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## EUROPICA VARIETAS

### A Draft Program of History Teaching in Hungary

EUROPICA VARIETAS will consist of a series of four textbooks and later a series of source and workbooks in four volumes as well as a teacher's manual. These could be supplemented with video- and audiocassettes, acedates, etc. EUROPICA VARIETAS is a new, an "alternative" program of history teaching in Hungary, which has to meet a challenge set by a new, democratic political, social and educational system. So far little has been done in the renewal of history teaching. The ideal "consumer" of the program would be the 12-16 age-group - they should attain the basic or fundamental knowledge in Hungarian and world history.

Our aim is to avoid pursuing a completeness, because it has made school-history an indigestible mass, making all the major fields of human civilization only illustrations of a chronological "structure". We would like also to cease the separation of Hungarian and world history, because it conceals the common points and the divergences.

Our main intention is rather a new kind of totality, where thematic grouping is just as important as chronology. Smaller thematic groups should form coherent units, which are loosely connected to each other. Thus each group alone forms an intelligible unit.

We would like the introduction of structures instead of the one-sided history of events, because chronological political history - in our opinion - has almost completely thrust the more continuous and permanent structures into the background - at least in the textbooks. Due to this the history of events has become emptier, the notions have become uncertain and often meaningless. EUROPICA VARIETAS wants to devote more attention to the history of everyday life and thought, recurringly deal with the formation of the state and the legal-political structures, population, armies and warfare, implements and production technologies, religions, architectures, etc.

The main question which all the four books would try to answer can be put like this: how did our predecessors live? We do not intend to oust events - quite to the contrary -, but we try to subordinate them to the presentation of structures. To make it very simple: subjects that were in the background, being only secondary material, now would often become primary - those in the foreground now will sometimes be in the background.

In our attitude we wish to trace the "making of the past". According to our conception history-teaching should not be a sterile presentation of the results of researches. That's why - where it is possible - we will try to demonstrate the process of exploration. We shall refer to the sources of the facts and instead of definitive evaluations and judgements we shall refer to the debates behind them, and shall quote examples of different views and evaluations. This open approach is justified not only by the inherent reasons of history-teaching, but also by fundamental pedagogic reasons.

As for the compilation: instead of continuous text we want to provide varied information. A basic change in the outlook of the textbooks is also inevitable, because the importance of information conveyed by pictures, diagrams, maps, etc. equals - or should equal - with the importance of the text. Another innovation would be the segmentation of the traditionally long and coherent "unit" - instead there would be short, informative, typographically separated text-modules, like in several modern language-books. These can be partly traditional descriptions, partly they would belong to one of the following type: source materials, chronological survey, explanation of notions, biographies, portraits. As we have mentioned above diagrams, tables, maps, photos, summaries, etc. would also be included in our books.

The acquisition of the book does not demand the elaboration of each element. On the contrary: one of the aims of the modular structure is to enable the teacher to select. In our opinion whole chapters or even thematic units could be skipped, while others can be discussed more thoroughly - according to the teacher's taste or the nature of the class.

These changes in approach, content, structure and compilation all indicate a new direction, a new kind of history teaching - based upon improving the students' abilities, especially problem-solving. The philosophy behind this concept is that the past cannot be "pieced together" - instead a certain openness is needed: based on the acquired information the pupils and the teacher should compile their own view of history.

To achieve this new teacher approaches and student behaviour are needed, which develop a new kind of communication between teacher and pupils (also among pupils) based on the pupils' activity and creativity, their individual and group work. It would help forming pupils' rational-critical thinking, their ability of empathy and keeping a distance, their ability to ask questions and argue. This is what we regard as the real task of history teaching.

All this probably does not sound very original with western eyes, but they are original in Hungary. Teachers have to get used to such new methods, which should not be too avant-garde to them for this reason. Now the biggest problem will be the financial one to be able to start it at all.