

# Reconciliation between East and West?

Christian Reconciliatory Activity -  
Opportunities and Conditions

A Handout  
by the Reconciliation Project Group  
of the German Commission for Justice and Peace

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## Table of Contents

Table of contents	3
Preface	5
<b>Part A Reconciliation - a gift from God and a source of new life</b>	
I. The everyday reality of conflicts	11
II. Perpetrators - victims - spectators: On the question of participation in and moral joint responsibility for conflicts	13
III. How is reconciliation made possible?	18
IV. A just peace as the aim of reconciliation	23
V. Functions for specific reconciliatory activity in creating a European peace order	25
VI. Reconciliation work as mission and obligation for Christians	29
VII. Recommendations to the European Ecumenical Assembly	31
<b>Part B Reconciliation between East and West? Rapprochement to the societies of Central and Eastern Europe</b>	
<b>B 1 General problems</b>	
Introduction to Central and Eastern Europe as large social and cultural regions <i>Michael G. Müller</i>	37
The difficult relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism <i>Gerhard Albert</i>	52
<b>B 2 Specific countries</b>	
How the Polish view themselves - between the 'Grande Nation de l'Est' and the 'Polski Kompleks' <i>Adam Krzeminski</i>	67
The Czech Republic and its big neighbour to the West <i>Miroslav Kunštát</i>	83

Russia and the West <i>Marina Pavlova Silvanskaja</i>	91
<b>B 3 Projects</b>	
Experience and reflections on the work of the Auschwitz International Youth Meeting Centre <i>Marek Frysztacki</i>	101
A Right to hope. Aid for refugees in Serbia. A report from experience <i>Manda Prising</i>	110
'Memorial' in the context of the political history of Russia <i>Venjamin Viktorowitsch Jofe</i>	115
<b>B 4 Workshop report</b>	
Workshop report. Experience and conclusions of the Conference <i>Jörg Lüer</i>	127
<b>Appendix</b>	
Programme of the meeting	134
List of Authors	136

## Preface

This publication is the fruit of almost two years of work by the Project Group on Reconciliation of the German Commission for Justice and Peace. In the run-up to the German Ecumenical Assembly held in Erfurt in 1995, and as a follow-up to what had been elaborated there, for the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, held in Graz in 1997, which was dedicated to the topic of reconciliation, the Project Group was assigned to tackle the potential and limits of reconciliation. It was therefore a matter of how to portray in the reconciliation debate the distressful conflicts which are going on at present. The Project Group dealt intensively with the question of whether the term 'reconciliation' could serve as a definition which could open up new horizons, and if so, how.

In the first instance, the Group set out to clarify the term reconciliation from a political and theological point of view, with the aim of defining it as precisely as possible.

Having achieved this, the visible result of which is the first part of this publication, the Group opted to carry out a discursive experiment by applying the knowledge which had been gathered to a specific field of conflict.

It appeared to us to be necessary to take this approach in the light of the observation that it is relatively simple, at least in contrast to the real problems, to reach an agreement in the ecclesiastical area in dealing with the range of topics concerned with reconciliation, in spite of all the differences, and of the profound disagreements between the individual Churches and societies at the level of theological metalanguage. This agreement, however, which is frequently stereotyped, generally contributes nothing towards dealing with the real conflicts. The Project Group held a Conference between 17 and 20 March 1997, entitled "Reconciliation between East and West. Rapprochement with the societies of Central and Eastern Europe", which looked forward to, and prepared for, the approaching Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, which in turn was fundamentally a meeting of East and West. The topic selected for the Conference reflects past experience that encounters between the Central and Eastern European Churches are difficult, and frequently almost impossible. It is the experience of the member Churches of the CEC and the CCEE that the partition of Europe has cast deep roots in our hearts and minds. Overcoming this partition remains vital to whether Europe is able to remain at peace.

The euphoria of 1989 has faded, and has given way to astonishment, disillusionment and, in the case of the former Yugoslavia, even to shock in the face of the situation in Europe. The partition of our Continent goes deeper than many thought, and follows a different line to what we imagined when we lived in the shadow of the Cold War. Instead of overcoming the partition, we see that the old way of thinking is still being used to interpret new circumstances. In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and of the end of the confrontation between the Blocs, we can see how other potential sources of conflict, such as the search for a national and ethnic identity, problems concerned with minorities, etc., which, under the impact of the confrontation between the Blocs, had been underestimated for many years, or even considered to have been overcome, become more evident, and pose fresh challenges to our political thinking. In the years which have passed since 1989, we have had the opportunity, and indeed the need, to learn a great deal, particularly also with regard to our own distorted perceptions and to our own participation in the historical process.

One of the first steps to be taken in order to overcome this mental and intellectual distortion is to familiarise oneself with the perceptions and self-determinations entertained by the "others". It is of primary importance here to become aware of the danger that a superficial debate, which only appears to confirm what one already knew, deepen the partition, instead of helping to overcome it. Much in the "East" appears to us to be anachronistic. This perception, however, frequently appears more to describe our self-perceptions and our ignorance than the complex realities faced by in Central and Eastern European societies.

If we are able to develop a more differentiated view of the Eastern half of Europe, we can also gain a new insight into Europe as a whole. In this sense, the Conference was also perceived as a contribution to European rapprochement.

By using selected major national groups which are primary players in the region, a range of perspectives was opened up and investigated. We invited as speakers leading intellectuals from the countries in question who stood out, amongst other things, by virtue of their ability to also communicate to a Western European public the complex problems faced by their societies. As an explanatory counter-point to the general observations made by the prominent speakers, we asked representatives of various projects and organisations from the countries concerned

which tackle at a practical level the problems associated with "reconciliation" to report on their experiences.

The intention was to explore from a variety of perspectives, but primarily from the Central and Eastern European viewpoint, the question of relations between East and West, the potential for conflict which they harbour, as well as their potential for leading to reconciliation. We wish with the question mark after the title "Reconciliation between East and West?" to hint at our doubts as to whether the question itself is not still excessively influenced by the old confrontation between the Blocs. Intense reflection was given to this problem in the course of the Conference. If, at the Conference, we already had to content ourselves with dealing with the social contexts by means of examples, in putting together this publication we have now been forced for editorial reasons to impose further restrictions. The texts below are slightly revised records of the talks as they were held. This emphasises the fact that they are contributions to a discussion. They are not intended to be read as an academic publication. As contemporary reflections on the state of relations between East and West, as well as on Central and Eastern European societies, they are, however, inspiring material which is worth reading. We place in this publication the hope that we have thus been able to make a contribution to the debate between East and West, which has been impeded for so many decades.

Prelate Dieter Grande

Head of the Project Group on Reconciliation

**Part A Reconciliation - a Gift from God and a Source of New Life**



## I. The everyday reality of conflicts

It only makes sense to talk of reconciliation if there is an awareness that conflicts which have not been overcome change people's feelings, thought and acts in a fundamental way. Ultimately, this process of change can also not be circumvented by those who do not wish to admit to themselves, or to others, the fact of such a conflict not having been overcome, or who seek to suppress or minimise it. Under the surface of a mentality which holds that suffering from such conflicts is a matter only for those who have excessive difficulty coping with the realities of existence, the lack of reconciliation with the conflict situation is able to do its destructive worst, unhindered even by those barriers, fragile as they are, which can be maintained by keeping painful memories alive.

There is a sense in which the existence of everyday conflicts has proven itself to be inevitable. Even in situations where people long to avoid conflicts, and to resolve those which do arise by successful forms of co-existence, they may experience conflicts as the structural momentum of their social situation which they are not able to change. "Objective" conflicts of interest, which are not infrequently imposed by differing links to socially or institutionally defined functional role assignments, provide an example of what is meant here: they can limit the potential for co-operation, even where those concerned agree on their desire to prevent such interests conflicting.

Such conflicts can at least be alleviated up to a certain point by the fact that they are essentially negotiable. Their detrimental effect on the nature of the personal relationship between those involved in the conflict can also be limited by the fact that they are able to distinguish the objective side of the various conflicting interests from the subjective side, i.e. the assessment of the character and motivations of the respective opponent. Even where a conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily, opponents do not have to become enemies as a result, and differences do not have to give rise to lasting anger, or even hate.

Not all conflict situations which occur in reality, perhaps not even the majority of them, however correspond to this basic type of conflicts of interest which may be regarded objectively, with the associated potential for dealing with them rationally and for maintaining peaceful relations and attitudes on the part of the individuals concerned. For one thing, experience shows that it is relatively seldom possible to intentionally and emotionally separate with care the differences related to the issue

giving rise to the conflict from a possible aversion to the person asserting the different position. For another, not every conflict is based on negotiable conflicts of interest. It is especially those conflicts which prove themselves to be personally and socially particularly destructive which are not infrequently rooted in circumstances dating further back than the specific cause of the conflict at hand. If a common history of conflicts is reflected here which has already lasted for some time, and which goes hand in hand with more deep-seated resentment, because those concerned have experienced this history differently, the proportion of what can be solved by negotiation is considerably reduced in favour of those elements and characteristics of the conflict situation in which non-negotiable questions of personal morals, as well as those of social and political ethos, are equally concerned.

Reconciliation is particularly needed in situations where such conflicts with moral connotations largely define circumstances which leave suffering uncomforted, or which perhaps continually re-awaken and deepen it. The comments below will be concerned with such situations. The recognition that reconciliation and forgiveness are necessary for life and survival as the only alternative to conflicts which are otherwise insurmountable, unholy and destructive is certainly one which is reached not only through a Christian perspective and conviction, but which is open to all "men and women of good will". There are many of them, world-wide, as well as in Europe; within the established Churches, and everywhere where people have remained sensitive to suffering, and shakeable, and do not accept a logic of thought and action which selects people and their situations without mercy in terms of victors and vanquished, winners and losers.

## **II. Perpetrators - victims - spectators: On the question of participation in and moral joint responsibility for conflicts**

Conflicts do not have only an "objective" side, which makes it possible to describe and categorise them in different ways. If one seeks ways to deal with them sensibly, it becomes indispensable to take a look at the subjective side of the events associated with the conflict. The way in which the conflict is perceived by those concerned on each side, who often find themselves portrayed there in differing roles, and are each affected in a different way.

### *The moral profundity of conflicts*

What can be established in general in reference to conflict situations particularly applies to those where ethical questions are concerned and moral assessments become unavoidable. When a conflictual state of mind already arises out of a personal relationship between two individuals in that one of them considers himself or herself to be the victim of an evidently unjust, and possibly also unlawful, action on the part of the other, this perception is imprinted on the person's inner stance towards the situation differently, and more deeply, than in a situation where the conflict is restricted to negotiable opposing interests. However, for those actors who assume the role of perpetrators or observers, the conflict becomes all the more threatening the more fundamental moral standards are affected by it.

Added to this is the fact that the different roles assumed by those involved in the conflict are not a static, unchangeable value. Especially in the course of long-term conflicts, it can, rather, be repeatedly observed that the roles of the individual actors can change. Victims can also become perpetrators, and perpetrators victims. Observers who at first sight are not involved may gain joint responsibility for the course of the conflict by permitting opportunities to intervene - to act as a go-between for the parties, or to protect the side which is at risk of sliding into the victim role - pass by unheeded. A large proportion of the complexity, which is frequently typical of the efforts to settle and reconcile parties who have been enemies for a long time, is caused by the fact that it cannot be said that only one party is in the right and the other is in the wrong. No breakthrough to a phase of constructive work on a conflict can be achieved until one faces up to this lack of clarity and refrains from ill-advisedly taking sides with regard to the matter of who is to bear the responsibility for the suffering caused by the conflict - or even transfers it to actors who are hardly

able to effectively defend themselves against the consequences of such an assignment, as in the "scapegoat" mechanism.

*Individual responsibility and involvement in unjust circumstances*

If one inquires after responsibility, even guilt, for serious suffering imposed on the victims of a conflict, one should consider that the actions of the perpetrators are frequently carried out under circumstances which make it difficult, or even impossible, to be sensitive to the suffering of others. The major psycho-social mechanisms of insidious acclimatisation to systematically-caused wrong, the imitation effects associated with this, and not least the ideological justification of even the most serious violations of human rights and their reflection in individual consciousness, can largely be reconstructed in the light of the history and phenomenology of all modern dictatorships.

Existential experiences of being uprooted (for instance by war, expulsion, fundamental changes in the social and political situation) can easily make one's thought patterns dangerously and excessively ideological. Such experiences are answered not only individually, but are processed to form complex social discourses on ideal interpretations, be they of a national, ethnic, cultural or religious nature. These interpretations are closely linked to the individual's identity. Especially in conflict situations, they frequently develop a strong power to form groups, and this power has a normative character in political life. The collective interpretation of individual experiences shows a horizon which refers to the fact of being able to overcome suffering which has been undergone. It makes it possible not to become overwhelmed in the face of events which appear to be all-powerful, but to regain some ability to fight against the situation.

The danger lying in such processes of interpretation is that it is possible to close oneself off, more or less autistically, to the comparable experiences and suffering of other individuals and groups, the reality of which has no role to play in the interpretation of such collective identities. This in turn gives rise to a strong resistance to critical enquiries regarding the activities of one's own group. Even more, there is a tendency to interpret these enquiries as attacks on one's personal identity, and to respond to them as such. The situation of the competing interpretations, fundamentally conflict-related as it is, is made all the more profound by this process. Its political consequences may lie in the fact of having become entangled in (new) guilt.

That which can be stated on principle under more "human rights-friendly" circumstances, which are less violent, is particularly applicable here: the political, economic and social structures and institutions in which people find themselves frequently reflect the consequences of guilt-ridden, even sinful, acts. Such structures can make it almost impossible to bring to fruition the intention to act positively because the actors are already embroiled in the guilt which has been defined for them. Not lastly, reconciliation processes can be hindered by this, and their lasting and profound effect lessened. If reconciliation is to be successful, what is therefore needed, in addition to a personal changing of ways, is for these structures and institutions to be broken and changed in order that injustice may be overcome and more justice brought about.

Where in such situations one speaks of the phenomenon of "social sin", which spreads in suitable structures and institutions, and then exerts its influence on the individual consciousness<sup>1</sup>, the possibility is used of availing oneself of analogous definitions in expressing oneself. This definition lends expression to the fact that relationships between individuals, but as well as, and in particular, within a society, and between peoples and states, may be damaged in a way which entails guilt, going beyond the definable lack of justice.

The urgency of overcoming injustice at the level of political structures and institutions, as well as those which are the result of deformed perceptions of reality on the part of large groups, is also evident on the basis of the fact that it is only possible in rare exceptional cases to subsequently compensate for individual detriments caused by such means, through to damage to life and limb. German experience with dealing with the consequences of two modern dictatorships shows that even a state based on the rule of law is strictly limited in such an attempt, thus making appropriate punishment of crimes which have been committed just as impossible as restitution equal to the suffering endured by the victims. Excessively concentrating on prosecuting those who have partaken of the exercise of state suppression, be it in a formal or informal capacity, may even lead to a distortion of historical reality because the guilt on the part of those giving the orders, and of the "leaders", cannot be discovered and punished to a comparable degree. Such a distorted perspective is, however, at the expense of the inner ability of a society and state to make peace.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993) No. 1869: "'Sinful structures' are the expression and the effect of personal sins. They induce their victims to also commit evil."

The attempt to comprehensively process and clarify the mechanisms of totalitarian system structures may therefore not be treated like an unwelcome disturbance of one's peace. Rather, such clarification work provides for the first time an opportunity to counter the subsequent playing down of such structures, and hence the danger that such injustice, which is sanctioned by the state, could be repeated once again.

*Excursus: "Reconciliation with the threatened Creation" - on the ethical meaning of analogous use of the word "reconciliation".*

Guilt is visible not only in the multiplicity of social relations of individuals, and of whole peoples, but also where people are robbed of the basis of their existence, and where animals are tortured and their habitat destroyed. In the present ecological crisis, the consequences become increasingly evident of a perspective which considers the human relationship with both the living and the non-living natural environment as merely that of master and servant, and considers the question of the criteria for responsible use of the latter to be irrelevant. At the same time, it proves difficult to find the words to properly describe this relationship without referring to the relationship between mankind and nature as one between a person and a thing, whilst at the same time attempting to distinguish between this kind of relationship and one between human beings.

"Protecting Creation" is a manner of speech rather like the concept of "social sin". It gives form to the thought that the ever more urgent duty to maintain the "basis of existence"<sup>2</sup> has both normative, ethical relevance and a religious dimension. In dealing with the basis of both human and non-human existence, resources are affected which have not been created by human effort, but which the Creator left for mankind to use and care for responsibly. The way in which these resources are actually used, however, rarely allows one to conclude that mankind considers himself to be under such an instruction. Rather, he often misses this goal in a grievous and irreversible way. This not infrequently leads to suffering, both for fellow human beings and for non-human creatures. This reverse side of all overexploitation - the fact that the consequences of this conduct are not neutral, but that others have to pay the price for it - is however often not realised even today. Instead, we still encounter strategies of self-pacification and self-justification, attempting, almost

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. working paper of the German Justitia et Pax Commission "Bewahrung der Grundlagen des Lebens - Eine Aufgabe für die Kirchen" (Protection of the basis of existence - a task for the Churches), Bonn 1994 (= ARB 69 in the series of publications on justice and peace).

mechanically, to play down the consequences of overexploitation, and the suffering which it causes, as the price which has to be paid for development and progress. However, the negative effects of day-by-day overexploitation of the natural basis of existence appear to be increasingly counter-productive, even if one bases one's orientation on a rather narrow, short-term definition of progress.

"Reconciliation with threatened creation" - this phrase is intended to make it clear that it is not only a question of technically optimised adaptation of today's way of doing business to aims related to environmental compatibility and the protection of the basis for the existence of future generations. In the light of the guilt-ridden way of handling the resources which mankind is entrusted to protect, what is needed, rather, is a fundamental re-orientation. It is difficult to equate the intrinsic value of a non-human creature with the common understanding of human dignity, and even then this is only possible in a very indirect sense. It is, however, for this precise reason that this intrinsic value should be reflected by a form of speaking and reflecting which does not degrade animals and plants in particular to mere objects which are unable to suffer.

### III. How is reconciliation made possible?

Reconciliation is more than a temporary cease-fire. It describes the aim of a process which is often long and difficult, of the positive end to a conflict. Reconciliation which is successful in this way makes peace possible. Peace is the fruit of a persistent striving for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not the only way to end a conflict. It cannot to be taken for granted<sup>3</sup>. In the effort to achieve it, it is a matter of identity and integrity - on the part of all those involved<sup>4</sup>. Reconciliation between people requires a great number of small steps to be taken together and towards one another. It requires the participation and involvement of all concerned. Even the best go-between in a process of reconciliation is not able to replace this. Without a patient effort, it is hardly conceivable to achieve a gradual reduction of enmity, without forgiveness. Processes of reconciliation frequently require a great deal of time, and may not be disturbed or prevented altogether by attempts to forcibly bring them about too early<sup>5</sup>.

If reconciliation is to work, what is needed, not lastly, is suitable language. Reconciliation is not a matter of fine words and solemn proclamations. Above all else it demands empathy, delicacy and credibility. This also involves seeking a form of language which avoids creating new wounds, at the same time as aiming to alleviate, or even heal, wounds which still hurt.

Nevertheless, it frequently remains uncertain whether reconciliation is successful in the final analysis, and this depends on many conditions and circumstances which are beyond human control. If one seeks "strategies for reconciliation", it will be necessary first of all to look for elements which are able to further and facilitate reconciliation, and then to name individual steps which experience has shown to be fundamental to this process. These include:

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to reconciliation, the alternative, the taking of revenge, is "conflict termination in terms of a victory" (Elisabeth Seidler).

<sup>4</sup> "Reconciliation is needed where one person has incurred guilt in respect of another in such a way that further untroubled relations with one another appear to be impossible" (Klaus Jacobi)

<sup>5</sup> "Reconciliation is something which has to go deep down into the human soul. It is possible to call for it, but it cannot be given, planned, prescribed or instructed ... It is a question here of a relationship between human beings. And this may not be restricted to a day, hour or week which has been designated specially for such a purpose" (Lev Kopelev). This also applies to reconciliation between entire peoples: "Guilt or innocence for a whole people does not exist. Guilt, like innocence, is not collective, but personal" (Richard von Weizsäcker).

- *Conflict analysis: ascertaining reality and recognising causes.* It is a question in conflict analysis of making the causes of conflicts as objective as possible, of differentiating between various causal factors and opening them up to processing which is suited to their characteristics.
- *Willingness to act as a go-between: facilitating steps on the path to peace.* These are aimed at opening up opportunities of understanding and reconciliation, at limiting conflicts and at reducing their destructive force, as well as at establishing what steps might be taken in order to de-escalate the conflict. In addition to detailed knowledge of the conflict situation, selfless effort is needed, as well as an attempt to approach both parties to the conflict in the same manner (which should not be confused with an indifferent stance as to the question of which of those concerned is responsible for the conflict, and to what extent) and offering to help personally. The aims of such a go-between should be put in modest terms in order to be acceptable to both parties: for instance, making humanitarian aid possible, foregoing violence or other aggressive means of carrying on a conflict (such as propaganda), agreeing conditions for a cease-fire, starting negotiations for a possible peace treaty. Such go-betweens wish to awaken the hope that there may be ways of escaping from the confrontation which has become established and, in spite of all the entrenchment, to mobilise the forces able to contribute towards constructive conflict-solving. As the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament says, "blessed are the peacemakers".
- *Empathy: learn to see with the other person's eyes.* This stance calls, us above, all to overcome unknowingness, disinterest, ignorance, arrogance, mutual aversions and indifference, to do without claims to dominate those who are (actually or only allegedly) inferior; to cast off arrogance and become more sensitive; to learn to distinguish between an indifference as regards value judgments, which is not infrequently confused with tolerance, and a proper understanding of such tolerance. The situation and the conduct of the other person should be reflected upon in order to some extent to place one's own assessment of a person, as well as one's own emotions regarding that person, on a reasonably objective footing.
- *Seriousness: not minimising the suffering of others.* The topic of suffering should not be flogged to death, but neither should it be exaggerated nor minimised. What is needed is sincerity, not only with regard to the matter itself, but also in the intentions of those who seek reconciliation. It is a question of our "looking the truth in the eye as well as we are able - with no glossing over, and without one-

sidedness" (Richard von Weizsäcker). Expression needs to be given to the suffering undergone by the victims (especially through the destruction of many of their hopes for life, the experience of human lowness and of shameful betrayal, often from their immediate surroundings) *and* of the perpetrators (for instance via the recognition that they have been misused, and through the loss of something in which they had mistakenly believed and for which they had fought). Again and again, both perpetrators and victims will have to ask what portion of blame attaches to each of them.

- *Memory: not seeking to suppress or forget.* This is a major prerequisite for sincerity: leaving out the question which gave rise to the situation which in turn caused the suffering, and how its repetition can be avoided, would mean halving the responsibility. A decisive element of any memory lies in it seeking not merely to keep alive the recollection, but to incorporate it as a past experience into the structure of a more human future<sup>6</sup>. Thus, it is possible for *our own historical memory to serve as a guide to how to conduct ourselves in the present*. This also, and particularly, applies where reconciliation or understanding is possible only between the victims' children, who have not personally experienced the suffering imposed on their parents. They may not feel the original intensity of the pain in the injuries and wounds. Opportunities to learn individually and collectively - important preconditions for preventing a historical catastrophe repeating itself - are nevertheless retained where social pedagogics and political education work approach the suffering of the victims to the greatest extent possible, and bring it to life.
- *Patience: give yourself and others time.* The willingness to recognise that a lot of time, and often a protected area, are needed in order to gradually remove the protective walls which alone made it possible to bear the bitterness of suffering; that reconciliation is a process where only a little can be achieved and repaired through steps which can be planned; that the strength on both sides not to give up is often more important in this process than anything else.

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<sup>6</sup> "Remembering means recalling an event so honestly and so purely that it becomes a part of one's inner self ... All of us, guilty or not, young or old, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and have incurred a liability for it. Young and old must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep the memories alive. It is not a question of dealing with the past. That isn't possible. It cannot be changed after the fact, and we cannot make it undone. Anyone, however, who closes their eyes to the past will become blind to the present. If we refuse to remember inhumanity, we will be liable to be reinfected by this danger" (Richard von Weizsäcker).

- *Knowledge of the tragic: distinguish between levels of moral fragility* - even without subjective guilt, or where this guilt is greatly reduced. Tragedies may result from a *lack of freedom* to take alternative options for activity; from a *lack of courage*, resulting from social integration into structures where there was an expectation of blind obedience which allowed the individual conscience to waste away; by means of *discouragement* resulting from a threat of sanctions which only martyrs can stand against (giving rise to the moral responsibility of those who gave the orders for such sanctions, who undermined individual morality in a most long-lasting way). This also includes *tolerance of ambivalence* and grey areas: in various phases of life, many people have been sometimes the victim, sometimes the perpetrator.
  
- *Allowing grief: bearing the pain of the victims and their tears.* "Grief is needed so that we do not wallow in resignation and indifference" (A word from the Christian Churches at the end of the War). *Human closeness* and *comfort* in despair, as an appropriate way of reacting to situations of grief which has not been overcome, foregoing minimising the depth of suffering felt because it is precisely in this way that the dignity of the sufferer can be hurt. Even an appropriate theology of reconciliation is inconceivable where there is no qualified theology of suffering; and this is only appropriate if it is able to sense the point at which it should also be silent. - Dealing with grief may make it indispensable to recognise that many remaining differences have to be accepted, and that inner *closeness is possible only at different grades and levels*; that the first thing which is needed is to feel precisely where strangeness and otherness are based which have been left in those who experienced and suffered it by different trails of varying history.
  
- *Truthfulness: no "great peace with the perpetrators" (Ralph Giordano).* The risk is too great that this would be at the expense of the justice demanded by the victims. What is needed instead of this is for the awareness to be kept alive that *reconciliation is impossible without remorse and without a sign of willingness to make good.*

Despite all efforts to further a procedure of reconciliation, situations may arise in which human means fail. Trusting in God, we may nevertheless dare to take further steps on the path towards reconciliation. Anyone who prays for his or her "enemy" inwardly certainly comes step by step closer to him, and in doing so gains the strength to give good in return for bad. This also happens in situations where someone voluntarily makes atonement for the misconduct of a "perpetrator" (without the knowledge of the latter), bringing before God his own forfeit, his own sacrifice

and personal suffering as a representative of the perpetrator so that God affords His special help to the other in order that he may change his ways.

#### IV. A just peace as the aim of reconciliation

A "future built on the memory of suffering" (Johann B Metz) which can be better than the past, which was full of suffering, is only possible where the question of justice is not circumvented or neglected in the process of increasing reconciliation. Reconciliation will only last in the long term if increased justice has been achieved in the reconciliation process. The latter is the actual aim of any sincere work towards reconciliation, even if justice in the full meaning of the word cannot be achieved, but one can only approach it as closely as possible.

The justice which is the subject of the quest in the case at hand means something different to pure legality or pure legal justice, which in some cases can even be a particularly subtle disguise for deep-seated injustice. It includes as a major element the *search for solutions for the future which do not conceal the seed of fresh injustice*. This includes the readiness to do without revenge and retaliation, "making opposing rights subservient to the concept of reaching an agreement" (Richard von Weizsäcker) and the willingness to take the first step. In this spirit, it is possible to answer a magnanimous gesture of reconciliation with just such a gesture, instead of giving in to the temptation of meeting it with new demands. This is all the more so if the person who took the first step is the person with the lesser responsibility, or who is innocent of the wrong which is to be appeased.

The question as to how to deal with a wrong which can be punished under criminal law, and what procedure to apply to those who committed it, gives rise to a problem related to justice. Debating granting an amnesty for the wrongs committed by defeated regimes should not be allowed to lead to the former perpetrators misusing the victims' willingness to become reconciled, in a desire to live together in the future, in order to quietly re-create the old hierarchies and power structures, and it becoming impossible to publicly establish serious wrongs as being punishable.

It is necessary to look for justice not only in dealing with the perpetrators, but also with regard to their victims. Justice will not be done merely by clarifying the conditions and structures under which past wrongs were committed and the path towards criminal prosecution remaining open. It is impossible for compensation to make good the suffering which the victims have undergone. Nevertheless, generous and unbureaucratic compensation in line with the dignity of the victims is one of the main prerequisites of it being possible to integrate them into the reality of a society

which is re-forming. Compensation is justified not only by the fact that the situation of the victims can be at least alleviated in this way, but also in the necessity of overcoming society's lack of empathy towards such situations. Compensation is also an act of tangible public recognition of a wrong which has been suffered. It creates a public space for stories of suffering, not lastly for processes of critical self-reflection in the majority society in the light of the historical "price" which had to be paid for the opportunities which are available to it at the present time.

It is often particularly difficult to marry together peace and justice in the international sphere. The absence of war, or the end of physical violence, is an indispensable step on the path towards peace, but is by no means identical with this aim. A cease-fire obtained and enforced by means of power politics may initially base its moral legitimacy on the achievement of having put an end to an orgy of murder and all types of violence which otherwise would have run its course. This legitimacy, however, is rapidly placed in danger if the opportunities afforded by this forced cease-fire are not used in order to create structures without which people and political communities in the conflict area are not enabled to pursue peace in the long term.

It is possible here only to refer to the necessity of creating the preconditions which make a just peace possible. They themselves cannot be explained in greater detail. For the foreseeable future, the questions arising in this field remain as an orientation for any attempt to develop a peace ethic in the light of the challenges facing us in the new millennium<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. on this matter the working paper by the German Justitia et Pax Commission "From the 'just war' to the 'just peace'" Bonn <sup>3</sup> 1994 (= ARB 63 in the series of publications on justice and peace).

## **V. Functions for specific reconciliatory activity in creating a European peace order**

In the light of the efforts towards the gradual establishment of a European peace order, the observations below are intended to describe specific fields of work which should lend concrete form to the above considerations. A fundamental perspective of non-partite political and social justice must guide our actions here - both in our own countries, and as a standard to be followed in foreign policy. Counter to the trend, this should be strengthened and defended in many places in Europe where, instead of the concept of solidarity, social Darwinistic policy programmes are favoured in interior policy, and a policy of purely national interests is pursued in foreign affairs. Against the background of the trend towards renationalising political thought, which can be seen not only in Central and Eastern Europe, one can observe the following: It is not a Europe of walls which is able to bring cross-border reconciliation, but only a continent which deprives its borders of their element of separation.

The process of establishing a peace order covering all of Europe must be understood and carried out as a joint task. What is needed is to practice a dialogue which is within our powers of imagination in order to counter the creation of new walls. In Germany itself, people's everyday experience in the new and old Länder (states) with the "other Germans" gives rise to all the old foreignness, and above all to new strangeness. Many people therefore feel that the "German Unity" project has failed from a social point of view. Different state and social systems existed for forty years, and the danger exists that what still separates the former East from the West not only anchors the old alienation, but also allows a new strangeness to be created.

This experience underlines the fact that all over in Europe, but particularly between neighbouring states, perceptions of ourselves and of others should be scrutinised as a matter of urgency, that history which is separate, and hence is differently perceived, should be the subject of joint reflection. False arrogance and certainty of oneself should be laid aside, in particular in relations between Western and Eastern Europeans. Not lastly, it must become recognisable that, even under a violent regime, life was not simply meaningless.

In the light of the multiplicity of political, social and economic changes, one should not lose sight of fundamental questions, for instance whether mankind really is in charge of running his own house, or whether he is valued too much in terms of his

economic performance, or of profit. People in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe must very quickly learn to cope with the new political and economic structures and rules which have been imposed on them. Especially, the need to take quick decisions gives the impression that the revision of these structures was largely organised "from the top". People's actual experience with the basic regulatory concepts of "democracy" and "market economy" nevertheless often makes it difficult for them to recognise the positive content of these aims. This particularly applies in a context where market economy concepts are implemented in a way which lacks any awareness of the social dangers of unbridled economic liberalism, but where democratic structures which are still fragile are unable to prevent the exercise of political power being removed from the hands of the governed. Under such circumstances, it seems to many people that the expectation that such models would be useful to society as a whole does not appear to have filtered down into their everyday lives, and, rather, seems like an ideology which has been forced upon them.

In many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, in addition to the solidarity ordered by the state, there was a solidarity which grew out of the difficulties faced as a result of living conditions as they were at that time. It becomes more difficult to retain this within the new framework. We continually hear news of thoughtless self-assertion on the part of both individual and collective actors, frequently with no consideration for fundamental interests and elementary moral principles. Instead of the state repression of former times, organised crime arises in places, and hardly faces any hindrances. The social consequences of this (corruption, long-term damage to the legal economy, etc.) are disastrous, especially for government, administrative and social systems which are forming and re-grouping.

This is why the fact must remain present as a political criterion in the public awareness that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe may not be removed from the dynamics of development of the Member States of the European Union. This applies with regard to the further structuring of increasingly resilient legal and constitutional systems, as well as to the task of creating an economic framework which implements and ensures social and ecological standards. Those states also which do not appear able to gain rapid association with or membership of the EU must be afforded sufficient opportunity to participate fairly, so that the consolidation of their economic and overall social development can be successful.

Beyond the economic and social dimension, the fundamental changes have made many people feel insecure, and have robbed them of their orientation. The media

reflect this not only in a dissonant cacophony, but also frequently provoke one to ask of whether they are adequately meeting their social and political responsibility. By means of this kind of reporting, it is possible for indispensable insights to be provided, but they can also be blocked. Especially in that discretionary area which is a result of the necessary freedom and independence of the press, it is all the more important for such people to afford higher priority to this duty to truthfulness than to those interests which push themselves to the fore in the light of the competition for frequencies, ratings and circulations.

The fight against the various manifestations of xenophobia and radicalism also belongs within this context. Whether, however, the urgency of this task is sufficiently realised depends in turn on how violations of human rights are dealt with which were committed under the old system. Such acts must be prosecuted, the victims must be cared for and the offenders must be pursued. At the same time, action should be taken in order to counter old rights being asserted in an insensitive manner (houses, property), as well as against speculation.

The problem of how to deal with breaches of the law as it stands, and with crimes against humanity which took place as a function of the political suppression carried out by the old regime, must be dealt with sensitively. It is not until the perpetrators have turned themselves in that it will be possible to deal with grief, together with the victims. It points to a better path than resignation to the trauma of a past which has not been dealt with (and with which it will soon be impossible to deal), and prevents the formation of a distorted memory of past events: "People have a fatal leaning towards remembering the good things which happened during bad times. It is possible to reap a political harvest from this, and there are people who do so" (Joachim Gauck). If one is willing to stand up to one's recollections with no subsequent beautification, it is possible to avoid the danger of nevertheless creating a seemingly moral justification for even the worst effects of suppression and lack of freedom. If we are able to look in the eyes the essence of all ideological thought which destroys values and human beings, we will also be best able to prevent events repeating themselves. Not lastly, the task arises here which is of eminent social and ethical significance, consisting of helping to form a fundamental stance which, by overcoming selective perceptions, could lead to a "resistance" being formed to all kinds of ideologies rearing their heads once more.

These tasks are aimed at all social and political actors, in particular at the Churches. They must open themselves up to society, and contribute to the forming of an awareness in that society if they wish to have a mission to society which can be

perceived as being of value. Christian churches and groups in Central and Eastern Europe in particular should allow the positive experience of community life as it was under the previous system to bear fruit in the new situation. The faith-related experiences of the past and of the present are of considerable significance for the furtherance of justice and peace, and for the maintenance of the basis of existence in our own countries, in Europe and in the One World.

## **VI. Reconciliation work as mission and obligation for Christians**

For Christians, the word "reconciliation" gains a special, additional and profound dimension as a function of the conviction of their faith. It gives us hope, awakens responsibility and places us under an obligation to be persistent.

### *The gift of hope*

All human failings, all sin and guilt, even institutionalised sin, have been stripped of their power by the willing act of redemption by Jesus Christ, his obedience even to the Cross, and may be turned to the good by reconciliatory acts on the part of human beings. Since we are already reconciled with God, we can also seek reconciliation with one another.

### *Awakened responsibility*

Jesus Christ's act makes us who bear His name particularly willing to work to serve reconciliation. God made his act of reconciliation dependent on our willingness to be reconciled with those of our fellow human beings who owe us a debt of guilt. In the same way, however, we cannot be reconciled with God if we turn our backs to the victims of unreconciled history. Rather, because reconciliation between human beings is directly concerned with the relationship between God and mankind, the human dimension becomes particularly serious, and gains its own depth.

### *The obligation to persist*

Our willingness to be reconciled should not wait for a first step to be taken by the other side, but should knowingly make the first move. It is more likely that the guilty party will change his or her ways if he or she sees that the victim is prepared to forgive. It is easier to ask for forgiveness when standing at an open door.

Readiness to be reconciled does not mean from the outset that restitution is unnecessary, or that a just punishment need not be imposed. That said, punishment has a healing effect only in circumstances where forgiveness of (moral) guilt can be counted on. Efforts towards reconciliation should be inexhaustible. Disappointments, defeats and fresh entanglements in guilt should not be allowed to make us unable to attempt further steps in the reconciliation process. We are all incessantly dependent

on God's forgiveness, and for that reason should tread the path of reconciliation with the greatest persistence in the light of His inexhaustible mercy.

Reconciliation is a word which has its meaning both in salvation-history and in eschatology. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the entire Creation has been reconciled with God. However, this is not revealed and completed until the end of the age, in the new Heaven and the new Earth. We come one step closer to this apocalyptic reality with every step we take on the path to reconciliation.

## **VII. Recommendations to the European Ecumenical Assembly**

The German Justitia et Pax Commission already submitted the following proposals to the German Ecumenical Assembly which was held in Erfurt in 1996. Nos. 1 and 5 were included in the Erfurt Message.

Since we are better able today than was the case in the past to exhaust the available potential for ecumenical co-operation, we would also like to submit these wishes once more for Graz. We ask that the European Ecumenical Assembly examine and implement them as a sign of new hope.

1. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to establish a prayer community whose members pray a specific joint prayer every day for reconciliation and peace, and include in this current intercessions for particular centres of conflict. At the same time, the Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon the Christian churches to include in their intercessional prayers specific matters related to reconciliation.
2. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to bring to life a community of fasting in solidarity with the hungry and the victims of unjust violence in the whole world whose members are willing to forego one meal on Friday of each week, and to donate the money thus saved to relief activities.
3. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon its participants, the members of grass-roots groups, Church members, and all people who wish to work for justice, peace and maintenance of the Creation to donate on a long-term basis a percentage of their net salaries which they themselves are to determine to one of the humanitarian relief agencies, to an organisation devoted to protecting human rights, or to an initiative to protect the basis of existence.
4. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon its delegates and the members of grass-roots groups to win over as many comrades-in-arms as possible for a world worth living in, who are willing to undertake one or several of the abovementioned tasks.

5. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon the Churches to extend and network their various services for peace and reconciliation, in order in this way to be able more effectively to initiate and support processes of reconciliation in conflict situations.

**Part B Reconciliation between East and West?**

**Rapprochement to the Societies of Central and Eastern Europe**



## **B 1 General Problems**



*Michael G Müller*

## **Introduction to Central and Eastern Europe as large social and cultural regions**

Even before Jeremy Wolf published his very intelligent book about "The Invention of Eastern Europe", those who were able to see understood that the term "Eastern Europe" was certainly an ideological category, or to put it in more modern terms, a product of cultural invention, i.e. social invention in a historical context. Why in fact do we in the "Western" societies speak of Eastern Europe at all? What actually gives us the right to draw such a terminological line as is continually suggested in the linguistic distinction commonly made between Europe in very general terms and Eastern Europe in particular? These questions are both insidious and quite complicated.

Anyone who takes seriously the profession of research into Eastern Europe, something carried out here in the West, and which we have made into an institution, will probably have two answers to give to this today. Firstly, there is actually no sensible, concrete reason why we should regard Eastern Europe as being different in a major sense to Western, Northern or Southern Europe. Other peripheral sections of the Continent also developed separately, in a clearly different way to the European pioneer region of modern times - if you could put it this way. And yet we see no reason to create special sub-regions of Europe for instance in Ireland, on the Iberian Peninsula or in Southern Italy. Apart from that, Eastern Europe itself is an artificial term, and more importantly it is one which has been imposed from the outside. There has never been a collective consciousness of Eastern Europeans, a common identity of Bulgarians, Hungarians, Poles and Russians. Neither does the geographical division between East and West have a historical background. It was not until the 18th Century, pushed by pre-modern Russian imperialism, that the North of Europe became Eastern Europe in the political jargon of the West.

In fact, research into Eastern Europe therefore no longer has any more *raison d'être* than the fact that research into Hungary, Poland, Russia, Serbia and others requires

certain linguistic and regional knowledge. In Western Europe, this specialised knowledge can be gained only by following a course of institutionalised Eastern European Studies. As the historian and expert on Russia, Dietrich Geyer, from Tübingen, recently said rather vividly in a small book, Eastern Europe is not a historically and culturally coherent unit, and anyone speaking about the historical and contemporary situation in Eastern Europe as a whole will always have to prove very precisely the claimed connection, both factually and in terms of chronology.

The second answer to the question which I put at the outset is as follows. As well-founded and necessary as such scepticism regarding the division conventionally made along lines of West and East may be, particularly in the light of the idea of an Eastern European identity, it is more difficult to deny that the corresponding perception of the East by the West, the feeling of Europe being separated into West and East, is indeed a historical reality. Not only Western societies, but at the latest since the beginning of the 19th Century those in the East also understood their own cultural situation in terms of these categories, amongst others. In this way, thinking about West or East still has a central role to play in various social debates. We have to take an interest in this, both for the processes of cultural construction of certain perceptions of Eastern Europe, and for the relationships and conflicts forming the background to this.

I would like to try to hold together both perspectives to a certain degree. For one thing, I am interested in criticising and dismantling certain ideas concerned with identity, i.e. pointing out the normal situation as it is in Europe, as well as the internal diversity of Eastern Europe. On the other hand, however, I would like to add a few explanatory elements to the perception of what may have given rise to our dichotomous perception of West and East, and what is ultimately responsible for the fact that it is now necessary for all to discuss the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe in terms of reconciliation. Here, I would like to proceed by making brief commentaries on one era at a time, as one might indeed expect a historian to do. In doing so, I would like to refer to what I feel to be the structure-forming processes in the individual periods.

My first comment in this context certainly does not sound like an argument typically put forward by a historian. My claim is that the circumstances in which Eastern European history began, those in which Eastern Europe was acculturated in the Early and High Middle Ages, i.e. Christianisation and mediaeval nation building, had very little, and perhaps nothing at all, to do with the subsequent separate developments which concern us in terms of reconciliation. Whether the mission in the Middle Ages radiated out from Byzantium or Rome initially had no major influence on its effect. Everywhere, Christianisation was an element of the transition from tribal societies to principalities. Everywhere, also meaning in mediaeval Russia, as well as in Bulgaria and in Serbia, the mechanisms at play were commonly those of nation building, effective almost at the same time within the area of influence of the Western mission, outside of the Europe of Antiquity, for instance in Brandenburg, in Hungary, in Mecklenburg and in Poland, as well as in Denmark and Sweden. I think that this is an important observation. As observed by the historian and expert on Eastern Europe, Klaus Zernack, from Berlin, it was particularly the era of Christianisation, in other words the time between the 10th and the 12th and 13th Centuries, which was actually the most European in the history of Russia. Never during any ensuing period did Russia directly embrace the European model so completely from a structural point of view, and directly participate in this European model, than in the time of Kievan Rus. Or to put it another way, it was not the course of Christianisation as such, the subject of our considerations today, which brought about the subsequent structural frontiers.

The situation is quite different with regard to the developments in the High and Late Middle Ages, in other words in the 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries. Three processes in fact particularly gave rise to structural frontiers, frontiers initially within the larger region of Eastern Europe, which had until then developed relatively uniformly. For Eastern Central Europe, these processes were on the one hand the so-called land clearance which took place in the High Middle Ages. The economic and social structural transformation, you might say modernisation, which started with agricultural colonisation and progressed via the establishment of towns, made continual structural changes to most of the countries to the West of Russia and to the North of the Balkan Mountains until the 15th Century, and made them a part of the European system from an economic point of view. Eastern Central Europe,

meaning Croatia, Germany to the East of the Elbe, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, was Western in orientation over the coming centuries, and it belonged to the West, both in terms of its social and political organisation, as well as in its foreign relations, its direct link to what we now call Europe. If someone had been asked in the 15th Century to describe the cultural geography of Europe, and this is something which we must remember again and again if we speak of East and West in our contemporary categories, they would certainly not have thought of placing Prague or Krakow or Gdansk, or even Riga, Buda and Zagreb, or Dubrovnik/Ragusa outside the core regions of Europe in terms of civilisation. All this was the periphery and the core region at once.

The second relevant process of change which took place in the Late Middle Ages was the Mongol-Tartar conquest of Russia as it was at the time. Seen from the perspective of the 13th and 14th Centuries, this was not a process of Barbarism as such, or a step backwards in terms of civilisation. Perhaps it was even the opposite in some senses. The fact that even the princes in Moscow, who were to give the decisive impulses for throwing back the Tartar power, at the outset strategically and ideologically emulated not Kiev, but the Golden Horde, certainly says something about the attraction of the world outside Europe in terms of civilisation emerging as a result of the Tartar conquest. It says something about the fact that opting for the West at that time was obviously not of necessity the most rational or the most obvious option in terms of civilisation. Nevertheless, none of these objections change anything about the fact that Tartar rule separated Russia from Central Eastern Europe from a development point of view. Right or wrong, at that time Russia therefore had a different perspective as regards development. Different means neither positive nor negative. The Moscow Empire, which was the successor of Kiev in terms of power, was neither to have a direct part in the momentum created by the land clearance carried out in the High Middle Ages and the economic and social modernisation which it brought about, nor was it to be linked to the cultural integration processes of humanism and the early Enlightenment. Where this did occur, it was through the agency of Poland and Lithuania. Until the mid 18th Century at least the Russian path remained in a very concrete sense a special path in European history.

In the third complex of structure forming in the Late Middle Ages, the argumentation of change and "distance from Europe" is almost more complicated. This is the structural separation of South Eastern Europe because of the Ottoman expansion in the Balkans during the 15th Century. The fact that this part of Eastern Europe was thus connected for at least two or three centuries to what was in fact a superior culture in terms of the organisation of the state and of society, can no longer be denied today. There is no doubt that the administration of the Ottoman Empire confronted South Eastern Europe very much earlier with the developed structures of an early modern state apparatus than was the case in the other parts of the major region of Eastern Europe. There is also no doubt that it was inclusion in the developed Ottoman culture of the state and the law which permitted particularly the Balkans to enjoy a period of long unaccustomed co-existence and mixing between groups which were different from both a religious and a linguistic point of view, with a low level of conflict. Today's situation in large sections of South Eastern Europe which we have come to perceive today as an allegedly impossible to disentangle ethnic and cultural mixture posing an extraordinary dilemma must be followed back through history particularly to the fact that the Ottoman Empire did not exercise on its citizens the cultural and religious pressure to integrate which had been the norm in the development of European territorial states, including Muscovy, since around the time of the Reformation.

There is also an argument here because the distance placed by Ottoman rule between South Eastern Europe and the rest of the Continent was to become a problem at some point. Occasionally, it was only a question of relaxing direct neighbourly contacts between neighbours in Eastern Europe. The main point was that South Eastern Europe no longer participated in the land clearances which took place during the High Middle Ages. The region was economically integrated into a non-European system as defined by Emanuel Wallerstein and the non-continuation of certain traditions of organisation existing within the state and society which previously had closely linked South Eastern Europe with Eastern Central Europe, as well as with the sphere of influence of Kiev and Moscow. All in all, one could speak of relative processes of destratification in the Late Middle Ages, and of relative differences. These were relative in the sense that no verdict had yet been reached with regard to the structural formations of this age in terms of the chances for

development of the individual regions, as well as in that from a contemporary point of view there was as yet no rational reason for arriving at value judgments balancing up West and East. There was at least no other reason than the religious division. At this time, no one could have plausibly predicted whether the centres of development in terms of economy and civilisation would lie in the long term in the Western Mediterranean area, or in the North West of Europe or around the Black Sea or the Baltic. It would have been completely erroneous to speak of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) as being in a special cultural or political relationship together with Kiev, or indeed Novgorod with Smolensk, not to speak of with Prague, Krakow or Poznan. As much as Islamic or Orthodox Europe at that time was absolutely alien, from a Western point of view, the so-called North was naturally still a part of the core of Europe.

This changed in the late 16th and in the 17th Century. This was an age of global change, which amongst other things actually brought about the division of Western and Eastern Europe. At least forming an outline of this process requires from us a moment of patience and concentration. The complex nature of the problem lies in the fact that a variety of factors had a role to play, more or less simultaneously, but not necessarily with a causal link or dependence. In addition, the problem lies in the fact that historians have no ultimately plausible, understandable way of explaining the dramatic structural changes which took place during the 16th and 17th Centuries. The emphasis here is on the fact that the economic potential of the individual large regions within Eastern Europe, and hence the respective social and political dynamics, suddenly and dramatically drifted apart. Even prior to this there were of course regions with intensive and extensive economies, whose populations were either rich or poor. These differences had however still been relatively small, and in particular all of them had had the opportunity to keep up with the competition, and where necessary to compensate for temporary setbacks. Whether Ragusa or Genoa, Gdansk, Prague or Amsterdam were able to accumulate greater riches than others during a particular decade certainly depended on changing economic cycles. Such circumstances could change once more. This was no longer the case from the 17th Century onwards. The discovery and colonial exploitation of the New World, the changes in transportation technology and financial mechanisms, the developments in agricultural and industrial productivity, networking and subjection of the Continent to market mechanisms which were rapidly becoming more intertwined, all of these

factors together were to constitute a great privilege in terms of development to very specific regions in the North West of Europe. Most other regions, however, degraded to become secondary or even tertiary locations for modern economy and civilisation. The economist and economic historian Paul Bairoc, from Geneva, once attempted to some extent to quantify this complex process of transformation. The result is quite impressive. If in the Late Middle Ages the productivity gap between Eastern and Western Europe was in a ratio of roughly 1:3, then we have to presume that by the 17th Century this ratio was 1:8 and for the period of industrialisation between 1:12 and 1:14. To put it in a nutshell, development and stagnation were now very clearly developed in geographical terms, and Eastern Europe was unquestionably one of the less privileged regions on the Continent. Having said all that, however, this was not an exclusively Eastern European problem. The far West and the South were also among the losers in the long term. In fact, the economic and social situation which was typical of large sections of Eastern Europe was at that time not the exception, but in fact rather the norm on the Continent. It could rather be said that those countries which pioneered pre-industrialisation, and which engaged in capitalist trading, in fact took a special path. Nevertheless, the caesura which took place in the 17th Century probably had a greater effect on Eastern Europe than on other parts of Europe's periphery. Scarcely anywhere else was the separation so clear from the guiding processes of protoindustrialisation in Europe, in other words those of early modernisation. Since this time, not only did the larger part of Eastern Europe not follow these processes, but in fact it followed completely opposite paths. The so-called second serfdom, the freeze on the development of towns, and the repression of the bourgeoisie, the relative narrowing of the cultural horizon towards aristocratic and protonational identities, this and other things in fact typified Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Russia at the beginning in a type of special path, one which entailed digging in in terms of structurally reproducing backwardness.

The special path followed in economic and social terms was accompanied from the 17th Century onwards by something like a special political path in terms of state building and of power. What I mean by this is the gradual destruction of the old national states and the political transformation of Eastern Europe by means of late feudal and neofeudal empires. The genesis of these large empires, this imperial nation building, which was to determine the state structure of the region until the First World War, varied greatly. Differences also occurred in terms of the circumstances

under which the individual mediaeval nations of Eastern Europe were integrated into or subjugated by these Empires. This process was both started and ended by military expansion: the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans starting in the 15th Century, the partition of Poland at the end of the 18th Century. Between these two events lay the development from the Moscow principality to become a hegemonic regional power, and the long process of empire building by the Habsburg Monarchy. This was a process in which dynastic expansion and the formation of centralised states was to an extent part of one and the same process, being at the expense of and in some cases also against the resistance of the crown lands - examples of this being Bohemia in the 17th Century and Hungary in the 18th. It is not easy even for a historian to say whether there was any uniform logic at all behind this process. It is clear, however, that the success of the large imperial states over the smaller power bases of the previous eras was to some extent a function of their backwardness. It is also evident that, in contrast to what happened in the West and South, the large countries were superior in terms of mobilising military resources and political power, in spite of their relatively cumbersome nature. It is also plain to see that, particularly for the mainly agricultural large states, which were relatively unstructured from an institutional point of view, the vital principle of increasing resources through expansion became one which determined their policies. Russia serves as an example here. In terms of the Western criteria of state structures, in the course of several major expansions undertaken by Ivan IV, Peter I and Catherine II, the structure of the Empire was impressively fragile, with the central power having no institutionalised access to the lower level of society or to its geographical periphery. In the same way, it was almost bereft of any functional elites, its economic productivity was relatively low, and, especially, it had little tax revenue. Nevertheless, in the light of the absolute size of its territory, as well as of the relatively low level of resistance which the neighbouring states were able to offer to its expansion in the long term, this empire building by Moscow and Russia, concentrated as it was on military expansion, proved to be superior in the long term. Conversely, what was gained in expansion in the Baltic, on the Black Sea and in Central Asia, on the Volga, in Ukraine and in Poland also compensated for quite some time for the shortcomings in the internal structure of the state. At least partly, the annexation of key trading locations such as Kazan, Ingria or the Dniester estuary, as well as of key agricultural areas such as Southern Ukraine or the East of Poland and Lithuania, took the place

of economic structures which were not formed at home. Another aspect should be borne in mind. Particularly the backwardness of Russian society was to become an advantage in terms at least of one aspect of the Empire's policy in the 17th and 18th Centuries. The relatively archaic order of Russian self-rule was much better suited than other, more highly developed constitutional orders to be able to channel state resources towards military purposes. A similar concentration and long-term overtaxing of their own strength such as that ruthlessly demanded of the Russian people by Peter and Catherine would have been unthinkable in corporative states such as Poland or Lithuania, or in any case would have been politically impracticable.

What kind of structural changes were therefore brought about by the imperial changes which took place in Eastern Europe up until the 18th Century? The claim that the imperial states acted as agents for catching up on the modernisation of the region as a whole, as agents for the Enlightenment and for Westernisation was certainly hardly any more than a protective claim by those in power at the time in attempting to justify their rule, and not only in the case of Russia, but also of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern rulers. Only in the case of the Ottoman Empire is it perhaps possible to say that different criteria applied. On the whole, imperial nation building meant rather that backwardness was consolidated because the empires, which were largely agricultural and feudal, with their absolutist structures, also exported their orders to places where other, more Western structures had previously been planted. Russia did so in Livonia, as did Prussia in Pommerania and Austria in Bohemia. Furthermore, this was because all imperial states tended to centralise their lands from an economic and legislative point of view, and to put a stop to separate regional developments. One example is the Polish Commonwealth, which under Prussian control of a part of the country became for the first time a supplier of agricultural products to the Hohenzollern monarchy. Finally, and this is evident, the rationale retaining political power led all imperial regimes to forbid social participation of even a premodern corporative nature, not to mention the modern processes of mobilisation which followed the Enlightenment. It may appear initially paradox for Catherine II to have justified Russian intervention against Poland's new Constitution of 1791 as an act of defence against the French plague, but there is a certain justification in terms of the logic of the Eastern European network of power. In

addition to economic and social backwardness, Eastern Europe hence also became politically backward. And something else: to the extent that this two-fold isolation of the East from the West became consolidated during the 18th Century, also the modern picture emerged, the modern perception of the relationship between West and East which I mentioned right at the start, namely the perception of a divide between West and East. At the latest since the Enlightenment a perspective arose in the Western perception of the region as a whole in which increasingly the positive or negative perception of Russia as the new hegemonic power certainly played the central, organising role. But this also applied to the internal perspective. It applied too to the societies within Eastern Europe itself, which since the 18th Century started to define themselves to an ever greater extent, and more and more exclusively, in terms of their relationship with Western Europe, to Europe itself, be it within the context of the self-assured emphasis on Eastern differentness, such as in patriotism towards the Russian Empire, or in consideration of the dilemma of their own backwardness and possible ways of overcoming it.

If we now ask about the structural situation of the 19th Century, this can probably be outlined quite precisely in terms of two major lines of conflict which emerge from the above. For one thing, I mean the tensions which arose from the conflicting developments of the neoabsolutist imperial states themselves. The rapidly growing challenges of modernisation, the economic pressure to conform exercised on Russia, later also in terms of political power, by Western Europe, which was undergoing a process of industrialisation, collided with the political obligation to continually reproduce and retain their own conservative system. This dilemma, which was also a dilemma of compromise with the nobility in the imperial societies, was actually never solved in any of these countries. In the course of selective efforts to modernise, the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, as well as the Ottomans, all made partial retreats at some point during the 19th Century without being able to tackle the problems themselves in their entirety. Right at the end of the Century, the rulers of the Russian Empire gave themselves over to the illusion, during the age of the statesman Witte, that they could make the overdue adjustments without actually needing to abolish the old system of self-rule and privileges for the nobility.

The other line of conflict was a result of the reaction on the part of the societies concerned. As the obvious discrepancy grew between the needs for adjustment of the existing states and societies, and the adjustments actually made there, support within society for the imperial state system was also supposed to disappear. The structures as they were not only offered insufficient opportunities to integrate the new strata of the bourgeoisie and the peasants, who were now freedmen, but these structures ultimately showed themselves to be unsuited to satisfy the old elites, unless they belonged to the ruling nations, and to integrate them into new imperial societies. The fact that neither Prussia nor Russia was to succeed in gaining the sustained loyalty to the overall state of even a relevant segment of Polish society in their provinces of partitioned Poland, demonstrates this claim quite impressively.

This therefore is the rough framework for modern nation building, and for processes of national mobilisation in Eastern Europe. It makes no sense to define an Eastern European type of nationalism in the manner attempted by Karl Deutsch and many others after him who carried out research into nationalism. Nationalism in Eastern Europe was by definition neither more ethnic, nor more socially conservative or anti-democratic or whatever than elsewhere in Europe. It is true though for this that, just as in all parts of the West, it was connected to the specific interests of major sections of society in overcoming the Ancien Régime, whatever form that might have taken. The circumstances in which such interests took effect from a point of view of national policy in the 19th Century varied greatly. The particular nationalistic strategies and projects even differed literally from one country to another.

Please allow me to briefly outline two cases in order to make the range of variations clear. First of all, the case of Poland, which I have just mentioned. This case was particularly characteristic because the modern nation existed almost without interruption as a tradition, an identity and social and political project for the future, and hence as a political alternative to the rule of the powers overseeing the partition. This was the case during the entire period when the Polish state as such did not exist. One of the reasons for this was that it was possible to look back on a state tradition dating back to 1795, and hence there was also an uninterrupted ruling elite and a group of people consciously supporting this concept and identity as a nation. This was also because there was a broad spectrum of individuals with a heightened

awareness of their nation, in the shape of the large Polish nobility, which had enjoyed, and indeed exercised, rights to participate as citizens until the third partition. In order to provide an impression of the dimensions concerned, the Polish nobility, which acted at the end of the 18th Century as the *citoyens actifs*, Polish citizens, was larger than most of the groups of voters of the early Liberal systems, including in the West of Europe, during the first half of the 19th Century. The final reason was the tradition of political and social modernisation. These efforts to modernise, which as a result of the Constitution of May 1791, as well as of the experience of the Kosciusko uprising in 1794, could undoubtedly lay claim to a much higher degree of Westernisation than the Regimes of the powers overseeing the partition. This was a tradition which could be activated at any time as a political project, and which in fact was repeatedly brought to life. This gave rise to a strangely contradictory profile of a national movement. The considerable degree of national mobilisation and mobility, as well as the growing political radicalism of the national movement, directly linked to the national movements which were in opposition in the West, contrasted with the rather pre-modern social background of the upper echelons of society, which for a long time were more aristocratic in nature. This was a result of the special way in which the fronts had been drawn up in the Polish national conflict. The roots of this lay on the one hand in the solidarity effect exercised on all sectors of society by the powers overseeing the partition, ranging from the nobility, through the clergy to the peasants. Another aspect here was a certain lack of challenge through alternative modernisation concepts from the central state. Put simply, quite a long time into the second half of the century, the old Republic, the one which had existed prior to the partitions, remained socially and politically more attractive than the partition states themselves. This generally gave the Polish movement a special dynamism, at the same time however as burdening it with modernisation conflicts which had not been solved. These conflicts were to keep the national state busy which emerged in the 20th Century.

A second example on which I would like to comment is Bulgaria. This is also a fundamentally historical nation, but one which is burdened with a multiplicity of complications which ultimately tend to group the country with the so-called small, young nations. This was because state tradition, at least from the point of view of the 19th Century, was still an ideological point of reference, but was only a reality from

an ideological point of view, and was not able to demonstrate a continuity of elites, or to constitute a prototype of a modern state which could have been reassembled like in Poland. Furthermore, in the 19th Century, Bulgaria was anything but a geographical and ethnic reality because the settlement patterns since the loss of the mediaeval Bulgarian Empire had long since levelled out territorial identity. Finally, as almost everywhere in South Eastern Europe, the fact that the Ottoman Empire had not exercised force in terms of integrating confessions and ethnic groups now revealed itself to be a handicap. The result of this tolerance *avant la lettre* was that a direct mix of groups had been retained with extreme cultural differences. Almost nowhere in Bulgaria were language and social profile, profession and confession, administrative structures and dwelling places in a directly correlation. Ethnic identity does not function as a characteristic for other relevant distinctions. What, then, was the rationale behind the political and cultural national awakening which occurred in the 19th Century? This rationale lay primarily in the formation of a special social and political interest group, namely the Bulgarian Orthodox clergy and the educated Christian bourgeoisie, which had its own economic, social and cultural ideas of the future, and of what the future was to hold for them. As a result, these groups were no longer able to see prospects of achieving these goals within the established Ottoman state structure. This conflict then became a national antithesis, and was incorporated into the programme of a national Bulgarian state. This state could only be created in considerable abstraction from the ethnic and cultural circumstances. It did however have the major advantage of being able to draw on the nationally orientated interventionist policy of the major European powers which were directed against the Ottoman Empire, hence receiving outside support which was decisive for the political success of the Bulgarian movement.

All national movements, including those in Poland and in Western Europe, have more or less invented their identity and alleged objective basis in the course of modern nation building - to borrow a buzz word from Eric Hobsbawm. Furthermore, it is true that it was not only nation building in Bulgaria which was of necessity accompanied by the initiation of new discrimination and new conflicts. The situation was very similar for the relationship between Poland and Lithuania, between Hungary and Croatia and Slovakia, as well as indeed to the relationship of almost all groups to Jewish nation building, which posed an obstruction to a certain extent, and

which also started for a time in Eastern Europe as a reaction to the exclusion of Jewish agencies from the reforming national societies.

In the final analysis, therefore, it is impossible to plausibly distinguish between well-founded national projects and those which were merely invented. All national claims were justified by the fact that they asserted real interests and were the expression of real unsolved conflicts. Furthermore, even though most national movements which took place in Eastern Europe in the 19th Century were similar to the political and social model of a nation in the West, they cannot for this reason be classified as naturally backward. It is not the newly forming national societies as such which were backward, but the circumstances which were defined by the central states, against which these national movements directed their conflicts in the course of the 19th Century.

There is no need for me to go into detail on the resulting events of the 20th Century, with which we are all familiar. I would however like to close by making two or three comments on these events. Firstly, the failure of the first attempt to reconstruct Eastern Europe along national lines, the restoration of Europe as a whole, was a greater catastrophe for the Eastern section of the Continent than for the West. The failure of the state system created by the Treaty of Versailles was however not due to its construction faults. It would have been impossible by definition to create a "fair" balance between the varying claims made by West and East, as well as within Eastern Europe, as was demanded with hindsight by those who would justify the collapse. There is in fact no such thing as a fair ethnic solution. Stability could only have been achieved through wide-spread acceptance of the principle of compromise. The old revisionist guiding powers did not show such an acceptance.

Secondly, the catastrophe caused by the German war of subjugation in Eastern Europe not only pushed back the process of reconstruction, but in fact made it impossible for generations. The racist division made by the Nazis between a Western Europe standing on the same footing and a racially inferior East, as well as the acts which followed from this, entailed such a loss of substance for Eastern Europe that almost all previous experiences of subjugation and captivity paled into insignificance in the light of the collective experiences of those concerned. If, like

Hans-Heinrich Nolte, we may ask what the causes of experiences of totalitarianism and acts of totalitarianism were, there is no doubt in my mind that the German invasion of Eastern Europe is a key event. The crimes committed by the Soviet Union in its own sphere of influence are a problem, but it would have been impossible for even the Soviet Union to restore Eastern Europe as the Eastern Bloc after 1945 if the experience of the Second World War had not given restituted Eastern Europe an additional feeling of belonging together. This experience with the Germans had been literally so murderous that it seems to me that the idea of reconciliation still poses a problem. Perhaps normalisation would be a more modest, but also more suitable aim, at least to the extent that the German side is able to express it.

Thirdly, I feel that it is important to see that the present process of reconstruction, which started in 1988/89, or perhaps even in 1980/81, is strewn with challenges of enormous proportions. Eastern Europe now has to work off a backlog of modernisation with an extremely long-term effect, in other words it must at once solve problems of change which occurred at different times. The American political commentator Paul Kennedy attempted to lend expression to this in relation to the Soviet Union with an accurate observation when he said that the French Revolution was actually the future of the Russian Revolution. The French Revolution of 1789 was still the future of the Russian Revolution of 1917. It now appears to me to be naive to believe that these processes could or should be gone through by rapidly catching up on all the experiences had by the West, or to believe that the Western model is the sine qua non and the probable model for the future of Eastern Europe. All historical probability at least tends to indicate that this is not the case.

*Gerhard Albert*

## **The difficult relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism**

My approach to this topic is not strictly academic, but is, rather, typified by reflections resulting from my many years of experience as the official responsible for this issue at the Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference, and as deputy manager of Renovabis.

The topic has so many layers and is so varied that I had first of all to give serious thought to a method of approaching it. There is good reason for scheduling it at the conclusion of a Conference concerning itself with present-day relations between the so-called East and the so-called West, taking specific examples from individual countries and national societies and cultures. The question as to the relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism is of key importance for a large number of problems repeatedly concerning us in this context, both from a fundamental and a practical point of view. On the other hand, it is a topic which one could just as easily spend three days discussing as a half an hour.

The topic is, therefore, "The difficult relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism". It appears to me to be necessary at this point to provide a definition of terms. If we speak of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, we speak of something different than if we were to speak of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. This distinction is very important. A common definition of Catholicism is that it encompasses all manifestations of Catholic Christianity which are of a historical and contingent nature, in other words "neither counted as a permanent part of the Church, nor perceivable as its necessary historical expression" (Karl Rahner). This refers to the forms characterised by ethnic, national and other specific milieus which have emerged within the historical context in individual countries and under certain political and social preconditions. With specific restrictions and distinctions, which could be gone into in further detail, this statement can naturally also be applied to the definition of Orthodoxy as the sum of all forms of expression which are characterised by the Orthodox tradition in the lives of individual

historical figures, of societies and of nations. Defining the relationship between the Churches is a different issue, a theological question, and a matter for ecclesiology and ecumenical theology. The differences between these two levels should be borne in mind from the outset. There is also a need for further restriction. *Orthodoxy* as such does not exist, any more than *Catholicism* does. This is easier to appreciate in the case of the former because it tends, rather more than Catholicism, to express itself in individual national manifestations. Particularly within the Central and Eastern European context, however, this naturally also applies to *Catholicism*. One has only to think of the various geographical stages on which problems and tensions are presently rearing their heads in relations between Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

Let us look on the one hand at Russia, where the Roman Catholic Church was always a religion practised by other nations which came under the rule of the Russian Empire as Moscow's power expanded. In Belorussia, in the light of this country's history, this relationship is different once again. Here, the Polish inheritance constitutes a highly formative influence on Catholicism. This relationship is much more difficult to describe in Romania because a multiple problem exists in that country, on the one hand within the Romanian nation between the Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Uniate Church, and then also between the Romanians and the other nationalities in Romania, especially the Hungarians. This also gives rise to tensions within the Catholic Church, something which needs mentioning here for the sake of exhaustiveness. The position is different once again in South Eastern Europe, where in fact the relationship between what is Catholic and what is Orthodox can only be applied by means of an extreme simplification to the polarity between Croats and Serbs. In reality, the situation is much more complex.

This variety of manifestations makes it difficult to concentrate on individual examples, as in fact one should in such a lecture. I have however attempted below to cover examples particularly from the Russian sphere, as well as partly from the Ukrainian and Belorussian contexts. The Romanian context appears to me to be too much of a special case.

In spite of this variety, and in the light of the differences, common perceptions of the problem do however exist. Here lies once more the danger of simplification. It has almost become common ground that after the collapse of the Iron Curtain which had

been drawn right through Europe, and the disappearance of this separating line, the old cultural seam and at the same time the frontier within Europe between the Latin-Western and the Orthodox-Byzantine worlds has re-emerged. Only a few years ago, this question was almost irrelevant to a perception of the political and social reality of these countries (in Western eyes at least). Now, however, they are frequently used, in oversimplified form, as a criterion - in some cases the exclusive criterion - to explain the tensions and massive conflicts which have occurred over the past few years in Central and Eastern Europe. If it is our intention to speak of this divide, we therefore have to bear in mind that it is not a sharply-defined one, but that there are a great deal of zones of mutual contact, overlapping, influence, and also cross-pollination in the positive sense of the term, and that these are in need of precise definition in historical terms. If we think back to Ukraine in the late 16th and early 17th Centuries, to Transilvania in the late 17th Century, as well as to the other historical areas, and the consequences had by these encounters down to the present day, the complexity of the relations then becomes clear. The existence of the Uniate Churches, which whilst retaining their own Eastern rite and church law, have entered into full communion with the Bishop of Rome, is in itself a sign that these historical and cultural contacts have borne fruit down to the present period. I would like to warn against perceiving here a contradistinction, a divide, but rather a zone of mutual enrichment which appears once more to have taken on considerable historical significance.

If one wishes to make a sketch of the main spheres where tension exists, it is necessary to bring into play two relevant key terms, especially in the relationship between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Catholic Church. These terms were addressed by the Orthodox side as an accusation against the Catholic Church (both that centred in Rome and the local Church). One is the accusation of uniatism, and the other is that of proselytism.

Uniatism - the pejorative form makes it clear - refers to the existence of Churches which are Eastern in terms of tradition and rite, but which at different times and for a variety of circumstances and reasons have taken up allegiance to the Bishop of Rome, and hence have entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. This is regarded as a break with their own Churches, as a schism which has not been

healed to this day, and this certainly applies to the view taken by the Orthodox side, as multifarious as the individual historical circumstances may have been. Furthermore, the accusation of uniatism also refers to all manifestations of the rebirth and re-establishment of these Churches, made possible by the religious freedoms which have been granted in their countries of origin since 1989.

The other accusation is that of proselytism, in other words one Church wooing away members from another. From the Orthodox point of view, this accusation relates primarily to the presence and supposed practices of the Roman Catholic Church in countries which were mainly typified by the Orthodox Church, and which have been claimed for its tradition. This accusation has been levelled particularly vociferously since 1991, when the Apostolic See appointed bishops for the Roman Catholics living on the territory of the Russian Federation and the Central Asian Republics who do not have the full status of diocesan bishops, in other words who do not run dioceses in the full Church law sense of the word, but who exercise jurisdiction over the Catholic churches in a certain area as Apostolic Administrators. These are the Apostolic Administrators for the Catholics in European Russia (seated in Moscow) and in Siberia (seated in Novosibirsk). Even though it was in consideration of the Orthodox Church that Rome established only this provisional form of jurisdiction, the act of appointing Catholic bishops was regarded by a large number of senior representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church as an affront, the effects of which remain tangible today, still considerably influencing relations between the two Churches.

These two accusations, which may be used as keywords to sum up the tensions, hide processes of alienation running back over centuries between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Eastern Central Europe and in Eastern Europe. It is well known that such reservations and antipathies can be reactivated at any time at intellectual and political level on the basis of the popularised historical tradition. However, more recent experience from the period of Communist rule also plays a role here. In particular it is worth mentioning in this context the re-integration or forced integration into the Orthodox Church enacted by the 1946 and 1949 Synods, the canonicity of which is more than questionable. This process was experienced as a great injustice by the Greek Catholic Church, primarily in Ukraine and Romania, as

well as in some other countries, with the subsequent complete expropriation or reappropriation of Church property into the ownership of the Orthodox Church, and the enforced suppression of the life of these Greek Catholic Churches which produced countless martyrs during these years. The insecurity which can be ascertained in all quarters caused by the changes which have been occurring very rapidly in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989, and which came as a surprise to all, bringing up to date the unresolved questions arising in the relationships, is a factor which further amplifies the tensions. The insecurity of the Patriarchate of Moscow in terms of its position within Orthodoxy, and of its canonic field of activity in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union is clear to see. This question arises particularly seriously in a few countries, such as Ukraine, where the Orthodox Church is now divided into three different jurisdictions, whereby the main thrust of the division is between the jurisdiction which is subject to the Patriarchate of Moscow, and those wishing to establish a separate Patriarchate of Kiev. These problems are also virulent in Estonia, where a conflict has arisen between the Patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople which is sending considerable shock waves through Orthodox Christianity as to the subordination of the Church in that country, in other words regarding the assignment of the Orthodox Church there in terms of Church law.

One can also not help noticing that, as a result of the opening up and the removal of the old political barriers and obstacles, Polish Catholicism - and I am deliberately using the word "Catholicism" - is once more casting its gaze further to the East, to those territories which in the past have belonged to the Polish state, and where, in spite of all the suppression to which it must submit, the Roman Catholic Church still has a Polish face. A few specific everyday experiences illuminating both the positive and negative aspects of the relationships may serve to clarify the problem:

A Roman Catholic bishop on the territory of the Russian Federation repeatedly attempted to telephone his Orthodox colleague, whose residence is in the same town. Each time when the Catholic curia is announced, the receiver is replaced once again in the residence of the Orthodox bishop.

Another example: There is an Orthodox bishop who, because of the poor relations with the Catholic colleague under his predecessor, tries to improve matters and, as far as he is able, demonstratively approaches this Catholic bishop. The Catholic bishop accepts the approach with joy. This leads to this Orthodox bishop being placed under pressure by groups in his diocese who called themselves "orthodox", because he was allegedly delivering Russia into the hands of Catholicism, or was in favour of a new Union between the Orthodox Church and Rome.

There are however other examples: Polish priests in religious orders, who are doing excellent pastoral and social work in certain parts of Ukraine, naturally also mention that they are "on mission" in this part of Ukraine, where a certain number of Catholics have always lived, but where, traditionally, the majority belongs to the Orthodox Church. They go on a "mission" there as they would to Africa or New Guinea. They speak with joy and the best intentions of the fact that many Orthodox Christians are helping to build a church which they are erecting there. This must frequently pass for an answer to the question as to the relationship with the local Orthodox Church. The justification repeatedly offered for this pastoral concept is the lack of eagerness shown by the Orthodox priests with regard to spiritual welfare work, pastoral care and youth work. If it is a question of bringing people back to the faith, it is the Catholic Church which will have to close this gap.

There are however some more cheering examples, for instance from the area of popular piety. Many people are unaware that in individual countries in which both Churches have been present for time immemorial there has always been an orientation in both directions in terms of the external practice of popular piety by simple people. A nice example is the veneration of St. Anthony by Orthodox Christians in the Roman Catholic Church in Romania. As the Catholic Archbishop of Bucharest once commented, those services with the highest attendance are prayers for St. Anthony in his cathedral. Orthodox and Catholic Christians come together there because St. Anthony of Padua has no tradition in the Orthodox Church, being a Western Saint, but at the same time there is evidently a great need to particularly venerate this Saint.

One example of a gratifying development which is perhaps equally meaningful is to be seen in the fact that there are Orthodox theologians teaching at the priests' seminary in St. Petersburg, the only Catholic seminary for priests in the Russian Federation. This completely unspectacular symbol demonstrates how close the two positions have come in the light of the joint challenge of rebuilding theology and Church. One could list countless examples of constructive agreement between local priests which, if it was possible to add them up in purely quantitative terms, would easily outweigh the much more spectacular and questionable examples. The issue of tension between Orthodoxy and Catholicism does not arise in everyday life. The real difficulty is, however, that it appears to be possible to bring it to life at any time, and this is often done by powers outside the Church which are pursuing interests which are not those of the Church.

How do Church leaders react to this challenge? The answer to this question is very clear for the Catholic Church, for the Apostolic See, and especially for Pope John Paul II himself. Working towards re-establishing unity between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches is one of the central topics of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, who thus not only continued but indeed intensified the dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches which was initiated by the Second Vatican Council. It is well known that the latter used the term "Sister Church" when referring to the Orthodox Churches. This term has become central to ecumenism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, which is also to be used in order to help resolve the difficulties existing at parish level, as well as between the Churches. As early as in 1991, before the two Catholic bishops had been appointed to Russia, in an atmosphere of the rebirth of both the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches, and of the issues arising from this development associated with the relationship with Orthodoxy, the Pope wrote a letter to the bishops of continental Europe "On Relations Between Catholics and the Orthodox in the New Situation in Central and Eastern Europe". This letter refers to normalisation of the life of the Catholic Byzantine rite Churches, in other words the so-called uniate or Greek Catholic Churches, as reparation for an act of serious injustice. On the other hand, the letter goes into detail with regard to problems remaining open, as well as to tensions between Catholics and Orthodox Christians, especially concerning Church property and the use of places of worship, something which has been a major issue

particularly in Ukraine since 1989. To quote from the letter: "Brothers who once shared the same sufferings and trials " i.e. under the state atheism of the Communist period - "ought not to oppose one another today, but should look together at the future." This is a recurring leitmotiv in communications from the Pope and from Rome, the hope for the fruits of ecumenism of suffering which frequently existed between persecuted members of various Churches during the persecution. There are great hopes that this experience will form the fertile soil under today's changed circumstances for new co-operation between the Churches, through to a hoped for complete unity. This letter however also forms a reminder that it is the particular task of the Catholic Churches in the East, in other words of the Uniate Churches, to further the unity of Christians. The tone here is clearly one of admonition. The aim is amplified of complete communion in one faith, in the sacraments and in the leadership of the Church.

In 1991, the Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome, and for the first time bishops from all the countries of Eastern Europe were present. There, in the light of the newly rekindled tensions, it was established that, whilst the dialogue of love between Orthodox and Catholic Christians had been taking place which had been called for by the Council, it was still necessary to ask oneself whether this dialogue "is really always being pursued well, especially in the light of recent difficulties." This is also a clear admonition to the responsible leaders of the local Churches to be aware of this challenge.

The Roman text which is the most important to have emerged for practical circles since the political changes, as well as being the most disputed in parts, is the "General Principles and Practical Norms for Coordinating Evangelising Activity and Ecumenical Commitment of the Catholic Church in Russia and in the Other Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States". The very laborious title itself demonstrates that a large number of very much heterogeneous problems are considered to exist in practice, and that an attempt is being made to provide recommendations for dealing with them.

The Catholic churches in situ in these countries are reminded in this letter of the fact that, until such time as there is an adequately trained clergy, they should try to obtain co-operation from episcopal conferences and religious and orders in other countries.

This refers to the deployment of priests, and has been carried out on a large scale. One fundamental aspect is contained in the sentence "The apostolic structures which the bishops and apostolic administrators organise in the territories entrusted to them are meant to respond to the needs of the Catholic communities present in these territories." It is underlined in the same breath that no form of proselytism is permissible, and that there is no intention to compete with the Orthodox Church. "In full respect for religious freedom" a careful examination should be carried out of the motives of those who wish to enter the Catholic Church. The polemics of Orthodoxy are repeatedly ignited by the relatively rare cases in which people who are perhaps of Orthodox origin in terms of family tradition, but have had no contact with Church life for two or three generations, themselves are not baptised, and are therefore completely alienated from their original Church, then in some way come into contact with the Catholic Church, and ask to be baptised there. Here, the Roman institutions call on Catholic priests who come across such candidates for baptism to make them aware of their obligations toward their historical and cultural community of origin, in other words the Orthodox Church. The institutions fundamentally instruct that the conduct of the Catholic Church in these countries should be distinct from mission work in the true sense of the word, in other words initial evangelisation. For this reason, no parallel evangelisation structures are to be established. This answered an accusation coming from the Orthodox side, whilst at the same time affording the Catholics who already lived there the right to their own spiritual welfare work. Poles living in Kazakhstan or in Siberia, German Russians, Lithuanians and others who have become spread over the wide expanse of Russia in the course of the many voluntary, and less voluntary, population shifts have the right to be afforded priority by the Catholic Church in the giving of the sacraments, and in spiritual welfare. Structures need to exist in order to achieve such an aim, in other words an episcopate and parishes.

I would like to bring to mind once more that the sacraments should be celebrated in the language of the ethnic minorities concerned, wherever possible. This is however ambivalent in practice. The intention is for no excessive German or Polish influence to be exerted. The Orthodox side however frequently interprets this to mean that the pastoral language, as well as that used in services, should for instance be German for German Russians living in Siberia or Kazakhstan. In practice, however, this is

impossible due to the long years of alienation from their cultural roots which these groups have undergone within the population, as well as because of the decline of spoken German in these milieus. This would mean the dying out or complete ossification of pastoral work for these minorities. This is why the Catholic Church must use Russian, and the Catholic side has no doubt about this. It is however precisely this which the Orthodox side repeatedly regards as an affront.

The 1993 document by the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is another important paper. The task of the Commission is to carry on a world-wide dialogue between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

The Orthodox side was threatening to leave the dialogue which has been running since the Second Vatican Council if the Catholic side would not declare its position in a joint statement with regard to the Uniate Church. In a joint document put together with much effort, named after the meeting place Balamand (Lebanon), two principles were agreed upon which need to form a reference point for the present-day dialogue if one side is not to make headlines out of it, thus placing it in danger. For one thing, uniatism is regarded neither as a method nor as a model for the striven for unity of the Churches. The unions, for instance that of Brest in 1596, are respected, at least by the Catholic side, as a contemporary means of achieving greater unity. They are however not perceived as constituting methods with future promise.

The second principle which was established is the following: "Concerning the Oriental Catholic Churches, it is clear that they, as part of the Catholic communion, have the right to exist and to act in answer to the spiritual needs of their faithful." This view has been accepted by the Orthodox side, meaning that any questioning of the right of for instance the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine to exist in its present external forms cannot fall back on the declared will of the representatives of the Orthodox Church on the Joint Catholic-Orthodox Commission. Finally, the Catholic side established that any proselytism and desire for expansion on the part of the Catholics to the detriment of the Orthodox Church were to be ruled out in the future. These ascertainments, which have considerable consequences in practical terms, are enclosed as a basis with the major ecumenical texts from 1995, especially the

Pastoral Letter "Ut unum sint" and for the Apostolic Letter "Orientale Lumen", which assesses the theological, spiritual and cultural tradition of Eastern Christianity.

The question arises as to whether an adequate answer has been provided by the Orthodox side to the impressive and high-level pastoral letters, and whether an answer can be given at all under the current circumstances. This is an extremely urgent question to all whose hearts beat for ecumenism.

Is it conceivable that no answer can be given at present without referring to the fundamental questions of unity within the Church, but which can nevertheless make an observation with regard to the so painful practical problems and the observations made in the pastoral letter "Ut unum sint" which could have made it possible for the message of the Orthodox side to already take on a similarly binding nature. One should not remain closed to the simple fact that no Second Vatican Council or comparable event has taken place in the Orthodox Church. Indeed, this could not have been the case because of its completely different structure.

The fact should not be underestimated that, especially because of political developments, the balance of power has drastically improved in favour of the Orthodox Church. It is by no means the case that Polish Catholicism was undertaking a concerted attack on Orthodox positions, as some Orthodox Christians have perceived the situation to be. The efforts towards a privileged position for the Orthodox Church have now led to progress. The Russian Federation still has no statute on religion. However, all the drafts which are in circulation in this regard tend to afford it a privileged status. This has quite specific consequences for the situation in which the Catholic Church finds itself, with for instance still only 22 Churches and as many chapels in the European part of the Russian Federation for roughly 300,000 Catholics. Church premises for instance are being restituted relatively slowly, as was commented upon recently by the Apostolic Administrator for European Russia, Archbishop Kondrusiewicz.

In conclusion, I would like to add a few personal remarks as to how Christians in the West might approach the difficult relationship between the sister Churches in the East.

My view is that Christians in the West were taken almost completely by surprise and that they were confused by the sudden commencement of tension, by its scope and its complex and varied manifestations since 1989. This led to uncertainty as to how we in the West are to deal with this phenomenon, and the shockwaves have yet to die out. The prevalent picture of Orthodoxy, whether it has been obtained on the basis of theological studies and knowledge, or be it as a popular cliché, has been questioned in many cases. The same applies to hasty expectations which existed in many quarters that concrete steps could be taken towards full unity. For the perception of ecumenism which existed, and had even to some extent gained popularity, in wider areas of church life in Germany, these events, the reappearance of Orthodoxy at all as an ecumenical partner, brought the previous ecumenical paradigm into question. Furthermore, in my view the dominance of internally multilayered historical, cultural and political factors in the complex of problems which I have just described entailed unexpected difficulties for observers in the Churches in the West. The key to an understanding of these events can be gained only with a great deal of effort, and this is a discouragement to many. However, and this is something which should not be forgotten, the Churches in the East, Catholic and Orthodox parish churches, with their bishops, priests, theologians, as well as the Pleroma (the entirety), as it is known in Orthodox theology, of the faithful on whom it is primarily incumbent to take the authentic steps towards reconciliation after years of enforced deformation of their Churches and centuries of alienation. Our counsel and our experience could be highly valuable. Our role here may however always only be that of a servant. In order nevertheless to be able to fulfil such a role at all, the courage is needed to recognise existing conflict situations as such in all their dimensions and manifestations without any glossing over. One needs to make a constant effort not to succumb to the ever present temptation of partiality in this conflict in order to also avoid the danger of being used oneself as an instrument. The only way of achieving this is by making detailed efforts and by gaining considerable knowledge of the historical, cultural, ethnic, social and political circumstances of the conflicts. Without such efforts, which are of course strenuous, we will be able to contribute little which is helpful. The existing attempts, such as in the programmes organised by our church academies and training centres, are in my view as yet insufficient.

In the light of all this, we may not underestimate our own, seemingly minor, contribution to maintaining the dialogue between the sister churches in the East. This applies to all partnerships, especially those existing within the framework of material assistance. In this, it is always the ecumenical dimension of our activities which should be attested, even if this might initially make an exchange with the partner difficult. A lot also depends here on whether it is possible to gain a personal dimension on the relationships which we establish through partnerships, aid, etc., in order to gain access to the other Church at all. And as always when spiritual interests are at issue, agreeing to differ is one of the most important virtues in relations with the partners. This applies not only to relations within one's own Church, in our case the Catholic Church, but particularly also in building up relationships with Orthodoxy which are based on partnership. If one starts by taking more prudent steps into this area, one will cause offence to those who feel this pace to be too slow, and be accused of being imbalanced, because, to quote Saint Paul, we have not immediately become "all things to all men". In the longer term, however, we will find more reliable partners for a more sustained conciliatory effect. Patience and composure are also indispensable virtues in approaching the problem. We must not forget that a great deal is being asked of the Churches there in a very short space of time: re-building, in many cases from scratch, in the midst of serious economic difficulties; overcoming their own recent and distant past; and finally, the spiritual, theological and not lastly ecumenical re-orientation which is indispensable to the survival of the Church in today's society, typified as it is by stormy transformation. This is a truly superhuman task, and, according to the conviction provided by our faith, can be performed only with God's help and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. What is owed from us in the West is primarily solidarity, and not so much fault-finding and a know-all manner and, as Christians, especially our prayers. In all our efforts to come to terms with this problem, which naturally also confuses and hurts us, the latter always seems to be slightly neglected. Let us by our prayers help to overcome painful tensions, so that hopeful approaches may come into being, for the visible progress of the unity of Christians, so that the World may believe.

## **B 2 Specific Countries**



*Adam Krzeminski, Warsaw*

## **How the Polish view themselves - between the Grande Nation de l'Est and the polski kompleks**

It could be said that our topic today is a "vivisection" of the Polish self-perception, or of the way which the Poles have of viewing themselves, at the intersection between the "Grande Nation de l'Est" and the "polski kompleks". It is a difficult undertaking to unite two opposing streams of thought and attitudes: on the one hand the inferiority complex of a nation which has suffered misfortune over the past 200 years, and whose sovereign *raison d'être* has been placed in doubt to the extent of abolishing the existence of the Polish state, and on the other hand Polish delusions of grandeur which express themselves through a feeling of not being merely a subject of European history, but of having also exercised a decisive influence on it.

Both terms - the "Grande Nation" and the "polski kompleks" - are actually foreign in origin. One is French, and, if you associate "complex", in the sense of "inferiority complex" with Freud, the other is a "German" term which has become firmly anchored in Polish literature through several novels (including by Tadeusz Konwicki), as well as in historical and philosophical contemplation. The "Grande Nation" on the one hand - did the Poles indeed consider themselves to be a Great Nation? Before I answer that, I would like to outline two anchoring points of the Polish self-perception and self-awareness.

The first is its thousand years of history. There are nations with an older history, and there are also stronger, more important nations which have a much younger history, and which are not plagued by our complexes. However, these thousand years are a framework which is based partly on a historical mythology, and which is able to demonstrate a considerable geographic range, roughly from Topolsk in Siberia, where the Poles were banned in the 19th Century, to Chicago in the United States, where they went, also in the 19th and 20th Centuries, although this time admittedly voluntarily.

The second anchoring point is the existence of a state in Eastern Central Europe which, whilst it was never able to or wished to develop the function of a major European power, nevertheless played an important regional role in Eastern Europe for centuries. Even after the partitions of Poland in the 18th Century, this Poland, which in formal terms did not exist, had a European function as a kind of heart of unrest, or as a potential possibility. "Lost again and again, it was never lost", writes Günter Grass in the "Tin Drum", and this is in fact the self-awareness which the Poles have had of their own state over the past two hundred years.

The third anchoring point is the culture, which naturally was typified by Catholicism and was closely, but not too closely, linked to the West. It is a Polish myth to state that this culture belonged to the West. It is certainly true that Catholicism and Rome, the Renaissance in the 16th Century, were strong influences in Poland, and the Polish nobility liked to attend Italian Universities in the 15th and 16th Centuries. At the same time, however, Sarmatism, the Polish ideology of the 17th and 18th Centuries, had no Western characteristics whatever; on the contrary, from a mental point of view, it distanced itself from the West.

It was a myth in itself, based on the idea that this Polish-Lithuanian Union was a Heaven on Earth with no need whatever to change and, so it was believed, was almost complete in its baroque, Catholic, Marian character, at the same time as being multicultural and multiconfessional. Sarmatism was the name given to this self-perception, which was a mixture of Catholic, baroque culture and strong oriental influences. The Polish national dress of the nobility at that time was a Turkish dress, and the Polish King, Jan Sobieski, had to have his knights wear straw belts in 1683 near Vienna, in order to make them look different to the Turks, against whom they were to fight, so that the "Westerners", their Polish Allies, did not confuse them with the Turkish enemy. If one bears this in mind, it is possible to state that the precarious, strange position held by Sarmatism, by the self-perception of the Polish szlachta, belonged simultaneously to the West through the Latin links between the cultures, as well as in the geographic, and largely also mental, influence exerted by the East.

At its greatest extension, the Polish-Lithuanian Union was a gigantic *Res publica* with an elected King, but it steered clear of all absolutist tendencies or longings. Any absolutist temptation was nipped in the bud, especially since the King was not only elected, but also bound by Constitutions. These assured the political nation *inter alia* the right to attack the King with weapons, should he exceed the laws or wish to create an absolutist structure.

This became a bitter disadvantage when the neighbours created more efficient structures during the 18th Century – namely ones which were enlightened, but absolutist. The myth of having their own state, one which was thoroughly democratic, nevertheless lived on, although the "demos" naturally consisted only of the political nation of the nobility, who however constituted up to 20 % of the overall population of this *Res publica*. This nobility naturally considered itself to be a Great Nation, irrespective of whether it was poor or fabulously rich. The greatness was by no means understood to consist in ethnic terms, but was built on the pride in the separate political culture, which developed its own political understanding of freedom, and which was not in the least bit interested in ethnic origins.

The political nation spoke Polish, but the majority of the Polish nobility came from the East and was of Ruthenian – i.e. today Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, or even Tatar origin, and this frequently dictated its mentality.

The majority of the population living in this allegedly so super Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Union was certainly not Catholic. On the contrary, it was a particularity of this Polish-Lithuanian Union that, in the 16th Century, the majority of its nobility was still Orthodox. Added to this was a large group of Calvinist Protestants, as well as the separate rank of the Jews, who belonged to the political nation as little as the peasants, although it was unimportant whether the latter were ethnically Polish, Ruthenian or Belorussian. All of them were actually incorporated into the political nation at a very late date, towards the end of the 19th Century.

If one bears this history in mind, one must naturally ask oneself whether a perception of national greatness is possible in this situation, and if so, which. If one analyses works of Polish culture without restricting one's search to the greatest of national

poets, but also includes second-class or even third-class literature, one discovers that terms occur very frequently such as "Great Nation", "great literature" and "great music". The symbolic figures repeatedly cited are Chopin, Mickiewicz or Sienkiewicz. What, though, was the foundation of this greatness which is repeatedly apostrophised?

It is sometimes possible to find it in the Polish literature of the 19th Century, coming from a kind of act of defiance as an imagined greatness which expressed itself for instance in sentences like: We are still here; we have our own values which are incompatible with those of the partition powers; we are better; we are the Christ among the peoples; perhaps the Polish being won't cure the World at once, but certainly Europe; Poland's suffering will save Europe, according to the motto: "for our freedom and for your freedom". This was the essential feature of Polish Messianism, which was anchored not in the partitions, in the feeling of being the victim and of suffering, but which occurred earlier in Sarmatism ("antemurale christianitatis") and which can still be found today in the attitude of many nationally-minded Polish Catholics who misunderstand the papal call to "re-evangelise Europe" to mean that Polish Catholicism is the non plus ultra of Christianity for the 21st Century.

Sarmatism, too, is back in fashion in some quarters, namely the perception of a Polish paradise said to have existed some 400 years ago, a transfigured, more narrow home in the countryside, and a state which, whilst it developed knightly virtues, had no militaristic organisation whatever, no permanent army, and which was unable to fight wars of conquest. This picture may even have been roughly accurate for certain periods of Polish history, but on the whole it is nevertheless a myth. The Polish-Lithuanian Union naturally did not come into being exclusively as a result of the "peaceful filling up" of the vacuum in Eastern Central Europe which had been left behind by the conquest of the Kiever Rus' by the Mongols in the 13th Century, but also by means of the military expeditions of the Lithuanians and Poles (the former by the way not being ethnic Lithuanians, but Belorussian Boyars under a Lithuanian high command). This was the basis of the existence of the Great Polish-Lithuanian Empire. It was, however, not the Jagiellon Kings who were given the flattering epithet "the Great", the Kings who had founded this major empire in the 15th Century, but Kasimir the Great alone, who was not a conqueror in the proper meaning of the

word, who was no exemplary fighter, but rather a manager, who found a Poland built of wood and left one masoned out of stone. He was the only "Great" King. In the final analysis, it was not the great warriors – such as Peter I in Russia or Frederick II in Prussia – who were ultimately "the Great" in Poland, but an economist, to put it in casual terms: a Balcerowicz of the 14th Century. This too is characteristic. The Poles perceived themselves to be a knightly culture, but not as a militarised society, not as great conquerors. The Poles also made no geographical discoveries and expansion, such as in Russia – I am thinking here of Yermak, the Russian discoverer of the Wild East in Siberia. The so-called "wild fields" on the banks of the Dnieper, where the Polish-Cossack Wars took place in the 17th Century, bear nothing of the romantics of these discoveries. In spite of Copernicus, whom we more or less share with the Germans, the scientific discoveries were for centuries no reason to feel great. Even if the Poles boast of him today, in spite of Copernicus, in spite of Madame Curie-Sklodowska, it is not possible to say that the Poles identify themselves with great scientific revolutions. The discovery of a new astronomic picture of the Universe or of a physical law is not yet part of the handed-down Polish self-perception.

Economic progress in Poland, too, was not as decisive a factor as it was in England, Holland or Northern Germany. At best, Europe's first written Constitution of 3 May 1791 gives the Poles the feeling of having for once been the first to think up something modern and useful ...

During Poland's best period, in the 16th and 17th Centuries, when the characteristic patterns were created, the self-satisfaction of rural life typified the way in which the Polish viewed themselves. In the 16th Century, in the magnificent Renaissance literature of someone like Kochanowski, whose poetry still appears for us today in purest Polish, which we can understand without difficulty, since there was no linguistic break, unlike that which took place in Germany in the 17th Century, the idea prevails that we live in the countryside, are happy there and have no need of mobility. This picture of a large, rural, simple nation of nobles was carried on into the 19th and 20th Centuries through literature. Even after 1989, there is a literary current which is quite strong associating this rustic self-glorification with Messianism, in conformance with the old patterns: The Poles are said to be rooted in the soil, and that is why they consistently fought against Communism; Solidarnosc allegedly

continued the anti-Russian revolts –strongly Marian in character – which started as early as the mid-18th Century; the Poles were said to have stood up to Stalin like no others, and they were the ones who had shown the path towards freedom ... This self-assessment allows one to deduce the existence of a justified pride, which however never contains more than a trace of arrogance. This, too, is a level of the imagined Polish greatness: we believe ourselves to be the greatest hero of freedom, and the "greatest victim".

In their self-perception as the greatest victims, the Poles do, however, have to face a superior competitor, namely the Jews. There is a lamentable competition taking place between the Poles and the Jews as to who has been the greatest victim in the course of history. When, several months ago, I led a discussion on this topic on Polish radio, David Warszawski, a young Polish-Jewish journalist, who analyses this problem very well, said: "Yes, that's true, this competition does exist. There is however only room for one at this summit of suffering, and that's us Jews. There's nothing like the Holocaust. The Poles' bad luck is being second in line. The second person to reach this summit receives no attention, you might say he loses out on media attention, on world public understanding, etc. You have to live with the fact, and we Jews also have to live with the fact, that we have stolen the show from the others – the Poles, the Gypsies, the Russians. But the Holocaust was quite simply a unique event in the 20th Century." I do not wish to reduce the Polish-Jewish complex to this single component, but it also has a role to play: Who is the Greatest? Who is the greatest victim?

In German literature and journalism - particularly that which is second-class, or even third-class, the latter frequently being more revealing than the subtle and the absolute best, one sometimes comes across terms such as "Polish delusions of grandeur", "Polish chauvinism" and "horrific self-overestimation". The Polish cavalry is frequently cited as an example of these delusions of grandeur, which is said to have attacked German tanks in September 1939, and the yearning to constitute a regional power serves as proof of Polish chauvinism, or of the desire to bring the Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, etc., under Polish regional hegemony.

The Poles do not like to hear this, especially since these pictures entertained by foreigners are frequently based on major misunderstandings, but at the same time they have an inkling that there may nevertheless be something in it, i.e. that there really is such a thing as self-overestimation, crowing and bragging by which one attempts to artificially create that which one was unable to achieve. This trend in the Polish culture, journalism and literature of the past two hundred years also sparked off a very strong critical reaction within the Polish intelligentsia. This therefore brings me to the second part, to the "polski kompleks". What is this complex?

On the one hand, we are the greatest, the most beautiful, the best, the luckiest; Poland is in fact Heaven on Earth. On the other, we are the worst, the ugliest, good-for-nothings, we are the black marketeers, car thieves and street hookers. Similar to the Germans, the Poles observe very closely how they are received abroad. The "ugly German", the "ugly Pole". I could easily swap the stories on the title pages of the "Spiegel" for those in "Polityka", and would need only to replace the word "German" with the word "Polish". How are we received? Are we perceived as being something unpleasant, or are we rising on our neighbours' scale of sympathy? The complex is the same in the case of Germans and Poles, only the reasons are different.

The feelings of guilt entertained by the Poles look different to the German ones. The latter probably arise from the feeling of false capabilities, from a hyperefficiency of evil. The Polish complexes, on the contrary, come from a feeling of inefficiency, of the constant failures of the past two hundred years. Once again, Polish literature has provided us with an important impetus for dealing with these complexes. This particularly productive current of self-mocking did not start first of all with a grotesque line by someone like Witold Gombrowicz, Sławomir Mrożek or Tadeusz Różewicz, who found great popularity after the War with Poland's neighbours, but it was already anchored in the strong critical currents of the 17th and 18th Centuries in the Polish Catholic tradition, which was concerned with vehement criticism of quietism, self-satisfaction, self-overestimation, arrogance, torpor and deformation, or lack of creation, of the nobility and the clergy.

As was also the case in Germany, our enlighteners were very often clergymen. In Germany, they were Protestant vicars or theologians, and in our country they were Catholic priests, but it was the same unabated criticism of our own being. This also continued in the 19th Century.

The same romantics, who super-elevated what was Polish, and who developed out of this the Polish ideology of Messianism, were relentless critics of the Polish being, of Polish backwardness, lethargy and laziness, and of all the characteristics about which Harald Schmidt tells his jokes today. We dealt with this in our literature as early as in the 19th Century, and this is why we fail to particularly appreciate it if Harald Schmidt repeats it parrot-fashion in his talkshow today. The "polski kompleks" is, however, rather more.

It is the feeling of being the constant victim not only of catastrophes which were our own fault. It is a complex of the wrong geopolitical location, of the sword of Damocles held jointly held by our dear neighbours to the left and to the right. It makes no difference what the Poles do – it will always end with the same disaster. This complex can be observed again and again up to the present day. I can prove this with a literary motif, with a starting point from the national drama of the 19th Century by Adam Mickiewicz. One important key scene in his "Funeral Ceremony" is the ball at the Senator's house. The entire Polish political clique is assembled at the house of this Russian Governor in Warsaw - the traitors, the courtiers who have entered into the service of the occupying powers, the Polish collaborators. Although the word was coined in Pétain's France, collaboration is also a very Polish problem, and it is the reverse side of the self-transfiguration which expresses itself in revolts.

Interestingly, the Poles, in contrast to the Germans, did not develop any particular court culture. Had Norbert Elias analysed Polish society in terms of his categories, he would probably have been quite at a loss, since these are only applicable to Poland to a limited extent. Poland's Kings were not absolutist autocrats, completely typifying their countries from Versailles, the Hofburg or Zarskoje Selo. Sobieski in Wilanów, the Saxon Kings in the Königsschloß – if they were not in Dresden at the time (which was however usually the case) - and finally the last King, Stanislaw Poniatowski in Lazienki, certainly had some radiance; usually, however, they perceived themselves

in the shadow of more powerful and richer magnates. Otherwise, each nobleman was of equal birth to the Monarch, and had no need to follow court fashion. After the partitions of Poland, however, foreign Governors came and foreign hierarchical structures entered the country to which Polish society, which had been divided into three, had to submit. These structures were on the one hand real and efficient, and they were recognised as such, but on the other hand they were foreign, and were hated accordingly. They embodied the picture of a negative, new culture which was the epitome of all that was bad, of treason and of self-denial. This was demonstrated by Mickiewicz in his "Funeral Ceremony": The Russian Governor fences with his Polish courtiers, whilst, outside, Polish students are arrested and sent to Siberia. This drama in four parts was written in the 1820s and 30s, and we can follow this picture in various versions in a variety of novels and plays written in the 20th Century, from the novel "Insatiability" by Stanislaw Witkiewicz, who, before the War, foresaw the re-partition of Poland by Hitler and Stalin, and who committed suicide, through to a minor futuristic novel by Rafal Ziemkiewicz from 1996. This author was previously obsessed by science fiction, and is attracted today by the right-wing of the political spectrum. It is 2010 or 2030, and the same thing happens as in Tadeusz Konwickis' "Minor Apocalypse", a novel which appeared at the end of the 1970s, which was published underground, and which we all read, enthralled by the "polski kompleks". The story was that Giereks' People's Poland, together with its "anti-Socialist powers" is insidiously incorporated into the Soviet Union and gradually sovietised, so that the white on the Polish flag becomes ever thinner and the flag ever redder, ever more Soviet. At the Russian Governor's "Senator's Ball", that of the Russian Governor in the shape of the Soviet ambassador, the opposition, Solidarnosc and the underground play the same role as the traitors had in the 19th Century. This novel from 1978/79 was the cult work of the first period of Solidarnosc. And there we have it, in 1996 Ziemkiewicz takes up the same picture once more. In the 21st Century, Poland is a Member of the EU and of NATO, but the West has long been in dissolution; Brussels pays money to "maintain peace" to the east of Poland, but no one in the West wishes to fight. The only peacekeeping force fighting against the heavily armed gangs acting in the crumbling Russian region are Ukrainian warlords. One of the latter notices, however, that there is no longer anything to be gained from the West, and secretly pays homage to a grand vizier in Bagdad who will soon put paid to the West. Poland's old nightmare has therefore not

disappeared, even on the eve of admission to NATO and the EU. We strive to join NATO and the European Union; we have our economic successes, but the political thought patterns of a section of the Polish public - or of a young author – say the following: "Whatever happens, we'll end up where we were 200 years ago, with a new partition of Poland and with the Russification of this run-down, treasonous upper strata, which will once again dance at a Senator's Ball."

Where do these pictures come from? Is this the complex of an alleged "Grande Nation", which knows that it is nevertheless weak, perhaps cannot continue to exist, and is sensitive to possible falls in temperature and atmospheric pressure? Or is it merely a lack of literary imagination on the part of the generation of those who today are between thirty and forty, which is incapable of breaking out of the Polish cultural code of the last two hundred years, and of saying to itself that we are no longer who we were, that all of our cultural perceptions became obsolete in 1989, that we can no longer link with the old Sarmatic, Messianic perceptions, etc., and that we have to think up entirely new ones? At least this is one train of thought in Poland today.

The other train of thought runs counter to this one, and expresses itself roughly as follows: Everything which we have been for the last two hundred years, this entire tradition, means nothing to us now. This country has changed completely because of being shifted to the West. We still speak Polish, but we have almost nothing in common with our ancestors, and equally little with our neighbours in the East, the Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians. Once uprooted, once away from home, once out of our foundation, it is possible to experience this or that once more in nostalgic terms, to retell the story, but this thread running through Polish history has come to an end. Today, we belong in Central or Western Europe, and we have to get used to the actual neighbourhood, i.e. the Germans, because – unwantedly but in fact – a third of us have become the heirs of German history in Silesia and Pommerania. This is a principal motif within the Polish self-perception as regards the future, and at the same time a very strongly-flowing current in recent Polish literature. Young people in Gdansk, in Wroclaw and Szczecin are discovering German history; you might say that they are continuing to write Günter Grass' plots; they concern themselves with the complex of the expulsions of the Germans, make friends with German exiles; together they establish German-Polish museums of local history, in

which the up to seven hundred years of German history awarded the same status as the fifty years of Polish history, and they are adjusting to this neighbourhood.

This does not mean that the relationship with the neighbours in the East is non-existent, with the former "domestic neighbours" of the Poles, namely the Ukrainians, Lithuanians and Belorussians. The relationship with the latter is in a phase which I would compare with the German-Polish dialogue of the sixties and seventies, although the roles have been swapped. Today, the Poles very frequently attempt to take up the position which was assumed by Günter Grass, Gräfin Dönhoff, Klaus von Bismarck and others who came to Poland in the context of the German-Polish dialogue of the sixties and removed the Poles' fear of the Germans because they felt it to be necessary for the Germans' understanding of themselves to establish new contacts with the Polish neighbour in the East.

The model of settling up between Germans and Poles is now being transferred to the Polish-Lithuanian, Polish-Ukrainian and even Polish-Belorussian dialogue (even if the constellation of power in Minsk could not conceivably be less favourable for such an endeavour at present). The important thing is the development of the neighbour, as well as that of the dialogue, also being on a level which I call the "phase of taking leave" of the old home, particularly in the light of the German-Polish experience, by consciously bequeathing to the successors a part of one's own history and saying: "This is now yours, and you - Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians – will feel better if you do not suppress the fact that that was our common history, but if you take it over and continue to look after it. This can only help growth."

This gives rise to a kind of shadow of the former *Res publica*, and of that feeling of belonging together, and of a bond which lasted hundreds of years, which has by no means been destroyed without trace, in spite of the national disputes which took place in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries. The consequences of the old wounds can still be felt, but the upper strata of that *Res publica*, in other words the landed gentry and the big landowners, have become Polish, so that, in time, the social tensions in the particular places where the peasants were Ukrainian, Belorussian or Lithuanian also took on a strong national flavour. It is productive and far-sighted today to talk about culture, about being deeply rooted, and about common points, in a way which

has no ulterior political motive, especially since the Poles today are no longer so arrogant as to wish to play any hegemonic role whatever, in contrast to the situation during the inter-War period, when many still wished to restore the old *Res publica* and hankered after organising something like an intermediate Europe under Polish conditions in the area between the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic and the Black Sea. Such longings no longer exist today, and this is probably the real cure for the Poles, namely the fact that, in politics, they have liberated themselves of self-overestimation, as well as of the Polish complex.

This sometimes has quite comical consequences. When several countries of the former CMEA, the so-called Visegrád States, in other words Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, wished in 1989 to get together, it was revealed very rapidly that – in contrast to the previous situation – no fight took place over the leading role in this triangle. Rather, the whole game brought to mind passing the buck, with everyone pressing this role onto the others. Suddenly, everyone – with the possible exception of Walesa, but certainly the political class – felt that this leading role should fall to Havel, the Czech, since this nation had the best position in the West, had the best economic prospects, and had had the best democratic traditions during the inter-War period. The Czechs, however, very quickly revealed that they themselves felt nothing for this role, especially since they did not even wish to maintain the Federation with a weaker partner - Slovakia. And what happened with this vacuum? Did the Poles jump into the breach? By no means. The triangle collapsed or wasted away, until the Western Europeans then pressed us to put together something mutual after all, a sort of kindergarten prior to admission to the European Union. But we had no wish to go to kindergarten. Everyone wanted to get into this EU Heaven under his own steam. We were more competitors than capable of a community. It is not until the present day that a kind of community feeling is developing, as well as an awareness that we should support each other with no one telling the others what to do, and no hegemony.

Poland is, nevertheless, now sometimes pushed into a more active role, one which it is also gradually assuming. The best example here is the mediatorial role which Kwasniewski is now playing for Ukraine and Lithuania in relations with Western Europe. The initiative for this emanated not from Poland, but from the Ukrainians,

from President Kutchma and, even prior to that, from President Kravtchuk. This shows that the old Polish-Ukrainian animosities have played at most a regional role since the genesis of Ukraine as a separate state in 1991 - in Przemyśl (on the Polish side) and in Lemberg (on the Ukrainian) - whilst Kiev and Warsaw rapidly approach one another's positions. In the same way as we said after 1989 that our path to Europe leads via Germany, the Ukrainians also said that Ukraine's path to the West leads through Poland – if only because of its geographical location. Walesa tended to regard this with distrust because he feared that it might drive a wedge between Poland and the West; Kwasniewski, on the other hand, seized the bull by the horns because he realised that this was precisely what made a good impression in the West. He invited Kutchma to CEFTA meetings several times, as well as to the meetings of the Presidents of the Eastern Central European States, an informal organisation which is larger than the Visegrád Group. It has been demonstrated that Poland is well able to play this role of mediator.

The second example is Lithuania. Tensions arose in Lithuania because of the Polish minority, as well as because of the Lithuanian complexes regarding this - at least in numeric terms - overly powerful neighbour in the West, and because of the previous bossing around of the Lithuanian political class during the Polish-Lithuanian Union. As Polish became the language of the Lithuanian nobility, the accusation was levelled during the Lithuanian national awakening which took place in the 19th Century that Poland had "beheaded" its neighbouring peoples by robbing them of their leading class through Polonisation. These complexes still play a role after 1990, although the Solidarnosc politicians were of assistance during the violent struggle for Lithuanian independence. This tension died down between 1993 and 96. Even nationally minded Lithuanian politicians now stress the very good relations between Lithuania and Poland.

Another example, finally, is Belarus. It was Kwasniewski who, in the space of two days, brought about a joint declaration on the part of the Ukrainian and Polish Presidents on the danger to democracy in Belarus. Havel did not join in until two days later.

We can see that the geographical proximity to the East has once more predestined Poland to have a finer feeling for developments in the East. I hesitate to speak of "our home abroad" because this term is reserved for Yelzin and his blurred neoimperial dreams. In Poland, we do not think in these categories. On the contrary, a hefty discussion took place in Poland two years ago as to where the main partners or main adversaries of the new Poland in the East were, in Moscow or in Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. My view is that the discussion has not been concluded to this day. There is the formula of a parallel policy towards the great Russian neighbour and the direct neighbours. In spite of this, the accusation has been levelled again and again in the public debate in Poland that Polish foreign policy is neglecting the direct neighbours – in other words Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania – in favour of relations with Russia.

The reality, however, developments show that this policy practically makes itself with the strong, clearly Euroatlantic option. The problem at the moment in this respect lies with Polish-Russian relations, since these are certainly influenced, if not actually burdened, by the wrangling over the eastwards expansion of NATO.

Even Polish-Ukrainian, Polish-Belorussian and Polish-Lithuanian relations are largely determined by the problem of the opening up of the Euroatlantic structures towards the East. What we are faced with today in politics in Central Europe and in the East as a whole is the new law that it is the weaker who set the pace. They push, they express their wishes and strategies, and the powerful fall into line. That is what happened with us. First of all, the Visegrád States were given the NATO option, with regard to which the Americans and Western Europeans initially had some reservations, but the resolution of the Eastern Central Europeans set the pace. Our partners in the West reacted to this - hesitantly at first, and then more decisively. The same is now happening with our partners in the East, in that they set the pace of rapprochement to Poland as one of the bridgeheads of their own link with the West. The substance of Polish-Ukrainian, Polish-Belorussian or Polish-Lithuanian relations does not depend solely on Warsaw; Poland merely absorbs and reacts – better or worse. This is not a phase of a really active policy and of an active self-perception; no one thinks in these categories. It is always possible to find groups or journalists with a right-wing orientation who think in "Neo-Sarmatic" categories, but if one

regards their marginal scale, it is possible to see that such considerations are bereft of any actual political power.

The question now naturally arises as to the role played by Russia in this law of the weaker, and of the extent to which Russia sets the pace even today in Polish-Russian relations. I believe that we are now in a strange and very unusual situation in that Poland, this small and long absent partner, is in a phase where, whilst it is on the winning side, it has yet to cope with this position well, or even to begrudge this to itself at all.

One might put forward the theory that Poland is one of the winners in this terrible 20th Century. This surprises most Poles at first sight, and if one advances this theory in Poland the first thing one hears is: "You're mad, we are the greatest losers, the victims. The whole Polish intelligentsia was rooted out and the country moved from the East to the West like a sack of flour. The Poles were expropriated and suppressed, and then Stalinist Communism with its idiotic economic forms finished off the job, and you blither on about winning?" You only then have to look at two dates - 1901 and 2001 – always assuming that no catastrophe takes place in the three years up to then. In 1901 there was no Poland, and Stanislaw Wyspianski portrayed in his play "The Wedding", that Poland, divided as it was into three parts, was utterly unable to exist within Europe. One hundred years later, this Poland will be a recognised, self-conscious and equal partner of the EU and of NATO. Even the "Polish economy", a German term which you have to let melt on your tongue, is getting a positive air today. If that is not success ...

I once wrote that we were the Frankenstein of Europe, cobbled together completely crookedly by a bungler, be he a doctor, professor or magician: The left arm was sewn onto the right shoulder, the head much too small; nothing is right, but it works. This rather robust homunculus is able to demonstrate economic successes, something which cannot be taken for granted in the light of the Polish tradition, since the country had become a laughing stock in the seventies and eighties because of its high level of debt. If we look at Albania and Bulgaria today, they remind us of Poland ten years ago. Today, it is a country which on the whole does not work badly, and where the number of strikes has decreased drastically over past years, in spite of its

pronounced culture of revolts and disputes, as well as in the face of the considerable social tensions caused by political and economic change.

On the whole, Poland is developing peacefully. The successful minority within society is strong enough, at a third, to constitute a counterbalance to the absolute losers, who also make up one third of society, and to give to those who have drawn the short straw in relative terms the hope that things are actually improving as a result of the economic and political reforms.

Poland is still having trouble coping with all this. It cannot yet be taken for granted that one's own feeling of worth can be based on real successes, and where doubt arises, it is always easier to call on the old thought patterns, the catastrophes and partitions, etc., and to play down successes, than to live with the fact that we no longer entertain a longing to be a potential major power, or feel that we should be one, and that soon entirely new challenges will also gnaw at the heart of the Polish being: We will not be the way we were for very long. All this is, however, rarely discussed. Poland allows itself to drift, it develops and invests its energies into economic reconstruction, although sometimes fearing that the price of success might ultimately be a vacuum: "We might become something like how the Germans were in the seventies and eighties, well fed and successful, but at the same time completely insecure in the face of the question: who are we?". Who are we? What are we capable of? These are the eternal questions present today in both German and Polish journalism. The Germans asked themselves: Are we now someone again? And later: Are we being deprived of that which we became after the War? Are the fat years over and the lean ones before us? All of these questions will be asked in Poland when the country reaches its fat years. This has yet to happen, but it is possible to make out these years on the horizon, and not only as a Fata Morgana. All these "German" questions arise, and with them a new Polish complex, namely that the old familiar tradition of being the eternal loser and underdog will no longer be viable. It will, however, be a long time before a reduction in this complex leads to a new hubris in the form of a punishing self-overestimation as a Grande Nation of the East. Happily.

Miroslav Kunštát

## **The Czech Republic and its Big Neighbour to the West**

Just a few years ago hardly anybody suspected that the German-Czech issue would gain such great relevance as it has after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Now, i.e. after the signature of the German-Czech Governmental Declaration as well as the acceptance of it by the parliaments of both countries, we are in a somewhat happy phase of this unhappy post-revolution history. I am an optimist and I hope that, to use the words of Federal Chancellor Kohl from the beginning of January this year, "the German-Czech Declaration will hopefully be just a stop on the way to a new quality in our mutual relations". We will see. We do have certain opportunities. How large the scope will ultimately be is not only dependent on the politicians, but also on the public, the churches as well as the different structures of the civil societies in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the Czech Republic. This German-Czech Declaration is, as Alena Vagnerova wrote some time ago, not a victory of politicians or merely the result of political negotiations. It is a victory of the civil societies of both countries.

Our meeting has the motto: "Reconciliation between east and west?" - sensibly with a question mark because that makes my task of describing in detail the main subject using the example of the German-Czech example much easier. This question mark is justified and necessary. In my opinion it is not "east" and "west" that need to become reconciled, much rather many old, so far unhealed European animosities many old, sick relations with neighbours have to be reconciled with each other. Examples of this can be found not only along the former Iron Curtain but just as much in Northern Ireland, in the Basque country, in the Balkans or between Turkey and Greece.

Reconciliation between "east" and "west" as an issue seems to be stuck in the philosophical world of the continuing Cold War.

In a welcoming message to the ecumenical assembly in Graz the Czech president Vaclav Havel warned against abusing the term reconciliation.

"The word 'reconciliation' has become a fixed element in the vocabulary in recent years that we use often and casually. Sometimes too often and too casually." (...)

"The thought of the unified Europe is among other things a thought of reconciliation - and the way towards it, process that has its unrepeatable dynamism and its unrepeatable course for each one of the nations that were formally hostile to each other. Every case of reconciliation, whether it is between individual people or between nations and states, has, however, a certain fundamental structure that cannot be avoided. Of course it depends on us emerging from the captivity of our own prejudices and stereotypes to a certain unknown terrain, a terrain upon which we trust the other's good will, and where I assume that this good will exists. Reconciliation between people, nations and states is, therefore, not possible without the recreation at the fundamental trust in the other. Forgiveness and "finishing off" the process of reconciliation between nations do not mean - and must not mean this - shutting the history books. Much rather they mean "guiding trust" where we accept everything which is necessary so that we are never again tempted to open Pandora's Box with all the evil of the past. In the relationships between the nations we must, above all, have the will to seek common interests and to work together on the tasks tomorrow." And now a sentence that seems particularly relevant to me: "The mistakes of yesterday also demand their tribute. Healed scars do not disappear completely. They are a reminder. And that is right."

Maybe Vaclav Havel was thinking of the failure of the German-Czech co-existence in this hundred year community of conflict or maybe certain periods of the symbiosis of Germans and Czechs. Although the neighbourly relationship bearing the scars of the past is now on the way to a general recovery, and the joint Czech-German Government Declaration is very good evidence of this, in this context I am warning against too much unreserved optimism. It really is as Havel said: Healed scars do not disappear completely. They are a reminder. Germany was and is for us Czechs as a common quote says, "our inspiration and our pain".

For most political observers it was a surprise after the revolution that particularly the German-Czech and German-Slovakian relation sent out many confusing signals. At the beginning we saw hardly any problems. Unlike Poland there were no border problems, for example. But the burden of the shared history was greater than we

assumed in the first months of euphoria after the revolution. Here I would just like to mention the painful complex issues of the Second World War and the associated question of Sudeten Germans. Added to this was the isolation that lasted forty years which was more intensive and longer than in Poland, for example, and which had made much more of a mark on us than expected.

Regardless of these considerations, many people in the Czech Republic and in Germany today ask themselves the question: Are we really still unreconciled or are there just politicians or certain interest groups who are calling for reconciliation and need it or proclaim or abuse it with a mild or loud tone? Before I come to my historical and current political considerations, I would like to present a few statistics. These are the results of regular opinion polls on this issue in Germany, carried out for example by EMNID for the news magazine "Der Spiegel" in spring 1996 or on our side, the surveys of the Prague Institute for Public Opinion Research (IWM). A comparative overview of the opinions of the Czech citizens on the German-Czech relation for the period between February 1995 and November 1996, i.e. up to the publication of the German-Czech Government Declaration, show the following results:

German-Czech relations were assessed most positively at the beginning of 1995 when these relations were classed as "good" or "quite good" by more than 68 per cent of those surveyed. One year later, in February 1996, the percentage of positive assessments fell by almost a third to 45 per cent. In my opinion this reflects the statement of the German Federal Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on the relevance under international law – I am deliberately not saying validity – of the Potsdam Resolutions. This statement received an immense and honest echo in my country. In the following two surveys in 1996, nevertheless, the positive opinions grew. In August 1996 50 per cent were positive in November 1996 58 per cent.

One third of those questioned in the Czech Republic is of the opinion the Czech Republic so far has done much more to improve the relations. It is interesting to compare the data of September 1994 with those of November 1996. In both cases we see one third, 33 per cent. By contrast only one quarter of those surveyed believes that both states made mutual contribution. The younger generation in

particular belongs to this quarter. Only two to five per cent see a greater contribution from the Federal Republic of Germany. The view of the Czechs on the German-Czech Declaration were surveyed three times in 1996, before the publication. It showed that the public did not attach as much importance to this issue as the politicians. More than a quarter have no opinion on this issue or were not interested. Almost a third thought that the declaration could hardly influence German-Czech relations. The Declaration was associated with positive expectations for only some 30 per cent. During 1996 there was a 4 per cent increase in this group, from 28 per cent in February 1996 to 32 per cent in November 1996. However, this percentage fell by about 5 per cent after publication of the Declaration. In my opinion this shows that the Czech diplomacy in some of the wording in this Declaration, mainly as far as the post-war fate of the Sudeten Germans is concerned, went to the limits of what is possible and responsible. This is also the opinion shared by many Germans and the majority of German politicians. The issue of Sudetengermans is a neuralgic issue in surveys in the Czech Republic, as was only to be expected.

With respect to more general problems of the relations, greater openness and sometimes even optimism was reflected in the surveys. In November 1996 63 per cent believed that reconciliation was possible with regard to future cooperation. The more positive or optimistic attitudes in the Czech Republic are consistently greater among the young generation in the surveys assessed. However, the results in the generation that experienced this are catastrophic. The positive trend will stabilise particularly when the Czech and the German expectations are more or less fulfilled with regard to the German-Czech Declaration.

The dissonance of the arguments about the German-Czech Declaration are reflected in the surveys.

I would like to make a few comments on the background and the content of the German-Czech Declaration. We ask ourselves why a German-Czech Declaration is necessary, in particular a Government Declaration. After all we have an agreement under international law on good neighbourly relations and cooperation from 1992. This agreement also contains the reception form of the Prague Agreement of 1973 which was an important component of the agreements of the Brandt/Bahrschen-

Ostpolitik of the seventies. The Prague Agreement was explicitly retained and expanded by the chapters that concern the normal interaction between two democratic sovereign states. Of course the 1992 Agreement could not solve all questions, in particular the completely different Czech and German legal positions with regard to the outstanding property issues remain unsolved. In the correspondence of Foreign Minister Genscher and Dienstbier there is a simple sentence: "This Agreement does not concern itself with the property issues." This sentence can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the governments of both states had decided not to open these questions *pro futuro*. Secondly, it is also possible to read it in the way that the resolution of the German Bundestag of the end of May 1992 did, i.e. that the outstanding property questions between the Czech Republic and Germany remained outstanding and should be made the subject of further negotiations. If we compare this Agreement with the German-Polish Agreement, we can see that we are *de facto* dealing with two identical agreements. But, nevertheless, there is one very important difference. The majority of Polish society is satisfied with the bilateral agreement with Germany and German-Polish cooperation is completely troublefree. On the basis of this agreement further initiatives and institutions were founded in Poland but have made major contributions to the reconciliation between Poland and Germany, such as the Foundation of German-Polish Reconciliation to recompense victims of the Nazis, German-Polish youth activities, etc. Not everything is working smoothly in these institutions. But it is a step in the right direction. In the case of the German-Czechoslovak Agreement and after the division of the Czechoslovak Federation there was no compensation for the victims of Nazis. And over the course of time the issue of the Sudeten Germans continued to develop into a neuralgic issue in mutual relations. German-Czech relations after the division of the Federation triggered political and technical processes to deal with necessary individual problems, such as the negotiation of the *Zurückführungsvertrag* with Germany and the Border Agreement. This process went on for a very long time for various reasons, among them terminological reasons. It was only with the beginning of a cycle of speeches by important German and Czech politicians on German-Czech relations that, in my opinion, the breakthrough was achieved. This cycle was opened on February 1995 with a historical speech by Vaclav Havel. One of the mottos in this speech was: "The time for apologies and the listing of scores is ending and the time for a debate on them based on fact should

begin". This motto is based on the consideration that we have not yet subjected the problems of the past and the present to a thorough reflection for the most varied of reasons. A few months later Foreign Minister Zieleniec and State President Havel presented in parallel the idea to name the remaining outstanding questions in a government or parliamentary declaration at least, and, where possible, to solve them. The negotiations on the Declaration started in August 1995. In January 1997, after a difficult process in which the differences of viewing the problem clearly came to the fore, the Declaration was finally signed. Now the Declaration is in existence and has been ratified by both parliaments.

But what is the significance of this Declaration?

Primarily it is in the historical part of the paper. In paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Declaration there is a retrospective of the historical interactions between Germans and Czechs. In the Declaration Germany accepts the full responsibility for the development that led to occupation by National Socialist Germany in 1938. In this part it honours the Czech victims of National Socialism. At the same time these paragraphs establish a causal link to the sad post-war events, i.e. to the persecution and expulsion of the Sudeten Germans. In a further point the Czechs regret the expulsion of Czechoslovak citizens of German nationality as a result of the Benesh decree. At the same time it regrets that a certain interpretation of Act No. 215 from 1946 allowed an amnesty of the crimes committed against Germans. I have deliberately said "an interpretation" since, according to its annex, this act is not an amnesty act for crimes or against the Sudeten Germans. It refers to the period from 1938 to 28 October 1945. You can find similar amnesty acts in Italy, in France, even in the Republic of Austria.

The German-Czech Declaration does not judge this act, rather post-war practice and the reduced legal culture of the renewed Czechoslovak state. Under Czechoslovakian laws the acts were punishable but there was practically no public prosecutor who allowed proceedings to be started although people did report such acts. So much for the historical part of the German-Czech Declaration.

In a further paragraph (4), which in diplomatic circles is viewed as the "greatest

success” of Czech diplomacy, both governments recognise that each party is obliged to its own legal order and declare that readiness to respect that the respective other party has a different understanding of the law. This passage is of great significance, in particular with regard to the property issues already mentioned.

These are the most important points of the German-Czech Declaration. Now it is a matter of fulfilling this Declaration and the new political space created by it. One of the last articles of the declaration provides the foundation of the German-Czech future fund. The larger share of this fund is to be used to recompense the Czech victims of the Nazis. The Federal Government has declared that it will pay DM 140 million into the fund, With some DM 105 million destined for the victims of National Socialism. However, the payments are not be made in a form of a per capita payment but rather within the framework of projects.

Bilateral agreements must be made for the concrete implementation of the fund, in which the details will then be made more precise.

At this point I would like to pause briefly to mention the compensation of the Czech victims of National Socialism. The situation today is very sad. Not as far as the material side is concerned, but as far as the moral side is concerned. After the division of the Federation there was no compensation for surviving Czech victims of Nazis, even though this had been announced by the Federal Chancellor. A foundation along the Polish model could not take hold. Here the pressure from the Sudeten German associations could have played an important role. This called for a deal between the compensation of the victims of Nazis and the compensation of the Sudeten Germans. Officially this deal was never formulated in front of the Federal Government. But the lack of compensation leads us to suspect that this deal does indeed exist and did exist. In 1994 the Czech government decided on a risky and brave unilateral compensation in the form of per capita payments to the individual victims. An inmate who, for example, was in a concentration camp for four years would receive approximately 100,000 crowns within the framework of this compensation.

The moral problem is now to be seen in the fact of the Czech victims of Nazis received the money not from the German but from the Czech government. On the one hand the Federal Government honours the victims of the Nazis in figure 2 of the Declaration but on the other hand it is not and never was prepared to pay per capita payments or to accept a foundation solution. The problem is not of a material nature, it is just that the victims have received this money from the Czechs state and they have not personally experienced the responsibility of the German state or the legal successor to the Third Reich, the Federal Republic of Germany, for its history. To this very day this problem has not been solved by the Declaration.

The two hardship foundations that were dealt within the German Bundestag in January/February 1997 do not solve this problem either.

Back to the Declaration. A German-Czech discussion forum is set up with the Declaration. This instrument proved its worth after some time in German-Polish relations. This binding forum is entitled to address recommendations to both governments. It is planned for this forum to be divided into several sections, with issues of the past taking an important place. It is thus expected that the Sudeten German organisation will also play an important role in this German-Czech discussion forum. The entire process of mutual rapprochement within the framework of the arguments about the 1992 agreement on the German-Czech Declaration of 1996 is now to be completed with two major speeches from the heads of state.

Each individual is the owner of a healing word. I am hoping for a healing word from Czech and German politics. We are still waiting today.

*Marina Pavlova-Silvanskaja*

## **Russia and the West**

Before I turn to my subject in the stricter sense, I would like to make a few brief comments on two terms at the heart of the subject matter of this conference. The first term is "reconciliation". I have certain reservations about using this term so generally. If we want to avoid diluting this term into something meaningless we must first of all clarify who should and must reconcile themselves to whom?

In terms of the relationship of the Russians to the Germans I believe that we have already reconciled ourselves. It happened somehow in a way that is very difficult to define. Many different factors were of significance here. Of course politicians did make a great contribution. The world, and therefore the general conditions of our relations, have changed. German society has completed a radical process of change. In particular, the German commitment to reappraising the past is very highly regarded in Russia. I know that these things are often assessed more critically in Germany and it may indeed be the case that this can be seen better from closer, but with respect to German-Russian relations it can be said that until relatively recently there has been practically no friction, almost no problems.

The second term that I wanted to comment on is "history". Sometimes I am surprised at everything that is dormant under the surface of the apparently peaceful present.

Let us take the example of Poland and Russia. For a long time it appeared that the Russian population did not have any historical aversions against the Poles. One day in 1994 there was a relatively minor incident at a railway station in Warsaw in which Russian tourists were insulted and actually beaten by the police. Within a few days an amazingly strong xenophobic feeling against Poland had developed. In recent times these tendencies have also been apparent in the relations between Russia and Germany, not least due to the disputes about the so-called looted art. Politicians are starting to play with these problems in order to get a high profile and capitalise on them and we can see that the tensions we thought had gone are there once again.

Now, I do not believe that we should adopt a position like that of the last 50 years that is based on suppressing historical experience and trauma and that we should restrict our dispute to the apparently topical issues. In the case of Russia and Poland understanding is not possible at all without history.

Russian totalitarianism has destroyed the historical memory of the people to such an extent that when an average Russian is talking to an average Pole or an average German — with a German to a lesser degree, with a Pole to a greater degree — the impression arises that they are talking about different histories, different countries. The disparity of these perspectives is often shocking. In the following I will try to talk about the current situation but, as I said before, I will not manage this without history and, in my view, that would be counterproductive.

The question I mentioned at the beginning about who is to reconcile themselves with whom is, in the Russian case, necessary for another completely different reason. We can hardly talk about a uniform Russia. Russia is to a certain extent an abstract. In order to describe the situation in Russia it is not enough to point out the division and polarisation of society. Russia is an enormous and multi-faceted phenomenon.

If we are now talking about reconciliation between "east" and "west", we must be aware that this phenomenon knows very little about the west, which itself is an abstract to a large degree. In one of the most recent opinion polls concerned with our relations with the west only 22 per cent of those surveyed who aligned themselves with the group of "west-oriented democrats" had ever been to the west. The country's average is approx. 15-17 per cent. Tourism and thus the possibility to get to know the abstract "west" better may be increasing, but very often it is the same people who are travelling, meaning that the phenomenon of tourism is restricted to a certain group of society. There are millions of people who have never left their town or their village, who don't know this world at all. They are confronted with the western world primarily by the media, particularly by television with all its ambivalence. On the one hand the media are characterised by clichés and kitsch, but on the other hand they are windows to the world. In my opinion we should not look down on this kitsch; we should use all means to show people what the unknown world is really like and how this abstract world presents itself.

In the mid eighties in the Soviet Union the idea that the world was small and that we should really cooperate with the west, which had proved itself to be very effective, began to gain ground. Today a large proportion of the Russian population sees the west as an example as regards the patterns of consumption. According to opinion polls 59 per cent of the population want to reach the western level of consumption. (59 per cent of democrats and even 23 per cent of former communists or socialists.) 53 per cent of the population wants to live as in the west, among the pro-westerners this figure is 53 per cent, among communists and socialists 24 per cent. 49 per cent of the population wants a western education for its children, among the pro-westerners 52 per cent, among the communists 21 per cent. As mentioned, these figures relate to the patterns of consumption and living. Interestingly, only 19 per cent of the population agreed with the question "should we no longer view the west as an enemy?". Even among the democrats only 30 per cent answered with yes. In the group labelled as Christians in the opinion polls (members and sympathisers with the Christian Orthodox church) 28 per cent want the west not to be viewed as an enemy. Among communists this is only 9%. Only 10 per cent of the population is prepared to accept western aid; slightly more among the pro-westerners, among the Christians 14 per cent. The majority of the population is of the opinion that we must create the desired prosperity with our own means and not with western aid. We will just have to be assiduous, work hard and learn a lot. A quarter of society is prepared to create an economy open to cooperation with the west; among pro-westerners 41 per cent, among Christians 30 per cent, among communists 8 per cent.

Almost half of society, 43 per cent, sees no danger from outside. More than 21 per cent see a threat from NATO. But 12 per cent of the population see a threat from the former Soviet Republics. This is very interesting in that it clearly shows that this is not a fundamentally anti-western position. The opinion polls reveal a multi-faceted society that is not extremely hostile to the west. The majority of the population is convinced there is a need for change. But the main question that is still open is how and with what means this change is to be brought about.

Many of our scientists study in the west today and with the impressions of their studies still fresh they bring completely new and often strange ideas to our society.

However, these concepts are often found to be very problematical in adoption as can be seen, for example with the conditions of the International Monetary Fund.

We get the impression that by uncritically taking on western ideas many of our scientists are showing the old mentalities. Many of the scientists who went through the Marxist theoretical school have a terrible need for a closed world, for a world that can be explained in its entirety, where there is no room for surprises or anything new. The idea of western modernisation also fits in this context. According to this, some time in the Middle Ages the matrix of European development was formed. This matrix tends to spread. In the first wave of expansion there was a breakthrough in Scandinavia, in the USA, in Canada and in Australia. The first wave of this expansion created the west. The second wave is characterised by the modernisation or rather a certain westernisation of Japan and South Korea. Today we are experiencing a further wave in the new industrial countries in Latin America and Turkey.

With respect to these development models, from a Russian perspective it is important to note that there are also countries in which this process does not lead to success but much rather to permanent crises and conflicts which accompany the modernisation or undermine it.

Russia, too, according to the prevailing opinion of our society is one of these countries. A sort of Russian inferiority complex is due not least to this experience with modernisation processes. "Why do the others manage it? The Czechs can do it, the Poles can do it, but we keep on failing!" Today, if we read literature from the turn of the century then we are sometimes shocked at how this problem is repeating itself. We seem to be moving in a vicious circle in some way,

How should we change? This question cannot be answered without understanding our own identity. Somehow Russia is living in constant competition with the USA, with the west per se, with Europe, etc. But what is our persona in this competition? Are we a world champion, a superpower? A world champion who has become tired and should take a rest? Politicians responsible for Russia's national security often say: "We need a rest for five years!" All the time we expect that we will get better quickly but growth will come and that we will then be a superpower again. The "rest"

is dragging its heels. There is much confusion and suspicions are being voiced that we are not a world champion at all; maybe a sick world champion, but so sick that we will never be healthy. Fears are circulating.

Why is the path of Russian self-comprehension so bumpy and so difficult? We have almost 70 years of isolation or rather self-induced isolation, behind us. But at the same time these were also seven decades of a terrible satisfaction with ourselves. We had no real image of the outside world and were convinced that we ourselves were the peak of human development. The great turnaround came with Gorbachev. It was the beginning of a long learning process. I say learning process because the path that Gorbachev suggested at that time was indeed an option and maybe a philosophy for life but seen with hindsight was very simplistic. His model was more or less equivalent to a renaissance of the Leninist ideas, a golden era of Leninism in an upturn in productivity. This model needed favourable foreign policy conditions to which he was committed accordingly. Ultimately, however, it emerged that the model was not thought through well enough and thus was no more than a few positive approaches.

Gorbachev operated with certain coded signals, such as the "European House". "Under a shared roof there will be no fire, we will live better in this house". This was a beautiful image that the west viewed rather sceptically. This image and the associated option were very soon out of the discussion. In Russia, we understood this signal very quickly. The link to Europe through shared Christianity, without differentiating between the individual denominations, was understandable for society, However the image was simplified to such an extent that it could hardly become reality or concrete practical work.

Glasnost opened up an important discussion on Russia's history and on the repeated vicious circle of modernisation. The fact that Russian society was always two-tiered society entered up our consciousness. The majority of the population — as one of our philosophers said — stayed in the Muscovite time, in other words on the ground floor of Russian history. The upper floor was inhabited by the largely western oriented elite. But even this elite was torn apart by the constant argument between the Slavophiles and the westerners. Within a short time the Atlantis of Russian

philosophy, of Russian political thought of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>/end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century emerged from the sea of oblivion. However, as a result, much that was in the devil's workshop and had thought to be overcome appeared on the agenda again. An immense cultural and political discussion developed. The beginnings of these discussions often seemed to be very harmless and presented themselves as arguments about inner-literary values. "Who is better: Stolz, the German, described in Goncharov's famous novel "Oblomov" or the lazy but good-hearted Oblomov?".

For this reason these discussions and the political options that developed from them were not taken seriously by politicians at the beginning. This was the case in the beginning of 1992. At that time the pro-westerners had a fairly well developed liberal doctrine. However, here, I must add the reservation that the politicians in the liberal camp still had, as far as I am concerned, far too blind a confidence in the western path of development. The opinion that we only had to copy western development was widely hailed among them. At the beginning of 1991 Gajda's liberal cabinet tried to bring about this doctrine in the economy and in politics. But it very quickly became clear that the problems were much more complex. Production was falling to such an extent that nobody in the world had believed it possible. Even last year — so many years after the beginning of the reforms in which growth is constantly forecast — we had a drop in the growth of domestic products of 6 per cent. Against the background of this disappointment other political options quickly gained ground. We experienced the renaissance of geopolitics. There was a so-called patriotic camp made up of nationalistic groups and national organisations to which important political forces from society such as the old nomenclature, the military but also elements of society who were becoming poorer crossed over. This type of thinking gradually developed into an important political force. This is the background to the victory of Shirinovsky in the 1993 parliamentary elections, to which the west reacted with irritation and concern.

With the strategic partnership with the USA the liberals had also introduced a radical change in foreign policy. Even then Brzezinski one of the old men of the US American foreign policy expressed the fear that this could be a partnership that was happening too early. This view seemed to be confirmed with Shirinovsky's electoral success.

In my opinion the decision to expand NATO is to be understood against this background. The west was uncertain as regards developments in Russia and so the need to take precautions for event of anti-western forces come into power. Added to this is the fact that for some considerable time now Yeltsin had been losing political and ideological conviction and was visibly coming closer to the nationalistic ideas of the specialness of the Russian path. In 1995 the communists had very good results in the parliamentary elections which further promoted Yeltsin's change of direction.

Then came the presidential elections. Even in the winter it seemed clear that Yeltsin would lose. He was the weakling and the loser. Even after the first round of elections it was not clear that he would win. Ultimately he could only win with the support of Lebed. Then he became ill which further intensified the state of general uncertainty.

At this point as far as I am concerned it came to the second key reaction of the west, Clinton's speech in Detroit in which he announced that at the forthcoming meeting in Madrid the countries would be named that were intended for membership with NATO.

The unilateral westernisation development process borne along by a somewhat naive wonderment at the west turned round into a more independent type of development which is very problematic if it should turn into the other extreme. There may be neither a cold peace nor direct confrontation but we are growing apart.

I do not think this distancing is a catastrophe. It seems to be that it is much rather needed from a certain perspective.

In order to deal with each other more realistically we must know who stands where. Clarity must replace illusions. That is why I am not calling for confrontation, but I am bearing in mind the fact that the necessary foundation of cooperation is found in both parties being clear about their interests and their identities. The process of finding identity in Russia is very difficult and due to its depth of uncertainty it is often very difficult for people from the west to understand, and this fact should be taken into

account by the "west" who should in turn be aware of its own responsibility and its ambivalent influence on this process.

## **B 3 Projects**



*Marek Frysztacki*

## **Experience and reflections on the work of the Auschwitz International Youth Meeting Centre**

In my talk, I would like to concentrate on the history of a specific reconciliation effort, that is on the history and experiences of the Auschwitz International Youth Meeting Centre.

What has the term "reconciliation" meant in the history of this centre, of this initiative?

If one wishes to speak of reconciliation in this context - the term has taken on a variety of connotations over the course of time - it is necessary to begin with the time when the centre did not yet exist.

During the 1960s, the first groups from Sühnezeichen/Friedendienste (ASF) (sign of atonement/peace services) came to Poland, to Auschwitz. The ASF is a German organisation which was founded in 1958 and which aims to overcome the causes and consequences of national socialism in Germany and in foreign countries affected by Germany. The ASF now sends 150 volunteers for 18 months each to various projects abroad, including in Israel, Poland, Russia and France. From the outset, the activities in Poland were focussed on work on memorials, in other words on confronting German history. The first ASF group came to Auschwitz in 1967.

Historically, this initiative was sparked off by the letter from the Polish bishops to their German counterparts in 1965, containing the well-known words "We forgive and ask forgiveness", and by the German Federal Chancellor Willi Brandt when he knelt in front of the Ghetto Heroes Monument in Warsaw in 1970. This new beginning was typified by the courage to deal with one's own history and to confront Polish society. The groups which came to the Auschwitz memorial carried out maintenance work in the memorial complex. This work received a great deal of attention in Poland, and became highly significant to German-Polish relations.

Imagine it, the War had been over for roughly 25 years. This means that the War generation was still alive and recounting its terrible experiences. Poland lived in constant fear of Germany, a fear which was bolstered not lastly through the Communist propaganda. The Poles were apprehensive that the Germans would not be satisfied with having lost their territories in the East. Only the Soviet Union, so the propaganda claimed, could guarantee that the new Polish borders established in 1945 would be maintained. In most people's heads, in Poland's collective psyche, the Germans were the eternal enemy.

These were the circumstances under which young Germans came to Auschwitz. Polish society was astonished to realise that there are also Germans who are different. Those who came were young people who had not personally experienced the Second World War. In spite of this, they attempted to establish normal relations with Poles, and showed good will, a symbol of reconciliation, reconciliation in the literal meaning of the word. They wanted the Poles to forgive them.

The ASF had then found its partner for this work in the shape of the Clubs of Catholic Intellectuals (KIKs). This partnership gave birth to the then highly imaginative idea of building an International Youth Meeting Centre in Auschwitz. In the light of the political realities, it did not look as if this idea could come to fruition. The non-aggression pact which was concluded in 1970 sounded in a new political climate. Diplomatic relations were (re)-established between the Federal Republic and Poland. The Oder-Neiße border was recognised, albeit with various reservations. In this climate, which encouraged a great many initiatives, the ASF decided to build a Youth Meeting Centre for Germans and Poles near Auschwitz. But the euphoria of 1970 was soon to come to an end.

Political developments in Poland associated with the transfer of power from Gomulka to Gierek placed difficulties in the way of bringing about the project.

In the next few years, the ASF continued its group work on the monument complex. At the same time, they looked for ways of establishing the Meeting Centre in spite of everything. The ASF decided to pursue the project with a partner accepted by the

Polish state. The KIKs were tolerated within the framework of political compromises, but were by no means accepted by the Communist rulers.

This official partner was found in the shape of the Association of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBoWiD), an association of combatants which also counted many former concentration camp inmates among its members. The problem with this choice of partner lay in the fact that the Association was chaired by a powerful section of the Communist Party which had played a major role in the anti-Semitic hate campaign which took place in Poland in 1968, as well as in the "expulsion" of the last 30,000 Jews from Poland in the same year.

Under the political circumstances of a divided Europe, how was one to build this centre without a good measure of political pragmatism? Since the project could not be achieved without state support, the ASF (West) entered into this problematic compromise.

This decision was the subject of very critical assessment on the part of the Eastern half of Sühnezeichen (ASZ), as well as of the Polish partners of the KIKs, which were on the side of the opposition. Many people accused the ASF of having lost its moral integrity.

In the ensuing years, the ASF (West) had less and less contact with the KIKs, whilst the ASZ continued its relations.

The ASF lost the confidence of opposition circles because of the proximity which it gained to the regime through its partner ZBoWiD. The question arose of what the ASF was actually hoping to achieve.

Many people had the impression that the Germans were ultimately not coming to Auschwitz in order to establish contact with Poles, and hence to work towards reconciliation between these peoples, but rather in order to deal with their own history, and that they were strangely bound up in themselves.

The remarkable thing about this work on the monument is that, in addition to its major symbolic significance for German-Polish relations, in spite of all the critical comments, the phenomenon which arose in the 1980s was that of young Germans thinking primarily of the history of the Holocaust when they come to Auschwitz. Polish martyrdom, a word which is used a lot in Poland, is in the shadow of the Holocaust here. The encounter with the memorial is therefore a surprise for them. They arrive thinking about Jews, but in fact they also have to deal with Polish history.

For many years, the memorial was conceived as the symbol of the national martyrdom of Poland. Most of the victims were referred to as Poles, and the Jews were hardly given a mention. Auschwitz was used as a national instrument.

This instrumentalisation is also given expression in the monument at Birkenau, which is decorated with a cross. This cross symbolises the Order of Grunwald, one of the highest Polish medals. It was awarded collectively to all of the victims of Auschwitz for their "anti-fascist fight". The latter interpretation is more than problematic, and is criticised by many, with good reason.

It is probable that martyrdom, a victim of an idea, within the framework of a sovereign or independent Poland, the idea of a fight against fascism, is only talked about in the Polish context.

The irritations caused by the young people's "disappointed" expectations frequently turned out to be the intellectual breaks which gave rise to exiting questions and discussions. In the final analysis, these discussions were more favourable than detrimental to the "therapeutic" nature of a journey to Auschwitz, in particular through meetings with former inmates. Thus, the young Germans learned more than they had expected about Poland and Polish history during the Second World War. During these meetings the Polish side too was able to see that there are also Germans who are not necessarily revisionist or revanchist.

The problem with the Polish interpretation of Auschwitz, however, typified as it is by being narrowed down to the specifically national perspective, remained unresolved in the course of these discussions.

Let us return however to the history of the Youth Meeting Centre. 1980 saw the birth of the Solidarno movement. In the course of the opening up which took place in Polish society as a whole, the ASF was able to lay the foundation stone for the centre in 1981. When however martial law was imposed on December 13, 1981, the implementation of the project once more became a distant prospect.

In these years, 1980/81-83, a psychological transformation took place in the Poles' awareness of their relationship with the Germans. This was set off by the spontaneous solidarity of West German society with Poland after martial law had been imposed, expressed not lastly through massive charitable support.

In 1986, the ASF was able finally to build the Youth Meeting Centre, in co-operation with the Polish authorities.

Having been erected under the political circumstances which have been described, the centre was a special focus of political attention. The question arose as to the extent to which, under these conditions, the centre could actually make a real contribution in the process of reconciliation between Poles and Germans. I would like to define the problem. The entire investment cost DM 4 million. The building was prefabricated because the fear existed that a drawn out construction period might allow another incident to prevent its completion, and all the materials were brought to Auschwitz from Germany. It is in fact a modest building, rather like a German Youth Hostel. For the Polish situation at that time, however, it was a really magnificent object, in stark contrast to the triste surroundings of Owicim. This led to the inhabitants of the town calling the centre the German House.

This centre seemed to the Polish population to be closed. During the opening of the Youth Meeting Centre, attended inter alia by Hans-Joachim Vogel, Rita Süßmuth, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Poland and Alexander Kwasniewski, the present President and then Minister for Youth, there was naturally a lot of talk about reconciliation.

At the same time, there were critical commentaries in much of the Polish media, especially in the press. "What are the Germans actually doing in this holy Polish place? They have build a comfortable hotel for themselves and actually only want to

provoke the Poles!" In the light of the strict regulation of official reconciliation, the opportunities open to the centre to make a contribution to reconciliation between Poles and Germans were very restricted.

The centre was run by the nomenclature. This regulation could be felt down to the cleaning ladies. Jobs in the centre were very much sought after, and this meant that it was mostly policemen's wives who were given these jobs. There was always someone from the security service in the centre.

Under such conditions, it was difficult to organise real meetings between young Germans and Poles where the questions which really moved people could be freely discussed. Not everyone was allowed to come in and meet and "reconcile" themselves with Germans.

Thus, the centre was seen by many Poles, including those who were allowed to enter, more as a symbol of the West than of reconciliation.

The meetings which nevertheless took place, and in the face of all the problems one should not underestimate the subversive strength of youth meetings, were regarded by the Polish side primarily as an opportunity to establish contacts with Germans, and to breathe some Western air. There was little talk of reconciliation. This may also have been because many young Poles no longer considered this necessary. Above all else, they were fascinated by German prosperity and German democracy. The Meeting Centre worked on this basis until 1989. By that time, almost 700 groups had visited the centre for an average of between six and seven days. The programme was naturally primarily dedicated to the memorial, but meetings also took place with school pupils, and these were organised along the lines I have described.

When in 1989 Communism came to an end in Eastern Europe and the Wall had fallen, it also seemed to many Poles that the Second World War had conclusively come to an end. The situation was confusing. On the one hand, Poland - a nation which itself had been partitioned for a long period - had in some sense to recognise this desire for a united Germany. On the other hand, however, people thought "What about us?" and what about the border between Germany and Poland?

This insecurity was much more widespread than one would have imagined fifty years after the War. This was certainly an expression of the Polish trauma, as well as being the effect of Communist propaganda.

I started working in the Youth Meeting Centre in 1990. We thought then that the topic was closed with the end of the Cold War, and that in future no groups of Germans, or at least fewer, would therefore come to Auschwitz to tackle this topic. We soon realised that we were wrong. The groups kept coming. This meant that there was plenty of work for us. But the term 'reconciliation' soon became out of date for the young Germans too. Some teachers still came with their pupils thinking "We're going to Poland to meet Poles and reconcile ourselves with them." For these teachers, who were mostly of the generation of 1968, dealing with German history at the end of the 1960s had been an incisive step in their lives. Now they came to Auschwitz as teachers and expected their pupils in turn to react in the same way as they had. These young people in the third generation, however, approached the topic in a very different way. For them, the War was only knowledge from school books and from school. This was aided by the fact that young Poles also no longer showed an interest in being constantly identified with the victims.

The old clichés about the descendants of the perpetrators coming to reconcile themselves with the descendants of the victims started to crumble. The Polish side began to realise that it was time to depart from the narrow, somewhat self-righteous perspective of their own history.

This realisation was certainly also helped by the obvious fact that the only path towards Europe leads through Germany.

Now, when young Poles came to the Youth Meeting Centre, their motivation was increasingly that they were above all seeking contact with Germans. One might say that the meeting as a paradigm replaced reconciliation.

In this way, there was an increasing shift in the discussions towards thinking together about joint responsibility in the world. Auschwitz is a starting point here for deeper humanistic reflection. Accordingly, we had to develop a new concept in our work, no

longer concerned with the principle "The Germans did this to the Poles", but "a human being did this to another human being". This entails everyone who comes to Auschwitz, and not only the Germans, tackling the question of whether they themselves could have been perpetrators. Such a perspective was an important change for Poland. We Poles must also face this question in the real political situation, especially that in Poland and in Germany, as well as in the One Europe.

The transformation which took place in 1989/90, and the resulting opportunity to ask formerly unasked questions, led to a new, previously unknown willingness in Poland to tackle the relationship between Poles and Jews. This problem had been covered up for almost fifty years, and had also hardly played a role in the debate between Germany and Poland.

In 1990, Poland established diplomatic relations with Israel. Young Israelis came to Poland. More Jews as a whole came to the memorial, and it was not long before the first conflicts broke out. The best known is that concerning the Carmelite cloister in Auschwitz, which the Jewish side accused of attempting to christianise Auschwitz. We are still at the beginning of our efforts to carry on a Polish-Jewish dialogue, and the same applies to the Polish-Jewish-German dialogue. This debate is made all the more complicated by the fact that these three groups have differing perceptions of the problems. A certain amount of clarification has now taken place in relations between the Germans and the Jews. That between the Poles and the Jews, however, which partly stands in the shadow of the Holocaust, and hence of the German-Jewish problem, but which also has a completely different structure, remains largely unresolved.

This taboo has been challenged ever more strongly since 1989. As we have seen time and again at meetings between Poles and Israelis, in particular the accusation put forward by the Jewish side that the Poles had collaborated with the Germans in order to carry out the Holocaust, provokes strong emotions in Poland.

It is extremely difficult to bring the various levels, these differing phases of reconciliation, into a debate. In approximate terms, the young Germans are looking in Auschwitz primarily for arguments against their own nationalism. The young

Israelis, on the other hand, are looking primarily for arguments in favour of their own nationalism. The latter do not come to Auschwitz in order to redefine their view of the Holocaust, since the Holocaust is a separate subject in their schools. They come in order to strengthen their own identity as Israelis, to see the place and to complete a nationalistic act, with flags and all. This is carried out with a great deal of emotion and very little reason.

The Germans are quite different here. When a German group comes to Auschwitz, there is a lot of discussion. They try to understand how it could happen, and to find out what they can do in order to prevent it happening again. The young Israelis approach the memorial quite differently. I am aware here of making a generalisation, but they wish to experience the meeting in this place mostly from an emotional point of view. There is almost no basis on which these two groups could understand each other. The problems of understanding are all the more serious in the German-Jewish-Polish triangle. The challenge to learn about the different perspectives by debating together is enormous. The fruits which one could reasonably expect, however, justify the necessary effort.

*Manda Prising*

## **A Right to Hope. Aid for Refugees in Serbia. A Report from Experience**

The community of Sombor in Vojvodina has approximately one hundred thousand inhabitants. In 1991/92 10,000 refugees driven from their homelands in Croatia and Bosnia, mostly Serbs, came to our community. In August 1995 they were followed by another 13,000 people from Krajina, which had been regained by Croatia. We were faced with the question: how can the community of Sombor cope with this migration and all the problems that led to it? How can ethnically mixed Sombor absorb people traumatised by war without destroying our own peaceful cohabitation that we fought hard to save?

The question is even more urgent because our society is seriously ill. The big factories, centrally managed from Belgrade, have not been working for years. Agriculture is dying slowly. The property ownership situation is unclear. There is an extreme lack of capital. Informal trade, e.g. with Hungary and Romania, is a solution only for a few. Although the International Red Cross distributes aid to overcome the greatest need, the long-term problems of refugees cannot be solved with such short-term action. People's hearts and minds have been poisoned by war propaganda and hatred. The people are condemned to idleness, suffering and poverty. Immorality and drugs are becoming widespread, particularly among young people.

The refugees were initially housed with relatives and friends and people shared what they had with them, as well as they could.

Overcoming the refugee problem is made more difficult by the fact that the community administration is staffed by outsiders who make sure that they get the paid jobs while the people from Sombor, which has been ethnically mixed since time immemorial, miss out.

One example of dealing positively with refugees was set in Backi Monostor, a village 15 km away from Sombor in the north-west of Vojvodina. 80% of the 4,000 inhabitants are Croats. Since August 1995 230 refugees, mostly of Serbian origin from Croatian controlled Krajina, have come to the village. They live in 47 old, relatively dilapidated houses. The neighbours have temporarily given them these houses and have helped them to make them habitable.

In just a few hours these 230 people, together with 200,000 fellow sufferers, were driven onto an uncertain path with just a bundle, in cars that were barely roadworthy, on tractors and trailers or on foot, old and young, confused and lost. Their route from Bosnia to Serbia took them across Croatian territory where people threw stones at them on the road. It was not better in Bosnia. There the people, a large number of whom were refugees themselves, often shut their shops, demanded DM 5 to 10 for a loaf of bread, DM 10 for a litre of milk for the children and DM 10 for a litre of petrol. In Serbia it took them days and weeks to find accommodation. Some were deported by the police to Kosovo. Finally, the majority were housed somewhere in Vojvodina and Serbia with relatives and friends. Only 10% had to be accommodated in refugee camps. This is how 230 people came to Backi Monostor.

The first family arrived there in the middle of August. The Croats in Backi Monostor had been threatened with expulsion and we were therefore afraid that they would be hostile to the refugees from fear. But to our pleasant surprise this was not the case. The first empty house that the refugees moved into belonged to a Croatian woman who, together with the neighbours, helped to see to electricity and water, paint the house, provide beds, pillows, a stove, bread and clothes. Then the second family came, the third and the seventh and the fortieth. For all of them there was a cup of coffee with the neighbours, support and sympathy. This is still the case after two winters. The people who had hardly ever seen snow near the Adriatic coast have now experienced two very cold winters with us. They have joined in the celebrations of Catholic and Orthodox Christmas and New Year. If they do not know when to sow something in their gardens because they are not used to the unfamiliar climate, their neighbours are only too willing to give them advice and a helping hand.

It is almost a miracle that after five years of systematic poisoning through propaganda, these so-called "hundred year enemies" can now live in the same

village as neighbours and experience something that completely contradicts all the newspaper and television reports.

On 28 August 1995 we visited the first refugee families. They had just moved into the empty houses, gathered the essentials for their houses and got to know the village and their neighbours. They now knew that the village inhabitants feared that they may have to leave their houses.

In their shared misfortune they recognised each other as human beings, shook hands and supported each other. They made peace. With my husband I had visited every family in its own house by 29 December 1995. During these visits we learned of their concerns, their problems and fears and their needs. Thanks to the material and moral support from friends at home and abroad we could acquire what the families needed most urgently.

Hygiene articles, underwear, seeds for the gardens, fresh milk for small children, large pots for washing, crockery, cutlery, ovens, blankets, carpets, etc. We had old stoves, irons, washing machines and sewing machines repaired. At New Year a personal parcel could be given to each individual.

When we went to the refugees in order to get to know them personally, we wanted to develop neighbourly relations with them, invite them for a chat, drink coffee with them, give them various pieces of information, offer to help them to communicate with other people, institutions, their relatives, their friends living in Croatia. We simply wanted to hear what they needed. Rich and varied work has developed from these first contacts.

We have now found a room in the village in which we, refugees and locals, meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 4 in the afternoon to 7 in the evening.

There we have drunk vast quantities of coffee together and have heard the refugees' war stories and the story of their exodus a hundred times. They are terrible stories, full of emotions and pain. We can only offer them our sympathy and an open ear and try to ease their arrival in the present. We will never live in 1990 again. Everything is different! There is now a today and probably a tomorrow.

In order to give them an image of today and hope for tomorrow we get them newspapers and magazines from Serbia and Croatia, inform them of new laws and regulations in the two countries and discuss these things. Our aim is for them to be able to take responsibility for their own lives one day. At the moment they can decide on nothing. They are a passive section of the population, expelled, without any rights, openly exposed to all manipulation. They do not have any nationality, no property, no work and no security.

But they are now here and we are trying to give this terrible today a better quality, to offer them a better today. We to give a new quality to the memories of their friends, to the big and little pleasures that we experience with them.

They all live in difficult material conditions. None of them has a permanent job. They do seasonal work in the fields and in the forest. The daily wage is low and is often paid months in arrears. The humanitarian aid that they receive for a whole month is only enough for up to four days. All of this is unbelievable and unacceptable, but true. We locals are trying to stand by them and encourage them.

We are trying to find work projects. We procure wool for knitting, garden tools, vegetable and flower seeds. In the past we were able acquire clothing, baby equipment, medicines and presents, we could organise meetings with psychiatrists and bring doctors into the village. The refugees received medicines free of charge.

The many activities are only to be mentioned in brief here. We went to the theatre together and read poetry. We celebrated birthdays with the children. We organised workshops on violence-free communication. The children were involved in various camps (peace camps), the adolescents were allowed to take part in village competitions. We took those adults who were active and interested to meetings of various peace groups, attended seminars and organisations that deal with problems of this kind. Forty refugees have been trained for computer work. An English language course is being prepared. We twice had a visitor from Croatia who was concerned with the protection of human rights and knows the situation in "their country" very well and way able to answer many of their urgent questions. For the mostly Serb refugees, the offer of cooperation in the return to Croatia is particularly significant. The return home, obtaining a nationality, the return of property as well as living together with old neighbours is the real desire of many of them.

But we need a DECISION for all of this. It means taking responsibility, being patient and being prepared to go to a lot of bother and, in many ways, to change one's

attitudes. So far we have already received 24 applications to return to Krajina. We have passed on these forms to the responsible authorities in Croatia. And now we are waiting for an answer.

All of this is drawn-out, hard and exhausting work. From day to day the strength and the material aid becomes less. There are now no more funds for our work. The apathy among the refugees is growing and solutions to their problems seem to be nowhere in sight.

In all these difficulties we at least want to offer our hands to the refugees and stand by them in the crisis as far as possible.

We want to prove that it is possible for refugees and locals to get on well together and, if necessary, to act as a mediator in the event of disputes and misunderstandings.

There was no war on the territory of our community, but the war is nevertheless not over. Everything is uncertain.

Currently the so-called peaceful integration of the Croatian Danube territory around Vukovar, which is under UN protection, is being prepared in Croatia. This territory is just a few kilometres from Backi Monostor. It is unclear how many Serbs can stay there or want to stay there. Driven out by fear and uncertainty they are coming to us. They are looking for houses to buy, and they want to move in. But these are mainly the houses that the refugees are living in. The locals to whom these houses belong, have become much poorer in recent years and they need money. Furthermore, they fear that the houses will be taken away from them anyway if a strong wave of refugees comes. But if they sell the houses they will disappoint the refugees currently living in them, with whom they have such good relationships. They are faced with a dilemma. They are frightened of a new aggressive wave that could also carry them away.

This fear is great and, in view of the tense situation in the Vukovar region, it is justified.

Nobody is planning for the future. After all no one knows what they could plan. In all this confusion, the simple and modest message is what we want to express with our work in Sombor: **Let us stay human, let us become Christians. Let us stay together. Let us offer each other a helping hand.**

*Venjamin Viktorowitsch, Jofe*

## **"MEMORIAL" IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF RUSSIA**

### **1. "Memorial" and the issue of the victims of political repression**

The "Memorial" Society was founded in 1988 and officially registered in 1989. Initially, its members were young people who wished to push through changes in Soviet society, and who desired to convince society that it must see to it that the victims of terror and repression - a chapter running through the entire history of the USSR - were not forgotten. The "Memorial" Society aimed firstly to create a memorial to the victims of political repression, as well as to support those who had survived the GULAGs. The Society's work was highly successful (today, "Memorial" is almost the only organisation from the time of its establishment which has remained in existence). In the course of time it found its role. The overwhelming majority of this Society's members were former prisoners, and it attempted to solve their specific social problems without delay.

These problems became all the more urgent once the economic crisis had started in the country. Nevertheless, the concept on which the Society was originally based, and which the founding members had written on their banners, was fortunately not lost sight of, and today "Memorial" is a politically independent, social organisation taking an active stance on a series of topical questions (for instance on the war in Chechnia or on laws which encourage the rebirth of the police state). The Society's non-party nature can be explained on the basis of the fact that it brings together the proponents of a wide variety of political views (with the exception of those who support political violence), all of whom fell foul of repression. The potential for political activity is therefore limited, but at the same time the Society is thus able to find an ethical approach to tackling the events of political life. None of the problems with which "Memorial" concerns itself has been brought in from the outside. Rather, they have arisen in the course of the Society's development. For this reason, it is correct to speak of a *grass roots organisation* which earns this name to a much

greater extent than patriotic associations with nationalist leanings, also going by this name. (There is probably also no comparable organisation in the West with such a wide field of operation.)

### **The social work of the "Memorial" Society**

What stance does the Russian state power take with regard to the victims of political repression?

The Act on Rehabilitation dated 18.10.1991, and the Government Decisions taken on the basis of this statute, provide for compensation payments for persons who have been rehabilitated. Compensation of DM 18 is to be paid for each month spent in detention, in addition to compensation payments for property lost as a result of repression (where possible, proof of this is to be provided). This compensation is however not to exceed DM 1,000 (DM 2,400 only in the case of the loss of an owner-occupied house, and only if it was not taken into state ownership), as well as a series of benefits or support for rent and public transport, and a small rent supplement (approx. DM 10 per month).

Former GULAG inmates are mostly old, sick and poor. Because of their political criminal record, they were always part of the lower echelons of society. They are in a poor state of health, and their pensions are extremely meagre. Many are worried about receiving a dignified burial, as they lack the fund to pay for this. The "Memorial" Society supports them as well as it is able. Its funds are however extremely modest since neither the state nor the municipalities and local authorities afford it any assistance. In 1996, they were able to afford direct material assistance to 123 members, and obtained medicines at a value of DM 3,900 in response to individual requests. In the context of the psychological rehabilitation programme, roughly 300 people were given presents on holidays. 1,200 were enabled to attend a theatre performance or a concert, and meetings were organised in the club for the elderly (the so-called "Ismailosvski Thursdays").

### **Memorial's work in support of legal protection**

The Society's legal protection commission helps members to solve problems of a legal nature, particularly in connection with their rehabilitation, with receiving compensation payments when they have lost property, or with accommodation problems. In its legal protection work, "Memorial" goes beyond the confines of the organisation. The representatives of the Commission help people who have fallen foul of the justice system, tackle the problems connected with the indescribable situation in the St. Petersburg prisons, and they naturally always act when they see a political motive behind a case of repression (such as the case of Nikitin).

### **Historical archiving work**

The historical archivists of the Society's Commission have been asked to look for mass graves. They organise exhibitions and expeditions into areas where the GULAGs are located, organise conferences, and collate exhibits for museums as well as archiving material. They supply the "Memorial" library, and publish the "Vestnik Memoriala" (Memorial Gazette). Furthermore, they keep a computer file containing information relating to the victims of repression, and help independent scientists carrying out research into the history of political repression to publish their work. For this purpose, a scientific Information Centre was established which is associated with the Society, and which takes care of the publishing work, as well as preparing the printing of the "Vestnik".

That said, "Memorial" is active in many more areas than only the social and legal problems faced by the victims of political repression, and the problems which they face with regard to past events. Certainly, "Memorial" was founded in the name of the past, but also for the sake of the future, for those who have to live in the next Millennium. Our main task will be to learn the lessons of the past in order to prepare our country for the world after the GULAGs, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima.

## **2. Political repression. The search for causes**

Political repression was the main instrument used in the establishment of the totalitarian state in the USSR. In the attempt to make clear the system of repression in the centralist policy which was pursued in that country, especially two main streams are worthy of mention: repression of social structures with the aim of subjugating these and completely binding them into the totalitarian state structure, and repression of persons with an individualistic, or at least independent, orientation<sup>1</sup>.

The process of using terror in order to integrate individual social groups into the structure of the totalitarian state depended on the extent to which the social group in question was structured. In the case of the technical intelligentsia, the situation was as follows: in 1928, out of 47,000 qualified engineers in the USSR, 138 were members of the Soviet Communist Party. In the case of managers of basic industry in the central rayons<sup>2</sup>, only 7 % of the qualified, specialist staff were party members.

After the Shachti trial and the case concerning the Industry Party in 1930, 3,500 engineers joined the Party. By 1937, the Soviet Communist Party had 47,000 engineers within its ranks. On the whole, however, as a social group with only a loose structure, the engineers suffered less from repression than others.

Highly structured and introverted social groups, such as the Church or the armed forces, suffered from repression to a much greater extent.

The following figures demonstrate the extent to which the armed forces were made to suffer under repression between 1937 and 38: out of 899 senior Red Army officers, 643 (71 %) were victims of repression. 583 (65 %) of them died. They were all members of the Soviet Communist Party. The organs of the Party persecuted people to the same extent during the "Great Terror"<sup>3</sup>. Thus, 110 out of 139 members or candidates for membership of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist

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<sup>1</sup> These are people who focus on personality or embody the principle of individualism in contrast to the principle of communism. See also the definition of intelligentsia.

<sup>2</sup> *Rajon* is the top local territorial unit, comparable with a county.

Party, who had been elected at the XVIIth Party Congress, were arrested, in other words 80 % of them. The consequence of this was that the Central Committee was then only a puppet body. From that time on, it was the Secretariat of the Central Committee which held the reigns of power.

The figures relating to the suppression of the Church are even more impressive. By 1941, roughly 360,000 people had been persecuted in this group (of whom 140,000 were priests). 300 archbishops died as a result of the repression, and roughly 30 remained at liberty.

The suppression of social groups and structures can be explained in that potential competition was to be eliminated from the outset. The intention was to prevent alternative centres of power and influence being created.

One item of proof of this is the tactic used in order to exercise pressure. This consisted simply of supporting the ideology which destroyed an existing structure. In the case of the army, this was carried out by establishing the Institution of the Military Commissar - and hence abolishing unrestricted command authority. In the case of the Church, this was by supporting the revival movement, by means of which the existing hierarchy was destroyed. After the army or the Church had been brought under complete control, support for the destructive ideology was suspended, and the original hierarchy reinstated. (In the army: abolition of the Institution of the Commissar and re-establishment of the rank of officer. In the Church, this means abolishing the revival movement and re-establishing the Patriarchate.)

The consequence of these acts of repression was that all social institutions became integrated into the structures of the totalitarian state. They were centrally managed, and no other centres of influence were tolerated. The last social group to be integrated into the system of state control was the criminal fraternity. One consequence of the "infernal War" was that after 1948 (when political prisoners were transferred from general punishment camps to special camps) co-operation between criminals and the authorities and the administrative apparatus was deemed to be

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<sup>3</sup> „Great Terror“ means the period of mass persecutions that started in 1937.

permissible and legitimate. Naturally, inclusion of the "socially close" world of crime opened the flood gates to the criminalisation of the state.

Suppression of the individual as a separate entity and a personality was beyond a doubt the nucleus of the repression carried out by the Soviet organs of power, which afforded the state absolute priority over individual human beings. Highest priority was allotted to the fight against „bourgeois individualism“. This fight undertaken by the state against the individual is difficult to demonstrate in figures, but there is no doubt that, after the victory of state power, the members of the intelligentsia (the state called this group the proponents of the personality-centred principle, or individualism principle) were to a much greater extent the subject of repression in comparison with other groups of victims. As early as in 1918, after the principle of kidnapping had been introduced, the Soviet state power preferred to select members of the staff of officers and the intelligentsia for public shooting. This trend can be followed further. In 1935, 5,000 members of the highly educated section of society were arrested. In 1939, the figure had reached 22,000, and in 1941 it rose to 31,000 per year, whilst the number of arrests of "counter revolutionaries" remained stable.

### **3. "Memorial" and the problems concerned with rehabilitation**

After 1954, there was a quantitative reduction in politically motivated repression in the Soviet Union, even if it never ceased entirely. At the same time, the process began of rehabilitating the victims of past political repression. 737,182 persons were rehabilitated between 1954 and 1961. This process was then interrupted and not started again on a large scale until 1988. Another 844,740 people were rehabilitated between 1988 and 1989. The process of rehabilitation is still continuing today, although the number of rehabilitations has been decreasing in the recent years. While the mass rehabilitations used to be carried out at the initiative of the public prosecution office, now rehabilitation is carried out only on request of the victims of the repression or their family members. Rehabilitation itself has become a formality. Between 1954 and 1961 the cases were re-examined in the light of the grounds for the charge. The policy today is to regard all judgments which were based on political motives as acts of unjustified repression carried out against honourable Soviet citizens (with the exception of cases of treason, for which there is no rehabilitation).

No account is taken here of facts such as active resistance to the Soviet state, or an inimical stance towards it. (The poet N.S.Gumilev took part in the revolt against the Soviet state power after the October Revolution. He was rehabilitated in 1989 as he is very popular. I.W.Ogurtsov, who was convicted in 1967 for comparable reasons, is refused rehabilitation today on grounds that he "took part in a revolt in order to take power".) The search for reasons for this different treatment leads one to ask the question of the legitimacy of Soviet state power. In 1992, in connection with a series of judgments relating to crimes committed by the Soviet Regime, the Constitutional Court openly raised the question of the legitimacy of this Regime. The Government, on the other hand, which had declared the Russian Federation to be the legal successor of the Soviet Union, recognised the Regime's legitimacy, and hence cast doubt on the lawfulness of resistance to the Communist rulers in all periods of the Union's existence. Through this, persons who had taken part in the resistance, either violently or non-violently, and had been convicted because they wished to change the Soviet state system, were denied a legal basis for their rehabilitation. This rehabilitation then is based on the fact that the law has no provision for criminal prosecution in such cases. This does not entail challenging these persons' previous convictions, and hence they remain lawful.

Today, the criminal justice authorities take the following stance: In the past, they held strictly to the laws applying at the time (and in doing so admitted that the laws were bad). Now, other laws apply, better ones, and they follow these equally strictly. This allegedly means that they cannot be accused of anything. They claim to be the true guardians of the law. Such a position is mistaken from two points of view. Firstly, the Soviet rulers were not able to claim any legitimacy whatever since the constituting assembly was dissolved once again in 1918 and no free elections took place in the ensuing period. It is thus possible to cast doubt on the legality of their edicts, and the activities of the opposition are justified, or at least lawful. It is of great importance to all those who took part in the resistance for their rehabilitation to be accompanied by an acquittal, and not founded on the amended legal basis. (For this reason, many former resistance members do not apply to the authorities for rehabilitation. They wish to be acquitted.) In order that the victims may enjoy the purely material advantages of rehabilitation, "Memorial" frequently applies for rehabilitation on behalf

of the Society in the interest of these persons - the law makes provision for this - but the problem naturally cannot be solved by these means.

Secondly: However unlawful and arbitrary Soviet legislation may have been, nowhere in its wording did it ever require false self-accusations or the falsification of documents (all this was based on legal norms ordered either by telephone or orally.) Furthermore, the law required officers carrying out questioning to provide proof of guilt (here, it was frequently the case that the accused's confession was the only proof) as well as proof that the country had incurred political damage through the accused (the objective side of the crime). This obstacle was cleverly overcome by means of the intended ambiguity of the term "anti-Soviet activity", which mixed the terms country (Soviet Union) and political Regime (Soviet state power). Any activity directed against the Regime (the Soviet state power) was categorised as being an activity damaging to the state (the Soviet Union). Even Soviet law ultimately required that criminal intent be proven in court proceedings (the subjective side of the crime). This however never happened. Any statement which was not in favour of the Communist Party, which contained even only the slightest criticism, was put down as slanderous, although the courts never went so far as to demonstrate the incorrectness such arguments, or to show that those using this term certainly knew of it. (This is the meaning of the term "slander".)

Similar problems arise in relation to the question of the canonisation of the martyrs of the new period of the Russian Orthodox Church. The announcement of Metropolitan Sergei in 1927 concerning the loyalty of the Church to the Soviet state power is today still regarded by the Church as a legally binding document. The Church therefore has no problem in taking up a stance on martyrs, in other words innocent victims of the Regime. It does however have serious difficulties with statements on priests who participated in the (passive) resistance against the power of the state (for instance the so-called Joseph and catacomb priests). The Church is very reserved in its comments on this topic.

The fundamental difference between the communist Regime in the USSR and National Socialism in Germany is that the present legislation damns National Socialism as a criminal Regime and considers resistance to this Regime to have

been justified, in contrast to which the Soviet Regime, which was guilty of a wide range of crimes against its citizens, is regarded as having been lawful, and hence resistance against this Regime is deemed to have constituted a breach of the law.

The Russian Government, which regards itself as the legal successor of Soviet state power, declared the year 1997, the year of the 80th Anniversary of the October Revolution (by the way, this year is the 60th Anniversary of the "Great Terror") to be the year of "Agreement and Reconciliation". "Memorial" commented on this that an absolute precondition for such reconciliation was for the Soviet period to be assessed in historic terms as a time of civil war between the state and its own people. Non-violent resistance against the totalitarian Communist Regime must be recognised as having been lawful, anchored in the law and made public. The victims of this unilateral civil war must be appropriately recognised as its veterans.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Political events in Russia can be understood only against the background of the repeating cycles of Russian history. In this light, one gains a completely new view of the present situation in Russia. Ever since Max Weber, we have known that political liberalism and the Industrial Revolution are interrelated with the spirit of the Reformation. Russia lived through neither the Reformation nor the Renaissance. In the 15th Century, the country went through the period of the Pre-renaissance, which however did not result in the Renaissance in Russia, and at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Century it entered the pre-phase of religious reforms. The philosophy of religion underlined the problems of the Christian conception of personality, whilst the district authorities (semstvo<sup>4</sup>) tried to establish local self-administration, and through the reforms of the Russian politician Stolypin, on the other hand, the peasants were scattered and personal ownership of land established<sup>5</sup> (something which is closely related to the problem of human beings' religious responsibility). There were demands within the Orthodox Church for

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<sup>4</sup> „semstvo“ is the name for self-governing organisations in the country established by the end of the 19th century in Russia.

<sup>5</sup> As a consequence of the land reform carried out by Stolypin (1906-1911) the local communities lost their land that they used to own. The reform was a (failed) attempt to solve the problems such as lack of land, mass poverty and starvation.

renewal and change. Instead of this, however, the events occurred which are known to us all, and today, on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary, we are able to take stock. To cut a long story short, all attempts have failed.

The Russian revolutions in February and October 1917 were given a pseudo-religious significance as they stopped the religious and ecclesiastical reformation. This meant that the development of the Russian state was in a dead end. There is only a reluctant discussion on the renewal in the Orthodox Church.

By breaking off the efforts to carry out religious reforms, a series of developments within the society were brought to a standstill. For this reason, complaints about the lack of success in the Russian reforms seem to be inadequate. Such complaints would only be justified if there had been a gradual, on-going development within Russian society.

The Western world took the opposite path. It increased the independence of the individual from the state. New types of economic and political relationships (as well as of political dominance) were developed which overcame the absoluteness of state frontiers. The world-wide trend towards greater individual independence from the state firstly found its expression in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. This was followed in 1975 by the Final Act in Helsinki, which restricted state sovereignty in favour of the personality of each individual. What happened in the GULAGs, in Hiroshima and in Auschwitz was considered by the world as proof that the model of the absolute state had had its day, and that humanity definitely must be protected against the absolute power of the state.

The prophecies of the honourable Filofejij about Moscow as the Third Rome are starting to come true in Russia. We hold the view that the Third Rome is leaving the historical stage in the same way as the First Rome and the Second Rome before it. There will surely be no Fourth Rome because the time of individual rights which are geographically divided is definitively over. The collapse of the Empire is a further historical fact which makes Russia's political landscape appear in an entirely new light, and which means that the experience had by the rest of the world of the development of stable national states is of little use for Russia. How will the future

look for post-Soviet society? This is the question which we have to answer today. Either the country will become an area such as Tacitus described as a "zone of mutual shock between the Germanic peoples and the Sarmatians", or the country will suffer the fate of the Holy Roman Empire, which collapsed, after a relatively long period, to become a conglomerate of "Subjects of the Confederation", which took diverging historical and political paths.

It is these circumstances in particular which are responsible for there being such a lack of understanding between Russia and the West. Russian authors speak of Russia's special path, and say that Western recipes and values cannot be transferred to the present-day situation in Russia. This is true. Western authors, and those who follow Western models, claim that there can be no special path, but only different stages on the one path towards development, and that taking on models and values which have proven their worth world-wide means that one can progress successfully along this path towards development. The authors are right here also. The fact is however that the recipes for successful development do not work in an environment of regression and a collapsing state, and that the dialogue between Russia and the West must take account of this fact.

## **B 4 Workshop Report**



*Jörg Lüer*

## **Workshop report. Experience and conclusions of the Conference**

### **"Reconciliation between East and West? Rapprochement to the societies of Central and Eastern Europe"**

The aim of our Conference was to test the form and content of our theoretical reflections on the complex of themes concerned with reconciliation within the framework of a discursive self-experiment on a specific theme which currently enjoys our attention, not lastly because of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly. In doing so, we were aware from the outset that we would not be able to exhaust this complex topic. Rather, we wished to **reveal basic structures, develop joint questions**, and hence **gain an insight into the state of our reflections**. Accordingly, the intention below is also, primarily, to lend expression to the experience gathered at our Conference, and to its preliminary conclusions.

Looking back at the Conference, its talks and its discussions, the first impression is that of a mixed "babble of voices". One frequently heard astonishment being expressed at the unforeseen and strangely confusing elements in some contributions. A number of speakers were obviously able, for instance by using distinctively historical arguments, to create a productive insecurity in our established discussion structures, where the alternation between argument and counter argument is frequently easy to anticipate.

Confusion has the effect of dissolving structures, and therefore gives rise in many ways to the question of the inner link between the aspects mentioned. Does this inner link between the phenomena exist at all, what does it consist of, and can it be suitably covered and portrayed by the debate on reconciliation?

When I paid closer attention to the "babble of voices" which I mentioned, it became clear that there is a **common understanding of the topic of "reconciliation"**, but that this was developed in a variety of pitches and keys, and commented upon in a variety of ways and contrapuntally.

The fact that everyone has a personal view of the topic, and that each view is different to the other interpretations, is a part of the overall problem. A superficial understanding of harmony, which also forms the basis of the phenomenon of

"reconciliation kitsch"<sup>13</sup>, is unable to cover the more profound structure of the dissonances. It is also impossible for these structures to be portrayed and overcome in perspective terms in discussing reconciliation in such a way as to play down its significance and too quickly emphasise the common ground. Some speakers even went so far as to question whether the term 'reconciliation' has a harmonising structure.<sup>14</sup> The question asked was as follows: Does talk of reconciliation not deceive us as to the **real depth of the lack of reconciliation** by proposing an overhurried solution? Would it not be more suitable to use terms such as "normalisation" or "process of social enlightenment"? The personal term 'reconciliation' is conditional on clarifying "what with whom"? Is it possible in these terms for reconciliation between peoples to take place at all?

It was also revealed in the course of the discussion of these questions that the dissonance is to be found less at the level of practical reconciliation work than in the different semantic and cultural **dimensions of the term 'reconciliation'**, with the corresponding connotations. The relative alienation at the level of political conceptualisations, as they emerged in the general talks from the respective countries, increased notably with geographical distance. The talks on Serbia and Belorussia appeared as voices from another world, whilst those on Poland and the Czech Republic were much more familiar in their argumentation and recapitulation. This alienation contrasted with an astonishing closeness and astoundingly spontaneous understanding at the level of concrete projects, such as MEMORIAL or refugee work in Sombor in Serbia. This semantic and cultural problem is all the more important as the participants agreed on the need to network the debates taking place in the various societies, meaning that one should relate the respective observations to each other and enter into a debate, and hence into a process of mutual change.

It was particularly the participants from Eastern and Central Europe who had a clear awareness of the need to **open up their own debates to the experience had by "others"**. This insight was expressed not lastly in the readiness of these speakers and participants to become involved in the Conference. The fact was considered both by the participants from the Churches and from non-Church agencies to be extraordinarily fruitful that, in the concept of the Conference, we refrained from a specifically "churchly" calibre, both in the composition of the topics, as well as in

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. the lectures by A. Krzeminski and M. Frysztacki

selecting the speakers, but that emphasis was placed, rather, on describing the "signs of the time"<sup>15</sup>, together with other "people of good will", and interpreting them. On the basis of the questions concerned with "Reconciliation between East and West?" the usefulness of the **dual term East-West** was tackled in describing the existing conflicts in Europe. In doing so, it was revealed that this comparison is in danger of understanding the present conflicts too much as a prolongation of the confrontation between the Blocs as it took place during the Cold War, of the constellation of power as it has been since the 17th Century, or even of a cultural antagonism between Orthodox and Latinate Christianity. All of these elements exert an influence in individual cases which should be the subject of precise examination. The terms which have been referred to are, however, also clear as an element of Eastern and Western self-perceptions, and to this extent can be clearly seen as constituting an element of the conflict. The danger of stylising a conflict to become a more or less unavoidable confrontation, as is presently happening in the theses of Samuel Huntington<sup>16</sup>, is a structural part of the formation of every concept. It is, however, to a particular extent an integral part of such a comprehensive typologisation. It can be considered significant in this context that the Russian participants felt quite at home with the terms "East" and "West", whilst those from Central Europe expressed considerable reservations.

The discussions have revealed that in particular the conflicts between Central and Eastern European societies, as well as those occurring within societies, constituted by Polish-Jewish, Belorussian-Russian or even German-Czech relations, are still orientated along East-West lines. This orientation, however, remains of central significance for interpreting experiences with the partition of Europe since 1945, as well as the specific transformation-related problems faced by Central and Eastern European societies today.

The **question of securing, ensuring and transforming social, collective identities** was identified as a core problem which is central to all reconciliation processes.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. the lectures by A. Krzeminski and M. Müller

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes*

<sup>16</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Simon & Schuster 1996.

In the deep-seated socio-economic transformation processes which are underway, people and societies are faced with tremendous pressure to find a new social and historical orientation in the light of the obvious upheavals which they have suffered in terms of their surroundings.

In this way, processes of social self-discovery can be observed in many places which, in the dynamics of one's self-perception and of perceptions of others, exert a major influence on relations between the various societies. This means that the debate regarding unprocessed historical experiences and traumas is highly significant. The success of this debate, which requires avoidance of social autisms, is conditional on discussions and meetings taking place with one's counterparts.

These processes can also be described as reconciliation with the past in the sense of accepting the past in its entirety, as well as with regard to the socio-economic transformation processes as a development of an autonomous future perspective. Both of these are inextricably linked.

This kind of reconciliation, which, as was remarked upon at the Conference, shows a considerable degree of **affinity to the process of enlightenment**, is to a certain extent placed in the timescale of the collective "subjects". Nations and ethnicities can schedule their development and reconciliation processes in terms of decades, or perhaps even of a century.

One urgent **question**, however, goes **unanswered** in this perspective, namely that **of the surviving victims**, who do not have at their disposal such a horizon in biographical terms. They do not have such a long timescale, and are generally offered little comfort by the "process of enlightenment".

In most cases, remembering the dead is less problematic than discussing the matter with the survivors, although the former, too, can become controversial to an extent which should not be underestimated, as has been demonstrated by the Polish and Russian examples<sup>17</sup>.

In order to carry out reconciliation processes, it is indispensable to tackle the painful experience of the survivors, as well as for their suffering to be recognised by society (among other things through rehabilitation and suitable and generous compensation).

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. the lectures by M. Frysztaki and V. Jofe

Excluding the survivors/victims, who are frequently experienced as a disturbance to one's own picture of oneself in the efforts of the majority of society to find normality, robs social development of its humane potential, since it ignores the weak and wounded as dysfunctional in terms of their own projection. In this way, the **irritating substance of the suffering which has been experienced**, which constitutes a **necessary correction mechanism**, is disposed of.

The question arises in this context of reconciliation in its whole drama. It is a question not only of defusing a range of different conflicts, but, rather, of whether humane development is possible at all.

**Appendix: Programme of the Meeting**  
**List of Authors**



## PROGRAMME

### 17 March 1997

18.30 h welcome

19.00 h dinner

after dinner Introduction to Central and Eastern Europe as large social and cultural regions. Structures and conflicts

*by: Michael G. Müller, Halle*

### 18 March 1997

09.00 h How the Polish view themselves - between the 'Grande Nation de l'Est' and 'Polski Kompleks'

*by: Adam Krzeminski, Warsaw*

10.30 h break

11.00 h Introduction to the Auschwitz International Youth Meeting Centre

*by: Marek Frysztacki, Cracow*

12.30 h lunch

14.00 h Russia and the West

*by: Marina Pavlova Silvanskaja, Moscow*

15.30 h break

16.00 h Change of perspective in White Russia

*by: Stanislaw Schuschkewitsch, Minsk*

19.00 h dinner

20.00 h Introduction to the work of Memorial in St. Petersburg and Moscow

*by: Venjamin V. Jofe, St. Petersburg*

**19 March 1997**

- 09.00 h      The Czech Republic and its big neighbour to the West  
*by: Miroslav Kunštát, Prague*
- 10.30 h      break
- 11.00 h      The work of the Bolzano foundation  
*by: Jaroslav Sabata, Brünn*
- 12.30 h      lunch
- 14.00 h      How the Serbs view themselves. Memories. Experience.  
 Beginnings of reconciliation  
*by: Aleksander Tisma, Novy Sad*
- 15.30 h      break
- 16.00 h      Introduction to the aid for refugees in Sombor/Serbia  
*by: Manda Prising, Sombor*
- 19.00 h      dinner
- 20.00 h      informal gathering

**20 March 1997**

- 09.00 h      The difficult relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism  
*by: Gerhard Albert, Freising*
- 10.30 h      break
- 11.00 h      final meeting  
 Summary and attempt to draw a preliminary conclusion
- 12.30 h      lunch

**List of authors**

Gerhard Albert, Freising

Marek Frysztacki, Cracow

Prelate Dieter Grande, Erfurt

Venjamin Viktorowitsch Jofe, St. Petersburg

Adam Krzeminski, Warsaw

Miroslav Kunštát, Prague

Jörg Lüer, Bonn

Michael G. Müller, Halle

Manda Prising, Sombar

Marina Pavlova Silvanskaja, Moscow

