

# Kalervo Hovi

\* 13.9.1942 † 10.7.2021



**Professor Emeritus** of General History Kalervo Hovi died of a long illness in July 2021 in Turku. He was born in Oulu in 1942. Kalervo Hovi started studying general history in 1963 at the University of Turku and defended his dissertation there in 1975. He had a long career at the University of Turku, retiring in 2007. Prior to his professorship in general history in Turku, he worked as Associate Professor of History at the University of Oulu from 1979 to 1983. He was a docent at the universities of both Oulu and Helsinki. Hovi was a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters since 1996.

Kalervo Hovi was a persistent and profound researcher in general history. He had a genuine appreciation for internationality and the perspectives of general history. As a Professor of General History, he promoted and encouraged a highly versatile approach to research: he himself studied the history of France, Poland, Estonia and many other countries. He often emphasized to his students that a researcher in general history can provide fresh perspectives on the national interpretations of history.

A good example of his broad approach is the joint research project of the universities of Oulu and Turku, funded by the

Academy of Finland from 2000 to 2002, entitled “Strong and weak cultures under the pressure of Western Expansion”. It involved two researchers in the history of Japan from Oulu and two researchers of Native American history from Turku. His close relationship with the University of Oulu became obvious during his annual, highly anticipated docent lectures, which were considered the first sure signs of spring in the Department of History.

Kalervo Hovi’s strengths lay in the history of international relations. In 1975 he defended his dissertation on the French Eastern European alliance policy (*Cordon sanitaire or barrière de l’est? The Emergence of the New French Eastern European Alliance Policy 1917–1919*) and later published a sequel to his dissertation entitled *Alliance de revers. Stabilization of France’s Alliance Policies in East Central Europe 1919–1921* (1984). In the same interwar context, he studied Finland in the field of international politics and published, for instance, a work about Finland in the foreign policy of Poland and several articles about Finland gaining independence and how different countries reacted to it. Kalervo was broadly interested in the history of Eastern Europe and published a

comprehensive Finnish work (1994) on the history of Poland, for example. The history of Romania was also a long-term interest of his, and he established cooperation with local historians.

Estonia was especially close to Kalervo Hovi's heart and he extensively studied the history of Estonia. He published a new, supplemented edition (1991) of *Baltic History*, a book written by his predecessor Vilho Niitemaa that was originally published in 1959. Estonia was also the subject of Kalervo's monograph on the interwar restaurant culture in Tallinn (2002), which would be his last. Much to his delight, the book was also translated into Estonian. He often remarked how excited he was about choosing the new theme and research approach. With this work, the solid profession in the history of international relations delved into the history of restaurants, menus and nightlife, which meant different sources and angles, even if the period itself was thoroughly familiar from his previous research.

Kalervo Hovi educated a large group of master's degree holders during his university career and supervised dozens of licentiate theses and doctoral dissertations. As a teacher, Kalervo was permissive, broad-minded and unprejudiced. He encouraged his students to broadly study the themes of general history. He supervised dissertations on the history of international relations as well as numerous other themes from the history of historiography to xenophobia in the Cold War, from intellectual history in the beginning of the Mod-

ern Age to the history of travel and tourism. Kalervo believed in his students and encouraged them to tackle big themes while building their international cooperation network. He himself set an example by actively attending conferences and engaging in other international activities. He made frequent visits to archives and research trips to Paris, Tallinn and several other European cities and spent a year in Germany as a visiting professor. Kalervo was a big advocate for studying foreign languages and urged his students to use their language skills in research and to continue learning.

Kalervo Hovi underlined the importance of theories to his students in a time when most historians relied heavily on an empirical approach and traditional methods of historical research. Kalervo himself was particularly impressed by the theories of international relations presented by French historians Pierre Renouvin and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, who expanded the traditional history of diplomacy to include more perspectives, highlighting diverse social forces and societal mentalities. He applied this approach actively in his own research and taught it to his students already at the master's level.

With his research and teaching, Kalervo Hovi fostered a versatile knowledge of European history. He advanced the genuinely international nature of research in history and implanted a broad, profound and theoretically oriented research mindset in his students and his professional community.

*Obituary by Taina Syrjämaa, Leila Koivunen and Olavi K. Fält*