, save, evaluate and systemize information about the Soviet period in Estonia.

107 papers (51 from basic schools and 56 from high school) were submitted to the competition *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia*. There were 64 instructors, both teachers and parents.

The winners of the competition were:

Basic School:

Kätlin Pahk	Are Basic School	“My Grandfather Leho Pahk – Countryman’s Life”
Viivika Halapuu		
Kadri Kann		
Jane Peda	Ülenurme High School.	“The One Who Walks After a Plough Is on the Right Track”
Robert EensooTüri	High School	“The School Network in Järva County – Its Creation and Transformation in Time”

High School:

Indrek Must	Treffner High School	“Textbooks for Elementary School level – the Tool for Soviet Ideology”
Mari-Leen Tammela	Tallinn French Lycée	“Journal <i>Pioneer</i> as a reverberator and Creator of Estonian School Youth”
Hiie Nõlvak	Rakvere High School	“Ellen Grünfeldt in Changing Times”

Students used a variety of sources including the National Archive of Estonia, county and school archives, museums, oral and written memories, personal diaries, journalistic sources, photos, and documents to conduct the research.

About the subject matter:

- In many papers, the grandparents of the students, who led their lives under a Soviet rule, form the core of the subject matter.
- A number of research papers dissected Soviet-time school textbooks, children literature, and the press.
- The school institution of the Soviet era was also studied.
- Some works focused on history of the native place during the Soviet period.

Some samples of the range of topics:

- Seaside Collective Farms of Saaremaa
- The Life of Estonians during the Soviet Period
- Defining the Term “Collective Farm”
- Memories of the Soviet-time Cinema
- Soldier Letters Tell a Story
- How Estonians Served in the Soviet Army?
- What Were You Like, the Period of Rouble?
- School life in the Soviet Time

- How to Evaluate the Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia?
- Reading a History Textbook
- Soviet Cleansing in Estonia in 1949-1959
- The Myths and Reality of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Estonia
- The School and Teacher during the Soviet Rule

The statement of the jury on outcome of the competition:

- The subject matter of the research papers was topical
- The task was rather difficult as the Soviet period is past era for today's students and the students are deprived of the historical background.
- It was relatively complicated for the students to assess the credibility and importance of sources used.
- The interpretation of the source material from the Soviet period was complicated. The wrong conclusions were easily drawn.
- The papers that utilised memories, interviews and diaries were better.

Estonian students will definitely continue with research papers as there are many aspects and things to study, and, surely there are a great number of eager student to work on them.

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Competition co-ordinators