

4th Annual National Competition of History Research Papers

“Man in History. Russia in the 20th Century” 2002/2003

Report

Memorial announced the 4th competition for high school students in April 2002. While “Man in History. Russia, 20th Century” remained the general topic of the competition, we offered the following nominations to the participants: “Family History,” “Man and Homeland,” “Man and War,” “Friends and Aliens: Another Nationality, Another Religion, Different Beliefs,” and “Man and Government.” The deadline for papers was January 10, 2003.

Every competitor who approached the Steering Committee received a methodological guide by mail. Besides, the Steering Committee experts in Moscow and the competition coordinators in the Russian regions gave hundreds of one-on-one consultations to school students and their teachers/advisors (by correspondence and at meetings).

We received 2.960 papers from 1.024 cities and villages across Russia. 13.6% of papers were presented by a group of authors. In total, the 4th competition had about 4.000 participants from 85 RF member territories, up by one third as compared to the last year.

The success of the competition was to a large extent a factor of the active support which our project had in the provinces. This was primarily support by the teachers and tutors of out-of-school educational centers. Our regional activists’ ongoing work is instrumental in building cooperation with them. The 4th competition relied on 20 coordination centers with staff coordinators and volunteers (staff employees ranged from 0 to 20% in these centers).

Coordination centers made contacts with schools, local studies groups and centers of children’s creative work, advertised the competition, explained its tasks, cultivated the media and made the regional public aware of our project.

Research and practical seminars that are held annually in Moscow and some other cities (Perm, Voronezh, Yekaterinburg and Tula) play an important role in forging cooperation with the teacher activists.

Experts of the competition included researchers, faculty of tertiary institutions, secondary school teachers and public figures. They short listed 100 best papers among 2.960 papers and sent them to the Panel. The Panel chaired by Sigurd Ottovich Schmidt from the Russian Academy of Education (RAE) included RAE Academician Alexander Asmolov, writers Daniil Granin and Svetlana Alexievich and other prominent figures of science and culture. On April 4, 2003, it selected 40 best papers from the shortlist. Besides, 45 students were awarded special prizes: they were delegated to the summer schools in Russia and abroad. A special prize was awarded to one competition participant for the practical assistance to the

survivors of political repression (assistance in obtaining the status of repression victims and in implementing the right to compensations and social benefits).

Based on the results of the earlier competitions, the Panel awarded special prizes to three best tutors: each of them received a computer.

About 650 school students received encouragement book prizes by mail (the Steering Committee had these books as sponsor's aid from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany), the Fund for Social, Economic and Intellectual Programs (Russia), the Soros Foundation – Russia and the “Democracy” Foundation (Russia)). All other participants in the competition received colored participation certificates by mail. Thank-you letters and books were also mailed to the most active schools and tutors/teachers.

Upon agreement with the competition Panel, the Koerber Foundation selected five candidates among the winners to take part in the international Summer Academy for the winners of European history competitions within by “Eustory” network, which also includes the competition held by *Memorial*. Russian winners from Vladimir, Krasnodar and Troitsk (Chelyabinsk oblast) took part in the Summer Academy in August 2003 in Germany.

On May 5, 2003, the State Museum of History in Moscow hosted the ceremony of awarding prizes to the winners of the 2002/2003 competition. Its attendees included 54 school students from Russian regions – from Pskov oblast to Khabarovsk krai.

The main sponsors of the award ceremony were:

- § the European Union (Brussels),
- § the “Open Russia” Foundation (Russia),
- § the Ford Foundation (USA) and
- § the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany).

The award ceremony also received support from:

- § the Koerber Foundation (Germany),
- § the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany),
- § Moscow City Government,
- § the Federation of Internet Education (Russia),
- § the “Open Society” Institute (Soros Foundation – Russia).

Chairman of the Panel S. O. Schmidt, E. Sh. Gontmakher, Director of the Department for Social Development at the RF Government Office, Deputy Minister of Education N. B. Bantsekin, Chair of the Human Rights Commission at the RF President E. A. Pamfilova, A. N. Yakovlev, Chair of the Commission on Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression and President of “Democracy” Foundation, Chair of the Moscow Helsinki Group L. M. Alexeeva, President of the National Project Institute Professor A. A. Auzan, representatives of supporter organizations – G. Bucher-Dinch, Executive Director of Eustory Network and E. F. Saburov

who represented the Federation of Internet Education, Russia – congratulated school students and tutors on their accomplishments.

The winners also received written congratulations from A. V. Shishlov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee for Science and Education, and the Committee of Public and Cross-Regional Relations of the Moscow City Government. All winners were awarded valuable prizes at the ceremony.

Irina Scherbakova, Director of Educational Programs for Young People at International *Memorial*, presented a collection of papers by the winners of the 2nd competition, which had come out of print in *Zvenia* publishing house right before the ceremony.

A collection of the best papers was published in German in September 2003, jointly with the Koerber Foundation. It includes the best papers of the earlier competitions and will be presented at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2003.

While in Moscow, the competition winners studied the work of Russian and international non-government organizations and visited the Museum of GULAG History and the Archives of *Memorial* Society. Grigory Yavlinsky, Chair of the Russian Democratic Party “Yabloko,” and Professor Falk Bomsdorf, Resident Representative of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Russia and CIS, took part in a discussion held the same day. School students took an active part in discussing a range of issues: the role and responsibility of historians in the present-day Russian society, human rights in the context of history (Russian and foreign experience), the problem of tolerance and nationalism, possibilities of drafting and implementing regional humanitarian mini-projects, and preparations for the election to the RF State Duma in December 2003. Guests and participants said that the days in Moscow were a vivid holiday for the school students and tutors, but also an important educational and awareness-building event in their history and civil education.

Summer School in Russia

In August 2003, 100 school students aged 14-17 from 34 Russian regions took part in a summer school in Russia (organised in cooperation between MEMORIAL and Inter-Republican Confederation of Consumers' Societies). The project was supported by the RF Ministry of Education as part of the federal program of development of education “Harnessing Public Resources of Education for Its Modernization and Development.”

Selection criteria were: the participants worked proactively and successfully in educational projects (did history or public/civil research on their own); were willing and ready to work in the projects run by children, youth or civil organizations of their regions or in a project on history and civil education.

Goals of the school: awareness-building, educational and methodological work with school students, their involvement in an international discussion of issues of the historical memory and human rights.

The school curriculum was targeted at:

- teaching the school students how to work with historical and present-day information and relevant legislation, and at encouraging them to go into local studies;
- developing their ability to evaluate historical and current events and work with oral sources; exposing them to issues related to the work of historical memory and its importance for the society, and with international experience in this field;
- drawing the young people's attention to human rights and fundamental freedoms and at creating the conditions for the free expression of views on issues of human rights, rule of law, and democracy.

The summer school offered teaching in different forms, e.g., master classes, business and sports/intellectual games, work in small groups, brainstorming, and interactive learning. Tutors and game specialists with extensive experience taught at the school.

Monitoring of effectiveness showed that the school, in general, was a success. The curriculum had a proactive impact on the development of knowledge in law and history and the young people's civil position. Besides, it developed their skills of public work and discussions and identified the most active students capable of productive social activities. Many students intend to take part in different programs of history and legal education in the period immediately ahead.

Discussions of the program elements by teachers, polls and questionnaires completed by students contain a variety of interesting findings that could be used at seminars for the secondary school teachers. In August-September 2003, we carried out the preliminary poll of the tutors who gave guidance and advice on the competition papers. Based on the poll, we selected 60 teachers who will be asked to take part in the research/practical seminars in Moscow in November 2003.

The 5th competition of history research for 2003/2004 was announced in April 2003. As compared to the 4th competition, it had a new topic "Person and Society" on the list of the most recommended topics. We suggest that the participants would think what the basic liberal values mean in the present-day life, find evidence of how people defended their civil freedom and freedom of mind, and how public activity opposed the dictate of the State. We believe that research on this topic will help the school students give a better evaluation of the role and place of the civil society institutes in Russia's life in the present and future.

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Competition co-ordinator