Notes on the contents

The Historical Journal theme issue (2/2012) showcases current Finnish research that provides insights into the final period of the Cold War from the viewpoints of Finland, Estonia and the Soviet Union.

The editor of the theme issue, Juhana Aunesluoma, writes in his introduction *Kylmän sodan päättyminen historiana* (*The conclusion of Cold War as a historical period*) that the end of Cold War at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s was already seen as a historical turning point at the time. More than two decades later, historians have unearthed new details to gain fresh perspective on the events of the final phases of the period. In addition to political events, historians are digging into the social dynamics that led to the end of Cold War, as well as developments over a longer period of time.

Simo Mikkonen takes a historian's view on the end of Soviet power in his article *Neuvostovallan päättyminen ja poikkikansallinen historiantutkimus* (*The end of Soviet power and cross-national historical research*). The end of the Soviet era is one of the most important events in recent history for Europe and all of world history. A wide variety of views exist on the actual process and the factors behind it, but in-depth research is still rare. A turning point is at hand in the research into the history of the Soviet Union. The challenges of the work concern the objects, methods and, most frequently, the sources used in research.

In his article *Tasavallan palauttajat. Viron Muinaismuistoseuran historiapolitiikka vuosina 1987–1991* (*Re-establishing the republic: Historical politics of the Estonian Society of Antiquities from 1987 to 1991*), Olli Nurmi discusses the re-evaluation of Estonian history that took place between 1987 and 1991, as well as the nationalistic movement's perspective of Estonian history, formed during the period of change. In 1987, an organised movement dedicated to rewriting history with a nationalistic emphasis was born in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. The political objective of the movement was to support Estonia's aspiration for national independence.

The Singing Revolution of Estonia manifested the differences between nationalistic political groups in how they saw the past and its role in future events. In the article *Nostalgian ja utopian välissä. Historiallisen tiedon käyttö ja tehtävät Viron jälleenitsenäistymisen kamppailuissa vuosina 1987–1991* (*Between nostalgia and utopia: Usage and roles of historical information during the struggle for independence in Estonia between 1987 and 1991*), Pertti Grönholm analyses historical discourse with a typology that makes a distinction between the moral, existential, political and ideological dimensions of the social functions of historical information.

In Finnish trade policy, the Cold War meant two separate trading processes. In trade with the West, Finland quickly adopted multilateral processes and exchange of currencies, while trade to the East retained bilateral agreements and clearing procedures. The end of the Cold War also ended the dualism in trade politics. What's interesting is not why the trade to the East ended, but how it ended and what trade exactly it was that ended. Saara Matala discusses the bilateral trading relations between Finland and the Soviet Union and the preparations to form Finland's eastern trade policies during the final period of the Cold War in 1988–1991 in her article *Idänkauppa oli varmaa, mutta sitten se loppui* (*Eastern trade was a sure thing until it ended*).