

**“History at Hand” Competition
Jury Announcement**

“Disobedient in the 20th century”

The topic of the Polish history competition (eleventh edition) organized within the framework of the “History at Hand” program, addressed to high school and middle school students, was “Disobedient in the 20th century”. The Batory Foundation and KARTA Center announced this topic in June 2006.

275 competition entries were submitted (147 group works and 128 individual), written by 518 students (63% of girls, which indicates a 10% increase in the number of participating boys), from 157 schools, from 94 Polish towns and cities (the same number of entries was submitted from Silesia and Greater Poland, which constituted 36% of all contributions). 31% of entries were submitted from middle schools; 22% were written by students from schools that participated in the competition for the first time; 6 papers were submitted directly, without school mediation. 175 tutors, mostly teachers, accompanied the students in their research.

The authors succeeded in presenting a whole spectrum of characters, truly disobedient throughout the historically complex 20th century. Profiles of the 1980s’ opposition movement participants were quantitatively dominant – in their parents’ generation authors discovered disobedient members of “Solidarity” or Independent Student Association, active especially in the underground structures of the Martial Law period. At times these were people not known or completely forgotten, whose nonconformist attitudes were worth noticing and describing. Students also went back to their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ generations – they described the participants of the events of 1976, 1970, 1968, 1956, the turning points in Polish history. They also recalled steadfast partisans who refused to lay down their arms after the war or members of illegal youth organizations active during the Stalin period. Among the presented characters certain groups were predominant. These were: teachers, especially those active in the clandestine underground schools of the war period; soldiers of the underground army, risking their lives under two occupation periods; priests fighting the communist regime. Few profiles of the disobedient at the very beginning of the 20th century included the participants of 1906 school strikes, participants of the uprising in Greater Poland, Silesian plebiscite activists fighting for Polish traits as well as the founders of the Polish bank in the Prussian sector of partitioned Poland.

Submitted entries imply a certain difficulty with the interpretation of the term “disobedience”. Not all participants familiarized themselves with the competition instructions, in which the organizers tried to facilitate the understanding of the topic. And the subject itself, we have to admit, was intellectually demanding. Competition entries described courageous, brave people (even risking their lives) who fulfilled their duties in difficult or even dramatic moments in their homeland’s history. Or those who were righteous, stayed true to ideals, steadfast in their activities or simply solidly performing their jobs. This, however, similarly as eccentricity or an expressive personality of an artist, does not always mean a nonconformist attitude.

Too often students employed a biographic approach –in detail they reconstructed fates of their characters without exposing those attitudes that would illustrate the disobedience during the depicted times. Some contributions lacked a background to the reality they rebelled against. Some contributions reached a hagiographic dimension, where childhood stubbornness or teenage rebel against members of family was to denote the character’s disobedience. Quite often authors did not conduct a critical analysis of the sources, relying solely on the characters’ accounts about their “disobedient lives”. Such sources, although at times extremely interesting, could not receive full recognition as student contributions. There were incidents where fragments of competition papers, indicated as the author’s personal input, were copied from the Internet. Sometimes these texts were originally written by people from the school environment (e.g. academic work of the tutoring teacher). We have also received contributions that cast serious doubt on the authentic authorship. Sometimes such situations led to the disqualification of the contribution.

Summing up, despite such incidents members of the Jury acknowledged the overall level of the competition as high – which is the reason for such a large number of contributions awarded with consolation prizes.

Submitted competition entries were analyzed and graded in two phases. Eleven historians, employees and associates of the KARTA Center, constituted the Nominating Jury. The decision regarding the prizes belonged to the Final Jury, comprised of: Anna Radziwiłł, Zbigniew Gluza, Jacek Kochanowicz, Andrzej Paczkowski and Tomasz Szarota.

Students were awarded: 12 first, second and third prizes (7 group and 5 individual); 35 consolation prizes of the first level (24 group and 11 individual – financial prizes), as well as 58 second level consolation prizes (28 group and 30 individual – book awards sent by mail).

105 contributions and 213 authors were nominated. Also 9 teachers, tutors of student contributions, were awarded financial prizes. Tutors of all awarded contributions were honored with diplomas and books.