

## **First History Competition in the Czech Republic**

### **“Alone against the power. Opposition against the totalitarian regime 1948-1989” 2001 / 2002**

#### ***Report***

The first round of the EUSTORY competition in the Czech Republic was organised by the Institute of Contemporary History at the Academy of Science (Ústav pro Soudobé dějiny Akademie věd české republiky) in co-operation with the Association of History Teachers (ASUD- Asociace učitelů dějepisu) and with the support of the Körber-Stiftung. Prof. Dr. Rudolf Zahradník, honorary chair of the Czech academy of science was the patron to the competition.

The competition was open for pupils of secondary schools not older than 20 years. The task was to write a paper on a specific topic (individually or in a group) on the basis of original research (i.e. Interview, current and past newspaper articles, documents from archives, museums etc.). We stressed that it is not about writing a classical seminar paper based on the study of secondary literature, but rather based on original research.

The general topic of the competition round this year was: “Alone against the power. Opposition against the totalitarian regime 1948-1989”. The participants were asked to write the history of single people in the region, for instance students that were thrown out of university which influenced their lives afterwards; citizens that were marked by the political trials fifty years ago; the history of farmers who did not want to join the farmers union; citizens that got into trouble because of their religion (belief); people who were against the invasion of the Soviet army in 1968 and last but not least families that had difficulties because family members emigrated to the West.

We received 113 research papers by 198 students. In the EUSTORY Committee’s opinion this first round was rather weak.

#### **Evaluation:**

The pupils discovered the past and discovered something, about which they had previously only read in history textbooks. They formulated that it was about individual attitudes; about the protection of democratic convictions, the education for democracy. It was rather instructive for the students. Individual destinies helped to better understand the general history.

The students thereby also learned the “handicraft” to write a research paper, the application of basic academic rules and methods - also that of oral history.

Some students were assisted by their teachers/tutors. It is also necessary to evaluate the teachers who encouraged their pupils to participate and then assisted them.

Many students worked independently and found contact to different organisations such as the organisation for former political prisoners. They also learned to work with press articles.

Important for the future was also to talk to Prof. Zahradník at the Award Ceremony. There is no competition for pupils in the field of history in our country and that gives us a chance for the future.

We have also done a lot about it in the media. At the Award Ceremony there was also a press conference organised and it found an echo in many newspapers, journals and radio broadcast that was relatively good.

Dr. Vojto Čelko,  
in consultation with the EUSTORY Committee