The Debate about a Center against Expulsions: An Unexpected Crisis in German-Polish Relations?

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Abstract: The growing tendency in the cultural discourses among the Germans to see themselves as victims, and not solely as perpetrators, of World War II causes much bewilderment among their Polish neighbors. A recent proposal to locate a center commemorating victims of the *Vertreibungen* in Berlin brought about an explosion of outrage in Poland and resulted in an unusual tension in the bilateral relations. This article examines some aspects of this tension and argues that Polish political and cultural elites are not meeting the challenge posed by a cultural process in which important parts of German self-understanding are being redefined.

Recently relations between Germany and Poland have been at their deepest low since the end of cold war. The dispute over support of the Iraq war and the dissent over the voting allocation in the EU constitution primarily account for this situation. The crisis has been exacerbated in a qualitatively different way by yet another factor—the fascinating and highly emotional public debate, especially in Poland, on the proposal of Erika Steinbach, the leader of the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (Expellee League), to establish a "Center against Expulsions" in Berlin. As proposed by Steinbach, the center is to be devoted to victims of forced deportations from various countries and historical periods, although it would clearly be aimed at memorializing the German victims of the expulsions from Poland and Czechoslovakia at the end of World War II.

As Steinbach's proposal began to gain momentum in Germany over the summer of 2003, the reaction of the Polish elites and media reached levels of unusual intensity, acidity, outrage, and viciousness. Such reactions have been especially remarkable because they were so uniformly negative. Politicians from left and right, former communists and former dissidents, nationalists and internationalists, friends and enemies of Germany alike seemed to be taken aback by the proposal of a *Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen* in Berlin. Their trumpets blow in unusual unison to alarm the Poles that the old German enemy is back. The Polish media even sarcastically dubbed the center as "Center against Reconciliation."[1] And one of the leading Polish weeklies, the magazine *Wprost*, produced on the cover of one of its September 2003 issues a photomontage of Erika Steinbach dressed in a SS uniform riding on the back of a smiling chancellor Schröder. The headline says: "German Trojan Horse."[2]

This unusual debate (with respect to both its intensity and subject) about the Center provides an interesting perspective for an assessment of current Polish-German relations, 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The uniform rejection of the idea for such a center with a location in Berlin, and a rising anti-German sentiment in the Polish public discourse as a corollary, are interesting phenomena, especially if one considers that the first decade of German-Polish relations after German reunification was hailed a huge success as a difficult reconciliation process. What happened in Germany that could have been so grievous as to threaten to undo, at least as seen from the practically united Polish perspective, all the reconciliation work done so painstakingly on both sides and to create an unexpectedly serious crisis in German-Polish relations?[3] Is the Polish reaction to these developments justified and understandable? Has this crisis really been unexpected and surprising?

I will try to answer both these questions. First, I will suggest that that the proposal as well as the ensuing debate in Germany are symptoms of a qualitatively new cultural and political development. Over a decade after German reunification, a new trend has emerged in the German public discourse to readdress the issues of the role of the Germans in World War II and especially of the status of the civilian population as victims of that war.[4] Interestingly these themes have been gaining a new attractiveness all across the political divides, as Germans enter another phase of recreating their national identity, which entails reformulating their public historical and cultural memory. The debate on the Center and its Berlin location is a symptom of this larger process, which is surprising and bewildering to some parts of the German society itself, but especially to Germany's neighbors and the former "traditional" victims of German aggression, the Poles and the Czechs.

The debate is but one aspect and one indication of a much more complex and all-encompassing process. Thus the Polish side correctly discerns an interesting change in the German society, but its reaction to the symptoms of this change is exaggerated and inadequate. The Polish reaction lacks a constructive impulse and instead promotes a revival of old anti-German phobias and stereotypes, which further complicates the situation. The overwhelmingly negative reception in Poland indicates that the Polish elites—intellectual and mainly the political ones—have not managed yet to put the new developments in Germany in the right perspective nor developed the right strategy to deal with them—neither culturally nor politically.

In fact, German-Polish relations have been new since 1989, not only in the economic and political contexts. But they are now once again in question because German public discourse about its national and historical self-understanding has been undergoing a remarkable transformation lately. These new relations are currently accompanied by deeply seated "old emotions,"[5] which should not be surprising. Rather, Polish emotional reaction to the Steinbach proposal offers evidence that the reconciliation process is still shallow and unfinished, burdened by deep historical distrust and animosities, which could have hardly been fully resolved over such a short period of time. Moreover, the current crisis has been deepened by lingering

political and legal questions in the bilateral relations inherited from the end of World War II and the cold war, which have now been revived in the context of Poland's accession to the EU and a weak Polish political leadership.

In the first part of the article, I will sketch the historical background of the expulsions and describe briefly the German-Polish reconciliation process of the 1990s—followed by comments on the genealogy and chronology of the debate on Steinbach's proposal for the Center against Expulsions in Berlin. In the second part, I will examine the reaction to Steinbach's proposal in Poland and the ensuing debate about the center as it unfolded in innumerable articles, letters from readers, and other events relating to the issue in the Polish media over the last year or so.[6] The particular mode and character of this part of the discourse were colored by several specific aspects of the situation in Poland, which are independent from the political realignment and issues of victimhood in Germany. The foremost reason for the remarkably emotional quality of the Polish public reaction is the legally still open and politically steadfastly avoided question of compensation for the German territories lost through the Potsdam Treaty at the end of World War II. This situation feeds the revival of anti-German phobias and clichés, which is amply aided by the Polish media. Likewise, the failure of Polish politicians to tackle those legal questions and to assuage Polish public opinion only exacerbates the situation and contributes to this unprecedented crisis.

I

The expulsions of the Germans from their former eastern territories were intrinsically connected with the forced resettlement of millions of Poles from their eastern territories by Soviet Russia. Both of them were a result of the Yalta and Potsdam conferences. In this process Poland lost 180,000 square km and gained 103,000 of the old German territories. There were three phases of the expulsions: in the first phase, the Germans were fleeing the oncoming Red Army; in the second, the "wild expulsions" before the war's end drove out millions more; and the third phase took place sanctioned by the Potsdam treaty.[7] The third phase is the one in which the Poles were most gravely charged with responsibility for gruesome and often merciless treatment of millions of Germans living in the area that fell to Poland. This responsibility could never be contemplated or admitted in Poland in the years between the end of World War II and 1989 for obvious political reasons. Stalin's plan of incorporating the Polish territories annexed after September 17, 1939 as a result of the secret pact with Nazi Germany also entailed the transfer of the Poles to the new Polish territories in the West. These expellees were labeled "repatriates," returning to their old "Regained Lands." Of course, a debate about the Soviet annexation of the Polish eastern territories was impossible and unthinkable. Thus, the injustices in the Polish east and the German east "cancelled each other out," as it were, and were framed as just acts by the Poles and Russians. In communist Poland the expulsions both of Poles and Germans became an instant taboo, which

was not addressed politically (other than by the official propaganda), publicly, or educationally, for decades.

What did not help this problem, but helped the communist propaganda, was that the claims by the German Expellee organizations didn't concern themselves with the political order after Potsdam and thus easily could be interpreted as simply "anti-Polish" and "contrary to the spirit of international agreements and international law." The ideological freeze on any open discussion of the status and manner of the expulsion of the Germans (and of the Poles) lasted practically until the changes of 1989. Until then it remained an open wound and biggest obstacle for a German-Polish normalization.

The watershed in a political treatment of the problem of the expulsions both internationally and domestically came only with the border treaties of 1990 and the treaty between Germany and Poland in 1991. The language used in these documents refers to "expulsions," and not to "transfers," or "resettlement," which was part of the old euphemistic terminology. Yet this political and juridical usage combined with the clash of the old and new mental paradigms sparked in Poland an intense and protracted moral examination of the expulsions among scholars and in the public: What were the actual numbers of expelled and what was the proper terminology for the process? Had Poles engaged in ethnic cleansing, and what responsibility did they bear for the suffering inflicted on the Germans? How did this affect their status of political subject vs. object?

There were many conferences, seminars, and long research projects involving scholars from both countries. Many important publications appeared that placed the issue of the *Vertreibungen* in a new, critical, non-ideological context. They were often published simultaneously in both countries.[8] Perhaps the most important was a volume of essays, entitled *Complex of the Expulsions*, edited by Wlodzimierz Borodziej and Artur Hajnicz in 1998.[9] It contained many studies written during the two years' existence of the Polish-German research project and included a final report on the state of the German-Polish relations in the context of the *Vertreibungen*. Likewise, several politically symbolic events took place in those years, of which perhaps the most important one was a historic speech to the joint session of the German Bundesrat and Bundestag in 1995 by then-Polish-foreign-minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who expressed his nation's regret about the suffering of innocent Germans during the expulsions.[10]

Thus the academic and intellectual elites of the two countries did impressive work during the 1990s. Yet, indispensable, critical, and important as these complex and thorough endeavors were, this was not sufficient for changing the Polish popular self-perception as mainly victims and not perpetrators of the expulsions. The Germans could not be seen in this context as innocent victims of World War II and of the expulsions, since they were responsible for the war and the first victimizations of blameless people in Poland. This situation persisted well into the 1990s. One example illustrates this particularly well.

The CBOS—Polish abbreviation for "Center for Public Opinion Research"—polled the Polish public in 1996 regarding the expulsions. The institute used a statement directed by Polish catholic bishops to the German catholic bishops in 1965: "We forgive and ask for forgiveness." Even in 1996, barely 28 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement; 45 percent considered it partially correct "because one ought to forgive, but we don't have anything to ask for forgiveness for"; and 22 percent rejected it altogether, because "we can't forgive the Germans, and have nothing to ask forgiveness for."[11] Despite some indications that this attitude has been changing, as will be shown below, the Polish debate about the Center has to be seen in this context.

As mentioned at the outset, recently, especially in the second half of 2003, a fascinating and rich public debate ignited around the proposed construction of a Center against Expulsions. The initiator of the proposal, Erika Steinbach, leader of the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (BdV) since 1998 and a CDU deputy in the Bundestag, had voted against the ratification of the Polish-German treaties in 1990/91. Although with weak credentials as someone "expelled from her Heimat"—she was born in 1943 as a daughter of a Wehrmacht officer who moved to the area around Gdánsk/Danzig with his army unit as part of the occupying forces—she brought new promise and impetus into the fading and faltering BdV. Her political instincts and personal charisma brought the BdV closer to the political mainstream and helped to reduce its traditional stigma of extreme radicalism and its political marginalization.

In mid-2000, Steinbach led the initiative for the creation of a Foundation for the Center against Expulsions and managed to get it to the floor of the Bundestag.[12] The proposal was to create a national center devoted to the expulsions of Germans at the end of World War II, to be located in Berlin. As the debate started gaining momentum in the summer of 2002, the SPD parliamentarian Markus Meckel formulated an alternative proposal to create such a center not in Berlin but in Wroclaw, the former Breslau in prewar Germany, where Polish expellees from the eastern territories annexed by the Soviet Union were resettled after 1945, once the Germans had been moved to the west of the Oder and Neiße rivers.

The idea of Breslau was supported by Adam Michnik and Adam Krzeminski, two prominent Polish intellectuals, who wrote an open letter to the German and Polish presidents in this regard, published in the journals *Polityka* and *Die Zeit*.[13] They argued: "Das wäre weder ein Museum nur deutschen Leidens und deutscher Klage, das Täter zu Opfern machte, noch ein Museum der polnischen Martyrologie und Kolonisation, sondern ein Museum der Katastrophe und ein Zeichen der Erneuerung unseres gemeinsamen Europa…."[14] The appeal caused great consternation on the part of Polish politicians, who first chose to keep silent on the issue while implicitly rejecting it. There was simply not enough political will to deal with the issue, even if the center were to be created in Poland. In the meantime, the Bundestag passed a resolution about construction of such a center without determining its final location.

The second act of this debacle began in July 2003 when 65 politicians and intellectuals from six countries published an appeal supporting the idea of a European center with an international board and conceptualization, again without specifying its location. The signatories, among them three former foreign ministers—Genscher, Geremek, and Bartoszewski—warned that a "national" center would breed only distrust and a mutual "Aufrechnung von Leid." Instead, European history should be "written together so that it won't be used against one another." Another German-Polish appeal, from early September 2003, was even more clearly directed against a German location while arguing that "the German interpretation of the historical events would lead to an interpretation of social conflicts in an exclusively ethnic context and thus reinforce such a notion for the future."

Even though some Polish politicians finally decided to plead for Breslau as Krzeminski and Michnik wanted, in order to control the content of such a center better—and the city eventually declared its readiness to host the center—the main Polish political figures did not agree. Polish president Alexander Kwasniewski and then-prime minister Leszek Miller declared publicly via print media and state television on the fateful occasion of the 64th anniversary of the beginning of World War II on September 1, that they preferred Sarajevo (Kwasniewski) or Strasbourg (Miller) as a location of such a center. It seemed that Polish leaders found it even then no less burdensome to deal with these issues under Polish supervision than doing so under German management.

Meanwhile two other important events intervened. First, in mid-September 2003, Erika Steinbach herself paid a visit to Poland. Her meeting with a group of Polish politicians, journalists, and intellectuals was arranged by the most important daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* (RZ) and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. Other Germans were also present, among them Helga Hirsch, a journalist for *Die Zeit* and a prominent supporter of Steinbach's proposal, and Markus Meckel, the SPD parliamentarian who opposed her. By all accounts, it was an unprecedented discussion, witnessed directly in the conference room by more than one hundred other interested persons. A long report of this meeting, along with excerpts from the discussion and other commentaries of known experts on German-Polish relations, was immediately published by the RZ. Downloaded from the newspaper's web site (with a special link to "Expellees"), it fills 23 pages.[15] The upshot was an obvious consensus that Steinbach "didn't convince anybody," that the polarization of positions remained, if it was not exacerbated, and that a compromise on this issue was impossible.

The second event was a mutual declaration of the German and Polish presidents on the occasion of Rau's visit in Gdansk, in October 2003. In the declaration Rau and Kwasniewski called for an "honest European dialogue on deported persons, as well as those compelled to flee, and the expelled ones." They stated that any claims for financial reparations were out of the question.[16]

II

This fascinating and very lively Polish debate on the expulsion center leaves the unmistakable impression that the Polish political and intellectual elite uniformly and deeply resents granting the Germans the status of victims of World War II and, by extension, of the expulsion, because they believe that Germans could inevitably claim this status if Steinbach's proposal became reality. This above all explains such a vehement opposition to the center.

This is even more remarkable, since many of the opponents and critics of the center were just a few years ago working hard on the critical assessment of the Polish role in the expulsions and were pleading with their countrymen to come to terms with the past and to cultivate the German cultural heritage in today's Poland. Borodziej, for instance, the author of the afore-mentioned key volume on the expulsions, has repeatedly spoken against the Berlin location, as has Bartoszewski, author of the historic Bundestag speech. In an article in *Rzeczpospolita* in July 2003, Bartoszewski even argued that if the Germans opt for the center in Berlin, Poland should create a center documenting the treatment of Poles by the Germans since 1772—digging up old grievances back to the first partition of Poland well over two centuries ago. The title of the article is: "Against Selective Memory."[17] In a similar vein Leon Kieres, the director of the Institute of National Memory (IPN), mused recently that nobody questions that the Germans "Opfer zu beklagen hatten. Aber das waren Opfer auf eigene Bestellung…."[18] And so on.

Themes regularly addressed in all these declamatory polemics, mainly directed against Steinbach and her allies, who range from Otto Schily to Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Ralph Giordano, Rupert Neudeck, and Julius Schöps, include accusations of attempts to create a false historical consciousness and selective collective memory. The commentators regularly criticize a misguided German need to forge a new identity as belatedly acknowledged victims, in which the old left turns into "new expellees," co-opted by the radical right eager to equate ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and Silesia. There are also harsh criticisms against extending the notion of universal human rights abuses retroactively, using false analogies, creating alleged new myths about the expulsions. The upshot of these negative and aggravated comments is mainly a distrust in German intentions and in the collective capacity to "differentiate consequences from reasons…." (i.e., there would have been no German expulsions if Hitler had not started World War II).

The question arises whether these criticisms are justified and fair. There is also a question of whether the Polish commentators differentiate sufficiently between the BdV and the rest of Germans. Are the Polish objections, which are ostensibly referring not to the "what" but to the "how" of the representation of the events by the Berlin center, really defensible? What provokes the biggest outrage is the idea that the building for the new Center against Expulsions in Berlin might be standing right next to the also new Holocaust memorial. This symbolism is entirely unaccept-able to most Polish commentators.

Clearly there is a certain residual distrust among the Polish elites and the Polish society at large in the face of the Germans' recent, qualitatively new and unprecedented attempts to reconstitute themselves as a "Community of Victims" with respect to World War II. Paradoxically, as long as people like Herbert Hupka, one of the most prominent expellees from the old days, and Wladyslaw Bartoszewski confront each other on the expulsions—which they indeed did, very peacefully in 1996—the elites can deal with the victimhood of Germans admirably well. But when conservative right-wingers of Hupka's stripe team up with the children of the 1968 generation like Helga Hirsch, Jörg Friedrich, or Otto Schily, and are even abetted by respected old liberals of Günter Grass' (*Crabwalk*) and Peter Glotz's stature,[19] things become more complicated. It is this unusual fusion in search of a redefinition of the German national identity that has presented an unexpected new threat to the political elites in the past two years or so, after the seeming success of the reconciliation in the 1990s.

Besides the changed set of main players in Germany, what have been possible other sources of such distrust? There may be an apprehension about renegotiating who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. There may well be a deep-seated fear of collective guilt with which "others" could burden Poland. Another explanation of the distrust may be what Robert Traba calls the "asymmetry of collective memory"[20] or what Hubert Orlowski identifies as the "asymmetry of deprivation."[21] These asymmetries, coupled with a high emotional value ascribed to the theme of the expulsions, make a shared, German-Polish culture of memory still quite im-possible. And besides these rather symbolic and emotional issues, there is a very practical one: the growing fear that German compensation claims for the eastern territories will be revived, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The emotional quality of the whole victimhood conundrum is best illustrated through the term "expulsion" itself. *Vertreibung* or *Wypedzenie* is widely used in contemporary Polish public discourse, although the emotional tension attached to it is still high and generally acknowledged. The use of the term is still not neutral or non-ideological. It always implies the question whether the "expulsion was right or wrong." The official meaning, used widely since the Polish-German treaties of 1990 and 1991, has not been able to drain this term of its emotional potential in regular language use or as a part of Polish cultural memory. Such a "de-emotionalization" seems to be an indispensable precondition for an unprejudiced and less ambivalent stance vis-à-vis the new German attempts of shaping a different cultural memory and a new national identity. Yet what is happening right now in Poland is just the opposite.

The "expellee debate," as it is called in Poland, was raised to yet another level of intensity when *Rzeczpospolita* published results of a poll it commissioned with the Emnid Institute in Germany and PBS in Poland at the end of August 2003.[22] A thousand Germans and 999 Poles were interviewed and asked three questions:

1. Were Germans, like Poles, Jews, and Roma, victims of World War II?
2. Have you heard about the proposal to create a center that is supposed to commemorate the expulsions of Germans?
3. What character should such an institution have? A national memorial in Berlin, predominantly dealing with the suffering of the Germans, or a European center with a location outside of Germany, or it shouldn't be created at all?

The ostensible goal of *Rzeczpospolita* was to gauge to what extent the debate had penetrated the respective societies. The results caused outrage and confusion in Poland, again well documented in this and other newspapers. It turned out that only about 30 percent of Polish respondents had heard about the proposal of a center. To the question whether such an institution should be created at all, 58 percent of the Polish respondents said no. Among those who said yes, 26 percent would prefer a center in Berlin, and 16 percent elsewhere in Europe. But most importantly, 57 percent of the Polish respondents agreed that Germans also were victims of World War II. [23]

What do these figures seem to be telling us? On one hand, they seem to indicate a certain inversion of perspectives on the issue of victimhood and the distrust with which some Poles look at the Germans as victims of World War II. In the 1990s, it was the academic and political-elite discourse that promoted a critical examination of the Polish deeds with respect to the Germans, and the popular mind seemed not to be swayed by that work, as the statistics from 1996 cited above showed. Paradoxically, now, it is most of the political and intellectual elites that seem to resist steadfastly granting the Germans the status of victims, while the popular mentality accommodates this notion well. Remarkably, 57 percent of the polled Poles feel comfortable with acknowledging the Germans as victims. To be sure, these results ought not to be misconstrued and overrated. Among other problems, a main weakness of the poll was that it did not provide enough nuance in the phrasing of the question regarding German victimhood. Nor did any of the questions allow for anything else than a simple yes or no.[24]

The role of the Polish political elites in this debate is troubling. They seem to lack any constructive or imaginative counter-proposals and solutions. Instead they prefer to join the front of noisy "anti-German" protesters. Moreover they lack ideas how to formulate Poland's own stance on the expulsions, on the/a center, on reparations, and how to put the issue of Steinbach's proposal in a more differentiated and nuanced context. Instead, local politicians, like Warsaw's mayor, instigate calculations of damages suffered during the German occupation, for which Poland could sue Germany.[25] The spiral of distrust and enmity is moving upward, which shows how shallow the process of reconciliation has been thus far. It also underscores the unmet responsibility of political elites to preclude revival of old national clichés and to prevent unnecessary panic and animosity. In that regard, the challenge is formidable, as the free, market-driven press pursues its own political

and commercial objectives. The media skillfully use the old phobias and create a fear that the supposedly healed wounds might be reopened.

There is a growing uncertainty among average Poles what the German developments might mean for them. If the Germans begin to talk about themselves as victims, does it mean that the roles between perpetrator and victim will be reversed? And, if the BdV assumes even more prominence and acclaim, will it mean that Poland will be financially liable for property in the territories annexed after the Potsdam treaty? To refer again to the cover title of the magazine *Wprost*: do Poles fear that the whole issue of the Berlin Center is just a Trojan horse of the BdV and that "the Germans" will cry out for compensation from Poland for the lost territories, which is estimated at around 19 billion Euro?

Clearly the threat of compensation and restitution demands is the most traumatizing aspect of the debate about the Center. The ideological abuse of this threat in communist Poland, coupled with the taboo of the annexation of Poland's eastern territories, have left it a big collective trauma in Polish society. Yet the post-communist Polish government has repeatedly failed to settle the issue of the status of the territories. At the same time, the anxieties accompanying EU accession have also been fueled by the fear that the expellees might gain legal recourse and Poland will be burdened with a legal responsibility of a new kind.[26]

Indeed, the issue of Poland's ultimate claim to the annexation of the eastern German territories—both morally and legally—is at least to a certain degree still unsettled. The Polish elites do not, to be sure, doubt at all that the moral aspect is settled. There the consensus is clear: Poland deserved these territories as a compensation for the wrongs done to them by the Germans in the course of World War II. Yet, the anxiety about the legal status of the Polish claim has been growing, and increasingly more experts address the issue publicly in the press. Paradoxically, from the perspective of the BdV and its new allies, the situation looks just the opposite: the legal claim of the Germans to compensation for the territories seems still certain, and the moral aspect of the Polish annexation is quite uncertain.

There are two broad aspects of this issue: one is the status of the territories in light of international law, the other is the question of compensation for property loss, subject to a bilateral settlement between Germany and Poland. The Potsdam Treaty is the only instrument of international law that addresses the first issue indirectly through the Allied agreement on the severance of the Eastern German territories to the benefit of Poland. As it is widely known, it also decreed a "transfer" of the German population from these territories to the remaining German lands.[27] Notwithstanding the Nazi guilt of aggression, the treaty is not surprisingly also viewed by some as an example of "victor's justice." Unfortunately, even the two-plus-four talks regarding German unification did not address this issue again. Thus the problem remains—ultimately only legally-theoretically: What validity does the partition have under the current international law? Yet although one could try

to call the validity of the treaty into question, even in the post-cold-war era the interest in geopolitical stability in this part of Europe dictates otherwise.

The other aspect seems to be more troubling: the compensation question remains ignored by the governments of both Germany and Poland. For both it is an issue of most explosive political potential, thus conveniently and necessarily being put on hold. The German government has claimed that the question is still "open" and thus to be potentially negotiated but currently dares not act on it any further. The Polish government prefers to believe and to claim that there is nothing open and left to be negotiated, as the issue is irrevocably closed. Both sides point, paradoxically, to the same source for their assertions.

This source is point five in the letters of both foreign ministers in the appendix of the German-Polish treaty of 1991 "on good neighborly relations and friendly cooperation," which simply states that the parties agree that the treaty does not address any issues of citizenship nor of compensation for lost property.[28] German politicians and the courts thus claim that this issue could not have been and is not resolved; Polish politicians insist on the opposite. The German government must, as it were, insist that the question is open because otherwise it would be liable to its citizens for compensation for the loss of private property confiscated from them by the Polish administration. It is worth remembering that even the legality of the original German-Polish treaties normalizing the bilateral relations under chancellor Willy Brandt was upheld by the German Constitutional Court only on the condition that they do not pertain to the ownership and compensation issues. Politically, the Schröder administration can afford no less but also no more. Claims by Germany on behalf of its citizens addressed to the Polish government would be a grave error and do not seem to be contemplated at the moment.

On the contrary, clearly intended by the German government as a conciliatory gesture, both the new German president, Horst Köhler, and Gerhard Schröder, indicated during their visits to Poland in July and August 2004, that they do not support the current drive of individual compensation claims, although each of them did it in a rhetorically still cautious manner: Köhler stated that he had *Unverständnis* for individual actions to reclaim title to former German property, now in Poland. Likewise, Schröder remarked in his speech on the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising that questions regarding property rights going back to World War II are "not a topic in German-Polish relations."[29]

The Polish government insists—apparently in its wishful thinking—that the issue of compensation is irrevocably resolved and will not reappear. To this end, Polish politicians are still somewhat dissatisfied with the statements of the German leaders. For instance, Donald Tusk, the speaker of the Polish parliament and a sensible and sensitive participant in German-Polish relations, while praising Schröder's Warsaw speech in general, nevertheless remarked that "it is beyond any doubt that we Poles still miss one particular statement—that, in case any individual claims would be legally upheld, the German federal government will pay for them."[30]

That, obviously, neither this nor any earlier German government was prepared to do.[31] Thus, such declarations will not go any further, although Schröder stated in his Warsaw speech that the German government will also attest its lack of support for the individual restitution claims before any international court. Clearly, though, the German government cannot prohibit its citizens to pursue such private claims, and one could argue that in this context this official stance might play just a secondary role.

The contemplated litigation by individual German expellees might soon put this thinking on the part of the Polish government to a tough test, as such individual claims would be considered by a non-Polish court or even a Polish court that would have to apply EU legal norms and court rulings. The institutional sponsor of such legal claims is a new organization, based in Düsseldorf, called the *Preußische Treuhand GmbH & Co.* It was created in September 2001 with the explicit aim to serve as a venue for instituting restitution suits for private property lost due to the expulsions. The organization collects individual claims and plans to lodge several of those complaints this fall both with Polish courts and EU tribunals. The stated aim is to reclaim possession of the property and not receive a mere financial compensation for their loss.[32] It is specifically this unforgiving stance of the *Prussian Claims Society* that makes many Poles shiver and causes most Germans to declare *Unverständnis*. And Polish anxiety about the "Trojan horse" seems to be confirmed by the fact that the chairman of the board of the corporation, Rudi Pawelka, is the leader of the Silesian expellee organization, and the vice chairman, Hans Günther Parplies, is the vice president of the *Bund der Vertriebenen.*

Anxiety has been growing considerably with Poland's accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004, by which it fell under the jurisdiction of a whole new set of laws and regulations that might and will conflict with the legal sources for Polish decisions heretofore. Simply put, many Poles are anxious that with Polish accession to the EU, there will commence a flood of individual civil suits at the European Tribunal of Human Rights in Strasbourg and at the European Tribunal of Justice in Luxembourg, initiated by the former property owners expelled by Poland at the end of World War II and by those who were allowed to leave Communist Poland later as *Spätaussiedler*, whose property was usually confiscated without compensation.

Personal property has been elevated to a human right by European jurisprudence and taking or dispossession without just compensation could be easily viewed by these authorities as a breach of such a fundamental right. At the same time, there is reason to believe that neither of these two highest EU courts would want to adjudicate cases that took place half a century before their creation. However, this assumption would have to be tested in practice and evidenced by a concrete statement by these institutions, called upon to adjudicate a claim of that type. Only then would it be certain how these courts understand their jurisdiction and their role in righting some alleged wrongs that lie so far back. And, whereas there still might

be some hope to this effect among the Poles with regard to the German individual claims, one recent development points rather to another possibility.

Only recently—on June 22, 2004—the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg decided in a case of a Polish expellee from the former Polish territories in the East that were claimed then by Stalin as part of Soviet Union, and belong now to Ukraine, that the Polish government is liable to pay compensation for loss of his home and land in Lwow (Lemberg).[33] The claimant was actually a grandson of the dispossessed owner and inherited the title to the property through his mother. This is an unprecedented verdict for two reasons: first, the courts took on that case even though the event took place before the creation of the tribunal, but the court explained that the wrong was "continuing;" second, the Polish government was declared liable here, even though it clearly could not claim any reparations from the Soviet Union, on a state-to-state level, and had been instead forced to officially forfeit any claim for reparations from its big brother. The difference between this case and a hypothetical German case would most likely be that the Polish plaintiff did not receive any compensation before suing. Thus, the most relevant question might become in the future proceedings to what extent a wrong of this kind would be con-sidered "continuing."

The only reliable manner to prevent such a threatening situation and to create some stability and certainty in Poland would be to negotiate these issues in a bilateral treaty between Germany and Poland. Then, as a settled matter between the two countries, the legal question could be simply considered moot. Some Polish experts and journalists promote increasingly the so called "zero option," according to which both countries would declare that they do not owe each other anything in terms of compensation for damages stemming from World War II. The likelihood of such a solution is currently low. In the meantime, however, numerous inquires have been initiated to explore the legal basis for a Polish claim for compensation for damages due to German aggression and occupation during World War II. Even though most legal experts doubt that there is any legal basis for such claims, the media continue to publish opinions supporting this idea and report about diverse initiatives in this regard. Thus the emotions spiral upwards and stakes seemingly grow, while in reality the zero option is definitely not within reach.

It is clear that, for the compensation issue to be settled as understood from the perspective of some German expellees, some money will have to be paid out to those who lost their property in the expulsions. The question is only who will pay for it, the German or the Polish government? Poland avoids it, aware that Germany will not want to accept that burden, especially considering the fact that the *Lastenausgleichgesetz* was arguably meant as such a compensation.[34] The German government, in turn, is reluctant both to pay out the money to the expellees from its coffers and to insist that Poland does it. Inaction suits both, but only for a limited time. The situation is changing rapidly and sometimes unpredictably, but the issue does not disappear. Only recently, right after chancellor Schröder's visit to Poland on

August 1, 2004, did Steinbach herself state surprisingly that she and the BdV would not seek any reparations from Poland and that instead the German government should take over this responsibility and issue a special legislation to this effect. She criticized the chancellor for certain hypocrisy with regard to the Poles, and challenged him to create a "legal security" while accepting the responsibility to pay up. [35] Only in this way would Poland be satisfied, according to the president of an organization of about two million German expellees! Thus, in the meantime, she seems to be aligned with the politicians from Warsaw rather than her colleagues from Berlin or Munich, not to mention her former friends from the *Preußische Treuhand*.

Unfortunately for Polish society, its post-communist governments has missed several chances to address the issue of compensation head-on and thus reach its real settlement. Not counting theTwo-plus-Four Treaty sealing the German unification in September 1990, and even leaving aside the Polish-German border treaty from November 14, 1990, there were at least three opportunities to mend this problem.[36] Yet, neither of them was used to this effect; the Polish administrations did not even attempt to do so. First, in the ground-breaking treaty between Poland and Germany of June 17, 1991, the questions of compensation and ownership were not addressed. Moreover, as mentioned above, there is an explicit statement in the text of the treaty to that effect; its interpretation has subsequently been a controversial point between Germany and Poland. However, in this contest of treaty interpretations, it seems that the German side has the better argument: The German Federal Constitutional Tribunal ruled in 1992 that the Polish-German border treaty of November 1990 does not have any adverse effect on the questions relating to property rights to the lost territories and does not conflict with the Article 14 of the Federal Constitution that protects the rights of property and inheritance. Likewise, it seems that the Polish government is realizing inevitably that its insistence that this issue is settled will not make it go away.

Another missed opportunity to settle the legal status of the compensation claims of the expellees was in 1993, during the Copenhagen conference on the European Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties. The Polish delegation could have and possibly should have proposed an amendment regarding the status of the confiscated property of German-minority expellees and so-called late-resettled from the Polish territories. That proposal should have stipulated that the international treaty does not apply in this particular context. Thus the issue would have gained at least an appearance of being sanctioned by international law.

A third missed opportunity was the negotiation of Poland's EU accession in 2002. The Polish government could have conditioned its entry to the Union at least in part on a declaration that compensation issues lay outside of the jurisdiction of EU law. Perhaps this did not happen in part because Poland was very eager to be admitted to the EU and didn't want to disqualify its candidacy by raising this issue. At the same time, the BdV politicians, including Erika Steinbach, eventually relented on their initial demand that the compensation issue be a central condition

for Germany's support of Polish EU-candidacy. In the end, the problem was not settled to the satisfaction of either side.

Conclusion

How can this unsurprising crisis be overcome and the process of German-Polish reconciliation continued and deepened? Voices are now being heard in the Polish media pleading for a separation of the issue of the Center from all the other topics on the Polish-German agenda. Such voices are few but quite authoritative.[37] They seem resigned that if the BdV and its new allies want to build a center to memorialize the expulsion, they will prevail, with or without official sponsorship of the German government, which at the moment is against such a move. Thus, increasing numbers of Poles are slowly recognizing that preventing the Germans from memorializing its newly discovered victimhood is not possible.

At the same time, these voices point out that mutual sensitivity is necessary and that the expellee circles should not be used as an emblem for all Germans. Therefore there is really no reason for new anti-German sentiments. After all, both chancellor Schröder and foreign minister Joschka Fischer have spoken against establishing the center in Berlin. So has, for instance, Günter Grass, whose book, *Im Krebsgang,* about the tragic deaths of thousands of German escapees from Danzig at the end of World War II was not received too enthusiastically in Poland.[38] The sensitivity must be mutual, which means that Poles cannot only expect it from Germans without reciprocating. This fact has been noted only rarely by the Polish commentators, although self-critical voices can be heard.[39]

There are also heartening signs of new collaborative efforts to bring a bit of calm into the debate and sort out the issues more rationally. One prominent example for this approach is the Copernicus Group, an informal and non-governmental association of scholars and experts on Poland and Germany, which in December 2002 organized an international conference on the topic of memorializing the expulsions.[40] The same circle published a report in December 2003 that evaluated the debate about the Center very critically.[41] The group acknowledged the educational, political, and symbolic need for a center, but as a mutual Polish-German, if not all-European effort to document the expulsions and their full context. Notably, the authors of the report pleaded for yet another location of such a center. Their choice was the city of Görlitz/Zgorzelec on the current Polish-German border, and a historic arrival point for many German, Polish, and other expellees. Even though this idea has also met with some harsh criticism in the Polish media, this seems to be a much-needed mediating idea. How much political and public support it will receive on either side, is another question. Likewise, there is another budding initiative for an alternative representation of forced migrations, called "Memory and Solidarity." This initiative, with its headquarters in Warsaw, and co-sponsored by the governments of Poland, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, and possibly the Czech Republic, would coordinate a network of research centers and museums

dealing with forced migrations. The question of sufficient political will is open here, as well.[42]

Meanwhile, one thing is clear: Steinbach's center will not be supported financially by the Schröder administration that clearly opposes it. Barring the unforeseen, official support will not come her way until 2006 at the earliest. Whereas Steinbach tries increasingly to win over the Polish side, either by renouncing the compensation claims or by organizing a series of events devoted to highlighting various aspects of Polish history (called interestingly "Empathie—der Weg zum Miteinander"[43]), there is still very much distrust among the Poles that accepting a center against expulsions in Berlin will open a Pandora's box. And even the cautious comments of president Köhler during his first visit ever abroad that such a center in Berlin should not be decided upon without a dialogue with the Poles, made the Polish side quite suspicious and nervous that the new German president might not be sufficiently against it, after all.[44]

In the final analysis, it seems that the whole debacle about the center per se does not have to grow into a full-blown crisis in the relations between the two nations, but it is a clear warning that much challenging work lies ahead for the reconciliation process to be completed and successful. The issue of the center ought to be isolated from the more fundamental challenges, like reflecting on questions of Polish moral responsibility for the often brutal manner of the expulsions and dealing politically and legislatively with the questions of compensation. Much has been done in the process in the first 50 years since it became possible to deal directly and openly with many previously uncomfortable but unexamined questions. But, as one commentator observed, this process has so far aimed at the lowest common denominator between the two nations while leaving other issues aside.[45] Given the dynamic nature of the political and cultural processes in both countries, adjusting this common denominator and raising its quality is inevitable and clearly desirable, even if it will require more toleration.

[1] *Rzeczpospolita*, 17 September 2003.

[2] The rest of the headline reads: "The Germans Owe the Poles a Trillion Dollars for World War Two." *Wprost*, 21 September 2003.

[3] "It is difficult to talk nowadays about any cooperation between Berlin and Warsaw…" So concludes, for instance, Piotr Jendroszczyk, the Berlin correspondent for *Rzeczpospolita* in his dispatch of 21 January 2004, entitled: "International Law, Germany and Poland: Reparations Versus Compensation Claims for the Expellees."

[4] See, for instance, a special issue of *Der Spiegel* devoted to the expulsions, *Spiegel Special*, No. 2/2002. Cf. also Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Munich: Propyläen, 2002); Jörg Friedrich, *Brandstätten: Der Anblick des Bombenkriegs*

(Berlin: Propyläen, 2003); Klaus Rainer Röhl *Verbotene Trauer: Ende der deutschen Tabus* (Munich: Universitas, 2002); Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2002).

[5] This is borrowed from a commentary on German-Polish relations by Anna Wolff-Poweska, director of the Western Institute in Poznan. *Rzeczpospolita*, September 2003, No. 217.

[6] The topic became very widely debated. Just two, admittedly the biggest and most important newspapers, *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* offer a mountain of articles, letters from readers, including contributions from the Germans who either support the Berlin idea such as Steinbach herself and Helga Hirsch, or the spokesperson of the parliamentary coalition of CDU and CSU, Friedrich Pflüger, as well as those who oppose it, like Markus Meckel.

[7] An illuminating and concise historical sketch of this development is offered by Norman Naimark, in the chapter entitled "The Expulsions of Germans from Poland and Czechoslovakia," that is part of a larger study entitled *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century* Europe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 108–38.

[8] A few of the most important ones in chronological order: Maria Podlasek, *Wypedzenie Niemcow z terenow na wschod od Odry i Nysy Luzyckiej: Relacje Swiadkow* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Polsko-Niemieckie, 1995); Hubert Orlowksi and Andrzej Sakson, eds., *Utracona Ojczyzna: Przymusowe wysiedlenia, deportacje, i przesiedlenia jako wspolne doswiadczenie* (Poznan: Western Institute, 1996); Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, eds., *Verlorene Heimat: Die Vertreibungsdebatte in Polen* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998); Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und Polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in SBZ/DDR und in Polen 1945–1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1998); Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Renate Stössinger, and Robert Traba , eds., *Vertreibung aus dem Osten: Deutsche und Polen erinnern sich* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2000); Wlodzimierz Borodziej and Hans Lemberg, eds., *Niemcy w Polsce 1945–1950: Wybor dokumentow* (Warsaw: Neriton, 2000); Bernadetta Nitschke, *Wysiedlenie czy wypedzenie? Ludnosc niemiecka w Polsce w latach 1945–1949* (Torun: Adam Marszalek, 2000); Piotr Madajczyk, *Niemcy polscy 1944–1989* (Warsaw: Oficyna Naukowa, 2001); Andreas Lawaty and Hubert Orlowski, eds., *Polacy i Niemcy: Historia, kultura, polityka* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznanskie, 2003).

[9] Wlodzimierz Borodziej and Artur Hajnicz, eds., *Kompleks Wypedzenia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 1998).

[10] An excerpt of this speech is in Bachmann and Kranz, *Verlorene Heimat*, 33.

[11] A thorough discussion of this poll in Borodziej and Hajnicz, *Kompleks*, 439–75.

[12] The following chronological account follows several articles in diverse Polish and German newspapers and journals; probably the most concise and informative is an article by Günter Gnauck, "Neuer Wind und alte Ängste," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 September 2003.

[13] Adam Krzeminski and Adam Michnik, "Wo Geschichte europäisch wird," *Die Zeit*, No. 26, 2002: 11.

[14] Ibid., 11.

[15] It can be found under the following link: http://www.rzeczpospolita.pl/gazeta/wydanie_030917/publicystyka/publicystyka_a_1.html

[16] *Rzeczpospolita*, 30 October 2003.

[17] *Rzeczpospolita,* 15 July 2003.

[18] Quoted in Günter Gnauck, "Neuer Wind und alte Ängste," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 6 September 2003

[19] Glotz is probably the most prominent left-wing liberal politician supporting Steinbach's proposal. He himself recently published a book on the topic: *Die Vertreibung: Böhmen als Lehrstück* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2003).
[20] Robert Traba, "Gedächtnisfalle. 'Vertreibung' als Katalysator im Verständigungsprozess zwischen Deutschen und Polen?" In: Edward Bialek, Manfred Durzak, and Marek Zybura, eds., *Literatur im Zeugenstand. Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Liteteratur- und Kulturgeschichte. Festschrift zum 65.Geburtstag von Hubert Orlowski* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002). 175–85.
[21] Hubert Orlowski, "Semantyka deprywacji." In: Lawaty and Orlowski, *Polacy i Niemcy*, 146–59.
[22] *Rzeczpospolita*, 28 August 2003.
[23] Here, for comparison, are results of the German poll: 36 percent of the polled thought that Germans were also victims, 52 percent disagreed, and 12 percent didn't know; 62 percent were for some kind of a center, and around 30 percent were for the center in Berlin, whereas around 25 percent of the polled advocated a European center not in Germany. Interestingly, 45 percent of those who are for the Berlin proposal are supporting the post-communist party PDS. Also, 37 percent of those sympathetic to the Green party are for the Berlin center. Those who live in the former GDR are also in the majority for the Steinbach proposal.
[24] One could also further ask what it means that Germans are victims "like" the Poles, etc. Also there might have been different response if present tense had been used.
[25] The first estimates run around 10 billion dollars; and, among others, this claim is also supported by Wladyslaw Bartoszewski. *Rzeczpospolita*, 7 November 2003.
[26] The very complex issue of the legal and political aspects of the (mutual) compensation and reparation claims is a subject of a separate article in progress.
[27] Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 111.
[28] Stefan Hambura and WaldemarGontarski, "Zamknac droge do oszkodowan," *Rzeczpospolita*, 8 October 2003.
[29] Here is the relevant excerpt from Schröder's speech: "Wir Deutschen wissen sehr wohl, wer den Krieg angefangen hat und wer seine ersten Opfer waren. Deshalb darf es heute keinen Raum mehr für Restitutionsansprüche aus Deutschland geben, die die Geschichte auf den Kopf stellen. Die mit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zusammenhängenden Vermögensfragen sind für beide Regierungen kein Thema mehr in den deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen. Weder die Bundesregierung noch andere ernst zu nehmende politische Kräfte in Deutschland unterstützen individuelle Forderungen, soweit sie dennoch geltend gemacht werden. Diese Position wird die Bundesregierung auch vor allen internationalen Gerichten vertreten." The whole speech can be found at http://www.bundesregierung.de/rede-,413.691262/Rede-von-Bundeskanzler-Schroed.htm
[30] *Rzeczpospolita,* 3 August 2004.
[31] The official stance of the German government on this issue is that the questions of compensation for the *Vertreibung*-related losses have been settled by the *Lastenausgleich* legislation (LAG) from 1952, in which expellees have received a total of 143 billion DM. However, it can be argued that that it is an incomplete compensation, as the claimants received only a particular percentage of the value of the lost property. Only property of a value no higher than 5,000 Reichsmark was compensated fully. For instance, for property

worth 10, 000 RM, the expellees received 80 percent of the full value, for those estimated at 100,000 RM they received 25 percent, and for estates worth a million RM, between 8 and 9 percent. In addition, the preamble of the LAG states specifically that the beneficiaries of the compensation payments do not forfeit any claims to the title of the lost real estate in the East. In case of reclaiming the title, the compensation monies would have to be paid back, but the claim to the title is paramount. Bartosz Jalowiecki, "Marne Grosze?" *Rzeczpospolita*, 11 August 2004, which is an informative article on the issue, written by a former president of the Polish-German Foundation "Reconciliation."

[32] "Preußische Treuhand will Rückgabe, nicht Entschädigung für deutsche Vertriebene", *Die Welt*, 4 August 2004. To learn more about this organization as it describes itself and its mission, consult its web site at: http://www.preussischetreuhand.de.vu/

[33] *Broniowski v. Poland* (application no. 31443/96). The decision of the Tribunal can be at fond at: http://www.echr.coe.int/Eng/Press/2004/June/Grand%20Chamberjudgment BroniowskvPoland.htm. For more context-setting information and commentary on this issue (in English), consult: http://www.euractiv.com/cgi-bin/cgint.exe?204&OIDN=1507917

[34] To gain a more detailed knowledge about the history of the LAG, please consult Lutz Wiegand, *Der Lastenausgleich in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1985* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992), and Michael Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat: West Germany and the Reconstruction of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

[35] "Vertriebene: Schröders Auftritt in Polen sät Zwietracht unter Verbandsfunktionären," *Der Spiegel,* 9 August 2004, Nr. 33.

[36] I rely here on the opinion of Mariusz Muszynski, a professor of international law, presented in the article entitled (in my translation) "Revanchism: Mistakes or Good Business?" *Rzeczpospolita*, 23 October 2003.

[37] For instance, Jerzy Kranz, coauthor of an important Polish-German volume on the expulsions, and former Polish ambassador to Germany; and Jerzy Holzer, one of the most distinguished Germany experts in Poland.

[38] Interview with Günter Grass, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 5 July 2002.

[39] "While fighting against the Steinbach proposal, we exposed ourselves with national insecurities and anti-German phobias." So writes Piotr Buras in his article "Sad Truth About the Lack of Reconciliation," *Rzeczpospolita*, 26 September 2003.

[40] A result of it is an excellent volume: Jürgen Danyel and Philipp Ther, eds., *Flucht und Vertreibung in europäischer Perspektive*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, vol. 1 (2003).

[41] The sixth Report of the Copernicus Group was entitled "Memory without Divisions: A European Center against Expulsions—Proposal for Concept and Activities." *Rzeczpospolita*, 31 December 2003.

[42] An example of potential tensions is an official letter sent to *Rzeczpospolita* in reaction to an article published by RZ on 22 July 2004. In it, it was mentioned that representatives from the Czech government also participated in the discussion of establishing such a network; the Czech embassy wanted to correct this characterization and insisted that it was only participating in the meeting as an observer. Letter by Bedrzich Kopecky, the Czech ambassador to Poland, published in *Rzeczpospolita* on 24 July 2004.

[43] The initial event of this planned series took place on 19 July 2004 at the French Dome of the Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin. It was devoted to a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, in which 200,000 Poles died and after which Hitler decided to level Warsaw entirely. Among the most prominent guests of Steinbach were the Jewish writer Ralph Giordano and the Catholic cardinal Karl Lehmann. No Poles were invited, and most of the Polish elites took this event as an incredible affront, although there were also some voices calling for empathy on the side of the Poles, on this occasion. See, for instance, Wojciech Wieczorek's article entitled in translation from Polish, "A Deep Polish Sleep," *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 July 2004.

[44] It was noted with significant satisfaction in Poland that Köhler decided to visit Poland first, and only after that to France, which traditionally enjoyed this privileged status in this context.

[45] Piotr Buras, "Sad Truth About the Lack of Reconciliation." In: *Rzeczpospolita*, 26 September 2003.