

Fourth Belarusian History Competition

“Aliens Among Familiars“

2004/2005

Report

The fourth round of the Belarusian history competition was officially announced on May 1, 2004 under the title "Aliens Among Familiars".

At the beginning the following methodological materials were prepared and published:

- information leaflet with the competition requirements;
- advertising poster;
- methodological brochure for students which describes in detail the competition conditions and the main rules of writing the competition research paper.

These materials were sent to educational institutions such as schools, Licei, gymnasia, vocational schools, colleges, technical secondary schools as well as to organizations and institutions engaged in organizing after-school activities such as clubs of local history, clubs of young historians, young tourist clubs and scouting organizations. Apart from this promotional and methodological materials were sent to children's and regional libraries, to local departments of education as well as to non-governmental organizations involved in cultural and enlightening activities.

The information about the competition and methodological materials were also disseminated by our partners: *The Society of the Belarusian Language Named After F. Skaryna* and *The Society of Belarusian School* through their network.

Altogether there were 3000 methodological brochures, 3000 information leaflets and 1250 advertising posters distributed.

Moreover a publicity campaign was started. We placed advertisements in the following newspapers: "Nasha Slova", "Narodnaya Volya", "Nasha Niva" (national newspapers), *Regiyanalnaya Gazeta* (Maladzechna region) and the Magazine of the Assembly of Non-Governmental Organizations. The competition was promoted by the Radio "Svaboda". In addition to this, the information about the competition was distributed by the BelaPAN information agency and through the Belarusian Association of Resource Centers' system of electronic dissemination.

The competition advertisements were repeated in the newspapers "Nasha Slova", "Narodnaya Volya" and "Nasha Niva" in September of 2004, after the beginning of the new school year on September, 1st. It resulted in a burst of interest in the competition.

Because of the difficulties we faced when disseminating information about the competition through the newspapers we decided to conduct two workshops for tutors and regional

coordinators instead of one. The first was held immediately after the competition announcement, the second in September 2004.

A number of official journeys were organized in order to promote the competition in different regions. During these trips methodological materials were handed out. The best research works of previous competitions as well as anthologies of previous competitions contributions were given to the teachers.

During the competition round we constantly maintained contact with the coordinators (in writing, on telephone and at the workshops). These are the 30 most active supporters of our project, who help to organize the competition in various regions and gain the involvement of new tutors.

The participant's contributions were accepted until November 25, 2004. During the period before this date the competition organizers provided consultations both in writing (through mail and e-mail) and orally (on phone and in private).

There was a total of 264 works submitted. Six papers were not accepted for further evaluation because they didn't meet the main competition's criteria. The rest of 258 works were evaluated by the Jury which consisted of the Main and Subsidiary divisions. The members of the Subsidiary Jury evaluated these contributions in the second and third rounds. The works that gained more than 30 points were evaluated by the Main Jury at two further stages.

There were 6 members of the **Subsidiary Jury**:

Yauhen Androsik (historian), Vatslau Areshka (historian of culture), Alena Areshka (teacher and expert on fine arts), Uladzislau Vyroukin-Shelyuta (historian and representative of the Association of Belarusian Nobility), Syarhyei Sakharau (expert on culture), Vitold Khanetski (historian and representative of the Association of Belarusian Nobility).

The **Main Jury** consisted of 6 members - prominent Belarusian historians and public figures:

Uladzimir Arlou (historian and man of letters), PhD Ihar Kuznyatsou (historian, lecturer at the Belarusian State University), PhD Vital Skalaban (historian-archivist), PhD Aleh Trusau (historian, Chairperson of The Society of the Belarusian Language), PhD Zakhar Shybeka (historian, lecturer at Belarusian Institute), Mikhas Charnyauski (historian, member of the Men of Writers' Association).

The Jury awarded 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes to 34 winners. They were invited to the award ceremony in Minsk. In addition to this, 40 more works with high marks were awarded with 4th prizes. Those authors received their prizes by mail or through their tutors.

The works submitted to the competition touched upon various topics. The difficulty with the general topic of the competition "Aliens Among Familiars" was connected to close interrelation of history and social issues. It was difficult for the participants to write "pure" historical research works. This explains why among the received contributions there were also works with a social "component" (about drug addicts, alcoholics, the handicapped). The weakest works were mostly of a descriptive character and were not based on original historical sources.

Among the competition participants there were students who took part in the previous

contests: "My Genealogy..." and "History from the Letter-Box". Many of them submitted contributions of a very high level. Some of those students who didn't become prize-winners at the previous contests, have won awards this time, having submitted interesting works notable for independent research and deep analysis.

Among the tutors are many teachers of Belarusian language and literature. At the previous competitions the works of their students were often rather of literary than historical character. For us it was pleasant to observe that those of them who visited our workshops managed to direct their pupils' research in such a way that their contributions became really deep history research papers and gained high marks.

We received 2 works from the Babruisk Reformatory Institution for Juvenile Offenders. Though these contributions couldn't become examples of historical research because of many reasons (e.g. their authors didn't have access to family or other archives, couldn't interview witnesses etc.), they are remarkable for their sincerity. We decided to send their authors encouraging prizes and included their papers into the anthology of competition contributions. Besides we organized a collection of books for the library of the Reformatory Institution.

The Jury awarded 21 tutors and competition coordinators. Some of them were invited to the award ceremony. The prizes (books, audio-cassettes, CDs) to others were sent by mail.

The award ceremony was held in Minsk disco club "Aquarium" on March 26th, 2005. After speeches of representatives of "Dyjaryjush" and the EUSTORY network the prizes were handed over to students and tutors. At 4.00 P.M. a disco entertaining program began.

The winners received the prizes such as a DVD-player, a CD player, a camera, books, CDs and audio-cassettes. All the participants who were not awarded with prizes received special gratitude letters by mail.

The final stage of the competition was the preparation and publishing of an anthology of the participants' contributions. It included the winners' research works, excerpts from the papers awarded with 4th prizes and contributions written by the participants from the Babruisk Reformatory Institution for Juvenile Offenders. This book was sent to the competition participants whose works were included in the anthology and to their tutors as well as to the competition coordinators. It was also sent to schools, children libraries and to local departments of education.

Halina Maruha

Iryna Koval
Competition Secretary

Larysa Androsik
Chairperson of the public association "Dyjaryjush"