

*The History of the German-Polish Textbook Commission**

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The German-Polish Textbook Talks developed within the framework of the German-Polish UNESCO Commission founded in 1972. Historians from Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany met for the first time since the end of the Second World War to discuss the portrayal of bilateral relations in textbooks and to propose changes to the subject matter. Neither the establishment of the Commission nor its later work would have been possible without the radical changes made to the Federal Republic's policy towards Poland at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The highlight of these changes was the signing of the German-Polish Agreement of December 1970, which ended the silence of many years in diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic and Poland, regulated border issues, and paved the way to normalising communications between the two states. Of course, the agreement of December 1970 did not solve all problems between the two countries; nevertheless, the process of improving relations between the Federal Republic and Poland was no longer to be stalled, as was demonstrated by the work of the Commission, which constituted a significant factor in this process. The results achieved back then serve as a standard for the work of other national textbook commissions up to the present day.

* This article is based on author's presentation 'The History of the German-Polish Textbook Commission' gave at international seminar 'Textbook Revision and Peace Education Revisited. Past Experiences-Present Expectations-Future Concepts', Beijing, 3-6 October 2008, organized under the auspices of Chinese Academy of Social Science, Georg Eckert Institut fuer Internationale Schulbuchforschung and Peace Boat.

How did the establishment of the Commission come about and why was it not formed earlier? Were there earlier initiatives for German-Polish Textbook Talks? What was the nature of the Commission's work and what were its results? Did official government policy influence the work of the Commission? This paper intends to answer these questions in order to define more precisely the character of this panel and correctly assess its value as compared to other international textbook commissions. The preparation for this paper involved evaluating archived material and making reference to the secondary literature available. The results of a written survey carried out at the beginning of the 1990s amongst the permanent members of the Committee, both in Poland and in the Federal Republic of Germany, have been particularly helpful.

The relatively late beginning to the textbook talks between the Federal Republic of Germany and Poland was without a doubt a result of the Second World War, which indeed was a huge obstacle in relations between the two countries¹. The great losses suffered by Poland as a result of acts of war and the German occupation policy, the persecutions, resettlements and deaths of millions of Polish citizens as well as heavy losses to national assets, were not a good starting point for resuming relations with the vanquished Germany. But even before the war, the relationship between Germany and Poland was far from good. Prussia's (later Germany's) policies towards Poland in the years of 1795-1918 (the era of divisions, i.e. non-existence of the Polish state) had cast an earlier black cloud upon German-Polish relations, with the goal of denationalising the Poles. The reinstatement of the Polish state after 1918 was to a great extent not

¹ For further information about Polish-German relations after 1945, see Włodzimierz Borodziej, *Od Poczdamu do Szklarskiej Poręby. Polska w stosunkach międzynarodowych 1945-1947* (Londyn, 1990); Dieter Bingen, *Polityka Republiki Bońskiej wobec Polski. Od Adenauera do Kohla 1949-1991* (Kraków, 1997); Krzysztof Miszczak, *Deklarationen und Realitäten. Die Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der (Volks-)Republik Polen von der Unterzeichnung des Warschauer Vertrages bis zum Abkommen über gute Nachbarschaft und freundschaftliche Zusammenarbeit (1970-91)* (München, 1993); Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, *Warszawa-Berlin-Bonn. Stosunki polityczne w latach 1949-1958* (Wrocław, 2003); Mieczysław Tomala, *Patrząc na Niemcy. Od wrogości do porozumienia 1945-1991*, (Warszawa, 1997).

accepted by its German neighbours. Poland was not only deprived of its right to the new western border achieved as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and the Silesian Uprisings, but also of its right to existence as an independent state. It was only at the first glance that the Non-Aggression Pact of 1934, which Poland signed with National Socialist Germany, promised a positive turn in mutual relations. Very soon afterwards this pact would turn out to be worthless. Following the initial improvement in relations, the National Socialists began, little by little, to place a range of unacceptable demands on Poland (including demands on the so-called Polish Corridor)². It should, however, be noted that the first attempts to initiate a German-Polish dialogue on the textbook issue were made during this period. Two meetings took place in 1937; however, they ended in disaster. Because of Germany's increasingly apparent desire to see Poland subordinated, the idea of further talks on the revision of German-Polish textbooks was rejected³.

Post-war relations with Germany were not only exacerbated by the terrible war experience and the resulting fear and hatred – summarised by the communist powers ruling in Poland since 1944/1945 as an age-old animosity – but also by the division of the world into two opposing political blocs in the latter 1940s, in which one side was dominated by the USA and the other by the USSR. Poland and the Eastern part of Germany (the Soviet occupation zone and, after 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR)) found themselves in the USSR bloc; and from that time on, Moscow would exert its strong influence over Poland's relations abroad, including relations with Germany.

In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the resumption of normal relations with Poland was for a long time hindered by foreign policy due to the fact that Poland belonged to the

² See Stanisław Żerko, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1938-1939* (Poznań, 1998); Eugeniusz Cezary Król, *Polska i Polacy w propagandzie narodowego socjalizmu w Niemczech 1919-1945* (Warszawa, 2006).

³ See Romuald Gelles, *Sprawy polskie w szkole niemieckiej w latach 1919-1939* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków, 1991); Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, "Der Entstehungsprozess der Gemeinsamen deutsch-polnischen Schulbuchkommission 1937/38-1972", *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 45 (2005), p. 327-352.

other political bloc and also the consistent non-recognition of the second German state, the German Democratic Republic (the so-called Hallstein Doctrine). On a domestic level, the stumbling blocks were the non-recognition of the German-Polish post-war border marked by the Rivers Oder and Neisse and the huge political influence of the displaced Germans who were not to be ignored by any head of government in the FRG in the 1950s and 1960s. The situation was exacerbated further by the rivalry between the FRG and the GDR regarding German-Polish matters. In the first years after the War, the socialist GDR enjoyed greater success in this struggle, having advanced to the rank of Poland's 'sister-country' as a member of the same political system. Once the Social Democrats gained government seats in West Germany from the second half of the 1960s onwards, however, this situation began – step by step – to change for the benefit of the Federal Republic.

The awkward political situation in the German-Polish relations, which can only be roughly sketched here, had a great deal of influence on the school systems of both states. The material taught in history, geography and social studies lessons conveyed ideas often defined by political tendencies and were far removed from objective fact. Nevertheless, there were individuals in the FRG who well understood the value of a democratic education for the future of the young generation. As early as the 1950s, they began to put together suggestions for changing and expanding textbook contents. It is important that we remember these initiatives because they paved the way for the founding of the Commission and, thus, contributed significantly to its success.

The first such individual to be named is without a doubt Dr. Enno Meyer, a *Gymnasium* teacher of history, geography and German, who published a short paper in the Federal Republic

in 1956 detailing 47 theses on the portrayal of German-Polish relations in history lessons⁴. It was the result of many years of study on the history of German-Polish relations and their depiction in German textbooks. In a letter dated 4th August 1949, to a well-known exiled Polish journalist, Tadeusz Norwid-Nowacki, he wrote of his reasons for addressing German-Polish issues: ‘In my home town [Oldenburg – author’s note], which counted 85,000 inhabitants in the year of 1939, there are now 130,000 people. 45,000 of them are refugees and displaced persons. As a teacher I am often asked how German-Polish issues could be solved. If ever there is to be peace again between the people of Europe, then an answer must be found to this question as well, despite all animosity. The old ideas of national honour, historical boundaries, security, living environment and revenge will not help us towards peace – or so it seems to me’.⁵ In the next few years, Meyer contacted Polish historians who had not returned to their home country after the Second World War for political reasons, and who were conducting their scholarship in exile. Meyer discussed his theses with them many times, thus further enriching them. The works of Enno Meyer were encouraged right from the beginning by the director of the Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig, Prof. Georg Eckert, who was seeking contact with Eastern Europe following the success of the Franco-German Textbook Talks. ‘In view of the improvements made to textbooks internationally’, Meyer wrote in the introduction to his publication, ‘much has been achieved in the last few years. History scholars and teachers from many countries have clarified controversial issues by working together, and have published the results of their efforts as “recommendations”. The effects of these recommendations are already visible in history

⁴ For detailed information about Enno Meyer, see K. Ruchniewicz, *Enno Meyer a Polska i Polacy (1939-1990). Z badań nad początkami Wspólnej Komisji Podręcznikowej PRL-RFN* (Wrocław, 1994); K. Ruchniewicz, “Enno Meyer – Der Pionier des Dialogs und der deutsch-polnischen Verständigung”, in K. Ruchniewicz, ed., *Zögernde Annäherung. Studien zur Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Dresden, 2005), p. 303-309.

⁵ Enno Meyer, *Wie ich dazu gekommen bin: Die Vorgeschichte der deutsch-polnischen Schulbuchgespräche 1948-1971* (Braunschweig, 1988), p. 21.

textbooks. [...] Behind the Iron Curtain there are no historians and no organisations that could debate objectively and independently with the free world. Yet that is what is so desperately needed. We need to break down the thick walls of historical prejudice and false assumptions that are rising up between the Germans and the Slavs. The disastrous policies of the German powers towards the Slavs between 1939 and 1945 can to a great extent be traced back to the fact that false ideas – or even none at all – were associated with these peoples at crucial phases in history. In Germany there has always been – and still is – the tendency to study intensively the lives of the Anglo-Saxons and the French, whilst taking no notice of our Slavic neighbours; and yet our destiny is so closely interwoven with and inseparable from that of the Poles and Czechs!’⁶ These words served to provoke German historians. In the next few years, over 20 reviews of this short publication appeared, both in Poland and in the GDR. ‘In the summer, we received the preprints of these theses at the West Institute’, [in Posen – author’s note], reported one of the most well-known Polish medieval experts and a pioneer of the German-Polish Textbook Talks, Prof. Gerard Labuda, ‘shortly before the official publication in the Institute’s principal medium, the *International Yearbook for History Teaching (Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht)* [...]. At the same time, we were encouraged to resume talks on these theses by the Foreign Office of the People’s Republic of Poland, because at this time there was some hope – albeit only short-lived – that we would succeed in establishing official relations between Warsaw and Bonn.’⁷ The theses were discussed intensively during the second meeting of the German-Polish Historians’ Commission, which took place in East Berlin in November 1956. At that time, it was agreed that one of the next meetings would be dedicated to the portrayal of

⁶ Enno Meyer, *Über die Darstellung der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen im Geschichtsunterricht. Sonderdruck aus dem Jahrbuch für Geschichtsunterricht 1956* (Braunschweig, 1956), p. 1.

⁷ Gerard Labuda, „Rozmowy podręcznikowe”, in *Polsko-niemieckie rozmowy o przeszłości. Zbiór rozpraw i artykułów* ed. G. Labuda (Poznań, 1996), p. 461.

German-Polish relations in the textbooks of Poland and of both German states. This conference took place only a year later, and indeed it was agreed that a joint statement would be worked upon. At this time, it was becoming impossible to overlook developments in the historiography of Poland and of the GDR, which were using the basic principles of Marxist methodology in a much more consistent manner in order to explain historical problems.

Despite many positive signals, the 1950s did not see any meetings that initiated regular textbook talks. Rather, in the FRG, the political climate worsened with regards to such an undertaking. In December 1956, the Standing Conference of Federal State Education Ministers passed the recommendations for 'Eastern Studies' (*Ostkunde*). These were intended to propagate and support the policy of not recognising the changes to the German-Polish border after 1945 across the entire school system, including higher education.

It was not until ten years later, in the course of changes to the Federal Republic's *Ostpolitik*, that the second important initiative towards the German-Polish textbook revision took place, with two conferences in 1969 and 1970, organised by the director of the Protestant Academy in West Berlin, Günter Berndt⁸. The conference location was no coincidence. Church circles had been paying closer attention to the German-Polish relations for some time. One might remember the memorandum from the Protestant Church in 1965 on 'The Situation of the Displaced and the Relationship between the German People and their Eastern Neighbours' as well as that of the German Catholics around the 'Bensberg Circle' in 1968. At the first conference, which took place in November 1969, the results of an analysis that had examined West-German textbooks with regards to their portrayal of German-Polish relations were presented. This analysis was conducted by historians, geographers and psychologists of the

⁸ For further information, see Zbigniew Kulak, "Działalność Wspólnej Komisji Podręcznikowej PRL-RFN", in *PRL-RFN. Blaski i cienie procesu normalizacji wzajemnych stosunków (1972-1987)* ed. Antoni Czubiński (Poznań, 1988), p. 187-225.

younger generation. It ascertained unanimously that the ‘publication of these West-German textbook texts in Poland is currently hindering the understanding and – in the long term – could render it impossible’.⁹ The negative assessment of the West-German textbooks was further emphasised in the conference’s final resolution: ‘The textbooks and atlases examined provide no objective enlightenment as to the political, state and social realities in Poland. They omit substantial facts and insignificant details are expounded upon with inappropriate thoroughness. The language used is highly emotional and encourages an uncritical attitude. Numbers, dates, statistics and procedures are presented in a terminology that gives the impression of neutrality, yet obviously tends towards judgement. Its one-sided nature becomes particularly obvious in the selection of reports and images. The anti-communist stance and the negative portrayal of the Polish people in the friend-enemy constellation only serve to preserve Cold-War attitudes.’¹⁰ The conference discussions and concluding resolution attracted a great deal of interest within German society. This moved Berndt, Director of the Academy, to found a working group entitled ‘Working Group for our Polish Neighbours’. One year later, in November 1970, Berndt organised a second conference on the subject of ‘Germany in Polish Textbooks’. Here, Polish scholars participated for the first time. Prof. G. Labuda held a paper on ‘The Image of the Germans and German-Polish Relations in Polish Textbooks’. The conference participants also had the opportunity to discuss, as yet unpublished, book on citizenship by Prof. Wladyslaw Markiewicz. This publication in particular – that is, the decision of Markiewicz to make the text available in advance of publication – was an absolute novelty and was applauded by a great deal the conference participants who recognized the author’s courage. As a result of the group work

⁹ Analysis ‘Polen im Unterricht’, in *Polen – ein Schauernmärchen oder Gehirnwäsche fuer die Generationen. Geschichtsschreibung und Schulbücher. Beiträge zum Polenbild der Deutschen* ed. Berndt von Guenter, Reinhard Strecker (Hamburg, 1991), p. 107.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

and plenary discussion, the participants produced a resolution which demanded – amongst other things – the founding of a textbook commission and called upon the West-German public, the FRG Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Bundestag and the federal-state governments to create the necessary conditions for such an undertaking.

The conclusion of both Berlin conferences, which emphasised the necessity of German-Polish textbook talks, were only too clearly underlined by demoscopic insights. In 1970, an opinion poll was carried out on the image of Poland amongst graduates of the *Volksschule* in Hamburg. The pupils described Poland as unappealing and its inhabitant as primitive, brutal, cunning, cold and unfriendly. Politicians, textbook authors, and teachers were thus confronted with the huge challenge of radical change in textbook contents that were the result of many years of neglect and ignorance regarding the significance of these Eastern neighbours.

On the initiative of Prof. G. Eckert, who was both Director of the Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig as well as the Chairman of the UNESCO Committee in the Federal Republic, a meeting with the Chair of the Polish UNESCO Committee, Eugenia Krasowska, took place during the 16th General Conference of UNESCO in Paris. The meeting addressed the possibility and necessity of resuming cooperative efforts intended to bring about improvements in Polish and West-German history and geography textbooks. Prof. Eckert had already made initial efforts towards cooperation with Polish partners regarding textbook issues on behalf of the UNESCO in the first half of the 1960s. In 1965 he visited Poland. During his visit, first unofficial talks took place on the bilateral textbook revisions and the organisation of meetings between historians from both countries. Attempts to uphold continued contact ran aground, however, as a result of political difficulties: neither side was willing at the time to graduate from unofficial meetings to close cooperation.

The signing of the treaty on the normalisation of relations between West Germany and Poland on 7th of December 1970 created good political conditions in both countries and a positive climate for the beginning of a systematic cooperation of scholars, educationalists and textbook authors. Negotiations on the founding of an experts commission and a commission of textbook publishers lasted the entire year of 1971. At last, on 22nd of February 1972, the first meeting of both delegations took place in Warsaw. The aim of this meeting was to decide on the methodical and objective conditions for future cooperation. First fourteen textbook recommendations were also produced. A few weeks later, in mid-March of 1972, the second conference took place in Braunschweig. Its participants met in three groups: the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era, Contemporary History, and Geography. The Warsaw Recommendations were corrected and extended upon. It must be emphasised that the first conferences focused on the objective work of preparing the recommendations without initially defining the formal framework and conditions for the cooperation. These issues were addressed by the leadership of the Joint German-Polish Textbook Commission in the autumn of 1972, during the two meetings in Warsaw and Braunschweig. The ceremonious signing of the agreement between the UNESCO Commissions of the FRG and the People's Republic of Poland on cooperation in the field of textbook revisions, represented by Prof. G. Eckert and the Deputy Chair of the Polish UNESCO Committee, Prof. Wladyslaw Markiewicz, took place in the historic conference room of the Old Town Hall. Serving side by side, they were the First Chairmen of the Joint German-Polish Textbook Commission. 'On the day that this agreement was signed, a committee of Polish and German experts was formed', we read in the jointly written text, 'which continues work in the field of textbook revision. Both UNESCO

Commissions are responsible for the compilation of this expert committee; they will do all they can to support its work. The Committee is to meet twice annually, alternately in the Federal Republic and in the People's Republic of Poland. It can – if necessary – form sub-committees and working groups, it can request the counsel of experts in both countries and invite the cooperation of individuals with experience in matters of revising, editing and introducing textbooks. This joint committee is to regularly work on and discuss the work's progress, particularly the implementation of the recommendations agreed upon, to elaborate on reports and to provide suggestions and plans for future projects.'¹¹ The most important goal of the Commission in the next few months was to be the revision and publication of the textbook recommendations. This became the focus of the next conference. The most controversial issue was 20th-century history, including the problem of post-war migration streams. Discussion based on these issues lasted for two years and frequently lead to critical situations. On many occasions, meetings were almost cancelled and results achieved so far were almost compromised. The two Chairmen, Prof. G. Eckert (and, after his death in 1974, Prof. Walter Mertineit) and Prof. W. Markiewicz acted as mediators. These discussions were followed with great interest in both countries, although in West Germany opposing opinions were voiced, as a result of the democratic character of the media, and reactions were almost certainly more honest than they were in communist Poland. The West-German historians were on several occasions taken to task for being too compliant with Polish demands and even of accused of 'selling the German historical tradition to the Communists', whilst the Polish side was accused of too much dependency on the political powers in Warsaw. The historians and geographers were thus faced

¹¹ Vereinbarung zwischen den UNESCO-Kommissionen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Volksrepublik Polen über die Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet der Schulbuchrevision, in *Internationales Jahrbuch fuer Geschichts- und Geographieunterricht*, vol. 14 (Braunschweig 1972/73), S. 267. See also Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, ed., *Die deutsch-polnischen Schulbuchempfehlungen in der öffentlichen Diskussion der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Braunschweig, 1979).

with a difficult task, yet it was not the quest for confrontation but rather their search for compromise that became the characteristic feature of the Commission's work, and it was successful – despite all difficulties – in continuing its work. In April of 1976, the recommendations produced so far were edited for publication in both countries at the ninth summarising conference on history and geography textbooks. The final statement of the conference confirmed the completion of the first highly fruitful – yet also particularly difficult – phase of the work of the German-Polish Textbook Commission. Early in 1977, the recommendations were published in a German and Polish conform edition. Twenty-six recommendations addressed history topics; seven dealt with geographic issues. The German edition had a print run of 300,000 (up until the beginning of the 1990s). In Poland, the recommendations were either published in the Textbook Commission's volume series or in specialist journals, and were less well-known amongst teachers. As Polish education policy was centrally controlled by the government and ministry of education, all publications were subject to censorship, even those of the Commission. The distribution of the Commission's products was therefore hardly supported by the state. In the Federal Republic of Germany, on the other hand, the publication of the recommendations had inspired intensive debate. The recommendations were being discussed in the federal-state parliaments and many reviews and reports were being published in the press. There was a great deal of criticism. This was the first discussion on German-Polish relations that both German states had participated in since 1945, and it contributed significantly to a heightened sensitivity in West Germany for these issues¹². The members of the Commission took an active part in the debate. 'Anyone predicting back in 1945 that Polish and German historians and geographers of the war generation would negotiate the

¹² Włodzimierz Borodziej, "Die Deutsch-Polnische Schulbuchkommission 1972-1999", in *Internationale Verständigung. 25 Jahr Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung in Braunschweig* ed. Ursula A. J. Becher and Rainer Riemenschneider (Hannover, 2000), p. 157-166.

possibilities of reifying textbooks and history lessons in a strict, yet also objective, polite and collegial manner, using the German language in Warsaw, would have been declared insane’, wrote a member of the German Commission in the FAZ on 31.01.1977. ‘Looking back in retrospect, we see that we need not only express scepticism towards work of this kind.’ The publication of the recommendations did not end the Commission’s work; rather, it marked the beginning of a new phase. The Commission agreed to continue to meet and, above all, to discuss the topics that had provoked the most controversy while working on the recommendations. Some of these successive conferences were of pioneer character. In 1977 a conference was held in Lancut, for instance, on German and Polish resistance during the Second World War. In 1982, a Commission met in Braunschweig to discuss ‘National History as a Problem for German-Polish History Writing’. Finally, in 1985, a conference on ‘Germany and Poland in the years 1933-1945’ took place in Nowogard. Alongside the discussions on specific topics, a large amount of time was dedicated to didactics, particularly the question of implementing the recommendations in Polish and West-German teaching practice. In 1987 and 1988, summarising conferences focused on the scholarly and pedagogical benefits of the work. Publications contributed to the rendering of research results by both Polish and German historians, within the context of the Commission, available to a broader public in both languages. Over the course of time, they became an important source of information on German-Polish relations for teachers. Nevertheless, the implementation of the recommendations met with huge resistance in both countries. Consideration had to be given to federal-state structure of the FRG and the political oversight in Poland. The latter was portrayed most aptly by Prof. Marian Wojciechowski, a founding member of the Commission who had been active for many years: ‘[In the 1970s] the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also the Ministry of Education believed that the Germans

should change their textbooks, while we should only introduce a few cosmetic additions. The suggestions for textbook changes put forward by the Polish Commission members were thus boycotted. The PVAP Department of Science assumed this attitude quite clearly at this time [...].¹³

The end of the Cold War in 1989 did not alter the work of the Commission. New topics were added to the list, which were not addressed in the official forum or – if so – only behind the scenes, for political reasons. These topics included the questions of German-Polish and Polish-German-Jewish relations. Soon, the idea emerged to create a teacher's encyclopaedia that would deal with key questions of German-Polish relations. Some of the volumes of this project were published.¹⁴ Another important project of the Commission was the development of supplementary materials on German-Polish relations in the 20th century. The Polish and German editions of these materials¹⁵ dealt with the most difficult period of mutual relations, issues which often did not feature in the Polish school system due to the political situation. The Commission did not stop publishing short essays as it had done with the recommendations of the 1970s, which are historical documents from our perspective today¹⁶. The essays were given a didactic

¹³ Archiv des Verfassers.

¹⁴ S. Michael G. Muller, Bernd Schönemann, *Die 'Polen-Debatte' in der Frankfurter Paulskirche* (Frankfurt/M, 1991); Karl-Ernst Jeismann, Lech Trzeciakowski, *Polen im europäischen Mächtesystem des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die 'Konvention Alvensleben' 1863* (Braunschweig, 1994); Maria Bogucka, Klaus Zernack, *Um die Säkularisation des Deutschen Ordens in Preußen. Die Krakauer Huldigung*, (Hannover, 1996); Winfried Schich, Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Slawen und Deutsche an Havel und Spree. Zu den Anfängen der Mark Brandenburg* (Hannover, 1997); Heinz Duchhardt, Bogdan Wachowiak, *Um die Souveränität des Herzogtums Preußen. Der Vertrag von Wehlau 1657* (Hannover, 1998).

¹⁵ *Polska i Niemcy w XX wieku. Wskazówki i materiały do nauczania historii*, ed. Ursula A. Becher, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz (Poznań, 2001); *Deutschland und Polen im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert. Analysen – Quellen – didaktische Hinweise*, ed. Ursula A. J. Becher, Włodzimierz Borodziej, Robert Maier (Hannover, 2001). See also. Robert Maier, "Deutsch-polnische Verständigung über Geschichte. Von den Schulbuchempfehlungen zur aktuellen Lehrerhandreichung – Die deutsch-polnische Schulbuchkommission vor neuen Herausforderungen", in *Vom Erinnern zum Verstehen. Pädagogische Perspektiven deutsch-polnischer Verständigung* ed. Wolfgang Keim (Frankfurt/M., 2003), p. 403-418;

¹⁶ For comparison, see Klaus Zernack, "Dwadzieścia lat później. W sprawie nowego wydania niemiecko-polskich zaleceń w sprawie podręczników szkolnych", in *Niemcy-Polska. Z dziejów trudnego dialogu historiograficznego* ed. Henryk Olszewski (Poznań, 2006), p. 197-208.

commentary and a selection of sources. During the work on this publication it became evident that Polish pupils had a much wider knowledge of the suggested source texts than their German counterparts. For this reason, it was decided to include more Polish sources – most of which were to be translated into German for the first time – in the German edition. This new publication was met with great interest in Poland and Germany. In Germany, it is available in bookshops and also from the German Federal Agency for Civic Education. This is an example of a highly successful case. After publication, 30,000 copies were put on the market. The Polish edition was sent to school libraries and is available on the Ministry of Education's internet homepage.

At the moment, the Commission is facing the greatest challenge in its history. It has been given the task of coordinating the work on the German-Polish textbook. Certain conditions needed to be fulfilled in order to achieve this project. These included not only financial provisions and staffing; it also required – and this should be particularly underlined – a certain political atmosphere. At the end of the 1990s, German-Polish relations featured an increasing number of critical moments that significantly aggravated the tone of the dialogue. Once again it would become apparent how such large-scale projects, such as that of the joint textbook, are dependent on politics. The fears and reservations held by some Poles opened up the discussion in Germany on Germans as victims of the Second World War, and the time of forced migration. Some media repeated the idea that Germans would change the picture of the Second World War by transforming themselves from a nation of perpetrators to a nation of victims, doing all they could to modify collective memory. Literature on the so-called *Bombenkrieg*, such as Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand* or on the many deaths as a result of the eviction of the Germans, such as Günter Grass's novella, *Im Krebsgang* were supposed to be proof of such tendencies. An

increase in the activities of Erika Steinbach, Chair of the Association of Displaced Persons, who intended to initiate the centre's project against forced displacement, also contributed to this reception. A private company that emerged at the time, *Preußische Treuhand*, began to make demands for property left behind in Poland or for equivalent compensation. The attempts by leading politicians of the Federal Republic to not only reject the idea of the Centre, but also the requests of many of the displaced, did not improve matters.¹⁷ The situation was further complicated – quite understandably – by a section of the *Sejm* delegates demanding the outstanding repayment of post-war rebuilding costs from the Federal Republic.¹⁸ Nor did the rise to power of the National Conservative Party for Law and Justice in Poland in 2005 solve these difficult problems. One might well ask whether both sides really did do all that was in their power to solve the conflicts and to resume the interrupted dialogue.¹⁹ The joint history textbook project was put on the shelf.

¹⁷ Wojciech Pięciak, *Niemiecka pamięć. Współczesne spory w Niemczech o miejsce III Rzeszy w historii, polityce i tożsamości (1989-2001)* (Kraków, 2002); *Pamięć wypędzonych. Grass, Benes i środkowoeuropejskiej rozrachunki. Antologia tekstów polskich, niemieckich i czeskich* ed. Piotr Buras and Piotr M. Majewski (Warszawa, 2003); *Vertreibung europäisch erinnern? Historische Erfahrung. Vergangenheitspolitik. Zukunftskonzeptionen*, ed. Dieter Bingen, Włodzimierz Borodziej and Stefan Troebst (Wiesbaden, 2003); *Pamięć europejska czy narodowa. Spór o Centrum przeciwko Wypędzeniom*, ed. Paweł Licicki and Jerzy Haszczyński (Warszawa, 2003); *Ein Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen. Nationales Gedenken oder europäische Erinnerung?*, Deutschen Kulturforum östliches Europa (Berlin, 2004); *Nach der Vertreibung: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer kontroversen Erinnerung*, ed. Jürgen Danyel and Philipp Ther, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, vol. 10 (2005), H. 10; Anja Kruke, *Zwangsmigration und Vertreibung. Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 2006); Agnieszka Łada, *Debata publiczna na temat Centrum przeciwko Wypędzeniom w prasie polskiej i niemieckiej* (Wrocław 2006); Zbigniew Mazur, *Centrum przeciwko Wypędzeniom (1999-2005)* (Poznań, 2006); *Vertreibungsdiskurs und europäische Erinnerungskultur. Deutsch-polnische Initiativen zur Institutionalisierung. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Stefan Troebst (Osnabrück, 2006).

¹⁸ Sprawozdanie Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych o poselskim projekcie uchwały w sprawie reparacji Niemiec na rzecz Polski (papers 2140 and 2674). For a discussion of the repayments in Polish Parliament (Sejm), see <http://ks.sejm.gov.pl:8009/kad4/082/40822000.htm#052>. For information about reactions of german press to polish repayments' demands, see Ulrike Notarp, *Der polnische Parlamentsbeschluss zu Reparationsforderungen an Deutschland im Spiegel der deutschen Presse/Uchwala Sejmu RP w sprawie reparacji od Niemiec w swietle niemieckiej prasy* (Wrocław, 2005). For comparison, see *Transfer, obywatelstwo, majątek. Trudne problemy stosunków polsko-niemieckich. Studia i dokumenty*, ed. Witold M. Góralski (Warszawa, 2005) (especially articles by Maria Frankowska "Oświadczenie kanclerza Gerharda Schroedera złożone 1 sierpnia 2004 r. w Warszawie w swietle prawa międzynarodowego" and Witold M. Góralski "Znaczenie ekspertyzy Barcz-Frowein w sprawie roszczeń z Niemiec przeciwko Polsce w związku z II wojną światową dla stosunków polsko-niemieckich").

¹⁹ For comparison, see Reinhold Vetter, *Wohin steuert Polen? Das schwierige Erbe der Kaczynskis* (Berlin, 2008).

Officially, the project was reawakened a few months ago. On 17th of May 2008, the beginning of work on this prestigious project was announced before representatives of the relevant ministries of both Poland and Germany, and both Co-Chairs of the German-Polish Textbook Commission.²⁰ This stirred up a lively reaction in Poland and a wealth of press commentaries. Some newspapers from the national and conservative camps raised alarm. For some journalists, the matter was perfectly clear: ‘the Polish taxpayer will co-finance a project that will most probably present the history of both nations in a relativised manner and – as a result – will cut through the roots of the Polish nation. We will forget national history; we will lose our identity.’²¹ Expressions such as ‘forget our national history’, ‘forget our own identity’, ‘a Polish instrument of falsifying history’ or ‘giving up being Polish for a relative ideology’, summarise well these and other voices from national conservative circles. In my view, these expressions must not be trivialised. They evidently provide us with a certain view of history, particularly national history. It is not a marginalised view. The international dialogue, of which this textbook would be a part, is seen as a danger; as an attempt to impose the opinion of the stronger powers. These are the questions that the team of authors and especially the German-Polish Textbook Commission will need to address more closely in the future.

²⁰ „Ruszają prace nad polsko-niemieckim podręcznikiem do historii”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 17.05.2008; Piotr Jędroszczyk, „Uzgadnianie wspólnej pamięci”, *Rzeczpospolita*, 17.05.2008.

²¹ Waldemar Maszewski, „Zapomnijmy o historii narodowej, ztraćmy własną tożsamość”, *Nasz Dziennik*, 19.05.2008.