

Russian-Polish Relations: A Long Way From Stereotypes to Reconciliation

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Marked by centuries of conflict and profound mutual suspicion, Russian-Polish relations, particularly in the twentieth century, provide a striking example of the difficulties involved in the process of potential reconciliation. The Poles have historically viewed Russia as a foe, and for their part the Russians regarded Poland as a kind appendage to their country. In one way or another this was true both for the Soviet period of history and for the post-Communist world. In the struggle to understand each other's goals and aspirations, the burden of the past has continued to hamper the creation of new relations. The story of Russian-Polish relations, a story of mutual prejudices between two neighboring nations, has its roots far back in time. Suspicions and allegations alternated with the struggle against the tsarist regime, and the cooperation of Polish and Russian dissidents in the struggle against Communism have continued down to our day.¹ These relations were formed against the backdrop of such bloody events as the Polish invasion of Russia at the turn of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Russian repression of the Poles during the eighteenth and nineteenth century revolts, the three divisions of Poland in eighteenth century, the investigation of the Katyn crime (the mass killing of Polish prisoners, mostly officers, by Stalin's secret police NKVD in April, 1940), and the incidents at the Tukhol death camp at which Red Army soldiers died after the Soviet-Polish War of 1920.²

The focus here will be on the most recent phase of bilateral relations, starting from the establishment of the new Russia which declared itself a democratic country. Any discussion of bilateral relations inevitably touches on the impact of the past on the Russian people's attitude towards Poland. From the researcher's perspective, it is interesting to compare these bilateral

¹One example of the cooperation between dissidents is shown by the personality, Mikhail Geller. He was a twentieth century Soviet historian, who was forced to emigrate from the Soviet Union and settle down in Paris, where he worked for the Polish language newspaper "Kultura." His books about the history of Russia, in which he expresses a positive attitude towards Poland, were published in Russia in the 21st century, after his death. In his book "Utopia in Power" (А́æäð Ì.Б., Íæðè÷ À.Ì. Óðñ èÿ ó æëãñðè. – Ì.: Èçäàðæüñðâñ «Ì ÈÈ," 2000.), he openly stated that "the mass killing of Polish officers in Katyn was done in accordance with the political goals of Stalin – to clean Poland of Polish patriotic elements, liquidate intellectual elite and build a loyal regime to USSR. He consistently maintained this policy even later, during the Warsaw uprising of 1944 and when Red Army came to the territory of Poland in 1944-1945.» Alexander Herzen also belonged to the minority of the Russian intellectuals who sympathized with Poland in the nineteenth century. The section below discusses the attitudes of Russian and Soviet historians, with which I will try to illustrate the phenomenon of a guilt complex in greater detail. It also should be mentioned that even in the Soviet Union, especially in the last period of its existence, there were Communist Party officials who regretted the harm inflicted on East Europeans. One of them was Alexander Nikolayevich Yakovlev, one of Gorbachev's closest advisors, who currently serves as the Head of the Presidential Commission for the Rehabilitation of the Victims of Stalin's Repressions. Yakovlev was the one who disclosed the secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty and the Katyn case. He devotes special attention to Katyn case in his recently published book «Ì óò ì à ÿð» (Memory Whirlpool). Ì ñêâà. Áãðèõñ. 2000. p. 284.).

² I am not trying to analyze the issues of Katyn and Tukhol as two similar cases. What happened in Katyn was an act of genocide. The suffering of Red Army soldiers in Tukhol is an issue of bad treatment of prisoners. It was not an attempt to "eliminate the core of the nation," as had happened during the mass killings of Polish officers at Katyn, Mednoye in April, 1940. Most of the Polish officers, who were killed, served as representatives of the Polish elite.

relations as part of a broader European integration, and as an important element for forecasting future trends. Due to its geographical position, Russia has always had a special relationship with Europe - particularly with its neighbors such as Poland – and its political aspirations have always been intimately intertwined with its relation to the West. In the aftermath of the Cold War, old allies ended up in opposite camps, and old enemies formed new alliances. Russian-Polish relations have undergone major transformations as a result. The current central issue is whether both nations will be able to build constructive and cooperative relations. The major difficulties that Russia and Poland experienced after 1989, with Poland's joining NATO (1999), the introduction of the visa regime for Russian citizens, as well as Poland's supporting Chechnya, were clear indications of a continuation of tensions.³

The idea for this project came to me at the end of the 1990s when the word “reconciliation” seemed unthinkable regarding Russian-Polish relations. While Polish anarchists were burning the Russian flag in front of the Russian Consulate in Poznan (Western Poland), following renewed attacks by Russian troops in Chechnya, Russian-Polish reconciliation seemed incredible. Then, in January, 2000 a large group of Russian diplomats was expelled from Warsaw. Some were registered with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs as official representatives of the Russian External Intelligence Service (SVR), while others were employees of the embassy classified communications systems. In response, Moscow expelled an equal number of Polish diplomats, creating an impression that bilateral relations were forever frozen. Channel One of Russian TV announced that “the relations between the two countries have never been so bad.”⁴ In such a context what can be meant by reconciliation?

The Notion of Reconciliation and Its Elements (Definitions of terms used)

There is no single correct and universally accepted definition of reconciliation. The *New Riverside University Dictionary* states: « reconcile 1. To re-establish friendship between. 2. To settle or resolve, as a dispute. 3. To bring (oneself) to accept. 4. To make consistent, or compatible<reconcile their opposing views>.”⁵ An American textbook on international relations by Peter A. Toina and Robert F. Gorman, uses “rapprochement” to mean a reconciliation of interests of rival states after a period of estrangement.⁶

In the last few years American scholars have written many interesting articles on the theory of reconciliation. The importance of this subject has been illustrated by such events as the internal reconciliation in South Africa and the Dayton Peace Accord in the former Yugoslavia. Writers on this subject include David Little, Susan Dwyer, David Crocker, and Margaret Popkin.

David Little analyzes several dictionary definitions of “reconciliation.” To emphasize that the verb “to reconcile” is a very complex concept, he defines it with three separate meanings:

³ Although the Polish-Russian border is no longer as long as it was during the Soviet period, the question of Russian imperialist aspirations is still an important issue in Poland, in no small part because of Russia's friendly relations with the Lukashenko regime in Belarus.

⁴ *ORT*, 9 o'clock news program, January 19, 2000.

⁵ Webster II, *New Riverside University Dictionary*.

⁶ A. Toina and Robert F. Gorman, *International Relations, Understanding Global Issues*. Washington DC: International Thompson Publishing, 1990, p.130.

1. To bring into a state of acquiescence (with) or submission to a thing.
2. To adjust, settle, bring to agreement.
3. To bring (a person) again into friendly relations to or with (oneself or another) after an estrangement.” To set (estranged persons or parties) at one again; to bring back into concord, to reunite (persons or things) in harmony.”⁷

American scholar Susan Dwyer writes:

The notable lack of any clear account of what reconciliation is, and what it requires, justifiably alerts the cynics among us. Reconciliation is being urged among people who have been bitter and murderous enemies, upon victims and perpetrators of terrible human rights abuses, upon groups of individuals whose very self-conceptions have been structured in terms of historical and often state-sanctioned relations of dominance and submission. The rhetoric of reconciliation is particularly common in situations where traditional judicial responses to wrongdoing are unavailable because of corruption in the legal system, staggeringly large numbers of offenders, or anxiety about the political consequences of trials and punishment.⁸

In the literature on reconciliation there is no agreement on how reconciliation should be defined. One problem is that the concept of “reconciliation” is a subject of widespread interest both within academia and among the general public. For example, in descriptions of reconciliation in the aftermath of violence, the concept is defined in four different ways: 1) to become friendly with (someone) after estrangement or to re-establish friendly relations between two or more parties; 2) to settle (a quarrel); 3) to make (oneself or another) no more opposed to something; 4) to cause (someone) to acquiesce in something unpleasant or undesirable⁹.

The first definition involves a transformation of the relationship between the former victim and the former perpetrator. This definition is necessarily broad. If reconciliation is understood as the transformation of a relationship, then reconciliation systems can be visualized along a continuum, ranging from “thinner” to “thicker” reconciliations (David A. Crocker’s framework).¹⁰ At one end of this spectrum is the so-called “thin” version of reconciliation. Such reconciliation does not address the question of past wrongs; it is a condition in which former enemies can peacefully coexist and are willing to listen to each other. At the other end are the “thicker” versions of reconciliation. These involve forgiveness and mutual healing, and imply the achievement of a harmonious relationship.

⁷ David Little, “Some Thoughts on the Notion of “Reconciliation.”

⁸ Susan Dwyer, Reconciliation for Realists. *Ethics & International Affairs* 13 (1999).

⁹ Bob Anderson, quoted in “Reconciliation – or Justice?” *Hecate* 26, no 1(2000): 4.

¹⁰ David A. Crocker, “Reckoning with the Past Wrongs: A Normative Framework,” *Ethics and International Affairs* 13 (1999): 60

The second definition of reconciliation – “settling a quarrel” – refers to the peace-making that takes place in the immediate aftermath of violence. In such cases, the term “reconciliation” can be understood as an attempt to establish minimal security, or to reduce potential outbreaks of violence. In this case this relationship is best described as peacekeeping rather than reconciliation.

Though the concept of reconciliation is more or less accepted by Russian academics, for many of my other Russian interlocutors the idea seems somewhat utopian. The Russian word for reconciliation, “*primireniye*,” sounds rather abstract and contains the implication of something unrealistic. However, in the beginning of Yeltsin’s term in power this word was used to rename the former Day of the October Revolution – November 7. It is still being celebrated as a public holiday and is now called “The Day of Reconciliation and Accord.” In this case the word reconciliation is applied mostly to the internal situation in Russia.

“Why reconcile if we have never been enemies?” was the response I received from one fifth of the hundred respondents whom I asked about the need for a Russian-Polish reconciliation. Russian politicians have only recently started to use the word reconciliation. I heard it during a talk show on Russian-Ukrainian relations¹¹ by the well-known Russian television commentator Vladimir Posner. In Polish, however, the word for reconciliation, “*pojednanie*,” as applied to the relations with Russia, is quite frequently used by a wide variety of politicians, beginning with President Kwasniewski, who use the word to describe Poland’s relations with Germans, Jews and finally Russians.

The problem of Russia’s reconciliation with its neighbors is indeed complex. In the twentieth century, the Soviet state's actions led to serious problems with relations, not only with Poland, but with other nations which were an integral part of the Soviet Union and even Russia (the Baltic States, Western Ukraine, Chechnya, Kalmykia, Tatarstan) as well as with neighboring nations such as Finland. Among Russian scholars the most carefully researched case-study of reconciliation is that of Georgian-Abkhazian relations, yet it has been addressed more in theory than in practice.¹²

A prerequisite for making progress towards reconciliation between the states is the resolution of territorial disputes and claims between states and nations. As members of the OSCE, Russia and Poland have agreed to respect each other's borders, maintaining the principle of their inviolability. (Moreover, the Russian-Polish border in Kaliningrad covers a very small expanse of territory).

Another important factor affecting reconciliation is the mutual economic interests of countries. That was true both for German-French rapprochement after World War II, and for the rapid improvement of Polish-German relations after 1989. Cross-border trade and interest in each other's expanding markets can serve as a serious incentive for rapprochement and future reconciliation. Polish business people today have realized that the Western market is already

¹¹ ORT Show About Russian-Ukrainian Relations on the eve of parliamentary elections in Ukraine (April 2002).

¹² Ἄδόςερίú è ἄάόαϕú ἱ óóú ê ἱ ðèì èðḗḗḗ Ἰáúáý ðḗḗḗöèý: Ἄ.Ἐἱ ἱ èðḗḗḗ, Ἄ.Ἰḗḗḗ, Ἣ.Ἄḗḗḗḗḗ Ἐϕḗḗḗḗḗḗḗ Ἄḗḗḗ ἱ èð. Ἰ ἱḗḗḗ. 1998.

saturated and is only very reluctantly opening up to Polish producers who, naturally, are looking eastward.

Reconciliation clearly implies the acknowledgement of the guilt of one nation that wronged another. Historians of both countries must explore and disclose the truth about controversial events of the past. After discussion starts within a society, especially in the media, politicians can begin to accept reconciliation-related concepts and make gestures which simultaneously declare guilt and forgiveness. German Chancellor Kohl and the Polish Prime Minister Mazowiecki embraced each other on Krzyzowa hill in 1989; General De Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer engaged in similar reconciliatory gestures for French-German relations. And on August 24, 1993 in front of the Katyn cross at Powazki Cemetery President Yeltsin made a similar statement: "Poles, forgive us if you can."

Full and objective knowledge about the difficulties and problems one side has caused the other must be available within both societies if there is to be true reconciliation. Critical to reconciliation is the dissemination of information regarding the guilt, outrages, insults and offenses of each other's countries. A lack of knowledge and mutual negative stereotypes create serious obstacles for reconciliation. Russian and Polish historians are now working together to open the "blank pages" of the past, and I will deal specifically with this issue. Historical research will eventually acquire a "critical mass" and will assist decision-makers in their work.

Information regarding historical guilt should be included in textbooks. While in the Soviet days there was a commonly known expression: "We must create in society an atmosphere of hatred towards traitors, etc., etc.," here a positive atmosphere must be created towards former enemies, or towards nations for whom Russia has caused problems. While the Russian Orthodox Church could play an important role in this process, this now seems highly unlikely because of its unyieldingly dogmatic position. The current position of the Moscow Patriarchate is both extremely anti-Western and anti-Catholic.

The problem of Russian guilt towards the Poles is compounded by the reluctance of Russian state authorities to officially acknowledge Russian guilt towards the Poles. It is clear from the statements of Russian officials at the opening of the Katyn and Mednoye memorials that Russians were as much victims as foreigners of Stalin's purges. Russian-Polish reconciliation means the reestablishment of friendship after a period of acute estrangement. At the same time, the Russians have viewed the Poles as allies for the last fifty years- perhaps not very reliable partners, but still partners, not enemies. The period of estrangement that began in 1989, when Poles were "permitted" to hate the Russians openly, now seems to have ended. And two nations are trying to make friendly steps towards each other, which was demonstrated during President Putin's visit to Warsaw in January 2002 and President Kwasniewski's visits to Moscow (the next is planned for early June).

After almost ten years of estrangement from 1991 to 2001, a slow process of rapprochement between Russia and Poland is now underway. It is clear that reconciliation involves a lengthy process of building relations between nations and societies following a period of estrangement. This process begins with the acknowledgement by opinion-makers (journalists, historians, intellectuals, quite often religious leaders), who can speak openly of the wrongs

wrought by their nation on another nation, and influence the government. The next step requires public gestures by politicians, confessions and avowal of guilt. This admission can be followed by the construction of the monuments, memorials, and cemeteries, the dissemination of information about the harm perpetrated by one nation on another, and inclusion of this information in the school and university textbooks to help overcome stereotypes and phobias. Organized religion can also play an important role in promoting reconciliation, and cultural exchanges can also help with the process of reconciliation. Compensation to the victims and the punishment of the perpetrators of crimes against the other nation marks one of the final steps, but in the case of Russian- Polish relations, many of the perpetrators that have already passed away.

In the early nineties, some of them were still alive. For instance, the supervisor of the camps for Polish officers, Soprunenko, was still living and the General Prosecutor's Office summoned him for interrogation. However, various personnel changes took place in the Prosecutor's Office, and Soprunenko soon died.

Methodology

To study Russian-Polish reconciliation I have made use of my contacts in the world of academia, journalism, and the media, and of my native knowledge of Russian and fluent command of Polish. Since my research was primarily based in Russia, I focused on Russian interlocutors, public opinion and sources. I have, however, also read various Polish sources and used my knowledge of Poland based on many trips to the country as well as conversations with native informants. It is my intention, however, to deal with the heightened Polish awareness of problem of reconciliation with Russia during my planned joint project with Jagellonian University.

Over the past few months I have discussed this project with many experts in this field, including Inessa Yazhborovskaya, Ph.D. (The Institute of Comparative Political Studies, Russian Academy of Science), Aleksey Lipatov, Ph.D. (Russian State Humanitarian University), an eminent researcher of mutual Russian-Polish stereotypes; Liliya Kazakova (Director of the Foundation of International Sociological Studies), Aleksey Volin (Deputy Head of the Government Staff for Information Work), Aleksey Zhidakov (Chairman of the Board of Russian Information Agency "Novosti"), Wieslawa Yerofeyeva, (a Polish citizen who settled in Russia), Vladislav Borodulin, (Director of Internet site "gazeta.ru"), Svetlana Falkovich, Ph.D. (Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Science), Irina Kobrinskaya (Independent Analyst), Igor Korotchenko, Journalist (*Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*), Svetlana Babayeva, Journalist (*Izvestiya*). From Liliya Kazakova I received data from two of the few existing public opinion polls about Russian attitudes towards the Poles, including a poll prepared jointly by the Moscow based Foundation of International Sociological Studies and the Polish Information Agency *Interpress*. I also interviewed a number of Russians involved in official capacities with Poland. They include a government official, who deals with information; two business people, one of whom travels through Poland to transport cars from Europe to Russia, and another who operates his own Internet project. I also talked to an individual person from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who previously worked in Poland. To protect the privacy of my sources, I am not able to provide their names here. One of the interlocutors was the Director of the Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War in Moscow, Vyacheslav Ivanovich Bragin, who played an important

role in Yeltsin's government in the early 1990s, and who explained to Yeltsin why Russian leaders should ask the Poles for forgiveness. I also interviewed a group of students at Moscow State University regarding their knowledge of Poland and the Poles, attended many functions at the Polish Institute in Moscow, and am grateful to Marek Zielinski, the Director of the Institute, for his assistance with my research. At the Institute I participated on a panel with Professor Jerzy Borejsza (Institute of History, Polish Academy of Science), with whom I outlined my project on reconciliation. I engaged in intensive Internet research of publications in the Russian media about Russian-Polish relations over the last few years. In addition, I monitored Russian press publications on a daily basis, comparing their reports about Poland with the treatment of these subjects in the Polish media. During President Putin's visit to Poland, I also recorded the Polish TV programs on "TV Polonia." I have established contacts with Polish scholars interested in my project, including Professor Lucjan Suchanek of the Jagellonian University in Krakow, and met with the rector of the Jagellonian University, Franciszek Ziejka, when he was on his visit to Moscow. I attended the press conference (February 15, 2002) of Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, who is the Head of the Russian Catholics in Moscow.

In addition, I surveyed the attitudes towards Poland that different groups within Russian society hold, focusing on individuals who have direct contacts with the Poles and Poland, or at least rudimentary knowledge about this country. Those three groups are divided according to their social status. First of all there are the representatives of the ruling elite (politicians, bureaucrats, Duma deputies); business people (including the so called "shuttlers" who are the main conductors of transnational trade), the group that comes closest to so-called average citizens. And the third group consists of the intellectuals, the so-called intelligentsia. I selected those groups by accounting for those people, who are somehow involved in the interaction with foreign policy and life abroad or interaction with Poland.

I have also analyzed Russian history textbooks, but virtually none of them mention mutual accusations of Russians and Poles. One of the rare exceptions were books of the publishing house "Ves' Mir," headed by Oleg Zimarin, who started a program of translation of foreign history textbooks into Russian. Other books and publications I have consulted are included in the bibliography.

In this paper the Katyn episode will be used as a revealing example of guilt and reconciliation. After an introduction to the historical background of the Russian-Polish reconciliation, this paper will deal with Russian stereotypes and images of Poles which have aggravated Russian-Polish relations and led to the need for a rapprochement. This section includes a poll I conducted of 100 Muscovites regarding their views of this issue. This is followed by an analysis of those gaps in historical writing which needed to be filled in order to provide accurate information regarding sore points in Polish-Russian relations, and the role of historians and nongovernmental historical organizations in righting these historical wrongs. School textbooks are also discussed, since they play an extremely important role in reconciliation, as the younger generation is provided with information through these books that will form and color their attitudes towards and analysis of Russian-Polish relations. Moving from historical writing and textbooks to journalism, I have looked at how journalists view and cover this issue and several other issues in bilateral relations, including the new visa regime, Poland's entering NATO as well its support for the rebellious Chechnya. Religion, too, has played a role

in fomenting the negative attitudes of Russians and Poles towards each other, and it could play a major role in achieving reconciliation if the Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic churches were willing to actively participate in this process. I have briefly analyzed this issue as well as the role of art and cultural exchanges, all of which can serve as stimuli for rapprochement. In conclusion, I examined the issue of monetary compensation for damages suffered as one way of achieving closure, and then turn to recommendations and conclusions.

An important case study for Polish-Russian guilt and reconciliation is the tragic story of Katyn. The reconciliation acknowledgement of Russia's guilt in the murder of 21,857 Polish officers at Katyn (4,421), Mednoye (6,311), Starobelsk near Khar'kov (3,820)¹³ and possibly in other parts of the former Soviet Union, such as the Urals during 1940, a fact that had been carefully covered up for decades and surfaced fifty years after this crime of mass murder had been committed.¹⁴ Though most of the elderly Russian executioners had either passed away or were quite well hidden from public scrutiny, the names of some of them were publicly announced in the early 90s in the articles of Russian and foreign journalists. Though they were summoned to the General Prosecutor's office, criminal charges against them were not fully filed. Further major and unprecedented public steps for atonement and reconciliation then took place.

In the summer and autumn of 2000, monuments to the Polish officers murdered by Stalin were dedicated at the two sites in Russia – Katyn (near Smolensk), and Mednoye (near Tver). During the ceremony in Katyn, Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek represented the Polish side with a large delegation of the families of the victims of Stalin's purges of the Poles – the Union of Katyn Families. In autumn, during the unveiling ceremony in Mednoye the word “reconciliation” regarding Russian-Polish relations was used in Kwasniewski's appeal to those gathered there.¹⁵ This was not the first time this word was use to address Russian-Polish relations. It had previously been uttered by Bronislaw Geremek, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the liberal coalition government of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek.¹⁶ But those were only words. In reality, political relations between Russia and Poland were bogged down in claims for compensation from the Polish side. Even though these claims may have been justified, there was no response from Russia. Moscow was not yet ready to talk about compensation.

¹³ Êàòóñó. 1940-2000, Áñèîí ãòó. Ñòð 563, N 227. 1959, ìàðòà 3, Ì ñèèàà – Çãñ èñèà ì ðãññãàðàèý Èñ èðàà àññòãðòãññé áãññ ãññòðè ì ðè Ññãàà ì èñèòòññã ÑÑÑÐ Á.Í.Ïããñ èñã ì ðãññ ó ñãððãðò ÕË ËÏ ÑÑ Ì.Ñ.Ïðóããó ñ ì ðñãðòñ ì ñòãññããñý Ì ðãããèóì à ÕË ËÏ ÑÑ ìã óñ-òñãñèè äã ì ì ñ ðãòèè, ñãñèèñèòãññé ðãññã Ì ñèòãðò ÕË ËÏ (á) ìò ì àðòà 1940 ã.

¹⁴ In Poland the truth about Katyn was well-known, however under the pressure of the Soviet side, Polish leadership tried to avoid the mention of Katyn in official documents. The official Soviet version of the Katyn crime blamed the Germans for committing it. This version was supported by the Commission of Burdenko, though it had privately expressed doubts in the truth of this report. There were also serious doubts in the West as well as in Polish society about the truthfulness of this version. It became a serious political issue in the early 1980s, during the period of “Solidarity.” Polish leader General Jaruzelski was pressed by Polish public to unveil the truth about Katyn and he raised this issue many times at the meetings with the Soviet leadership. First of all, he discussed it with Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader from 1985 to 1991. But even for Gorbachev it took quite a while before he recognized the existence of the documents that confirmed who had committed the Katyn crime.

¹⁵ Ì ñèèããã Ì ðããããðò ðãññ óãèèè Ì ñèüã Æ.Ëãññãññèññã è ó-ãñòñèè ðñãññòãññãñ ìèèðóèý ì ñèüñèññ èèããèüà ãððà èàòóññèññã ì ðãñòòñ èãñý á Ì ãññ. 2000 ã. Ñãóýãðó 2, Áãðããã. The Presidential Appeal was read by the Head of the President's Chancelory of the Republic of Poland Jolanta Szimanek-Derez. Quote from “Êàòóñó. Ì àðò 1940 ã.-ñãóýãðó 2000 ã. ðãññòðã. Ñóãñãñ ãèãñó. Ýòñ Êàòóñé. Áñèèí ãòó”. Ì ñèèãã. Ëçãððãññòãññ Æ.Áññ ì èð», 2001. P. 589-590.

¹⁶ *Izvestiya*, January 30, 1999. Interview with Maksim Yusin.

The members of the Polish community in Russia expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of representation by the Russian side at the opening of the memorial in Katyn, since neither President Putin nor Prime Minister Kasyanov attended the opening ceremony.¹⁷ Vice Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko, responsible for the oil and gas sector, as well as Minister of Culture Mikhail Shvydkoy represented the Russian side in Katyn. In Mednoye the Russian Minister of the Interior Vladimir Rushaylo made the opening remarks. The idea all Russian officials were trying to promote was that “ the Russian people - first and foremost - are the victims of the inhumane machine of Stalinism that damaged and ruined the lives millions of human lives.”¹⁸ The Russians, not the Poles or any other foreigners.

Soon after the opening of the monuments to the victims of Stalin’s purges the President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, made a phone call to President Putin and subsequently went to Moscow. The discussions were very friendly, facilitated by the fact that the Polish President is a fluent speaker of Russian. At that time Kwasniewski was less involved in internal political struggles, and was therefore freer to take action in the foreign policy sphere. Kwasniewski realized that Buzek’s government was losing its popularity and was not afraid to establish better contacts with the Russians. Meanwhile, in Poland voices of disappointment regarding cooperation with the West were becoming more insistent. After ten-year gap, Polish business had decided to look to the East.¹⁹

On July 17, 2000, the Russian economic weekly, *Expert* (the Russian equivalent of *The Economist*), published a center spread with portraits of President Putin and President Kwasniewski under the title, “The Great Breakthrough: Moscow and Warsaw Decide to Bring Relations Back to Normal.” A visible shift towards an improvement in Russian-Polish relations became evident in 2001, after Prime Minister Kasyanov’s visit to Poland and after the Polish parliamentary elections, which brought the Social Democrats to power. President Kwasniewski’s team wished to advance its dialogue with the Kremlin, and they were much more successful here than their liberal predecessors – those who had drastically worsened relations with Russia, even though they were the first to have used the word “reconciliation.”

In May, 2001 Prime Minister Kasyanov came to Poland to discuss the problem of the construction of an additional pipeline from Russia to Europe via Poland. Moscow explicitly demonstrated that the transporting gas transit to Poland was a key problem hurting Russian-Polish relations. In the summer of 2001, during the summit of East European leaders in Kiev, President Kwasniewski invited President Putin to visit Poland in January, 2002.

¹⁷ My private conversation with Pyotr Romanov, the secretary of Dom Polonii, NGO that brings together Russian citizens of Polish origin.

¹⁸ *Áññòí èàèá çàññòèòæý í ðàññààòæý Ì ðàèèòæýñòàà ðññèèñéíé Òààòæèè Á.Á.Õðèñòàèèí íà ìèððóðèè í àíðèèùííàí èííèèñà 2000, èþè 28, Èàòúí. N239. Quote from: Èàòúí. Ì àðò 1940 à.-ñàòóýðü 2000 à. ðàññòðæ. Ñóàúáú æáúò. Ýòí Èàòúíè. Áíèóí áòú. Ìñèèà. Èçààòæýñòàí «Áññü ìèð», 2001. P. 587.*

¹⁹ *Ì ìèùèá íà òí-ò çàèðúààòü ààòü íà Áññòíè. È ì ðíàá ìññòðèðíààèà ýòí à Èþèèèá Article by Valeriy Masterov, Vremya MN, April 12, 2000; Tadeusz Jacewicz, “Spojrzenie na Wschod,” *Zycie Warszawy*, Iczerwca 2001, strona 4.*

After September 11, which radically changed the face of global politics, the Russian President clearly demonstrated his support for the Western alliance. Not everyone in Russia – especially the top military brass – appreciated the President’s stance.²⁰ President Putin tried to be consistent. Even before September 11 he had started to clean up the “hawks” within the Russian Ministry of Defense, dismissing the strongest opponent of Russia-NATO cooperation, General Leonid Ivashov.

The Swiss newspaper *Le Temps* pointed out that the events of September 11 forced East European nations to reevaluate their relations with Moscow. Speaking about the Chechen Information Center in Krakow, Aleksander Kwasniewski said that he will “never allow terrorist organizations to act from Polish territory against partners of Poland.”²¹ He was not the only Central European leader who gradually changed his position regarding Russia. Czech Prime Minister Milos Zeman noted that the time had come to “take note of the depth of the political and economic changes that took place in the Russian “democratic state.” “Cooperation with Moscow does not mean that we reject the values we have chosen after 1989,” said Zeman.²² The Central European countries were trying to find their proper place, one where they, on one hand, would not feel dependent on Russia, as in the years of Communism, and on the other, would not distance themselves from Russia as they had done just after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In November the liberals lost the elections in Poland. The cabinet of ministers was formed by Leszek Miller, one of Kwasniewski’s closest political allies. Very soon Miller came to Moscow in search of new projects for the Polish economy, which was going through the toughest crisis of the last decade, and above all for talks about the gas pipeline. “Indeed, Social Democrats are more easygoing in dealing with Moscow,” said my Polish friend Wieslawa Skura (Yerofeyeva), a Polish citizen who has been living in Moscow for many years, and works as a journalist, interpreter, and an excellent specialist in contemporary Russian literature.

In January, 2002 President Vladimir Putin went to Poland on an official visit. It was the first official visit by the head of the Russian state to Poland in eight years, and also the first visit of a Russian leader to a member of the former Warsaw Pact, which had become a member of NATO. Prior to Putin’s visit to Poland I had published an article in the weekly newspaper *Moscow News*²³ that commented on what the President of Russia could do in Poland to create a better image of both himself and Russia among the Poles.²⁴ I suggested that wreaths be laid not only in honor of the soldiers in the Red Army who liberated Warsaw from the Nazis, but also at the monument to the Poles who were sent to Siberia and in memory of the fighters in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

From the editor-in-chief of *The Moscow News*, Viktor Loshak, I learned that even before the visit the article did not go unnoticed – and similar advice to Putin was forthcoming from

²⁰ On May 8, 2002, I had a conversation with one of Russia’s leading military journalists, Pavel Felgengauer, who pointed out that the majority of Russian officers are quite unhappy about the current rapprochement with the West. “The worst thing you can do to the military is to take away its enemy,” said Felgengauer. The majority of the Russian officers still view NATO and the West as enemies, claimed Felgengauer.

²¹ Quote from Interfax, *Le Temps* (10/19/2001).

²² Quote from Interfax, *Ibid.*

²³ (<http://www.mn.ru/issue.php?2001-52-18>)

²⁴ “Î îñêîñêèà îñîñòè,” 25 –31 äêâðü2001 ãîà, N 52, page 12.

other sources as well. The President even exceeded my expectations. Former KGB officer Putin laid flowers at the monument to the warriors of the *Armia Krajowa* (the internal Polish Army which during World War II operated from London and fought both against the Germans and the Soviets). This was widely commented on by the Western reporters who covered Putin's visit to Warsaw.²⁵ My surprise was partly explained by the fact that just a few days before the presidential visit to Poland, a new Russian-Belarusian movie about World War II ("August 1944") was released.²⁶ It depicted *Armia Krajowa* as a subversive organization closely resembling the Nazis. In his gestures towards the Poles, Putin was definitely moving beyond protocol and the usual Soviet stereotypes.

The fluctuations in public opinion struck me most strongly in January 2002, when *Kommersant Daily* published the opinion poll, "Who Are the Friends of Russia?"²⁷ The Poles were in second place on the list of the best friends of Russia. Of course, this high rating of Poland could be partly explained by the recent Russian-Polish summit in January, 2002 in Warsaw.

Bilateral relations between countries and nations, however, are not built solely on the presidential level. They have deeper and wider dimensions that are first of all defined by ordinary people, politicians, scientists and historians, businessmen, journalists, cultural and religious leaders. In any case, I believe that much still remained to be done with Russian-Polish relations. At the same time, the speed of change in the nature Russia and Poland's interactions within a period of barely a year was impressive.

In March, 2002 I asked one of the leading Russian specialists in Polish affairs, independent analyst Irina Kobrinskaya, who previously worked for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, if reconciliation between Russia and Poland is indeed possible. The answer was somewhat unexpected. This respected scholar told me that Russian-Polish reconciliation "is not only possible, but has already taken place." According to Kobrinskaya, that reconciliation took place on August 24, 1993, when President Yeltsin apologized to the Poles at the Powazki cemetery in Warsaw.²⁸ Kobrinskaya also told me that the opening of the monuments to acknowledge the mass murder of Poles in Katyn and Mednoye were important gestures for

²⁵ *Moscow Times*, January 17, 2002, the report by Andrzej Styliniski, The Associated Press. "Our Guest did much more than his bureaucracy had scheduled," said former Polish Ambassador to Moscow Stanislaw Ciosek. (Quote from "I nñêîâñêêâîîâîñòè," 22-28 ýíàðÿ, 2002 ã. «Ôââù çàî îçàèùâ», by Valeriy Masterov)

²⁶ This movie proves politically contradictory because of its sponsorship by Lukashenko and the image of Stalin it presents. It also aired for the first time on Russian TV on May 9, 2002, Victory Day.

²⁷ *Kommersant Daily*, February 13, 2002. According to the opinion poll conducted by the daily newspaper, friendship between nations means close contacts in the political, business, and human sphere, e.g. the exchange of visits between political leaders, bilateral trade and tourism. *Kommersant Daily* noted that "the rogue states" did not get into the list of the best friends of Russia. The closest candidate – North Korea was only in 23-25th place. But the first three places went to China, Poland and Germany.

²⁸ Another Russian scholar Inessa Yazhborovskaya believes that "it was a personal gesture of Yeltsin and has not received significant resonance in the Russian media."²⁸ As Yazhborovskaya, a Russian historian, and her co-authors write in their book (Yazhborovskaya, Yablokov and Parsadanova, "The Katyn Syndrome in Soviet-Polish and Russian-Polish Relations," published in Moscow in 2001) that this moment of reconciliation " was a time when Russian politics started to turn from the emotional self-criticism of the "early Yeltsin" towards a self-complacent, imperial style.

reconciliation between the two nations. The next and final step, she thought, should be compensating the victims of Stalin's crimes or their relatives.

Stereotypes and the Image of the Poles in the Eyes of the Russians

The image that Russians have had of Poland has been changing over time. Before the revolution of 1917 and especially at the end of nineteenth century, Russians perceived the Poles as rioters and rebels. In the early Soviet days the image reversed to one of a "bourgeois nation trying to resist World Proletarian Revolution."²⁹ There was the Soviet song: "The Warring Polish Dogs Still Remember our Red Army Swords." Molotov's famous expression: "Poland is an ugly offspring of the Versailles Treaty,"³⁰ denied Poland its right to a sovereign state. During the division of Poland between Stalin and Hitler in 1939, official Soviet propaganda tried to impose the myth of "the liberation by the Red Army of Western Ukraine and Belorussia." During World War II, Stalin's propaganda condemned those Poles who served the London emigré Government as traitors.³¹ After World War II, there was a "brotherhood of arms," "brotherly friendship between Russians and Poles." The Soviet Union also provided technical and humanitarian aid to Poland, "sharing the last piece of bread." They also touted: "We help Poland as much as we can with oil and gas. And all Poles are speculators and cheaters." In the 70s and 80s, Poland was described as "a socialist paradise" and "the most cheerful barrack in the socialist camp." When the "Solidarity" movement arose in Poland, the Russians responded by saying: "If you increase the price of vodka, we'll do the same thing they did in Poland." John Paul II was also called "Our Slavic Pope." Those were the most commonly used descriptions of Poland before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they recurred in many publications.³²

In the distant past of the Russian Empire, more recently in the USSR and in today's Russia, which calls itself a democracy, the attitude towards Poland and the Poles was based on a self-appraisal of the Russian nation and of the Russians, on understanding the needs of the Russian state and its citizens. Hence the incessant chain of conflicts, mutual offenses, claims and misunderstandings. The World War II period brought about a view of "the ungrateful Poles" – we've helped them to create their own army for fighting the Nazis, and they are abandoning us (regarding General Anders' Army leaving the USSR after the Germans revealed the existence of mass burials in Katyn).³³ "The ungrateful Poles" – we've liberated them from the Nazi occupation, and they are shooting us (regarding the last year of World War II and several years following it). "The ungrateful Poles" – we are helping them to build socialism so they can live better, and they are going on strike (about the period from the Poznan events until the *Solidarnosc* era). And in current times: "the ungrateful Poles" – they are Slavs just like us, but have turned away and joined NATO."³⁴

²⁹ À.À.Èèì àòíà, Æíàíèé ñí ìð ñèààÿ èèè ì ðìòèáíñòìÿèà ì áìòàèèòàòíà. Á ñáíðíèèà Ì ìèÿèè è ðóññèèà áçàèì ñí ñèì àíèèèè áçàèì ñíà ñèì àíèè Èçààðæóñòàí Èíàðèè. Ì ñèèàà, 2000.

³⁰ The Speech of People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich Molotov. *Pravda* September 18, 1939.

³¹ For instance, a poem by Konstantin Simonov from 1944-1948 («Áèèàà ì òð, ò ñíèààòà») «Ìèíè ì ñíàòóòÿ Ì ñíòà-Èáññèí ì ñáíèè èí ì ñáððè áéóáíóò ñíà».

³² À.À.Èèì àòíà, Æíàíèèé ñí ìð ñèààÿ èèè ì ðìòèáíñòìÿèà ì áìòàèèòàòíà. Á ñáíðíèèà Ì ìèÿèè è ðóññèèà áçàèì ñí ñèì àíèèèè áçàèì ñíà ñèì àíèè Èçààðæóñòàí Èíàðèè. Ì ñèèàà, 2000.

³³ Ibid. p. 17.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 18.

In connection to this perspective, Aleksey Lipatov wrote: "In order to understand the "ingratitude" of the Poles, we not only have to look in the mirror at ourselves, but also to try to see the other side not just through our own perceptions, inclinations and our own interests, but also through Polish perceptions and Polish interests, realizing that not just we but other nations as well have the right to arrange their own lives in accordance with their own (and not anyone else's) mentality, their own historic, ethnic and cultural traditions, which form the nation's needs."³⁵

To try to determine current Russian attitudes towards Poland and the Poles, I talked to people and referred to the newspapers that express the attitudes of various parts of the society.

1) Political Elite. The attitude of the Russian ruling elite towards Poland is reflected in government-owned media such as the newspapers *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* and *Krasnaya Zvezda* which kept harping on "the negative impact" of the Polish turn to the West in the late 90s, and on the "heavy financial burden being imposed on the Polish people due to Poland's entering NATO." I interviewed five representatives of the Russian political elite – two officials (employees of the Government Press Service), two State Duma (Parliament) Members and the Director of a newly established Internet Newspaper, who is both a businessman and a politician. Neither of them mentioned Poland's becoming a member of NATO as a negative factor for bilateral relations between our two countries. One of the people I interviewed, a former Russian diplomat who worked for a long time in Poland, made a remarkable statement: "A Russian who has lived and worked in Poland for at least several months and gotten to know the Poles usually becomes a Polonophile, or, one could say, falls in love with this country." In response to my question about the Russian foreign policy priorities regarding Poland, the Deputy Press Relations Director for the RF Government said: "Poland is of interest to us first of all as a transit country for the transport of gas; second, in connection with Kaliningrad; and third, in relation to support for Chechen separatism." The Press Secretary of one of the Federal Ministers was quite blunt: "The Poles are rather unfriendly towards us. I sensed this attitude during my visits to Poland even when I was one of the many members of government delegations." I asked Vladislav Borodulin, the Director and owner of the new Internet-based news service "gazeta.ru," why the Russian media is paying so little attention to Poland. His answer was: "For Russia, Poland is a transit country, interesting from the point of view of transporting raw materials to Western Europe, and for sending consumer goods in the opposite direction, especially used cars. Despite its rapid economic growth, Poland is not attractive to young Russians, because it does not have a developed high-tech sector, as does, for example, Ireland."

2) Business People (street-vendors, small and big business actors). The so-called average citizen, in the new economic conditions in which the government is no longer capable of providing financial support for all citizens, is forced to make his own living and is in constant search of additional sources of income. People often go abroad to buy things and resell them in Russia. These people have developed their own standpoint regarding the countries they visit, and their point of view is quite telling: their views depend primarily on their own practical experience.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 19.

A significant group of the part of Russian society which deals with Poland on a regular basis consists of those who go to Poland as a part of the process of the transit of second-hand cars bought in Germany, Switzerland or Holland to Russia via Polish territory. As a rule most of them have a rather negative impression of Poland, that of a country where crime and racketeering are prospering – not only because Russian gangsters have settled in Poland, but also because of corruption among the local Polish police, who collaborate with Russian and Polish extortionists. In this regard the recommendations of the author of the book “How to Drive Home a Foreign Car”³⁶ are quite typical when he says that “the best way to lose your car is to drive through Poland.”

3) Intelligentsia. The intelligentsia may be termed a part of the “elite” only with some explanation of the use of the term. This group never had the opportunity to influence political decisions, or, with very rare exceptions, any privileges or property. Many dissidents also belonged to this group, and their specific influence and impact on the Soviet system is difficult to measure. Some view them as the driving force for the political changes that took place in the USSR; others view them as quite marginal to society today.

The Soviet intelligentsia of the 60s and 70s viewed Poland as a “window to the West,” a country with greater freedom, “the most cheerful barracks in the socialist camp.” An example of such a description comes from the Russian translator Konstantin Dushenko, in his article, “A Polish Man and a Polish Woman in the Eyes of Russians,” published in a collection of articles by Jagellonian University.³⁷

Another example of this attitude shown in an article entitled “If I Were a Pole...” by the writer Viktor Yerofeyev, who writes that “Russians were seeking the West in Poland, but they discovered a very likeable country with a sense of irony, humor and courage. Every beautiful young girl in Russia would assert that she had a Polish grandmother. The mythical Polish grandma was a symbol not only of exquisite beauty, but also of nobility and aristocracy.”³⁸

One of my interlocutors was my car mechanic, Magomed, a graduate from a technical College and from Dagestan, a Muslim Caucasian nation that remains friendly towards the Russians. When I asked him whether he would opt for Polish or Dutch electric light bulbs, he replied that he would certainly purchase the Dutch ones although they might be more expensive. When questioned regarding his general attitude to the Poles, he said: “They have every right to hate us (he considers himself a part of the Russian nation) because what we did to our neighbor should never be forgiven.”

To check some of stereotypes and perceptions I conducted an opinion poll among 100 inhabitants of Moscow. We surveyed 100 Muscovites in April, 2002. The survey was conducted by the students of Moscow State University on a random basis. Four questions were asked. 1)

³⁶ Òðááèéíá À.Ñ. Êáè ÿ ðèáíáðü èíí áðèó. Íèáééé Ííááíðíá: «Áðá áà», 1997. Ñí ðááí-ííá ÿ íííáèá äëý øðíéíáí èðóáá ááðíéíáèðáèé, ááèáíèò ÿ ðèíáðáðè ááðíí íáèüü èííððáííáí ÿ ðíèçáíáðáà; ñíááðáèò èíóíðí áðèíí í áíáá áíí áèðá ÿ ðíáéá ù.

³⁷ . Konstantin Dushenko, „Polak i Polka w oczach Rosjan.” *Narody i Stereotypy*, Krakow, 1995. Miedzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, s. 158-164.

³⁸ Áèèðíð Áðíóááá, Ì óáè-èíú. «Áóáü ýí íëýèíí ...». Ñðð. 95-104.

“Do you believe in the possibility of Russian-Polish reconciliation?” 2)“Do you think that Russians should feel guilty towards the Poles for the troubles they caused them?” 3)“Do you think that the Poles should be grateful to the Russian for economic assistance in the first years after World War II?”, 4)“Do you know what happened in Katyn?” The respondents had to provide their gender, age, profession, and nationality. In response to the first question, 66 respondents firmly said “Yes.” 13 respondents replied with a “No.” And 21 (one fifth) said that there was no need to reconcile because we never quarreled with them. Replying to question two, 21 respondents firmly said “Yes.” 70 respondents - the overall majority - said “No.” And 9 respondents did not know anything about this subject and did not say anything about this matter.

Replying to the question number three, 59 respondents firmly said “Yes.” 26 respondents said “No,” and 15 respondents had not heard anything about Soviet or Russian economic assistance in the years after World War II. The most interesting results are drawn from the responses to the question about Katyn: 33 respondents said firmly “Yes,” providing a description of what happened in Katyn. They were explicit, saying “[T]hat was a murder.” 2 respondents said “Yes” without going into details. 34 percent did not know. 12 of them had heard something, but did not know exactly what. And 21 confused the mass killings of Polish officers in Katyn with the German massacre in the Belorussian village of Khatyn during World War II, where a large memorial complex was built in the middle of the 1970s.

Russian-Polish History in Twentieth Century: Blank Pages, Hot Spots of History or the Obstacles On the Way to Reconciliation

If I were a Pole I would easily prove to those Russians that they have neither a conscience, nor a historical memory. I would conduct a public opinion poll in Russia, and it would show that not more than 5 percent of Russians are aware of what happened in Katyn. They are still confident that it is the Germans, who should be blamed for Katyn.” Viktor Yerofeyev, Russian Essayist and Writer. “If I were a Pole...”³⁹

After reading the books and newspapers I have collected a list of the most controversial topics in the history of Russian-Polish relations in twentieth century – the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920; the separation of Poland by Hitler and Stalin in 1939; Katyn and the death of Polish officers in 1940; Warsaw Uprising of 1944 and the destiny of AK (General Leopold Okulicki); Soviets in the post-War Poland, the implementation of Yalta treaties and elections fraud in 1947; the workers uprising in 1956 and the danger of Soviet intervention; martial law of 1981 the possibility of Soviet military intervention and the role of General Jaruzelski.

The Joint Commission of the Historians of Russia and Poland has existed since November, 1965. Until 1989 the Soviet side was headed by the famous archeologist and academician Boris Rybakov. Currently, the Russian Co-Chairman of the Commission serves as a Corresponding Member of The Russian Academy of Science as well as the Director of the Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Science, Vladimir Volkov. The Polish side of the Commission was

³⁹ *Âèèðð Æððâââ, «Áóüü ýï îëýêñ ...»* Published in the book “Males” (“Ï óæ-èíú”). p.104.

headed by famous Polish historians including the late Aleksander Gieysztor. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union the main subject of the Commission's research was "Russian-Polish revolutionary cooperation against czarism." In the late 1980s ideological dogmas were slowly disappearing. As current Secretary of the Commission Svetlana Falkovich told me, it became possible for historians to get into complicated and forbidden topics, the "dark pages of the past."

After Mikhail Gorbachev came to power, Soviet historians received more opportunities for investigating the truth about the history of relations between the USSR and its neighbors, about the somber history of those relations, including oppression by the state on grounds of ethnic origin, and the exile of entire nations. Nevertheless, the resistance of former Communists or of the "security services" was quite significant. In those days the former Polish leader General Wojciech Jaruzelski bluntly questioned the Soviet leadership's acknowledgment of the historical truth about the Katyn tragedy. The so-called joint commission on the "blank pages of history" was then established. A group of Soviet historians, which included Valentina Parsadinova, a scholar who conducted painstaking research, has done a lot to reveal documents and facts about the Katyn tragedy and to have them officially recognized.

The role of the "Memorial" NGO, and especially of its Polish section headed by the late Anna Grishina, who collected all existing notes, documents and letters revealing traces of Poles who had disappeared in many areas of Russia and the former Soviet Union, is extremely important. In her final article prepared for the magazine *Novaya Polsha* (№9, 2000) Grishina recalled her last stay in Poland in 1992, when "Memorial" jointly organized with the Poles. "The Week of Conscience" in Warsaw. During the conference "Memorial" organized an exhibition of photos of Poles taken in Soviet prisons, camps and custody. "The Poles responded highly emotionally to all of these photos," writes Grishina. "What surprised us most of all was that the Poles appreciated the exhibition and viewed it with a feeling of gratitude." (*Novaya Polsha*, No. 9, 2000).

We were the representatives of that country which caused so much trouble for Poland. And yet the Poles responded to us with attention, care and gratitude. I was approached by people on the streets wishing to say "Thank you!" for our actions. They did not judge us by our nationality, but by our actions" (Grishina). "When you are doing work of that kind you start to realize that history in general, especially in crucial times, is first of all the history of average people."

The fate of Soviet historians such as Valentin Alekseyev (1924-1994) from St. Petersburg, who persistently attempted to disclose the truth about Russian-Polish relations and events in Poland, has frequently been quite dramatic. During his lifetime he was never able to publish his books about the Warsaw Uprising (1944), or about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943) ("The Ghetto Does Not Exist Anymore"). Because of the strict regulations in Soviet historiography as to what could and could not be published they were printed only after his death in 1999. Alekseyev was fired from his job several times for his protests against the party dictatorship. He later found employment in other colleges, where he was duly appreciated for his knowledge and understanding of history, only to be fired again for his disagreements with party officials and supervisors.

conspiracy between Stalin and Hitler in 1939 which foreshadowed the destruction of the Polish elite, army and its statehood itself by the fourth separation of Poland. Katyn means secret massive executions, the shooting of 22 thousand prisoners of the three special concentration camps for the military (Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkov camps) and of the prisons of Western Belarus and Ukraine in the spring of 1940. The truth about this crime is really a touchstone regarding the relations between these neighbors. Even though the Soviet Union had made every attempt to conceal the truth about Katyn and had forced the Polish political elite to do the same, history has shown that this was in vain. In order to eliminate the tension both nations now need a clear and full-scale resolution of this problem.⁴¹

A historian, Boris Orlov, published a review of the *The Katyn Syndrome* book in *Uchitelskaya Gazeta* (a teachers' newspaper), in which he rightly noted that "the truth about Katyn should be presented in school textbooks on history, because future generations should know about the mistakes and crimes of their foregoers to avoid repeating them."

In recent times, however, the same historians who used to work enthusiastically on bringing the truth to light have unfortunately turned to mutual accusations and arguments on who contributed more to the investigation, and who revealed more truths about the Katyn tragedy. I witnessed the quarrel between Inessa Yazhborovskaya and Natalya Lebedeva at a seminar at the Polish Institute in Moscow (November 20, 2001) about the quality of Lebedeva's recent volume on Katyn. Yazhborovskaya blamed Lebedeva for giving inaccurate names and figures and for misspelling Polish names. But the main reason for Yazhborovskaya's anger was Lebedeva's rush to publish and disclose some of the documents that were found by Yazhborovskaya and Parsadanova in the archives. Since Lebedeva had been the first to disclose the documents she became very popular among Polish journalists and was awarded a Polish medal.

Russian historians were unable to take a united stand against those who claim that "nothing wrong happened in Katyn." Some historical publications have appeared in this context, such as a book by Mikhail Meltyukhov called *Soviet-Polish Wars: Military and Political Confrontation in 1918-1939*.⁴² This historian believes that the Soviet-Polish military confrontation between the two World Wars was a natural sequel to the struggle the Russian and the Polish states have waged for ages – "the fight for political influence over the region."⁴³ Meltyukhov sees this situation in its historical context, the post-Versailles world, where he believes that Soviet Russia was acting correctly by standing up for its own geopolitical interests in the region. This point of view can be used to justify the execution of the Polish officers in 1940.

⁴¹ Ôæëí Á.Ì .Áç ñëëáíë íá íáñòíÿðæúñòáà í íëððè-âñëëááíñí ñ ëíáíëÿ, Ì ., 1999.

⁴² Ì .È.Ì æúðòíá, Ñíáâñéí-í íëúñëëá áíëíú: áíáíí-í íëððè-âñëíá í ðíðëáíñòíÿëá 1918-1939. Áâ-á Ì ññëá 2001.

⁴³

Ibid.

p.

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going to stop developing and publishing various new history textbooks.” The development of pluralism, of course, is extremely important for the free discussion of historical issues and for encouraging students to make their own decisions about historical events and processes. Yet pluralism of education no longer seems to be a value of the state. According to *Moscow News*, the Government is aiming at unification in most aspects of the education process.

The fact that the Polish theme has not been dealt with very often in Russian school history textbooks makes the availability of a range of views and of objective information even more important. Take the textbook *The Modern Twentieth Century History for the 9th Grade* published by “Drofa.” As in many other textbooks, there is not a single mentioning of Katyn . It does include photos of Pope John Paul II and Lech Walesa. The Pope’s picture is captioned as follows: “Prior to being elected Pope John Paul II served as a Polish Cardinal.”⁴⁷ There is no mention of Walesa, his role in Polish politics, or his relationship with the then cardinal.

The section on martial law in Poland reads:

...the USSR was struggling with economic and financial burden related to the arms race and other needs of the Cold War. So when the anti-socialist movement grew active in Poland in the end of 1981, the Soviet leaders could not use the Czechoslovakia variant. In conditions of a rapidly developing military conflict in Afghanistan, there were insufficient resources to occupy Poland. As a result the Polish leaders only introduced martial law (December 13, 1981), enforced exclusively by the local army, police and security service.⁴⁸

The section on World War II and on the Yalta Conference reads:

Discussions on post-war Poland caused the most arguments at the Conference. The USSR intentions were to establish a pro-Soviet government there; however, the Polish government headed by Stanislaw Mikolajczyk had been operating from London throughout the whole war period. Britain and the USA insisted on its participation in forming the future government of Poland. Thus the post-war conflict between the West and the USSR was born during arguments on Poland.⁴⁹

On August 1, 1944 the patriot groups of Poland, supported by the Mikolajczyk government, raised an anti-Hitler revolt in Warsaw. The vanguard units of the Red Army were already close to the Eastern suburbs of the city, which allowed the rebels hope for success. However, their victory would mean establishing Mikolajczyk’s government in Warsaw. That is why the attack of the Soviet troops was suddenly stopped. Stalin responded very vaguely to all requests by Churchill and Roosevelt, and finally made his negative attitude towards the revolt

⁴⁷ N.Í.Áóðeí, Íráæçæý ëñòíðèý, ÕÕ áæ, ó÷ááíeê æëý íáúááðàçíáàòæúíúõ ó÷ááíúõ çáàáááíeé æëý 9 èèàññà Äðíòà Ì ïñéàà 2000 áíä. p.294.

⁴⁸ N.Í.Áóðeí, Íráæçæý ëñòíðèý, ÕÕ áæ, ó÷ááíeê æëý íáúááðàçíáàòæúíúõ ó÷ááíúõ çáàáááíeé æëý 9 èèàññà Äðíòà Ì ïñéàà 2000 áíä. p.281.

⁴⁹ N.Í.Áóðeí, Íráæçæý ëñòíðèý, ÕÕ áæ, ó÷ááíeê æëý íáúááðàçíáàòæúíúõ ó÷ááíúõ çáàáááíeé æëý 9 èèàññà Äðíòà Ì ïñéàà 2000 áíä.,p.187.

clear. In the meantime the patriots in Warsaw were heroically fighting with the Nazis for two months, but by the end of August the revolt was fiercely put down.⁵⁰

There is a special Section entitled “The Tragic History of Poland.” The Section starts with the following words:

As you already know, at the end of the eighteenth century Russia, Prussia and Austria carried out three petitions of Poland. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact practically meant the fourth one for this country. And only a week after it had been signed the Nazis invaded Poland.”⁵¹ On September 17, after the major troops of the Polish army had been destroyed, the USSR occupied the Eastern regions of Poland. Officially no war was declared. It was stated that the Red Army was carrying out the liberation mission for the sake of freedom of Western Ukraine and Belarus population from under the Polish oppression. Practically Poland stopped its existence as an independent state.⁵²

This textbook does not refer at all to the Soviet-Polish war of 1920. In all fairness, however, there is an appendix dealing in the text on this war with detailed issues for students preparing for university admissions exams with information on detailed preparations for the war from the Polish side; b) attacks of the Polish troops, main areas of the attack, and the invaded territories; c) attack of the Red Army: objectives, participating troops, directions, results; d) counter attack of the Polish army: directions, objectives, reasons for success; and e) Riga Peace Treaty: reasons, foundations, meaning.

These excerpts prove that there are some changes for the best in the history textbooks, when it comes to the so-called blank pages of Russian-Polish relations. At least the story of the Warsaw Uprising and the role of the Red Army is mentioned. However, only one textbook mentions the Katyn crime,⁵³ and none of them mention the destiny of *Armia Krajowa* commanders, mass deportations of the Poles and the other blank spots that I have named above.

For institutions of higher education at which Polish history is studied in greater detail, the textbook *Summary History of Poland* was issued in 1993.⁵⁴ It speaks rather objectively of Polish history from the ancient times up to 1990. This textbook now is in need of updating, but this is not possible because of funding constraints. In 1995, the textbook *History of Poland from Ancient to Modern Times* was published in Poland, and was then translated into Russian.⁵⁵ It represents the Polish point of view on many events of Russian-Polish history.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 187.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 162.

⁵² Ibid. p. 162.

⁵³ Á.Á.Øñòàèíá, Ì.Ì.Áíðèíá, Á.Á.Áÿçá ñèèé. Ëñòíðèÿ íòá-áñòáá, ÕÕ áá, 9 èéáññ. Ì íá ðááàèòèáé Á.Í. Ñáòáíáá. Ì ñèéáá, Ì ðíñááíáéá 2001 áíá. Ñòð. 192-193.

⁵⁴ Ëðáòèáÿ èñòíðèÿ Ì íèóè. Ñ áðáíáéèð áðá á áñ íáèð áíáé. ÐÁÍ. Ëíñòèðòò ñèááÿíáááíèÿ è ááèèáíèðèèè. «Íáóèá». Ì ñèéáá 1993.

⁵⁵ Áèèèèÿ Áúáéíáñèáÿ, Ì áèáíáòà Áðóí, Bí Áðóí. Ëñòíðèÿ Ì íèóè ñ áðáíáéèð áðá á áñ íáèð áíáé. Íáó-ííáèçáàðáèóñòáí Ì ÁÍ, Ááðóá, 1995.

It is not easy to see contemporary events or those of the recent past objectively, and this is clearly reflected in school textbooks. Today we can say that the historians from both sides have more or less similar views regarding events which took place fifty or more years ago. For example, if a textbook speaks about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and of the partition Poland in 1939, it omits the Katyn crime as something of little importance that can be passed over in order not to be overly self-critical.

An official of the Russian Ministry of Education, Nadezhda Mikhaylovna Donets, on March 1, 2002 told me that a new Russian-Polish Commission on History, Geography and Literature textbooks is due to be established in June 2002. According to her, a Joint Commission on the textbooks did exist before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Then, "we had a break of 10 years. In autumn of 2001 the Poles expressed their interest in reactivating the Commission," she said. This seems to be quite a promising and positive move towards the "thicker" reconciliation.

How Russian Journalists View Polish-Russian Relations and What Obstacles They See on the Way to Better Relations between Russians and Poles

Since 1999, the tone of the Russian press about Poland has turned from negative to neutral or even amicable.

Some of the reasons for this change lie in the actions of the Polish Embassy in Moscow as well as the NATO Press Service. It became quite proactive in the last couple of years in working with Russian journalists. The leading authors of *Izvestiya*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, and *Moskovskiy Novosti* told me that they have been traveling to Poland on various occasions to interview Polish politicians and officials. The Polish Embassy in Russia invites Russian journalists to attend NATO maneuvers. Slowly the tone of the Russian press about Poland's joining NATO is softening in comparison to 1999, when *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* wrote that "Poland is voluntarily moving towards [a] heart attack."

In conversations with me, some of the Russian journalists who cover military issues agreed that they are traveling more often to NATO headquarters in Brussels, rather than to the military regiments of the Russian army in the provinces. And of course the more they learn about NATO operations, the more they realize "how much more needs to be done in the Russian Army to improve its infrastructure, as Poland and the other East European countries have already begun to do."

The issue of Poland's supporting Chechnya and the activities of the Chechen Information Bureau in Krakow gradually disappeared from the pages of Russian television and from TV screens.

Many journalists emphasized that the introduction of a visa regime for Russians visiting Poland and Central Europe had worsened Russia's relations with its Central and East European neighbors even more than the problem of the expansion of NATO. (And not only journalists would be upset about that!) Under pressure from the European Union, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic all introduced visas for Russians. This was bad for tourism, for bilateral exchanges, for the image of these countries in Russia, and certainly was not a factor working for

reconciliation. Freedom of movement is obviously an important issue for many Russians after the collapse of the Soviet Union, yet many countries are closing their borders for an obvious and understandable reason – to prevent the spread of crime and to stop illegal immigrants. Nevertheless, the general perception of almost all of my interlocutors in the journalism community was that the Central European countries are trying to cut themselves off from Russia through the introduction of the visas, something which rules out any question of reconciliation. Russian visitors are required to obtain visas to enter almost every country, and the process can be highly irritating especially when Consular sections of the various Embassies treat people as suspicious characters in humiliating fashion. A solution to this problem could be one of the most significant steps toward the improvement of relations.

Religious Element of Russian-Polish Reconciliation

The relations between states and religions are obviously very different issues. In the case of Russian-Polish relations the religious component of Russian-Polish reconciliation are closely linked to the relationship between the Polish Roman Catholic and the Russian Orthodox Churches. This parallel results from the churches' closely identifying with their states, trying to impact state policy, and seeing the other nation's church not as its ally in spreading the gospel, but as its competitor and adversary.

Regardless of the Constitutional clause on the separation of church and state, the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on state affairs is becoming more and more visible. President Putin is the first leader to have received the blessing of Patriarch Aleksiy II. The Patriarch is now acknowledged as one of the Federal leaders whose rank is equal to Vice Premier.

In the conditions of the crisis during the shift from one social system to another, many Russians have turned to religion for moral protection and support. Russian Orthodoxy is viewed by many as a core part of being Russian. Currently there are 22,000 Russian Orthodox parishes compared to 16,000 in 1991.⁵⁶

Some people view religion as fashion, some as part of national identity. But what remains absolutely clear is that the Russian Orthodox Church is institutionalizing itself as part of the state. It has good connections in the Army, in FSB and in MFA. How would they have otherwise been able to cancel the Russian entrance visa for Polish born Mgr. Jerzy Mazur, the Catholic Bishop of the Irkutsk diocese in eastern Siberia, if they were not well connected to the government?

To illustrate the influence and revival of the Orthodox traditions, I will quote from the business daily *Vedomosti*: "The revival of the Orthodox traditions in Russian society affects the business of alcohol manufacturers. This year because of Orthodox Lent the sales of alcohol fell about 30 percent." In April, the biggest winery in Russia sold 6000 deco-liters of wine per day instead of the usual 10,000 deco-liters. "It is the result of Orthodox Lent," said Sergey Nikitin, who is a marketing director for the Moscow winery. According to a public opinion poll taken in

⁵⁶ *Vremya Novostey*, February 19, 2002.

March by ROMIR, only 24 percent of Russians follow Lent. However, 27 percent of respondents said that they are trying to follow Lent, although not always very successfully.”⁵⁷

Nevertheless, The Russian Orthodox Church has experienced strong competition in struggling for influence over the souls and hearts of the Russians. In addition, upon the disintegration of the USSR and the separation of Ukraine the Moscow Patriarchy has lost many of its parishes. In particular, 22 parishes in Western Ukraine have turned from the Russian Orthodox to the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church.⁵⁸ In fact, in 1946 the Greek-Catholics were incorporated into the Orthodox Church with Stalin’s blessing.⁵⁹ The Greek Catholic Church acknowledges the primacy of the Pope, but has retained the Byzantine liturgy and other traditional Orthodox institutes. This Church was founded in 1596 during the Brest-Litovsk Council.

The Russian Orthodox Church decided to proclaim and to legally secure its religious monopoly in the territory of Russia. In the amended Federal Law on the Freedom of Worship and on Religious Associations, the term “canonical territory” has been introduced and the Catholic religion has been eliminated from the list of traditional religions and confessions in the territory of Russia, while the Moslems, the Jews and the Buddhists still remained on that list. The result has been a wave of anti-Catholic feeling that has been reflected in animosity towards Russia’s Catholic neighbor, Poland. And sensitivities here run particularly high since the head of the Catholic Church is a Polish Pope.

The ecumenical dialogue which was developing between the Catholic and the Orthodox believers starting from Vatican II, has been neglected in reality. The intolerance of the Russian Orthodox Church towards heterodoxy is especially visible in relation to the long planned visit of Pope John Paul II to Russia, which never took place. And a Slavic, Russian-speaking Pope could play a real role in fostering reconciliation between the two religions – and, since they are state religions, the two states.

In such an atmosphere any contact with the Vatican proves to be difficult. The Pope’s visit to Russia has been delayed a number of times because of unsettled relations with Moscow Patriarchy. Presidents Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin have invited the Pope to come to Russia, and for years the Vatican has been trying to coordinate these formal invitations with the Russian Orthodox Church. Formally, two invitations are required for the Pope to pay a visit to any country, one from the leader of the state and one from the local Catholic community. The February 2002 decision of the Vatican to enhance the status of Russian Catholic communities to metropolitan dioceses is most likely related to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has finally abandoned any hope of settling these issues with the Russian Orthodox Church and is determined to bring the Pope to Moscow this year. According to Moscow press reports, (*Novye Izvestiya*, February 16, 2002), this visit will take place despite the strongly negative position of the Patriarch and the Synod.

⁵⁷ *Vedomosti*, April 10, 2002, p. Á7.

⁵⁸ This figure is quite often used differently by different sides.

⁵⁹ “The fate of Greek-Catholics after World War II is maybe the most gloomy page in the history of agreement between Moscow Patriarchate and the Communists,” writes Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia) in his book “The Orthodox Church.” This book has been translated into Russian and published in Moscow in 2001.

At present, however, we are witnessing the escalation of the conflict between the Catholics and the Orthodox in Russia and there is no hope for reconciliation. In the last couple of months Archbishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, the Apostolic Administrator for Latin Rite Catholics in Northern European Russia, who usually hides from the press, has given more press conferences than ever before. The conflict between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church is developing rapidly. Indeed, the Russian Orthodox Church makes statements that it is worried about Catholic expansion. The Archbishop of Tashkent and Central Asia, Vladimir, said to *Izvestiya*,: “ Popes John XXIII and Paul VI were very kind and sincere people, and while they were in charge the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholics was very fruitful, and Latin expansion to Russia was impossible. The pontiff who took the name of John Paul II is not a religious activist, but a tough and insidious politician of the anti-Orthodox and anti-Russian character, who hides himself under the mask of a mellow elder.”⁶⁰

The Vatican as well as the Polish Catholic Church asked the Russian Orthodox Church for an apology, to which the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Aleksiy II, responded rather coldly. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church have called the Pope’s appeals “Western hypocrisy with the elements of show business.”⁶¹

The scale of the conflict reached the level of the parliament, and the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church decided to complain to the Federation Council Committee of on Foreign Affairs.⁶² In an interview with *Izvestiya*, Alexiy the Second used the word “reconciliation” and spelled out the conditions for a reconciliation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church. The Patriarch argued for a need to work out a joint position regarding major issues of inter-confessional relations. He believed that they should condemn the practice of proselytism in any form, agree that anything like the Union of Brest was and remains unacceptable, and recognize and follow the principle of canon territory. This proposal reveals the need to find a solution to the long-lasting conflict between the Greek Catholic Church and the Orthodox in western Ukraine, where three Orthodox dioceses were destroyed in Lvov, Ternopol and Ivano-Frankovsk. The Vatican needs to abandon the practice of proselytism among traditionally Orthodox population of Russia and CIS.⁶³

In other words, from the current state of tensions and conflicts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, it is indeed doubtful that either of the churches is about to play a major role in Russian-Polish reconciliation. And this is particularly regrettable at a time when the leader of the Catholic Church is a Slav who, better than any Pope in the past, could play that role.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ãëääà Ðóííêéé ì ðääííëääíé öäðëäë öíëíáí íðíííý è ì ðííúáá Èíáíá Ĩ ääëà Áòíðíáí í ì ðíúáëè. May 7, 2001. (<http://www.rambler.ru/db/news/msg.html?>) And also my private conversation with Andrey Zolotov Jr., a reporter from *The Moscow Times* and a specialist in inter-confessional affairs.

⁶² *Kommersant Daily*, May 13, 2002

⁶³ Èíòäáúþí äððëäððà Ì ííëíáíëíáí è ÁíäýÐóíë ÀëëáíëýII äàçáðá«Èçáíððëý,” 13 ì äý2002 äíäà.

Art and Culture as Elements for Rapprochement and Reconciliation

During the Soviet period part of the Russian intelligentsia viewed the Polish system as a possible alternative to the existing Soviet regime. This was confirmed by such popular Russian sayings as: “Poland is the most happy barracks of the socialist camp”, “Socialism has a human face in Poland.” The Russian writer Viktor Yerofeyev wrote: “the image of Poland has been especially attractive to Russians from the time of Khrushchev’s “thaw” to the victory of *Solidarnosc*. A whole generation has loved Poland as a transmitter of Western values (cinema, jazz, theatre). The *Polsha* magazine published in Russian played a particularly important role here. The Russians were seeking to find the West in Poland, but what they discovered was a truly likeable nation with its own sense of irony, humor and courage.”⁶⁴

The role of art and cultural exchanges are very significant in Russian-Polish reconciliation because these help each country view the other in a positive way. Opinion-makers and cultural leaders can and are playing a leading role in overcoming mutual prejudices and stereotypes.

According to the latest polls in 2001, the number two position in the list of most popular Poles in Russia is occupied by Barbara Brylska, who acted in the tremendously popular movie of the late Soviet period «Èðíèÿ ñóäüáú» (“The Irony of Fate”). In the late 90s, teenage girls in Moscow were also very fond of Joanna Chmielewska, the author of the so-called “ironic detective novels.” (Many of my students told me about that.) One of the most popular musicals in Moscow is “Metro,” staged by a Polish director. Movies by Andrzej Wajda, Krzysztof Kieszlowski, Janusz Zaorski and other Polish directors have always been popular with Russian audiences. And the Russian actor, Alexander Domogarov, who played the Cossack, Bohun in the Polish movie “With Fire and Sword” by Jerzy Hoffman, has become so popular that Polish women have created “The Domogarov Women’s Fan Club” (*Klub Milosniczek Domogarova*). This actor participated in a project in one of the Krakow theatres, and his admirers often come from all over Poland to see him perform.

The Russian public still remembers the life and songs of Anna Herman, who spent most of her life in the former Soviet Union, in Kazakhstan, where she lived when her Polish family was exiled to territory of the Soviet Union. She became very popular in the 1980s and despite making global tours, she was ironically unpopular in Poland because of her «Russian connections.» In February 2002 one of the most popular Russian weeklies *Argumenty i Fakty* published a glowing series of memoirs about Anna Herman, proving that she is still remembered by Russians.

A striking example of the possibility for art to play a role in reconciliation was provided by the famous Polish Oscar-winning film maker Andrzej Wajda, who declared in his interview with the Russian weekly *Izvestiya* (April 3, 2002) that a movie about the Katyn crime ought to be made jointly by Russia and Poland.⁶⁵ Wajda, whose previous film works could be characterized as landmarks on the way of Polish-German (“Spring in Germany”) and Polish-Jewish (“Holy Week”) reconciliation, is currently working on the movie project about Katyn. Wajda is eager to

⁶⁴ Àèèèìð Àðíòää. «Áóäü ýí ïèÿèì ...»

⁶⁵ Àíääé Áäèà: òèèüì í Èàòùfè äîèääí áúòü ðíññèéñêî-í ïèüñèèì. «Èçáñòèÿ,” 3 äè ðèÿ 2002 äíää.

find a Russian counterpart to participate in this project. “I hope that I will be able to interest Russian film makers in this project, because the tragedy of Katyn is a tragedy that touched upon the destiny of both nations.”⁶⁶

The problem of the Katyn tragedy has also been dealt with by another famous Polish artist, the composer and conductor Krzysztof Penderecki. Though one of his recent works is called “The Katyn Requiem,” he does not harbor anti-Russian sentiments, performing in Moscow or in St. Petersburg almost every year. In 2002, Penderecki even worked on a big project in St. Petersburg related to the 300th anniversary of the city.⁶⁷

Most of my Russian interlocutors, especially the academics, agree that cultural interaction between Russia and Poland is a significant element for reconciliation. Russian and Poland have finally agreed to the mutual return of the archives and artistic treasures removed during World War II. Russians have received a list of 18 pieces of art that were removed from Poland to the Soviet Union over World War II and are now stored or displayed in Russian museums. Russia has agreed to accept a group of Polish experts to view the art works to confirm that they belong to Poland. This event is also quite a significant step towards reconciliation.

The Issue of Compensation of the Victims or Family Members of Victims of Stalin's Purges

Compensation to the victims of the Nazi regime was the final stage in the process of Germany's reconciliation with its neighbors and with nations that had suffered from Hitler's actions. Polish representatives have raised the issue of Stalin's purges of the Poles with Russia as the successor state of USSR. After the division of Poland in 1939, several hundreds thousand Poles were sent to the GULAG (Stalin's prison camp network) and to the so-called “special settlements.”⁶⁸ As I mentioned above, about 22,000 of them were murdered in these camps and settlements between 1939-1940.

In 1941-1942 the majority of Polish citizens was freed from the camps and some left the USSR. Many of them left as a part of General Anders Army in 1942. Others left the USSR in 1944, when the Poles were evacuated to the “new lands” (“ziemie odzyskane”). Some Russian historians believe that Poland has already received compensation for the victims of the Stalinist purges, because Germany has returned those lands which were captured by Hitler in 1939, and because Poland has also received more than 100 thousand square kilometers of pre-war German territory.⁶⁹

On September 28, 2000 Vladimir Grivenko suggested in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, that “... Poland should be able to find a solution for the compensation problem using its own sources for

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Interview by Julia Kantor with Krzysztof Penderecki , *Êæøíô Ì áääæøèèé: ß õíðæ áú ñòàòü ñàáíàèèñ. Izvestiya*, April 6, 2002.

⁶⁸ Mikhail Geller and Alexander Nekrich in the book «Óðíí èÿ ó âèãñðè» (Ì ññèàà, Ì ÈÈ, 2000) emphasized that in 1939-1942 about 1,000,080 Poles and citizens of Poland were deported to the Ural mountains in Siberia. The figures of the deportations vary. According to Robert Conquest, 200,000 Polish citizens were sent to the camps and 620,000 were sent into exile. p. 379.

⁶⁹ *Áèääèèèð Áðèääáéí. 100 òùñÿ: èäääðàðíóò èèèñ ððíá è äðóãÿð ððèòí ððèè. Í «ãðóçá ï ðíæíáí» á ðíññèèñèí-í ïèüñèèð ïðíæíÿ.* (September 28, 2000), *Dipkourier Supplement to Nezavisimaya Gazeta*.

the citizens or their heirs who were repressed by the Bolsheviks, or else compensation would be paid by Russia from the debt obligations to Poland⁷⁰.”

The issue of compensation to the Polish victims of Stalin’s purges was also raised by the Polish side during the visit of President Putin to Poland in January, 2002. Former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Bronislaw Geremek said in the interview with *Gazeta Wyborcza*, “I believe that the list of problems for which discussion is needed is well known. We should forget none of them including the problem of compensation to the Siberians.”⁷¹ (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 16, 2002).

On January 16, 2002, President Putin in answering a question of Polish journalists about compensation to those who had suffered from Stalin's repressions, "kindly suggested that the Poles should apply Russian law about the compensation to the victims of political repression to themselves." In relation to this *Novye Izvestiya* (January 18, 2002) sarcastically noted that the main problem is "such law does not exist." The President was probably referring to another law "About the rehabilitation of the victims of Political Repressions," where there are some small references to compensation.”

Novye Izvestiya writes: "However, the relatives of the victims could not expect anything. Our law does not include any compensation to the relatives of those murdered, but only some benefits like free train tickets. And this law could be applied only to Russian citizens or to foreigners who could prove that they were repressed on Russian territory starting in 1917"⁷². In addition, Russian law acknowledges a foreigner as being repressed in Russia only when he or she had been found guilty by the Supreme Court of the USSR. Those or the relatives of those who were not found guilty by the Supreme Court and were imprisoned or shot, could expect no compensation for their sufferings, or the suffering of their ancestors.

President Putin said that “one could not compare and treat equally the actions of the Third Reich and the actions of the Soviet Union.” This way Putin has again demonstrated a failure to understand (or a lack of willingness to understand) the problem of the mass killings of the Poles between 1939-1940. One of my interlocuters. Veslava Yerofeyeva-Skura, also expressed this idea in the interview to the weekly *Inostranets* (March 5, 2002) and said that Putin's statements demonstrated a complete misunderstanding of the Polish psychology, although his visit to Poland was quite well prepared from the point of view of public relations technique. According to Weslava Yerofeyeva-Skura, “President Putin was supposed to say:

Look at our economic situation, we are not Germany, we are poor. We have starving pensioners and hundreds of thousands of homeless people. Russia is not able to pay compensation right now. But we grieve and apologize for what happened in 1940 and after the end of World War II. Mea culpa. The Poles would be able to appreciate this human confession. Talk about compensation will stop. And that will flatter the well-known

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *Gazeta Wyborcza*, January 16, 2002.

⁷² *ÍñâúâËçâñdèÿ, 18 ýñâöÿ2002 ãñà*

Polish sense "of honor." And obviously will enhance sympathy for Russia.⁷³

Unfortunately, the thoughts of a Polish person, who lives in Moscow for 20 years, and knows both Russian and Polish way of thinking, were not heard by the politicians, who are rarely able to utter statements that they – according to my private conversations with Kremlin officials – view as self-humiliating.

In general, it is gratifying that discussion has begun in Russian society of the issue of compensation to the Polish victims of Stalin, both, in the media and on the presidential level. That is definitely a progressive trend towards a “thicker” reconciliation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The internal evolution of Russia towards a more critical self-assessment is crucially important for reconciliation with its neighbors. President Putin, who came to power on the wave of the chauvinist anti-Chechen campaign and reintroduced the Soviet anthem is trying to take steps towards closer interaction with the former enemies of the Soviet Union as well as with countries the Soviets considered to be their satellites. His visit to Warsaw in January, 2002 proves that he does not want to ignore the hand outstretched to him. What he and his government can achieve depends to a great extent on his grasp of the international scene, where he seems to have been quite successful. And that has been proved by Russian policy since September 11, 2001.

The following steps are advisable on the path towards reconciliation:

* New History Textbooks (or the textbook if there would be the only one) should be created. The editors should include facts related to the mutual accusations. The Commission of the historians should recommend inclusion of references to the Katyn crime and other crimes of Stalin towards the Poles. The most recent findings of Russian historians about Katyn should be included in school textbooks as well. Textbooks should also contain more detailed information about the role that the Soviets played in dominating Poland and Central Europe after World War II; the repressions against the Armia Krajowa, the role of the Soviet Union during “martial law” in Poland; and the role of the Soviets in the post-war Poland, the implementation of the Yalta treaty and the elections fraud in 1946; the workers uprising in 1956 and the danger of Soviet intervention; martial law of 1981; the possibility of Soviet military intervention and the role of General Jaruzelski.

* Steps should be taken towards inter-confessional dialogue: Both sides need to make a clear explicit statement at the highest level (the Pope for Catholics, the Synod and Patriarch for the Orthodox) condemning the forced measures used by their churches against believers of different religions.

⁷³ Andrzej Walicki, (5 January 2002) interview with Woslawa Yerofeyeva, and my private conversation with her.

* The television and mass media, and those involved in art and culture should be more explicit in reporting about the harm inflicted by Russia on other nations, including the Poles, and promote reconciliation through joint productions.

* A solution to the compensation problem for the victims of Stalin's purges and their relatives should be found. This needs to be worked out by the Russian and Polish governments jointly.

The Russian position about reckoning with the past of Russian-Polish relations was stated on May 18, 2000, by Sergey Razov, Russian Ambassador to Poland, who currently works as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation:

New democratic Russia is not responsible for the crimes of Stalinism. They were decisively condemned in the joint statements made in 1993 by presidents Yeltsin and Walesa. The pronouncement of one of the hierarchs of the Polish Catholic Church, Archbishop Zyczinski, supported by many well-known politicians in Poland, that the Russian people are not responsible for the Katyn crime and that therefore the reconciliation between Russians and Poles is needed, has been vitally important. History must be made known. We should remember it, and learn lessons for the future. However, we cannot move ahead with looking backwards. We cannot view national reconciliation as a sequence of confessions and apologies of one of the sides. That is the way to nowhere.⁷⁴

That statement by a high-level Russian official, who fully realizes the importance of history and the past in determining the future of Russian-Polish relations, should be kept in mind by both sides as Russia and Poland move towards reconciliation, towards a future in which rancor and mutual accusations can be replaced by mutual respect and cooperation.

⁷⁴ *Ńadãæ Ðaçã: Íæuçÿ eãðè àí ãðã ñ í íãðíóðíé íaçãã àíííáíé. Í í ííãëþ í íñèà ÐÔ à Í íëüøã íà-èíàðü àèàèíã íóãí ñ àíññòàííãèãèý ãíããðý. “Äèí èóðüãð”. Í ðèèíãèãèã è «Íãçããèñèíèé áãçãðã” N 9, 18 íãý 2000, p. 3. («Dipkourier» Supplement to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, N 9, p. 3, May 18, 2000)*