

Third Belarusian History Competition - Close History -

“History in the Letter-Box” 2001/2002

Report

The Competition “History from the Letter-Box” started on January 15th, 2002. At the very beginning the following methodological materials were prepared:

- information leaflets with the competition requirements;
- advertising posters;
- methodological brochures for students giving an in-depth description of the competition, as well as recommendations for writing a contribution.

Afterwards the publicity campaign was held. Newspaper advertisements (in both variants: an abridged and a full variant) were published in a large number of national, local and district newspapers as well as in other NGO bulletins. The information about the competition was also distributed by BelaPAN information agency. Electronic dissemination of the information was performed by the Belarusian Resource Centre Association.

The competition advertisements were repeated in the newspapers “Nasha Slova”, “Narodnaya Volya” and “Naviny Palessya” before the beginning of the school year 2002/2003 which resulted in an outburst of interest for the competition. To promote the competition a number of official journeys were organized during which we demonstrated the best contributions of the previous competitions as well as methodological brochures, information leaflets and anthologies of the best competition pieces were distributed.

Competition materials were sent to schools, Liceums, gymnasiums, vocational schools, technical secondary schools and colleges as well as to history museums, school history clubs, clubs of regional history, scouts organizations and school tourists clubs. Apart from this we sent methodological and promotional materials to libraries, oblast and regional departments of education. We also involved participants to the previous contests and to the NGOs in these educational and cultural activities. The information about the competition was also spread by our partners from the Society of the Belarusian Language (SBL) and the Society of Belarusian School (SBS). Altogether 2950 copies of the methodological brochure, 3000 information leaflets and 240 posters were distributed.

We received a great number of telephone calls and letters from pupils, teachers, heads of different pupils’ clubs, teacher-organizers of afterclass activities. All of them got the necessary consultations and received the competition materials. We were working in close cooperation with the group of regional coordinators and activists (30 people), who contributed a lot to our previous competitions and helped in carrying out that one. Besides, we acquired new supporters and partners.

On April 7th we organized a workshop for tutors and regional coordinators, attended by 17 people (members of the jury and representatives of the partner organizations SBL and SBS among them). The agenda included both organizational as well as methodological parts. Within the framework of the organizational part the following issues were discussed:

- main results and lessons of the previous competition, terms and conditions of conducting the current competition (report by Iryna Koval);
- Belarusian competition as part of the EUSTORY Network (report by Halina Perapechka);
- Summer Academy 2001 (report by Natallya Yatsukyeovich).

The methodological part was devoted to the work with historical sources. It was prepared and held by Maryna Litvin, history teacher and experienced methodologist. Besides, Vital Skalaban gave the analysis of the children's contributions sent to the previous competition about "My Genealogy. Destiny of the Family in the 20th Century". The participants also discussed challenges pupils might face while working on their contributions for the competition about "History from the Letter-box".

On August 6th we organized a second workshop for tutors. We decided to organize this 2nd workshop also for coordinators.

In order to disseminate the information about the competition and to rise greater interest, a number of official trips were carried out by Iryna Koval and Halina Perapechka before the beginning of the new school year.

Contributions were accepted until September 30th, 2002. There were 331 works submitted. They were registered by the secretary of the competition. All contributions that met our requirements were evaluated by the Jury, which consisted of parts, a main body and a subsidiary body. At first each paper had been read two times by the members of the Subsidiary Jury at the 3rd and the 4th stages of assessment. Then 100 works which had got at least 30 marks were evaluated by the Main Jury. Each paper had its code and was considered anonymously.

The Subsidiary Jury consisted of six members, mainly history teachers and history scholars. The Main Jury consisted of, again, six members, well known scholars, archivists and public figures.

The Jury awarded the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes to 35 winners who had the highest marks – from 99 to 127. They were invited to the award ceremony in Minsk. The rest 64 participants who passed on to the 4th round were awarded with the certificates and prizes of the 4th degree. The prizes were sent to them by mail or delivered by their tutors.

We received 3 contributions from the Babruisk colony for minors. Though these papers didn't get high marks, the Jury decided to send them encouragement prizes. The Jury also decided to award 13 best tutors with the encouragement prizes. Some of them were invited to the award ceremony. The prizes to the others (books, cassettes, CDs that can be used in their history lessons) were sent by mail. One of the most active tutors was awarded with a camera. 5 his students won the 2nd and 3rd prizes, 28 pupils were awarded with the certificates and prizes of the 4th degree.

The award ceremony was held in Minsk disco club "Aquarium" on December 7, 2002. It started with the demonstration of a film about the "Close History" project. Then came the presentation of prizes and certificates by the members of the Jury. Afterwards the entertaining part started. The ceremony ended with a concert by the rock groups "Krama", "Impett" and "Partyzon".

In contrast to our previous competitions this time we have not awarded all participants with prizes. Nevertheless we have sent everybody special certificates. When choosing

the books and cassettes we took into consideration the marks the participants had got and their age.

It is worth to make some comments on the works sent to this competition. Among the competition participants there were students who had already taken part in the previous contests. This fact itself is very pleasant for us, since we can say now that the competition has already acquired its faithful supporters. But what is even of greater importance to us is that some of those students who did not become the prize-winners at the previous contest this time have won awards, having submitted interesting contributions remarkable for their deep analysis. That means that the competition is becoming a kind of school where students can develop research skills. At the same time we faced the situation when we received interesting contributions (mainly based on correspondence) that were rather of literary than of historical character. It can be explained by the fact that the tutors of such works were the teachers of the Belarusian language and literature.

The final stage of the competition was the preparation of an anthology of the best competition pieces. We included 55 works into it: the contributions of 35 prize winners, the most interesting papers awarded with the certificate of the 4th degree and essays by the inmates of the Babruisk colony for minors. This anthology of contributions to the competition was sent to the authors, to the tutors, coordinators and to the educational establishments.

Competition Secretary

Iryna Koval

Chairperson of the public association "Dyjaryush"

Larysa Androsik