

INTERRUPTED RECONCILIATION AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION. GERMANY AND POLAND IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Summary. The round table talks in 1989 have become a symbol of change in the course of Poland's recent history. They have also been interpreted as turning point in traditional Polish attitude to the history itself. The spirit of peaceful transformation has dominated the first 15 years of the transition from communism to democracy. It seemed that for Poles the history is to be transformed, ever since, not so much by violent uprisings and wars, but through a peaceful process of negotiations and mutual understanding. It also seemed that, from that crucial point on, Poland is eager to learn, like other European countries did, to reconcile its recovered identity with other ones. During that time Polish foreign policy has been almost unanimously understood as a way of promoting national interest through cooperation and agreement, and not through, often futile, if justified, resistance and violence. Such an attitude has also reigned during the first 15 years of the Polish foreign policy especially toward the immediate neighbours, Germany in particular. It seemed certain that the old Polish saying: „As long the world is the way it is, a German will never be a brother to a Pole”, will never be revived to the rank of the chief principle in Poland's relation with Germany. The elections in 2005 have marked a beginning of a radical change to the worse in this respect, effected by extreme nationalist and populist parties of the Polish right, professing a specific version of exterminative politics, inspired by the political philosophy of Carl Schmitt. As a result, the Polish foreign policy has been almost completely subsumed to internal politics, and has fallen victim of bitter internal squabbles. By reference to several incidents in the German-Polish relations, author explains how this came about.

Key words: German-Polish relations, Polish foreign policy, atlanticism, post-communist elite, political psychology

THE BLISS OF RECONCILIATION

Ever since the symbolic mass, held in former von Moltke's family residence in the village of Kreisau in the Lower Silesia, during which imposing Chancellor Helmut Kohl exchanged a hug with tiny Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first Polish prime minister of the post-communist Poland, both countries entered a path to the long-awaited reconciliation. Consecutive German administrations played a crucial role in implementing Poland's chief ambitions, formulated by the former

foreign minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski in April 1993, to become a member of the NATO and of the European Union.

The symbolic event in Kreisau has been preceded, and followed, by numerous German-Polish initiatives which enabled Poland to „return to Europe”, and initiated the process which enabled Europe „to breathe with both of its lungs”, as the famous John Paul II phrase had it. Many German-Polish associations, foundations and local initiatives were blooming at that time. Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation, which distributed significant sums of money in support of cultural, scholarly and artistic projects was established DAAD and The Goethe Institute greatly expanded their offer for Polish scholars, students and artists. Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk and „Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft“, are other examples of symbolic rapprochement. Many smaller foundations were and are operating in Poland, e.g. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, related to the German Left (*Die Linke*), or the Willy Brandt Centre at the University of Wrocław, established in 2002.

In 2000 Chancellor Gerhard Schröder announced setting up of a foundation, to be financed jointly by the German Government and the German industry, which would pay compensation to these people who were slave and forced labourers as well as concentration camp inmates under the Nazi regime. Significant part of the 76 million euro assigned to this fund was received by the Polish citizens.

Finally, during the concluding stage of the negotiations of Poland's accession to European Union in Copenhagen on December 13, 2002, Gerhard Schröder decided to accommodate the Polish Prime Minister Miller's surprising and indeed embarrassing demand for an additional billion euro for Poland in the EU budget for the years 2004–2006, though everything was already decided and agreed upon; the allegedly additional money Poland received came from another pocket which was made available to Poland anyway.

It is thus evident that over the 15 years of transformation, Germans exerted themselves to accommodate both reasonable and unreasonable Polish claims, only to win this country to the European Union. The problems began as soon as the accession became irreversible.

All this was accompanied and stimulated by numerous intensive mutual contacts of Polish and German politicians, from the presidential through executive, parliamentary and civil society level. It is fair to say that during the first fifteen years after the 1989, German-Polish relationships were the best in one-thousand-year-long history of the troubled neighbourhood.

Among the most important initiatives in this respect was the Weimar Triangle, established on August 29, 1991 by foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland i.e. Roland Dumas, Hans Dietrich Genscher, and Krzysztof Skubiszewski in the city Weimar. For fifteen years it has been an informal yet very effective instrument of securing Polish interests in the European game. It has been established in a conviction „that France, Germany and Poland form a community of interests which aims for Europe to succeed”. Its fathers appealed to their nations and governments „to continue on the road of the common re-

sponsibility of Poles, Germans and the French". They also appealed to the societies of these three countries to work in order to face effectively the challenges of the contemporary Europe.

One has to stress that the Weimar Triangle has been particularly important for Poland. The Polish accession to the NATO in March 12, 1999, and then to the European Union on May 1, 2004, would not have been possible without the support of France and Germany. This was also possible, no less importantly, thanks to the influence these countries were able to exert not only on these institutions, but also on their environment, especially on Russia. The importance of the Weimar forum will be seen especially in comparison with the Visegrad Group, known also as a Polish geopolitical axis¹, consisting of Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, which turned out to be an ineffectual not-starter both before the Grand Expansion of the European Union, as well as after it.

To sum up the character of the mutual relations between Germany and Poland in the period preceding the adoption of the Treaty of Nice it is fair to say that Germany worked to secure a strong position to Poland; this has been reflected in the fact that, according to the Nice provisions, Poland was able to form coalitions which would be able to block some EU decisions, which boiled down to the right of veto. This gesture of recognition, extended to Poland by Europe on German insistence, played an important role in winning public support for the accession, which was not certain due to hysterical opposition against the European Union of many political and religious groupings in Poland, especially the extreme right wing and peasants parties, as well as some fundamentalist representatives of the Catholic Church.

2005 – THE TURNING POINT

When the newly elected German Chancellor Angela Merkel paid her first visit as a German Chancellor to Russia, it was commented that within a week she has managed to achieve more than Gerhard Schröder did over the few years of his term, during which he was criticised for his excessively chummy relations with Vladimir Putin.² Even though this was rather an exaggerated statement, it is fair to say that Angela Merkel did quite well in Russia; at the same time, or rather just because of this, *die Bundeskanzlerin* cannot be said to have achieved a similar success in the relations with the neighbouring Poland, much the contrary. Just as the year 2002 has been described a watershed year in the German-American relationships,³ the same can be said of the year 2005 for the German-

¹ Simon Araloff, *The Visegrad Group – Polish Geopolitical Axis*, February 27, 2006; <http://www.axisglobe.com>

² „Der Spiegel”, December 12, 2005.

³ S. Stephen Szabo, *The Poisoned Relationship. Germany, the United States, and the Election of 2002* [in:] *A Precarious Victory. Schoeder and the German Elections of 2002*, David P. Conradt, Gerald R. Kleinfeld, Christian Søre (eds), Berghahn Books, New York-Oxford 2005.

-Polish relations. German and Polish general elections in 2005 have been a turning point which marked a dramatic change to the worse. Problems marring the German-Polish relations have to be understood against the background of events that took place in the years before, as well as in the more distant past. As a result, since the general elections held in both countries in autumn 2005, the relations between German-Polish governments have turned from a friendly and model cooperation into the state of war waged on harsh and cold words. While the above mentioned obstacles in the reconciliation process were serious dangers in Poland's accommodating to the rules of the European consensual politics before 2005, after that date they have been uniformly and consistently exploited by the newly elected parties to create a consistent belligerent rhetoric that was implied to be a basis for a new Poland's stance on most of the European matters.

In 2005 the new Polish government has been formed by the right wing populist party Law and Justice, led by Jarosław Kaczyński. In the presidential elections, held two weeks after the general ones, his twin brother Lech Kaczyński was elected the President of the Republic of Poland, succeeding Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a symbol of the post-communist establishment. The dominant Law and Justice party is radical nationalist, populist and extremely anti-post-communist formation. It has won the elections, though narrowly, under the slogans of doing away with the corrupted elite-network, referred to as "układ", and symbolised by the bridge table at which businessmen, corrupted politicians, former and present secret service members and biased journalists are playing the game against Polish national interest. The Law and Justice agenda had very little to do with constructive vision of Poland within the European Union and was focused on internal affairs which were to be solved not so much by modernisation of the country but by purging it of the former collaborators of the communist secret services and the post-communists themselves.

Expected coalition of Law and Justice with Civic Platform, more moderate and more groomed in international affairs, turned out impossible due to personal animosities between their leaders. Lech Kaczyński has won presidential elections against the Civic Platform leader Donald Tusk thanks to the publicised fact that Tusk's grandfather fought during the WW2 with Wehrmacht – on the German, not the Polish side, naturally. Thus, Law and Justice has formed instead a coalition with a radical socialist and populist Self-Defence, led by Andrzej Lepper, and an ultra-Catholic, xenophobic and homophobic party League of Polish Families led by Roman Giertych.⁴ Giertych has also been a honorary chairman of the All-Poland's Youth, even more radical and anti-Semitic association which had won some fame when some of its leaders were caught by a photographer

⁴ Stefan Meller, an experienced diplomat representing liberal circles in Poland, who initially agreed to become the foreign minister in the Law and Justice government, has resigned the moment the coalition was formed. He was succeeded by Ms. Anna Fotyga known for inability to take any decision without prior consultation with the President Lech Kaczyński.

while hailing in a Nazi gesture.⁵ His father, Maciej Giertych, the EU MP, won some fame by praising publicly general Francisco Franco and António Salazar as the model figures of the European values, and publishing an anti-Semitic booklet decorated with the logo of the European parliament for which he had not authorisation; for this misuse was subsequently admonished.

Initially, there were few signs of a reversal in the Polish politics toward Germany, especially after the leader of the victorious party Law and Justice compared the future Poland of his vision to the „second Bavaria”. This has been read as an indirect allusion to Lech Wałęsa’s promise to turn the country into the „second Japan”. Obvious meaning of this comparison involved the Catholic faith, symbolised by Benedict XVI, a Bavarian and a successor of the John Paul II, the icon of Polishness for Poles themselves. Yet, one hoped, the comparison embraced also the modern industry symbolised by the BMW, Siemens and Audi, chief Bavarian companies. However, the optimistic expectations in this respect turned out to be wholly misplaced; it soon became obvious that the twin dominated Polish government intended to build a new Bavaria much against Germany itself.

Electoral campaign and subsequent Polish foreign policy was dominated by the slogans of protection of the national interest. Both internal and external policies were to be dictated by „historical politics”, which was a sign that the future-oriented modernisation policies were to be superseded by the politics of retribution for the harms and damages suffered by Poland in the past. Accordingly, Poland’s place in Europe has been defined by the perception of Germany and Russia as chief dangers to Poland’s security; the cooperation of these two countries, especially in construction of the gas pipeline under the Baltic Sea, served as an undeniable proof of the collusion of these two eternal enemies against Poland. Polish national security could only be safeguarded by the United States; the historical politics resulted in recreation of the pre-war politics of two enemies and in the blind and uncritical pro-Americanism. What followed was a grotesque spectacle of demonstrated enmity and suspicion toward Europe, and extreme servility toward the American administration.

THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION: SOME EXAMPLES

In a well known joke a patient goes to the doctor, and asked about his malady, reveals his complaint: „I am being ignored by everyone...”. The doctor replies: „Next please!”.

⁵ Giertych became the Minister of Education, and one of his responsibilities was to organise trips of the Israeli young people in Poland where they visit the former Nazi concentration camps. One of his anti-Semitic remark prompted the Israeli government to declare that they will not deal with him. The Jews in Israel and in USA, however, were satisfied by Kaczyński’s statements that there is no anti-Semitism in Poland, which is belied by the fact that they tend to promote politically a worrying number of people who demonstrate publicly their anti-Semitic views.

This is what actually has happened to Jarosław Kaczyński back in 1990's when he had a chance to meet Chancellor Helmut Kohl. He took this opportunity to lecture the Chancellor on German wickedness toward Poland. Instead of arguing with him or attempting to change his view, Chancellor Kohl showed him out of his office, which allegedly surprised Kaczyński for, in his own opinion, he was just being frank. This incident tells a lot about both Kaczyńskis views of the Polish German history, their diplomatic talents, as well as about their limitless conceit and feeling of self-importance. One may also say that public disrespect one of them demonstrated toward the Chancellor Angela Merkel has been a belated revenge for the injury to their twin pride suffered in the past.

During his first official visit to Germany, being his first ever visit to that country, President Lech Kaczyński did nothing to signal that he will continue the former Polish course toward Germany. Asked upon his return what did he think of the Chancellor Angela Merkel, he confined himself to a condescending and rather sexist remark that she seemed a „nice lady”. Similar reference to Merkel appears in Lech Kaczyński's interview for „Der Spiegel” where it was translated into „a very agreeable woman”. The fact that he did not notice in time her extended hand – an act of inattention which was captured by the photographers – was commented widely as a demonstration of his disdain for her and as a premonition of a radical change in the mutual relations.

The final leg of his visit took Mr. Lech Kaczyński to the Humboldt University in Berlin where he lectured on his vision of Europe. His lecture was interrupted by the gay and lesbian activists' demonstration against his views on homosexuality, made public during his term as a mayor of the city of Warsaw, when he prohibited the homosexuals to demonstrate for their rights during the annual parade. Kaczyński's example was followed by mayors of other towns in Poland. In response to the questions concerning his views on homosexuality, he reiterated that he considers homosexuality as an illness to be treated, and not something to be proud of and publicly demonstrated.

On September 8, 2005, Germany and Russia agreed to build a new pipe-line for the transportation of the Siberian gas to Germany and Europe. The pipeline, now under construction, is to run from St. Petersburg's area to Greifswald, omitting the Polish territory. The German-Polish debate was increasingly dominated by references to the allegedly endangered security of Poland due to its undiversified energy supplies, meaning excessive reliance on Russian supplies. The references were formulated and found publicly credible in the context of the rapid increase of oil prices and of two incidents of Russia's employing gas pipelines as an instrument of influence on Belarus and Ukraine.

During his visit to the NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the Polish defence minister Radosław Sikorski has compared the German-Russian joint undertaking to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact; it was not his private opinion, for frequent comparisons to that effect have been heard frequently in the Polish media. According to the popularised view, the Polish security in this respect has been recently endan-

gered by the new German-Russian pact, signed over the head of the Polish nation, and against its interests. The defense minister also said that Chancellor Merkel had offered consultations on the pipeline project, remarking at the same time that she did not show any sign of a willingness to make any changes in the deal with Russia. „To first make a decision and then offer consultations is not our idea of European solidarity”, Sikorski said. „We are shocked that Germany would do something that creates a disadvantage for German consumers and which is geopolitically targeted against Polish interests”.⁶ In his interview for „Der Spiegel” Kaczyński said: „We are allies of Germany, in both NATO and the European Union – so why this pipeline around Poland’s borders? My discussions with Chancellor Merkel... were not satisfactory or constructive for Poland in this regard. We want the best possible relations with Russia, of course. But at the same time, we are very vigilant when it comes to the German-Russian relationship. The reasons for this bilateral pipeline through the Baltic Sea were purely political”.⁷

The worst came in the period just before the Weimar Triangle meeting planned for June 2006, shortly before the G-8 meeting scheduled in St. Petersburg in July later this year, and to be chaired by Vladimir Putin. A columnist of the German leftist newspaper of opinion „Die Tageszeitung”, Peter Köhler, has published a satirical article in which Kaczyński brothers were compared to young Polish potatoes, were called little thieves, their mother was alluded to, and were accused of aspiring to take over power of the world. This ridiculous satire was followed by even more ridiculous international row during which Lech Kaczyński and other Polish politicians demanded from the German administration to apologise for the publication, the Polish foreign minister, Ms. Anna Fotyga, has compared this publication to the anti-Polish aggressive publications in the Nazi *Der Stürmer*, and the general prosecutor was asked to consider prosecution of the author for offending the head of state.⁸ The editor of the *Die Tageszeitung*, Bascha Mika, has acknowledged that the satire was in some places particularly tasteless, yet compared the reaction of the Polish authorities to the reaction of the radical Muslims to the publication of the caricature of Mohammed in *Jillands-Posten*, which led to violent demonstrations in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁹ Which, one assumes, did not help much in winning Kaczyńskis for Germany.

In the course of the embarrassing ruckus Angela Merkel was strongly reproached by Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński for not stopping in Warsaw on her way to St Petersburg to the G8 summit in July 2006; he implied that her direct flight to St Petersburg over the Polish heads was a demonstration of disdain for Poland and that is not conducive toward the Polish-German dialogue.

⁶ „Der Spiegel”, May 1, 2006.

⁷ „Der Spiegel”, March 6, 2006.

⁸ Cf. „Poland Demands Apology. Polish PM Prickled by ‘Spud’ Slander”, „Der Spiegel”, July 11, 2006.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

In reaction to the scandal, eight former Polish foreign ministers have written a letter urging the new administration to respect former Polish achievements in the international field, including the Weimar Triangle, by drawing attention to the fact the French-German-Polish forum served first and foremost the Polish interests, and that France and Germany do not need the Weimar Triangle to boost their interests. In response to their letter, the ministers were attacked as traitors of the Polish interests. One of them, Władysław Bartoszewski, widely recognised champion of the Polish-German reconciliation and former ambassador of Poland to Austria, was spectacularly *not* asked by the Foreign Ministry or the President to withdraw his resignation from the membership in a foreign policy council, which he filed in a protest against the deliberate anti-German policy. Add to this the accusation by a deputy defence minister, Antoni Macierewicz, known for his unbalanced views and behaviour, who bluntly asserted in the TV network „Trwam” (which translates into „I Last”) run by a fundamentalist Catholic priest, that most of the former Polish foreign ministers were Soviet agents. Again, no less spectacularly, the deputy defence minister Macierewicz was not asked to step down.

One of the partners of the ruling coalition is the League of Polish Families, described as a fundamentalist Catholic, nationalist, anti-Russian, anti-German and anti-Semitic party. This small party, increasingly dominated by the Law and Justice, is striving for public recognition, and for the votes, by frequent attempts to introduce controversial issues into the public debate. One of its politicians has proposed to reintroduce death penalty, as a punishment of the paedophiles for starters. Asked for comment, President Kaczyński said that he was and will remain a supporter of the death penalty, though he is aware that in the present circumstances reintroduction of death penalty will not be possible; by this he meant official ban of the death penalty by the European treaties and documents. His words elicited a letter from the Council of Europe in which he was asked for explanation.

The League of the Polish Nations has also proposed that the German ethnic minority in Poland be deprived of a privilege thanks to which, from the very beginning of the transformation, ethnic Germans living in Poland has a parliamentary representation of two up to four MPs. They pointed out that the Polish sizeable minority in Germany is not privileged in a similar way. Prime Minister Kaczyński rather aggressively supported this view, mentioning the principle of symmetry; yet the very next day, during a meeting with Angela Merkel in Helsinki, he has reversed his opinion and promised that the German privilege will not be taken away. One has to mention that the privilege is extended not only to Germans but to all ethnic minorities in Poland, though only ethnic Germans are organised enough to be able to take advantage of it. The threat to abolish the alleged privilege of ethnic Germans in Poland turned out to be a blackmail, for it was soon revealed that the German minority MPs dared, just once, to vote in the Polish Parliament with the Civic Platform rather than with Law and Justice. The Law and Justice, despite commanding a majority of votes in the parliament,

cannot always rely on its wobbly coalition partners and are scrambling votes each time they attempt to pass any law important to them.

From the very beginning of the new Polish administration which took over in 2005, it has been apparent that for the newly elected Polish political leaders the most important German politician will not be President Horst Köhler, nor the nice lady Angela Merkel, nor any other official representative of German, but the ugly lady Erika Steinbach. Steinbach, the chairwoman of the Federation of German Expellees, won her attention of the right wing parties in Poland ever since she formulated the initiative to commemorate the fate of the expellees from the former German territories in the West and North of Present Poland. Infamously, one of the weeklies of opinion presented her wearing Waffen SS uniform and riding on the back of Gerhard Schröder.

On August 10, 2006, Erika Steinbach has opened her exhibition „Enforced Paths. The escape and expulsion in the 20th Century Europe”.¹⁰ This small and rather unassuming exhibition, confined to three rooms in Berlin’s *Kronprinzenpalais* on Unter den Linden, was for the Polish government much more important than anything any German politician would have done. One wonders, for example, whether they ever heard of Frank-Walter Steinmeier. (One also wonders whether Frank-Walter Steinmeier has ever heard of Poland, for that matter.)

On hearing the news of the opening of the exhibition, Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński demonstrated his disapproval by visiting the former Nazi concentration camp in Stutthoff in revenge; Kazimierz Macinkiewicz, former prime minister and then acting mayor of the City of Warsaw, has declined to go to Berlin, Warsaw partner city, on a long scheduled visit. As soon as the first review of the exhibitions were published, some items, lent by Polish subjects, were withdrawn from the exhibition, including the bell from the ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* which was sunk by the Russians on the Baltic Sea in January 1945, together with 9,343 Germans on its board. Few Germans knew, however, that there was no place to exhibit this symbolic bell in Poland after it was recovered from the sea, and that before the bell became famous again thanks to Ms. Steinbach, it was moved in Poland like a hot potato from one institution to another.

On September 2, President Horst Köhler took part in the traditional „Tag der Heimat”; in his speech he rebuked the interpretation of expulsions advocated by Erika Steinbach, which he did in her presence, by saying that the Germans suffered the expulsions not in 1945 but in 1939 already, and presented his own family and himself as an example. He was born in a small town of Skierbieszów in Poland, where his family settled after it was ordered by the Nazis to move from Moldova. Yet on the same day prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński has attacked him by saying that his appearance at the festivities of the „Tag der Heimat” is just one of many elements in a sequence of anti-Polish gestures of the German

¹⁰ Charles Hawley, *The Wounds of World War II, Remembering German Victims*, „Der Spiegel”, August 10, 2006.

politicians.¹¹ He did not stop to think that the presence of the German Federal President during the September 2 festivities has been a German tradition since 1950, least of all bothering to attend to what Mr Köhler had actually said.¹²

SUBJECT AND OBJECT

The present state of the German-Polish relations, illustrated by the above mentioned incidents, calls for some explanation. The explanation have to based on deciphering the contents of some elements of ideologies mushrooming in Poland in response to the rapidity and dynamics of the international relations, within which both neighbouring countries cannot afford to ignore each other and are condemned to play important roles for each other.

The difference between mutual attitudes of Germans and Poles toward each other is to be explained by means of the fact that, within the transformative processes taking place in Europe, Poland, due to its relative economic and political weakness, is perceiving itself largely as their object. At the same time, Poland perceives Germany as playing the role of the main subject of the dynamics. One has to stress that this double perception of the Polish authorities (and, to some extent, of the Polish society) is more or less adequate.

Peculiarities of Poland's behaviour toward its western neighbour have thus to explained, I suggest, by its resistance to its objectified role and by its yearning to be recognised as at least equal to Germany. Poland strives to achieve this aim by two strategies complementing each other. One of them is an attempt to find a ground for justifying the claim of its moral superiority over and above Germany, which is done by frequent references to history, especially to the WW2, during which Poland has fallen victim of the German invasion and occupation. The moral superiority of the victim versus its former oppressor is to compensate for the present weaker position of Poland in other respects.

The other strategy has as its aim to establish some „special relationship” with the United States of America and to play is against the partners within the European Union. Both of these strategies should be read as an attempt to justify the demand of equality in mutual relations with Germany and, more widely, with all partners within the European Union.

TRADE IN SUFFERING

First thing to be borne in mind is that Poland, contrary to the most of the European nations, continues to fight the WW2 without interruption ever since it

¹¹ Cf. *New Setback in German-Polish Ties*, „Der Spiegel”, September, 2006.

¹² President Köhler actually said: „There is no serious force in Germany that wants to rewrite history”.

ended in 1945. Due to the painful post-war memories which affected every, Poles are prone to fall an easy prey to anti-German sentiments; these sentiments have been ruthlessly excited and exploited by most of the politicians in the peculiar spectacle that has dominated the Polish scene. As a result, the Poles have been induced to perceive the accession to the European Union not so much as a political act, decisive for the future of the country and the continent, but rather as an act of compensation for their past suffering inflicted upon them first by the German Third Reich, and then by the Communist regime, imposed by the imperial Soviet Union. Feeling that the Western European countries betrayed Poland in the past, the Poles had accepted a vision of European Union as an instrument of repayment of the moral debt by the Western countries.

The concept of healing wounds and abating pain of the past suffering by means of money carries with it well known dangers. They are apparent in the Polish attitude toward the European Union as a whole, and Germans specifically; the accession to the European Union is perceived in Poland as a fulfilment of the historical justice, an act of the historical satisfaction for the betrayal and exclusion of their nation which ended only recently. At the same time, the Poles indignantly continue to stress that one cannot pay off the moral guilt by money; this however, did nothing to inhibit them from reaching for the cash. This is accompanied by a unique moral blackmail by means of which the descendants of the victims try morally to subdue the descendants of the perpetrators: „your money will not, of course, compensate our moral loss; but we shall take them anyway, because we deserve them. As a compensation our past moral loss”.

VICTIM'S POSITION

Few among Polish politicians are inhibited by moral dubiousness of this half-illicit trade in suffering they engage into. Radical change in the attitude of the Polish authorities toward Germans, which took place after the elections in 2005, is based upon an attempt to monopolise the victimhood and to make the best of this monopoly. For it is a very convenient position enabling them to claim that the old Europe, especially Germans, will never redeem their undisputed past sins, nor they will ever buy themselves out. This uninhibited and rather shameless trade in suffering blinds them to the fact that it results in a reversal that is becoming increasingly inconvenient to the accusers themselves. In the face of the extent of morally justified demands and inescapable guilt, Germans are either panicking, or growing defiant. In order to avoid the never-ending yet obviously always morally justified claims, to extricate themselves from the „moral nelson” imposed on them, the Germans begin to remind about their own suffering, and are searching for guilt in their own past victims. Persistently drawn back to the trenches of the WW2, which ended for them more than 60 years ago, the Germans are growing impatient and ask themselves whether it will ever end.

Realising immediately that it will *never* end, some of them are defiantly trying to domesticate their own history for themselves, however shameful it was. No wonder that Germans, who have repeatedly acknowledged and confessed their guilt, who attempted to redeem it by becoming the most important advocate of Poland in Europe, are growing impatient with their Eastern neighbour. They increasingly seem to reason along the following lines: „The Poles seem to think that having the argument of Auschwitz, they will have us, Germans, cornered for ever, irrespective of what and how much we do for them. They think that we shall bend under their demands indefinitely, irrespective of how disloyal they have been toward us. This must be stopped!” It is no surprise that the recent German culture and daily life is peppered with allusions to the *Polnische wirtschafft*, Polish undeniable, though by far smaller, historical guilt, e.g. against Jews, about Polish despicable national faults, the return of properties left by the Germans expelled from the present Polish western territories, etc.

PERENNIAL ENMITY

Both in the pre-accession and post-accession periods, the European Union has been persistently presented by some Polish circles not as unprecedented opportunity for the country, but as a grave danger. This danger is identified again, naturally, with Germany's dominant position with the European Union.

The political elites ruling in Poland in 1989-2005 followed more or less the spirit of the letter of 1965 in which Polish bishops forgave their German colleagues and asked them for forgiveness. The elites had to work hard against the traditional picture of bad Germans; in their difficult task they succeeded a significant extent. The picture of good Germans, however, has been upset by two most popular German politicians in Poland, i.e. Frau Erika Steinbach who initiated the Polish-German debate on the moral aspect of commemorating the fate of the expellees from the former German territories taken over by Poland after the Second World War, and by Herr Rudi Pawelka, chairman of the *Preussische Treuhand*, established to demand compensations to the Germans who lost properties due to the expulsions.

At the same time, however, their intervention into the reconciliation process was more than welcome by some Polish parties and groupings which revelled in drawing an ominous picture of the dangers Steinbach and Pawelka present. This was a clever move, for most of the Poles still remember the communist propaganda against the revisionists Herbert Hupka and Herbert Czaja, both of whom, almost until 1989, were made to symbolise the German danger to the Polish post-war territorial integrity. The Poles who have been working for the German-Polish reconciliation are now being criticised as „lie-elites” and accused for treachery against the Polish national interests; their conciliatory attitude is now perceived as an excessive philo-Germanism and is conveniently explained as motivated by generous German scholarship awarded to them. The German-

-Russian pipeline, together with Steinbach and Pawelka, are serving as a perfect proof of the truth of these accusations.

Germans have to remember that even though they have repeatedly paid respect to their victims, many Poles will continue to think that it is not enough and that it will *never* be enough; that the guilt of the Nazi Germany falls upon the heads of all Germans and their children for all times. In other words, Poles are taught to adopt as their own the view expressed by Hans Frank during his Nuremberg trial that the guilt of Germans will not be erased for a thousand years. They are taught to think that each German is an executioner and will remain one for ever. The recent uproar which followed Günther Grass's concession that he had served in the Waffen SS¹³ was used to demonstrate to the Poles that if the best of Germans turn to be very bad, it cannot but follow that there are no good Germans at all.

NAIVE ATLANTICISM

Some time ago a representative of the US Department of State, asked about the American policy toward the European integration is said to have responded: „Disintegration!“. Polish policies toward the European Union seem to be aimed toward the implementation of this disruptive policy. For another problem in Polish-European relationships is Polish ardent and uncritical Americanism.

At the beginning of the transformation processes, political elites in Poland played briefly with the idea of „Finlandisation“ of the country; this had to do with the justification of the demand for the withdrawal of the Soviet Army troops from the Polish territory. This conception was promptly abandoned as soon as the withdrawal was effected and Poland has applied successfully for the membership in the NATO. Upon Poland's becoming a member of the European Union, however, some political forces began to formulate an idea which may be called the „Israelisation“ of Poland; no one is clear what is the meaning of this conception except for a vague idea that Poland will have to play a role in Europe similar to the one Israel plays in the Middle East, i.e. the role of a bulwark against the Russian imperialism. It is justified by no less vague references to the Jan III Sobieski's victory against the Turkish invasion of Europe in Vienna on September 12, 1683, and to the Polish victory against the Soviets troops during the Polish-Soviet war of 1921.

The present Polish foreign policy is based on an assumption that Poland's security can only be safeguarded by the USA, not by the European Union, i.e. by the NATO, not by the Common European Foreign and Defence Policy. This does not go well

¹³ *An Honorary Citizen's Fall from Grace*, „Der Spiegel“, August 18, 2006. See also *Waffen SS Admission. Grass Seeks to Cleanse Reputation*, „Der Spiegel“, August 17, 2006.

with the Germany's strategic aims and foreign policy as formulated in the run-up for the 2002 German general elections,¹⁴ as well as afterwards.

One has to grant the obvious: the NATO still exists, whereas the European Rapid Deployment Forces do not – as yet – exist.¹⁵ The Polish policy is focused on the preservation of the truth of this obvious statement; accordingly, the Polish efforts are concentrated on strengthening the NATO and the American presence in Europe, and on undermining every attempt to work out a framework for the common foreign policy and establishment of the European Rapid Deployment Forces.

The pro-American attitude has been controversially demonstrated by the former post-communist Polish government by a symbolic decision in December 2002 to purchase 48 US F-16 aircraft, and to reject two competitive offers from the European countries. This did a lot to upset the Germans, though they did not aspire to receive the contract. Yet it was only just a beginning in the slide in relations of Poland toward Germany and the European Union. In March 2003 Leszek Miller, then Polish prime minister, signed the infamous letter of eight in support of the US intervention in Iraq, without notifying his partner Gerhard Schröder, though on the previous evening he had the Chancellor as a house-guest. This upset both Germans and the French even more; Jacques Chirac reacted to this with his memorable statement that Poles have lost an excellent opportunity to remain silent. It also led to the first failure of the French-German-Polish Weimar summit in Wrocław in May 2003, during which the heads of states found no common ground in their respective policies regarding the US invasion of Iraq. Later still Poland criticised the Constitution Treaty for Europe for lack of references to the Catholic God and, most especially, for reducing privileged vote weighing afforded to Poland in the Treaty of Nice. The post-communist Polish administration outdid itself in demonstration of their anti-European stance as soon as the Copenhagen accession negotiations were concluded on December 13, 2002, under the persistent pressure of extreme and moderate right wing parties; ever since one of their leaders theatrically, though foolishly declared „Nice or Death!”, the defence of the Nice system of vote weighing has become an official Polish policy toward the European Union and its constitution.

The post-communist elite may be excused for their self-contradictory attitude which, on the one hand, pushed them to work hard toward the European integration and, on the other, try to win the American appreciation for themselves. For, burdened by their illegitimate post-communist origin, they were particularly keen on winning the international recognition for themselves. Especially former president Aleksander Kwaśniewski was motivated to pursue this self-

¹⁴ For the story of change of the German attitude toward the US, see S. Szabo, *The Poisoned Relationship. Germany, the United States, and the Election of 2002*, op. cit., pp. 185–204. See also a rather mistaken projection concerning the expected continuity in German foreign policy by Jeffrey Lantis, *Strategic Dilemmas and the Evolution of German Foreign Policy since Unification*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, Ct, 2002.

¹⁵ For the recent US-European problems see Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power, America and Europe in the New World Order*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 2004; for a similar, though more up-to-date view see Gerald R. Kleinfeld, *The Clash of Two Unilateralisms*, 2006, manuscript to be published in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, Wrocław 2007.

contradictory policy by vague American promises of becoming the secretary to the UN or to the NATO. Apparently they were told that with Germany and France rejecting the US policies in the Middle East, Poland will become the US special connection with Europe. This won Poland the ridicule of being not so much the Trojan horse but rather the Trojan ass of America in Europe.

The new Polish administration, however, which took over in 2005, proud of their anti-communist pedigree, is continuing on the uncritical pro-American course without having noticed that, firstly, the US administration, in the face of the debacle in Iraq, understood that it will not achieve much without Europe's support, and secondly, that Angela Merkel who succeeded Gerhard Schröder, has managed to restore the tense German-US relations more or less back the former order. The ardent Americanism has also been the reason of the split within the ruling unstable coalition when the Prime Minister Kaczyński has declared to send one thousand Polish soldiers to Afghanistan, a decision he did not consult with his coalition partners. The decision was announced during a three-minute chat with the US President George W. Bush in September 2006. Interestingly, President Bush had found only three minutes to spare for the ardent ally, whereas a few days earlier he devoted 25 minutes to the French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy. The irony and paradox is that the present Polish uncritically pro-American and hysterically anti-European position has become embarrassing to the USA administration to the extent that is it the Americans who have recently began telling Poland that it *should* integrate with Europe.

The policy of searching for an enemy in Russia and in Germany simultaneously, accompanied by a futile search for friends in the US, has already led once to a catastrophe for Poland. Despite the American admonitions and against the lessons of history, the mistake is now being repeated, though as a tragic farce.

A CASE FOR POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

No analysis will be complete without invoking psychological and biographical factors in the explanation of the regrettable recent reversal suffered by the German-Polish.¹⁶ It seems, however, that a fuller picture of the present Polish-German problem cannot be possible without a venture into the political psychology or indeed

¹⁶ This need is felt by many observers of the Polish politics. One example: „For Westerners who remember the Poland of 1989, when Solidarity triumphed and not only toppled the communist government in Warsaw but set off a chain reaction throughout the region, today's Poland is a perplexing place. Despite enormous economic gains that have transformed the country from a land of chronic shortages into a bustling consumer society, despite Poland's membership in NATO and the European Union, despite the banishment of fear and the emergence of a free society, many Poles are in a sour mood. It's a mood that accounts for the recent emergence of a wobbly coalition government composed of right-wing populists, who are constantly bickering among themselves. What once was the Solidarity camp is now split a half-dozen ways, and the air is filled with mutual recriminations about alleged collaboration under the old regime and corruption in the new era. In short, the romance of the revolution is largely forgotten”, Andrew Nagorski, *Poland's Imperfect Revolution*, Foreign Policy, July/August 2006.

psychopathology. Most of the problems in the recent German-Polish relations seem to be a result of the fact that Polish leading politicians, who never enjoyed much recognition in the domestic scene, to say nothing about the international one, feel desperately ignored or looked down by everyone. This pushes them to do things which truly deserve to be ignored, which, in its turn, excites them to do even more irrational things, which sends them even further upon the spiral of irrationality.

Accordingly, it seems that the recent reversal in the Polish-German relations has to do with something which may be called a „Polish complex”. It is a specific and self-contradictory mixture of the strive for recognition by others, accompanied by deep contempt and condescension toward them. It translates itself into the sense of inferiority and megalomania, the deep-seated insecurity and ostentatiously demonstrated strength, hurt feelings and complacency, stubbornness accompanied by voluntary servitude, paranoia and self-confidence.

Such a conglomerate of feelings and resentments can be found to some extent in everyone. It is perhaps stronger in people exposed to the rapid social changes and accompanying birth-pangs of the wholesale transformation. This certainly seem to be the case as far as the Polish politicians are concerned. They do their best to excite and to exploit these social feelings in their attempts to secure votes, as they do everywhere. Some of them play the game cynically, others are dead serious in it.

As it happens, however, it is the latter who won the upper hand in Poland. Hungry for recognition more than for materials riches, especially that they never enjoyed much recognition both internally and externally, they are prone to interpret any behaviour as a demonstration of disparagement of themselves, as well as of the country they believe they legitimately represent. Accordingly, they are always satisfied in their attempts to prove that they are being disparaged, for which subsequently they can loudly complain. In their humourless seriousness, they look obsessively for signs of disparagement by partners within the European Union. This vicious circle is aggravated by their excessive aspirations to play an important and even a leading role in European Union. As a result, Poland's image gradually transforms from the one of the sick and poor man of Europe into the one of the European child of a special care.

Despite the appearances of seriousness, the above examples of Polish demonstrated enmity toward Germans bear unmistakable features of acts staged for the media effect and have very little to do with genuine attitude of Poles toward Germans, least of all with the Polish national interest. Germany remains and will remain the chief economic partner for Poland. Out of 1,5 million of young Poles who emigrated from the country after 2004, escaping unemployment and lack of housing in the country, nearly 600 thousand are now working in Germany. There are reasons to believe that the spectacle of divisive policies performed by the present Polish authorities would soon end if the Polish people would have a say. Most of them, however, tired of the increasingly bad show, shun from taking part in the democratic process. They vote with their feet and emigrate, or encapsulate themselves in the fearful and bleak privacy.