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Polish-German Relations since 1945: A Source of Inspiration for Future Korean-Japanese Relations?

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[Session I -2]

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Speaking points

My life is personally and politically closely connected with Polish-German relations since 1945. Born in a part of Germany which is now part of Poland, I was, as one of the leading Members of the European Parliament, responsible for the EU-enlargement-policy towards Central and Eastern European countries which brought me into close contact with Polish matters, politicians and people.

Polish-German Relations since 1945 cannot be understood without a pertinent look on history before 1945. There is nothing in European history of the last thousand years, revolutions and restorations, Christianisation and Stalinisation, rivalry and conflict, state building and state destroying, glare and glory as well as suffering and scare, to which Poland was not closely related to. And so it was with Germany. History divides and history unites.

Historical truth and political trust: Germany had to accept that the result of the war and the extinction policy which it had started against Poland was the irrevocable loss of its eastern territories to Poland. And Poland had to accept that those territories had a centuries long German history. Nobody in Poland and in Germany can undo what has been done before, in and after the war. But both people do no longer live in the forties and fifties of the last century.

Security and credibility: First, the end of any irredentism in politics and propaganda in Germany, as well as the official and private belief in that end in Poland. Second, both countries are members in the same military and political alliance – NATO – under American leadership. For the first time in history Poland and Germany belong to the same camp.

Mutual cooperation and integration: EU-membership of both countries is merging different remembrances and different interests into common projects. After the self-liberalization of the Polish People, led by Solidarnosc, freedom, democracy, rule of law and market economy took place in Poland as it has been the case in Germany since forty years. Common values are the basis for mutual understanding of politicians and people.

Reconciliation needs political courage seizing a historical occasion to start a long lasting process and the patience to fuel it for a long time. And it needs to succeed in the most difficult undertaking – to overcome our mutual prejudices.

[Session II-1]

VIDEO MESSAGE
Old threats and new opportunities

20 years of relations between the democratic and free Poland and Germany

by

Prof. Irena Lipowicz, Human Rights Defender of the republic of Poland

Can one imagine a situation that could be more conducive to conflict than the relations between Poles and Germans after the end of World War II? The Polish, looking at the situation from the perspective of their ruined country, were aware of the extent of tragedy. From the very beginning of the war, they fought against Hitler and his army, survived the nightmare of German occupation and were treated as “subhumans.” In total, Poland lost 20% of its population, including nearly the entire Jewish community and the majority of its elites, murdered systematically because of their level of education following the implementation of "Generalplan Ost." The majority of Nazi death camps, with Auschwitz at the forefront, were set up in the territory of Poland, because the country was home to the majority of those who were supposed to be liquidated by the Nazis. MOREOVER, after the war Poland, formally a member of the anti-Hitler coalition, was immediately “handed over to Stalin” by its coalition partners FOLLOWING THE YALTA TREATY. CERTAINLY, the breaking of border barriers in AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact marked for the Polish the BEGINNING of a series of great tragedies, which included the Soviet occupation and crimes. It was, therefore, a bitter victory, and the blame for the disaster was generally attributed to Germans.

Germans, on their part, had the feeling of deep moral failure and suffered the loss of a great part of their territory. The decision concerning the DRAMATIC SHIFT of borderlines was made by the Allies and Stalin and had two crucial consequences: on the one hand Poles were chased out of the territory taken over by the USSR (or fled themselves from the war area), while on the other hand in the eyes of Germans, Poles were the new and foreign “hosts” who lived in their towns and villages, and sometimes evicted the former inhabitants who remained there after the march of the Red Army – *nota bene*, an atrocious experience for German civilians.

The conflict was therefore long-lasting and strong. Moreover, it was fuelled by Prussian and anti-Polish negative stereotypes rooted in the 19th century after Prussia occupied a large part of Poland for over a century. Also in Poland existed anti-German stereotypes understood in the light of the terrible

war experience. These traditional anti-Polish prejudices, were reinforced by the economic slump of the Communist system and the parallel economic growth of West Germany.

Bilateral relations between both countries and their governments were put on hold for a very long time, welcomed by Stalin who decided to move the western borders of Poland. The USSR was supposed to be the hated, but sole “security guarantee” for the millions of Poles in the Western Territory who feared that they would lose their home again. At the same time, West Germany followed the conservative public (CDU) and the Federation of the Expellees and postponed for a long time the signing of the frontier treaty recognizing the outcome of World War II. The stance of German left-wing party (SPD) did not bring any solution or a real breakthrough as *Realpolitik*. Poland remained the eternal social-democratic “complex.” Even though the repeated, bloody suppression of workers' protests showed the true colours of the system, the political opposition was not overtly supported because Germany feared that it would put in danger the warming up of its relations with the USSR. Many members of left-wing electorate had their roots in many Polish cities, formerly belonging to Germany.

Such a stark conflict requires an international organisation, e.g. the United Nations, to mediate in very long diplomatic negotiations. However, as you know this was completely impossible in the world hopelessly divided between two hostile blocks, the east and the west. At this point, the third actor: the church, mostly the Catholic Church in Poland and the Evangelic and Catholic Church in Germany, entered the stage of history.

At the beginning, the reconciliation process did not bring about a discussion on the treaty, norms or guilt, but was rather a series of symbolic gestures that laid the axiological fundament of mutual relations. I do not wish to quote historical facts here, but rather indicate a number of tools and forms of action, which may seem at first sight bizarre or irrational in the diplomatic world. Among these actions were a letter of Polish bishops, a pilgrimage, the symbolic act of cleaning the premises of the Auschwitz Museum by a group of young Germans, discussions among Christian intellectuals or a group of German youth who secretly arrived in Poland with group of pilgrims in order to meet Bishop Karol Wojtyla, later the Pope. Such were the modest beginnings of the reconciliation.

What can we learn from this story today? It shows the power of social activities and the power of the individual's sense of obligation. It proves that non-governmental organizations (foundations, associations) can operate today on a larger scale, focus on fashionable research analyses, closed debates and

popular “events.” They do not have to replace the state – which finally, following the advent of political freedom, resumed their normal activities – but can and should change societies. Such change is constantly needed.

The first attempt, undertaken in the 1960s by Cardinal Wyszynski (with his historical statement “we forgive and beg forgiveness”) provoked an initial outcry of protest in the Polish society, for whom the memory of the war crimes committed by Wehrmacht and the SS, and the consistent extermination of millions of civilians, was still very vivid. Communist authorities considered the protest a good opportunity for political legitimization and organized a real propagandist witch-hunt. However, Cardinal Wyszynski's second attempt proved successful. The Polish society trusted the Church and took the direction indicated by it, even though it was not, at the time, fully understood.

The response of the German Church to the historical reconciliation letter from Polish bishops was initially regarded as disappointing and considered too cold and restrained. However, the German Church had to face a fierce opposition of those who did not wish to surrender their former territories, and certainly did not want to ask Poles for forgiveness. In one of the conversations I had with German Cardinal Sterzinsky he mentioned an astonishing wave of hatred directed at him. It's worth mentioning that the Pope Benedict XVI was among the ones singing the letter. Luckily, also in this case the second attempt proved successful.

This story shows us that the first failure of an important social action is not critical, and that it should even be considered as part of the process of solving a long-lasting conflict; a wave of negative emotions must be endured. From the historical point of view, the most important merit of both Churches was not their first attempt, but rather their endurance and resistance to the “social storm” and the pursuit of actions. We should learn from this example.

What contributes to reconciliation today?

First of all – let's **institutionalize!** Poland and Germany co-funded two large independent institutions: the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and the Youth Cooperation Foundation, which finance mutual activities. Even if the amount generated in this manner seems minor, it is more attainable than any funds from European sources. The purpose of the foundations consists in providing support to Polish-German projects: meetings, actions aimed at creating partnerships, cooperation of local authorities and other institutions, promoting German language and culture in Poland, and Polish language and culture in Germany. It should also be noted that foundations undertake actions that are aimed at supporting economic relations between Poland and Germany,

in particular educational activities, seminars and conferences. An important aspect of this work is the protection of common cultural heritage. Moreover, the Foundation initiates and finances its own projects. Also a network was created which deals with the relieving the atrocious historical burden.

Secondly – reconciliation actions have no final target. It is a series of actions, a patient fight against stereotypes and hostility which will never be fully achieved. The recent tragic events (the mass murder) in Norway or, more importantly, their social background, show that the fight for the souls of new generations will never cease, and that we must continue to explain and convince. Indifference is not conducive to stable peace. A part of this understanding of reconciliation is the establishing of German – Polish team working on a common history school coursebook.

Thirdly – maintaining the civic character of the reconciliation process. The rapprochement of the two nations cannot result solely from actions undertaken by state administration and it is important that local authorities help, or even initiate and co-organize this process. At the same time, it is important to ensure that mutual relations are not subject to excessive bureaucracy. Ceremonial meetings that are deprived of any deeper meaning and limited to mutual declarations of good intentions do more harm than good, particularly in the eyes of the young generation, as they create the impression of empty promises. Projects submitted to the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation clearly indicate the need for concrete actions, for instance more satisfying results in terms of mutual recognition and respect were observed as the result of organizing a joint concert, competitions of fire brigades or journalism workshops for the youth. It is also relatively easy to reach a desirable level of results in cross-border projects carried out by neighbouring communes from the two countries. However, even in this respect there have been unpleasant surprises. It is obviously more difficult to undertake concrete actions with the distance of several hundred kilometres, but it is possible when cooperation is carried out in the professional domain, and when contacts are based on common interests and competences of individuals and companies. A certain degree of specialization seems necessary when it comes to organizing contacts between Polish and German youth. General meetings are far less popular than horse-riding, sport, dance or journalism camps. They provide a great opportunity for counteracting routine and a certain professional burnout.

Apart from concrete actions, it is important to constantly re-define contemporary challenges and all forms of cooperation connected with them. Times, people and economy change fast, and therefore it is important to look for new opportunities for UNDERSTANDING in new conditions (for instance, new

attitude to teaching Polish in German schools in the situation of opening the labour market) and define new, potential fields of conflict (for instance, a debate with German trade unions, also in relation to the opening of the labour market).

It is particularly important to monitor any threats posed by any extremist political movements, even of minor importance, and to discuss common positive values with the youth. In this respect, a debate on positive values: freedom, dignity, justice or democracy in Polish-German relations is more constructive than a defensive debate on potential threats such as racism and xenophobia. Naturally, the question of racism that violates human dignity will always be a BASIC element of a larger debate. It is, however, important to show first of all the desired situation, and only later any deviations from it, and not the other way round.

We should now aim at strengthening the process of Polish-German reconciliation and immunize it against future threats. Common perception of reconciliation as a success story of Poles and Germans over the past 30 years should be conducive to it. Polish and German diplomacy can use it as a subject of joint presentations. Scientific reflection should also be expanded. Even though the number of historical academic works on Polish-German reconciliation is constantly growing, we still know very little about it from the point of view of social psychology and the sociology of social conflicts. Political science has also not explored the subject FULLY. The most interesting, however, would be the analysis of the problem from the point of view of the idea of mediation and identification of specific mediators, that is social leaders on the central and local level.

I wish to conclude my speech with a remark on the role of action undertaken on the “local level” in both countries. I believe that we live our lives on the local level, even if one lives and works in a capital city. This is why in the process of making Polish-German reconciliation durable and significant, the key role should be played by local governments. Any initiatives and groups of social leaders should come from particular regions and it is the latter that will determine the quality of our neighbourly relations.

[Session II-2]

Albrecht Lempp

Talking points

- 1) The history of Polish-German relations after the 2nd World War can roughly be divided into 3 periods:**

- a) 1945-1965 “Zero”-period, no significant contacts and developments (St. Stomma)
- b) 1965-1989 “Laying the grounds for a dialogue of reconciliation”
 - The Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers (1965);
 - The “Ostpolitik” of Willy Brandt (1970) – bringing a new perspective to the Polish-German relations;
 - The Polish-German schoolbook committee, 1972 (Georg-Eckert-Institute);
 - Beginning of more intense economic and social exchange (Jumbo loan, church organizations).
 - The first twin-city partnership (Bremen and Gdansk in 1975);
 - A surge of help going to Poland starting in 1980/81 (“packages of solidarity”);
 - The Polish help to refugees from GDR in the fall of 1989 (“Tschüss DDR”)

First without and starting with Brandt’s Ostpolitik with the backing of the (West)German government individual people started to set up channels of communication between Poland and Germany – often with the help of church organizations and, on the side of Germany, based on a feeling of guilt for what Germans did to Poles during the 2nd World War. Politics was aimed at overcoming the East-West division (political dimension), while society and individual people were driven by a wish for reconciliation (moral dimension).

- c) 1989-now
 - The 2 dimensions merge into one. Politically and economically trust becomes the key word on the road to normalization.
 - The end of the East-West division and the unification of Germany open up a multitude of opportunities for cooperation and dialogue.
 - The process of reconciliation becomes “institutionalized” and state-financed:
 - Border Treaty
 - Neighborhood Treaty
 - Institute for the Exchange of Young People
 - Foundation for Polish-German Co-Operation
 - Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility, Future”
 - German Historic Institute in Warsaw; Polish Historic Institute in Berlin
 - Treaty of the two states and the real beginning of the reconciliation politics due to the equal status of the societies in both countries in terms of freedom and other social aspects;

- German-Polish Forum
- German and Polish government representative for German-Polish affairs and many other bilateral initiatives.

2) The Foundation for Polish-German Co-Operation in the process of reconciliation

- Origins of the Foundation
- 10,000 projects over the period of 20 years
- The “joint cultural heritage” as a concept to preserve historic monuments and build identity
- Ready to compromise on an everyday basis.

3) Important characteristics:

- a) A complex and time-consuming process;
- b) Trust as a basis for reconciliation;
- c) The interaction of civil society and government politics;
- d) Where do we go from here? Who decides that the end of this process has been reached? What kind of dialogue on what issues will be led in the future?

[Session II-3]

Jerzy Sulek

Polish-German Reconciliation after the Second World War – in the Context of Korean-Japanese Relations

I. Introductory remarks

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would like to begin my speech with a short answer to the simple question of why, at my advanced age, I decided to make such a long journey to take part in today's conference. For many years I have treated reconciliation between Poles and Germans as my personal mission in life. I have dedicated long years of teaching to this goal, as well as my diplomatic career and even my family life (ten years ago my daughter married a German, and I thus acquired a ‘German son’). My activities have not gone unnoticed in Poland and in Germany, as is proven by the high state awards I have received – from the president of Germany in 2002 and from the president of Poland in 2005. I would be very pleased if my experience with Polish-German relations could serve other countries as well: for instance, for Korean and Japanese relations.

2. The reconciliation of states or nations that have repeatedly fought each other in local, regional or world wars is one of the recurring phenomena of human history. After the Second World War as well, this phenomenon could be observed at numerous points around the globe. However, in many cases, attempts at reconciliation were unsuccessful, ineffective or short-lived. On the other hand, in contemporary European history, there are two instances of reconciliation that could be considered model, in my opinion. They show that the friendly coexistence of states that once considered themselves 'eternal' enemies is possible. In both cases, the states were able to reconcile in spite of the suffering, injuries, and biological and material losses of the Second World War. The best example is generally considered today to be the reconciliation between France and Germany. A similar example is the reconciliation between Poland and Germany: in contrast to the French and German case, this example is not well known to international public opinion or to the political and academic elites of other countries. And it's too bad, because many conclusions that might be useful to other states or nations – including on the Asian continent – could be drawn from the example of post-war Polish-German reconciliation.
3. I am not currently fulfilling any official function; I am speaking as a private person.
4. The conference organisers have intentionally chosen for the second panel a topic consisting of two terms: on the one hand, there is '**historical experience**' and on the other, '**political rapprochement**'. I would like to go a little further, however – I would like us to consider a third term: namely, '**reconciliation**' in Polish-German relations. For the sake of my argument, I would like to define 'political rapprochement' between states and nations after armed conflict (as in Polish-German relations and Korean-Japanese relations after 1945) as the 'minimal solution' (a 'mini-goal') while 'reconciliation' should then be defined as the 'maximal solution' (the 'maxi-goal'). It is indisputable, I believe, that the departure point for both solutions, every time, must be the historical experience of the given states or nations, including their experience of the Second World War. **In other words, whether the parties are aiming 'only' for political rapprochement or for actual reconciliation, they will have to address the legacy of the past.** From the examples of relations between many states after 1945 – not only Poland and Germany or Korea and Japan, but also Germany and Russia, France and Germany, Japan and the USA, etc. – it is evident that historical experience can be very difficult to get over: almost always, in spite of the passage of many years, the past is a serious barrier in the process of arranging relations in the present. In those instances where states – such as France and Germany or Poland and Germany – have decided to work for reconciliation, the absolute imperative was to overcome the painful past. Such an

undertaking can not always be fully realised. Even after years of implementing a reconciliation policy in practice, the **‘historical experience’ will still return** fairly often and in spite of many undoubted achievements in the reconciliation process, **the past will continue to weigh on current cooperation**. However, in the reconciliation model, historical experience gradually loses its significance and recedes into the background. This is visible in Germany’s relations with France, and in recent years, with Poland as well. Reconciliation leads to growing cooperation in all areas. Cooperation has become the main trend and is decidedly dominant in the development of these countries’ mutual relations and also in their approach to current international problems.

Another situation is observable in the ‘minimal solution’. Here too though, the political rapprochement should be preceded by at least a partial overcoming of the past. But a basic question needs to be answered: **is political rapprochement even possible when problems from the past have not been resolved in the relations of feuding states or nations?** Firstly, the fundamental divergence of interests is maintained for years: the interested parties do not want to yield their principal positions; they do not express a readiness for compromise and try to impose their own viewpoint on the other side. Secondly, the failure of attempts at political rapprochement sometimes results from the general development of the international situation on the global or regional scale. This is how it was in the Cold War period, for instance, with the ideological conflict of East and West and the rivalry of the USA and USSR for world primacy, the lack of peace treaties with Germany and Japan, the division and reunification of Germany, the Korean war and the division of Korea, etc. Similar examples can also be found in the contemporary international situation.

In sum thus, contrary to appearances, the minimal solution in the form of a political rapprochement is not at all easy, although in international relations it is more often applied than the maximal model of reconciliation.

At the end, I would like to mention another possibility – that of the **‘zero option’**: **that is, a situation in which the interested states consciously decide to cross out the past and concentrate on developing mutual relations, literally from zero, in the present and future**. Frequently, in this situation, all or part of past claims (legal, financial, material – but not political – or moral!) against the partner must be relinquished. Such a solution – the classic ‘escape to the future’ – is applied especially when, for instance, historical experience has produced an impasse in relations between states (particularly in negotiations). And simultaneously the consciousness is growing on both sides that there is a danger of regression or of a multi-year stagnation when the essential interest of both sides requires a quick and dynamic development of mutual cooperation.

II. Basic conditions for the reconciliation model

Ladies and gentlemen,

We shall try now to set forth those problems that **must first be resolved** in order to realise the reconciliation model. (I want to point out that these remarks apply in large measure to the political rapprochement model as well).

1. **Ensuring a sense of security and returning mutual trust** is of key significance in both cases. Obviously, in such pairs of countries as Germany and Poland or Japan and Korea, in practice it is above all a matter of ensuring the security of the weaker partner in regard to the stronger. This can be done in many ways; I will indicate the three most important.

2. Regulation of territorial disputes

The most important thing is to resolve border disputes, confirm territorial integrity and mutually relinquish present and future territorial claims in international treaties (and not solely in political declarations).

In Polish-German relations, it was a matter, after the Second World War, of confirming the final nature of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse: that is, with Germany's acceptance of its loss of the so-called German eastern territories to Poland. This became possible only after the diplomatic breakthrough with Poland in 1989 and the unification of Germany in 1990. The Polish-German Border Treaty of 14 November 1990 had been preceded on 12 September of that year by the 2+4 Treaty (that is, the agreement between the two German states and the four great powers). It is a little known fact of major importance that, with Poland's approbation, the 'six' eliminated the Potsdam reservation, which had postponed a final settlement of the German border to a future peace treaty. Thus the 2+4 Treaty functioned as a de facto peace treaty with Germany. It made an ultimate determination of united Germany's area and borders (including the Polish-German border). The 'six' decided that no conference would be held in the future for the purpose of concluding a peace treaty with Germany, and the resolutions adopted in the 2+4 Treaty would be final (thus any possibility of revising the course of the Polish-German border in the future was eliminated). In addition, in the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness of 17 June 1991, Poland and Germany adopted a series of specific provisions entailing that the current border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse is entirely European in nature: it does not divide but unites Poles and Germans and is similar to Germany's border with the countries of Western Europe.

I would like once again to emphasise the great significance of territorial regulation: without united Germany's confirmation of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, the process of Polish-German

reconciliation could not have commenced! Both countries had been then, for 22 years, fully conscious of the historical necessity of resolving the border dispute – **without the Border Treaty and the 2+4 Treaty Poland as a state and nation would not have had a sufficient sense of security and the necessary trust in united Germany for the reconciliation process to begin.**

In Poland we are aware that, as Helmut Kohl expressed it, ‘the Border Treaty was a bitter moment for Germany’, since it meant final acceptance of the loss of the former German eastern territories (over one-fifth of the territory of the Third Reich), as a consequence of the criminal war unleashed by Hitler. The validity of the decision is best illustrated by the fact that in the twenty years since the conclusion of the Border Treaty no one in Germany (much less in Poland) has demanded a revision of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse.

3. War reparations and damages, mutual material and financial claims related to the Second World War

This is a very broad question, which would require a longer answer on my part than we have time for. I will limit myself thus to a few points which – I think – will be of particular interest for the audience here today in Seoul. I will begin with the conclusion, which might rather surprise you. **Today, the governments of Poland and Germany both consider the question of reparations to be closed in relations between the two states.** But it would be a mistake to think that such an outcome was brought about because, for instance, Germany entirely satisfied Poland’s expectations or because both sides regulated their mutual claims (as states and citizens). On the contrary, Poles, as victims of German aggression and occupation, did not receive the individual reparations from Germany to which they were entitled on account, for instance, of imprisonment in German concentration camps, slave or forced labour on behalf of the Third Reich, or other Nazi persecutions. On the other hand, German citizens also did not receive from Poland any financial recompense for the loss of their property on account of expulsion or forced resettlement to Germany or for forced labour in Polish labour camps in the first years after the Second World War.

Two factors contributed to today’s state of affairs. The course of international events after 1945 can be considered objective, while Poland’s and Germany’s positions were subjective. The international factor had great impact. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945 the great powers made decisions about the implementation of German war reparations in all four occupation zones. However, in the case of reparations for Poland, the Potsdam provisions remained an empty formal commitment.¹ In Cold War conditions the two

¹ Poland was supposed to receive 15% of the reparations awarded to the Soviet Union from Germany’s eastern occupation zone (the future GDR). However, given Poland’s status as a Soviet satellite and the lack of international control, in practice the provisions of the Potsdam Conference were not realised.

enemy groupings of East and West each needed ‘their Germany’, and thus the reparations were suspended after a few years, both in western and in eastern Germany. Poland lost in the process: in 1950, Poland’s communist government, like the Soviet government, relinquished first part of the reparations and then, in 1953, the remainder of reparations ‘from Germany as a whole’. This relinquishment of reparations by communist Poland was maintained in 1990 by democratic Poland. In both cases the question of reparations was closely related to the territorial question and therefore with the issue of the Polish-German border. The first time, relinquishment was a political gesture by Poland in exchange for the German Democratic Republic’s recognition of the final nature of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse in the Treaty of Zgorzelec of 6 July 1950. In the second instance, Solidarity Poland relinquished war reparations to make it easier for Kohl’s government to decide in favour of united Germany’s confirmation of the border on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse in the Border Treaty with Poland.

Another element of the reparations issue – the private material claims of citizens of both countries in connection with the Second World War – likewise underwent a long and complicated evolution. **The object of regulation was primarily Polish claims: that is, chiefly the individual claims of victims of the Third Reich in Poland.** First, a small and partial resolution in Poland’s relations with the Federal Republic of Germany occurred in the sixties and seventies, but it was only after the democratic breakthrough in Poland and the unification of Germany that the most important decisions were taken in order to clear the field for Polish-German reconciliation. Thus in 1990, in negotiations for the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness (which I led on the Polish side) the governments of Poland and Germany abstained from regulating the property claims issue. Simultaneously, however, both sides agreed on a non-treaty solution; a Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation would be established for the purpose of Germany’s providing humanitarian aid, totalling 500 million DM,² to the victims of Nazi persecution in Poland. This was also the political-moral sense of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany of 16 October 1991. It is also worth remembering that this Agreement contains the Polish government’s declaration that it will not pursue (against the German government) any further claims of Polish citizens which might arise in connection with Nazi persecution.

However, a few years later, on 17 July 2000, a multilateral international agreement was concluded with Poland’s and Germany’s participation. As a result, a ‘Polish ceiling’ of 1,812 billion DM was established for voluntary

² I.e., ‘particularly damages for victims of Nazi persecution’ who had incurred ‘serious damage to the health’ and whose material situation was difficult.

German financial payments to former slave and forced labourers and other victims of Nazism³ in Poland. Both these agreements (of 1991 and 2000) were accomplished in full. In addition, in the last few years, the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation in Warsaw has managed, mainly – although not exclusively – thanks to the cooperation of the German Foundation ‘Remembrance, Responsibility and Future’ to provide **various forms of humanitarian, medical and social aid for the victims of Nazism in Poland**. The amount of this aid has reached several tens of millions of USD.⁴ **In sum, in the entire post-war period, several million living victims of the Third Reich in Poland received together around 5.5 billion zloty (i.e., nearly 2 billion USD).** But none of the payments constituted reparations in the formal-legal sense; all the payments from Germany were ‘humanitarian aid’ or ‘voluntary financial payments’. Very often, the size of the financial aid received was not in any reasonable proportion to the persecution suffered or the loss of health or property incurred. On the contrary, in many cases, it was solely symbolic in nature, as a form of moral compensation. For this reason, the victims of Nazism in Poland have tried to pursue their claims through the courts both in Germany and in Poland, but with a few minor exceptions, these attempts have not been successful.

In sum, the following **conclusions can be drawn in the question of Polish claims against Germany (both war claims and individual claims).**⁵

First: After the Second World War, Poland was the victim of the developing international situation, on which it had no influence.

Second: There was a clear connection between the issue of the Polish-German border (Poland’s takeover of the former German eastern territories was considered to be its main recompense for its occupation and unlawful treatment at the hands of the German aggressor.)

Third: Germany accepted only moral and political responsibility for Nazi lawlessness and persecution, and not state responsibility for the actions of the Third Reich. United Germany and democratic Poland recognized that German humanitarian payments to victims of Nazism in Poland would foster the appropriate social atmosphere for Polish-German reconciliation.

Fourth: it would be difficult to expect victims of Nazism in Poland to receive further financial payments from Germany in the near or distant future, either as a result of agreements between the states or as a result of their own efforts (for instance, through the courts).

³ In the case of ‘other victims of Nazism’ it was a matter of ‘personal injury’ and ‘damage to property’.

⁴ It was a matter of such forms of aid as, for instance, temporary social aid, or the purchase of rehabilitation equipment, reimbursement for drugs, free endoprosthesis implantation operations in German and Austria, voluntary humanitarian payments from German cities and district, etc.

⁵ Due to the lack of time, I will not discuss the question of German citizens’ claims against Poland. I believe that Director Lempp will raise the subject in his presentation.

Fifth: the final outcome is a situation resembling a one-way street – the German government has not put forward any claims against Poland in connection with the Second World War. German citizens did receive damages for losses incurred, but within the framework (the *Lastenausgleichsgesetz*) of Germany's own legal order and not from Poland.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. The legal-international foundation of reconciliation

The third basic condition for Polish-German reconciliation was **the anchoring of the process in international law**. Goodwill on both sides is not enough. Governments, including Poland's or Germany's, come and go, and political elites can be changeable and cause unpleasant surprises. It is thus best to build, from the beginning of the reconciliation process, a solid legal foundation in the form of international treaties and agreements that will permanently bind both sides.

Such a role was fulfilled by two historically significant treaties: the Border Treaty of 1990 and the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness of 1991. The Treaty of 1991 acquired particular importance; it was intentionally named 'on Good Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation'. It could be called the Polish-German version of the Elysée Treaty of 1963. In article 1, we can read that the Polish and German governments 'shall endeavour to realize the wish of both their peoples for lasting understanding and reconciliation.' In the following years, both states concluded a series of further bilateral treaties and agreements, which made the process of Polish-German reconciliation tangible and lasting.

III. The import and political meaning of Polish-German reconciliation

1. Reconciling Poland and Germany as a component of state doctrine

After the democratic breakthrough in Poland and the unification of Germany, reconciliation between Poles and Germans became an official component of state doctrine, binding on both states. Aside from the above-mentioned treaty provisions, **reconciliation was officially proclaimed to be one of the chief political goals of the societies and government elites of Poland and Germany**. Thus in the declarations of the presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers or parliaments of either state, the obligation of reconciling Poland and Germany, Poles and Germans, was repeatedly mentioned. Equally often, the European aspect of Polish-German reconciliation was referred to: i.e., that it is both countries' important contribution to closing painful chapters of the past and overcoming the division of Europe, and thereby it contributes as well to the development of friendly cooperation and

preservation of the peace. On the Polish side, the model to follow has always been the reconciliation between Germany and France, while on the German side, Poland counts – beside France and Israel – as one of the countries toward which Germany has the moral obligation to seek understanding and reconciliation because of the Second World War.

2. The most important symbols of Polish-German reconciliation

Both Poland and Germany willingly refer to those events in post-war international relations that are generally considered by both countries' governments and societies to have been political symbols of reconciliation. They include:

- a) the exchange of letters between the Catholic bishops of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1965 (the Polish letter contains the phrase 'WE FORGIVE AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS');
- b) the kneeling of Chancellor Brandt before the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes in Warsaw on 7 December 1970 (on the occasion of the conclusion of the Normalisation Agreement between the Polish People's Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany), which was recognized as being an expression of expiation and of homage to victims of the Third Reich by the leading representative of Germany;
- c) the 'sign of peace' exchanged between Poland's Prime Minister Mazowiecki and Germany's Chancellor Kohl during a mass in Krzyżowa on 12 November 1989.

3. The definition of reconciliation – that is, the object of this process

In the case of Polish-German reconciliation, two meanings of the concept can be differentiated: the theological (religious) and the political.

The first is the product of Christian ideology. Reconciliation should then be understood in the phrase used in the letter of the Polish bishops to the German bishops in 1965: 'We forgive and ask for forgiveness.' In the theological understanding, reconciliation requires MUTUAL FORGIVING in the interpersonal sphere between Poles and Germans, as brothers in Christ, and in the official sphere between the Polish State and the German State. I wish to emphasise the phrase – mutual forgiving. That is, Poles and Poland forgive the German State and Germans for German wrongdoing, and the Germans forgive Poland and Poles for Polish wrongdoing. In the religious sense, there is no judgement about the wrongs of each side, or about whose wrongdoing was greater; no accounting of injuries and suffering is undertaken. In this sphere, the fundamental precepts of the Christian religion, such as 'love thy neighbour as thyself' and 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors' are to be applied. In this sense, the Christian theological meaning introduces its own sort of **automatic forgiveness**. Admitting one's own faults and showing humility is a

Christian's duty before God. It is not dependent on the attitude of the 'neighbour', on his sins or humility; every Christian is required to account for his own sins before God through confession, during which he must admit to having committed the sin, show humility, and repent, that afterwards he may receive absolution. Furthermore, in the theological sense, **the precept is of unconditional reconciliation**: it is not dependent on the neighbour's (that is, the other side's) admittance of wrong, his show of humility, repentance, or compensation for harm – for injuries inflicted on another. In other words, in the Christian theological sense, there is no requirement for mutuality: that is, for faults and forgiveness on both sides, or for a symmetry (or asymmetry) of wrongs and the ensuing symmetry or asymmetry of material or financial compensation.

In the political sense, reconciliation means Poland's and Germany's agreement after the Second World War, which should lead to understanding, good neighbourly relations and the friendly cooperation of both states and nations now and in the future. This new arrangement of mutual relations should contain such elements as: overcoming the past in relation to the war, resolution of disputes, gradual elimination of the state of mutual enmity, prejudices and resentments, development of mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership to the broadest possible extent, forging of ties not only between political elites and businesspeople but also social ties and interpersonal contacts, etc.

The political sense is harder to realise in practice than the theological sense. In the latter case we are moving in the spiritual sphere – we are communicating as Christians with the Lord and it is to Him that we will answer for our sins. In the former, however, we are operating in the material sphere, on Earth, in a specific social and political reality. For the sake of reconciliation, we have to undertake the difficult task of resolving in whole, or at least in part, many disputed issues, including determining who was the perpetrator in the Second World War and who the victim of crime, lawlessness and persecution, and who bears the moral-political – and sometimes also the financial and material – responsibility and to what extent.

In the French-German case, both sides were in a better situation: reconciliation was begun almost at once after the war. Germany's guilt and responsibility was then fairly obvious. Polish-German reconciliation, on the other hand, began in an entirely different situation: 45 years after the war, when Germany's power had been restored and Poland, after the fall of communism, was in deep social and economic crisis. Furthermore, with the passage of years, the earlier clear division into perpetrators and war victims had been relativized. Today, the opinion of the governments and societies of both countries diverge on this cardinal matter, as is illustrated by the different policies on history in Poland and Germany. In other words, the Second World War is, in part, differently interpreted in Poland and Germany, in spite of twenty years of

reconciliation. Furthermore, a large part of Polish society and the Polish political elite (including many Catholics) remain fairly sceptical about the political essence of the phrase used in 1965 by the Episcopate of the Catholic Church in Poland. Many of my countrymen simply consider that neither Poland nor Poles have anything to apologise about to Germans. An older generation of Poles and Germans, particularly many living victims of the Third Reich, as well as many Germans expelled from Poland, do not express any personal readiness to forgive the injuries inflicted by the other side (i.e., the potential of the irreconcilables).

4. On the entities of reconciliation

In the study of international relations, the primary entities are considered to be states, nations and societies; they are thus also the entities of reconciliation. The state organs (the head of state, the prime minister, the government, the minister of foreign affairs), parliament and central institutions representing the state abroad, act in their name. In the wider sense, both churches (Catholic and Evangelical) could also be mentioned. All these entities **participate in an international reconciliation**.

In interpersonal reconciliation, however, entirely different entities appear: political elites, political parties, business circles, social groups (for instance, victims of the Third Reich, Germans expelled or forcibly resettled from Poland), numerous social institutions and non-governmental organisations, etc., and also individual citizens of Poland and Germany.

During the entire post-war period, these two groups of state and social entities played completely different roles. As early as 1950, the communist authorities in Poland and the German Democratic Republic had proclaimed 'Polish-German friendship' in the Zgorzelec Agreement, but it remained an empty phrase. On the other hand, until 1980 communist Poland was only aiming for a normalisation of relations, and not reconciliation, with the Federal Republic of Germany. **In these conditions, the churches played a pioneering role**: first – as is rarely remembered today – the Evangelical Church in the Federal Republic of Germany issued the so-called Eastern Memorandum on 1 October 1965, and then the Episcopate of the Catholic Church in Poland sent a letter to the German bishops on 18 November 1965. **These were the initial, historic steps toward reconciling Poles and Germans**. The societies of Poland and Germany did not then understand the political sense contained in the phrase 'we forgive and ask for forgiveness': they were critical and not supportive of the churches' initiative. I will add that both churches, the Catholic Church in Poland and the Evangelical Church in Germany, were severely attacked, including with the accusation of national treason. *Nota bene*, somewhat later, in 1970, Chancellor Brandt's gesture also met with criticism and a lack of understanding. In Poland he wasn't taken seriously and the communist authorities intentionally

slighted him. The moral-political weight of both events – of 1965 and 1970 – was fully appreciated only in the nineties.

The democratic revolution in Poland of 1989 and the unification of Germany in 1990 formed an historic turning point. Only then did reconciliation become possible. State entities officially initiated an active policy of reconciliation and anchored it in two historic treaties – the Border Treaty and the Treaty on Good Neighbourliness. Social and non-governmental entities supported the governments' position. A far-reaching breakthrough in Polish-German relations occurred **during the course of the nineties; reconciliation rose to the rung of state doctrine and began to be practiced on a massive scale.** However, in accordance with the Hegelian triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, in the years 2005-2007 there was a regress on the Polish side. Under right-wing coalition governments, reconciliation with Germany was totally negated. In official spheres, the old schema of 'Germany, Poland's eternal enemy' returned to favour, and in the interpersonal sphere, social and non-governmental bodies that were engaged in the process of reconciliation with Germany were stigmatised as 'representatives of foreign interests' and 'traitors'. In this difficult period, the German government, political elites and society did not allow themselves to be discouraged, but continued with the policy of reconciliation, although they no longer had as many partners on the Polish side as before. In 2007, after another change in Poland's government, there was a return to the *status quo ante*. Thanks to the activeness of both groups of entities (official and non-governmental) in both countries, all the damage that had been done was repaired and reconciliation once again began to determine the development of Polish-German relations in all areas. This fortunate state of affairs was reaffirmed by the results of the parliamentary elections in Poland in 2011.

5. The infrastructure of reconciliation and cooperation

The process of reconciliation can not take place only in the 'spiritual sphere' (in the form of political declarations, treaties, agreements and understandings). It absolutely has to proceed in the material sphere as well. In the final accounting, it is the latter that will determine the success or failure of the whole process of reconciliation.

In the last 20 years, Poland and Germany have formed a very broad and dense network of mutual ties and connections in all four areas of international relations: that is, in policy and security, economics, trade and finance, education and culture, and social contacts and interpersonal links. This **infrastructure of cooperation and reconciliation** is presently created by several thousand entities which are active either in Polish-German pairs or separately and independently in both states. **Two segments of this infrastructure have taken shape: governmental and non-governmental.** The first includes common

government and departmental committees, plenipotentiaries for the development of bilateral relations, parliamentary groups, cultural institutions and institutions disseminating information, the partnerships of Polish provinces and German federal states, etc. In the official segment, there have also been model solutions in 'sensitive areas' of state security: for instance, the Multinational Corps Northeast, the Polish-German military contingent in NATO, permanent structures for the mutual coordination of the activities of internal services, passport and customs services, and army, police and intelligence services. A project is being prepared for the establishment in 2013 of a Polish-German combat group as the nucleus of an EU rapid-reaction force.

In the non-governmental segment, the following could be mentioned: the European University Viadrina and Collegium Polonicum (two universities at the border forming a coordinated structure), four Euro-regions, numerous foundations (including those represented at this conference – the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation and the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation), the Joint Textbook Commission, the Poland-Germany Forum, Polish-German chambers of commerce and industry, several hundred partnerships between cities and districts, several hundred partnerships between schools and institutions of higher learning, several dozen Polish-German societies, educational institutions, meeting and memorial centres, etc.

In sum, it is precisely **thanks to this infrastructure that Polish-German reconciliation has crossed the literal point of no return**. No other country from the former eastern bloc has managed, like Poland, to create a similar infrastructure in its relations with Germany. It is comparable to the infrastructure of relations between Germany and France (only the official segment is slightly better developed there than in relations between Poland and Germany).

IV. Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the process of Polish-German reconciliation and could perhaps be considered for their application to Korean-Japanese relations.

1. Reconciliation must not be understood as a unilateral capitulation. It is a process in which the interests and positions of both sides – the 'perpetrators' and the 'victims' of the Second World War – must be skilfully harmonised. Political courage and a readiness to compromise are essential to begin, and then to sustain, the process of reconciliation. The basic difficulty lies in the fact that neither side wants to give way because it is convinced of the absolute rightness of its own position – such an attitude will

appear particularly strong on the side of a state that considers itself to be a victim of the World War (thus it was in Poland over the border with Germany). At the same time, **any progress on the road to reconciliation** – and I suppose also toward political rapprochement – **can only be achieved when historical experience (that is, the past), and the current interests of both countries (that is, the present) are taken into account.** Even an obvious moral right or the historical facts of one side (the victim) will not pave the way to reconciliation or political rapprochement if the second side (the perpetrator) will not see its own interest in concluding such an agreement (for instance, Germany needed the agreement with Poland in order to achieve state unity).

2. Reconciliation is conditioned on the settlement between the sides – it is first necessary to resolve disputed issues connected with the Second World War (and sometimes also issues connected with the present). When such a settlement between the victim and the perpetrator is not possible given the divergence of interests, the following can be tried:

a) settle for a partial resolution: that is, the treaty regulation of only as much as can be agreed upon;

b) or settle for an alternative solution ('a prosthesis'), without the participation of the governments, but with the involvement of non-governmental entities (as in the establishment of the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation for Germany's humanitarian payments to the victims of Nazism in Poland, in a situation where German legal-formal compensation was not possible);

c) or choose the classic 'escape to the future': that is, cross out the past and begin a political rapprochement from zero. Such a solution is necessary when a dispute over the past leads to stagnation in relations between the 'victims' and 'perpetrators' and the essential interest of both sides requires looking to the present and future.

3. Neither reconciliation nor political rapprochement can be imposed from above on one's own nation. Political elites must count on the fact that a policy of reconciliation will require broad support not only among the establishment but in society as well. Then care must be taken, above all, of 'sensitive groups' (in the Polish-German case, these were the groups of Nazi victims and German expellees).

4. The reconciliation of political elites 'above' must be accompanied by reconciliation 'below' – in spheres of broad social contacts and interpersonal ties. This factor will determine the effectiveness and durability of reconciliation in states with a democratic system.

5. Reconciliation or political rapprochement is conditioned by the domestic situations of the ‘perpetrators’ and the ‘victims’. It is very often necessary to overcome particular party interests or the egoism of political elites, as well as the resentments and prejudices of one’s own society. This task can be successfully performed in the national interest by a statesman or by a powerful political movement with broad social support (in the Polish-German case this was Solidarity on the Polish side and chancellors Brandt and Kohl on the German side).

6. The past is necessary for the maintenance of national and state identity. In this sense, moral and political considerations are very important and cannot be underestimated by either side (particularly not by the ‘perpetrator’!) The past can be forgiven, but it should not be forgotten: both sides should mutually preserve it. However, the past must not determine present or future relations between the ‘victim’ and the ‘perpetrator’.

7. Reconciliation, or even political rapprochement, must not be a political utopia; it has a utilitarian nature and must ‘pay’ for both the ‘perpetrators’ and the ‘victims’. In Polish-German relations:

- reconciliation with Poland was necessary to bring about Germany’s national unification and gave Germany the moral and political legitimacy it had lost during the Second World War;

- for Poland, reconciliation with Germany served to further its pro-Western choice of development after the democratic revolution in 1989. Without Germany’s agreement, the new, free Poland would not have been accepted either into NATO or into the European Union. Reconciliation allowed Poland to have good relations and enjoy friendly cooperation with Germany and the entire West. Thanks to reconciliation, Poland has been able to develop into a modern country and overcome the civilisational lag produced by the communist era.

[Session III-1]

Günter Saathoff

Coming to terms with the past: National Socialism and the long road to reconciliation – the work of the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” and its international partner organisations

The Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ) was founded only very late. It was not until the year 2000 that a federal law called for its establishment. At the heart of the institution was the question of how Germany could assume responsibility for the injustice of forced labour under

the National Socialist regime – something it had long denied – and how the surviving victims could be compensated for the wrong they had suffered. The bitter debate about whether or not Germany's government, industry and society needed to accept responsibility for this injustice during the National Socialist period was carried out for over a decade in the German public and subsequently also abroad. Class action lawsuits in US courts against German companies who had profited from this injustice finally brought about the political breakthrough which led to the constitution of our foundation. Government and industry paid a total of 5.1 billion euros into the Foundation's capital.

At the end of this process was a compensation payments programme that reached over 1.7 million victims of National Socialism in 98 countries, most in Poland and Ukraine. This programme was carried out in partnership with those countries that had suffered most under National Socialism, including the successor states to the Soviet Union (Ukraine, Belarus and Russia) and the Czech Republic. At the same time, the Foundation was given the mandate of keeping alive the memory of this injustice for future generations and of funding international projects that offer social support to the surviving victims and promote understanding between peoples and protection of human rights today. Thus, the Foundation's work was and is also viewed as part of Germany's contribution to the process of intensifying reconciliation with these countries and to understanding between our societies.

What was the historical background of this development? Why was such a foundation set up only so late? How was the programme of compensation payments implemented? And what significance did it have for the survivors and for the relations between our societies and governments today? These are the questions to be discussed in this lecture.

However, I will begin with a few important introductory remarks:

I. The crimes committed in Germany from 1933 to 1945 under National Socialism are well nigh impossible for us to grasp today. The most egregious of these include:

- the murder of six million European Jews and almost 500,000 Sinti and Roma all over Europe and the murder of millions of people of Slavic nationality,
- responsibility for a war of conquest that culminated in the deaths of 60 million people in World War II, and
- the deportation of more than 12 million people from their home countries to Germany, where they were forced to work, often under desperate conditions, in camps, public sector institutions, industry and the agriculture sector.

Most of the people killed and also the majority of deported forced labourers came from Poland and the former Soviet Union.

The war begun by the National Socialist regime had a racist concept: people were divided into a “master race” and “sub-humans.” The latter group had no guaranteed right to life; the regime viewed them solely as an exploitable labour force.

Through the crimes of the National Socialist regime, Germany effectively excluded itself from the “family of civilised states” and the standards of human civilisation. After 1945 when it looked into the mirror of its past and crimes, Germany had to answer questions like: What did we do? Can we ever make amends? Who was guilty of all these crimes? Were these only state crimes or was the whole country guilty? And: What do we owe the victims? How do we keep remembrance alive and create a new future under the motto “Never again”?

Remember that Germany was not able to liberate itself from the scourge of the National Socialist regime. The country was liberated by the opposing forces, the Allies – the victors in 1945. Afterwards the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials were held in 1945/46, similar to those in Tokyo from 1946 to 1948 against Japan.

A few years after the end of the war, Germany was divided into two countries and was thereby drawn into the dynamics of the Cold War. This entailed new political and psychological power structures, the division of Europe with the Iron Curtain at its centre and also a new set of enemy images.

All this initially had consequences for the willingness and ability of Germans to come to terms with the historical injustice of National Socialism.

II. Conversely, from the end of the 1940s onwards, the will to persistently confront the injustice, for example by prosecuting Nazi criminals, was already abating significantly because the USA needed the Federal Republic of Germany as an ally in the Cold War. The Soviet Union needed the German Democratic Republic, the other part of divided Germany, in this Cold War, too.

The German Democratic Republic, which, like Poland, fell under the Soviet sphere of influence, paid extensive war reparations to the Soviet Union and also, in part, to Poland until 1953. However, this German state did not accept political responsibility for the wrongs committed under National Socialism.

The Cold War meant that there was no internal political confrontation with the injustice of National Socialism for many years in Germany. Given that the

countries whose people had borne the brunt of these offences were now part of the hostile communist camp under the Soviet Union, it was initially easy for Germany to evade historical responsibility for this past injustice. This made the road to reconciliation with Poland protracted and very complicated. We do not have enough time today to go into the dynamics of this process and the various government agreements since the 1970s.

Within this context, Germany needed fifty years, step by step, in a complicated historical and political process, to find the “moral impetus” to again “look into the mirror of history and morality,” face its obligations rooted in history and determine what needed to be done.

Over the decades, the process of coming to terms with injustice has gradually detached itself from the self-justification of perpetrators and hangers-on, to be replaced by academic and political debate among the generation that did not personally experience the events in question.

From the 1980s onwards, the debate took an increasingly holistic approach to confronting genocide, especially the Holocaust, and crimes against humanity. The most important dimensions were a turning towards the victims and their claims for restitution and compensation and society’s (self-) clarification of the causes and social dynamics of complicity.

This process of coming to terms with Nazi injustice underwent a process of cultural and political maturation, first from a German national perspective, then internationally – a process that is still not over. From an international perspective, there was an historical break in 1989. The Cold War had allowed Germany to reject claims from Central and Eastern European countries related to Nazi injustice. It was however not surprising that, with the disintegration of the Soviet sphere of control and the accompanying end of the Cold War from 1989 onwards, these same claims could no longer be denied and dismissed.

Over five decades, Germany created a number of laws and financial schemes as “compensation” and “restitution” for the victims of the National Socialist regime. From 1949 until 2010, the Federal Republic of Germany made payments to victims of National Socialist injustice [*or their heirs*] in the sum of 68 billion euros.

However, because of the Cold War, most of these schemes did not cover Eastern European countries; the beneficiaries of these earlier compensation programmes were only in Germany and the western countries. Except for a few special provisions – for example, for the victims of Nazi medical experiments – the

victims of National Socialism in Poland and other Eastern Bloc countries had no access to German compensation laws and programmes.

It was only with a democratic government in Poland after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and in connection with German negotiations to recover its sovereignty within a European peace framework that conditions were in place for the first compensation agreement with Germany. In 1991 Poland received 500 million Deutsche Mark (256 Mio. €) from Germany as a lump-sum compensation for those victims who had suffered most under National Socialist injustice. However, restitution for forced labour under National Socialism was not among the primary objectives of this arrangement. This issue remained unresolved until it was finally addressed with the founding of the Foundation EVZ.

III. The Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” was an additional and “modern” answer by Germany’s government and civil society to the question of how to deal with crimes against humanity, especially forced labour under the National Socialist regime. It was also a way to learn about history.

A federal law established the Foundation in 2000 as the culmination of three political processes. Firstly, the Social Democrat/Green federal coalition issued a government declaration in 1998 stating that it wished to establish “a federal foundation for former forced labourers with the involvement of German companies.” Secondly, Central European countries and international Jewish organisations, in particular, exerted increasing pressure after 1989, with an emphasis on the issue of forced labour under the Nazis, which had been excluded from German compensation law for so many years. Finally, legal proceedings were brought in the USA against major German companies that had used forced labourers or had benefitted from the expropriation of the property of victims of the National Socialists.

The establishment of this Foundation, which at that time was funded with 5.1 billion euros – half from the state, half from private companies – was a “modern” answer, because it contained certain elements that can be described as a more comprehensive “cultural achievement of coming to terms with the past.” I wish to specify just a few important aspects:

a) The creation of the Foundation by law brought in its wake a moralisation of politics, which found its most visible expression in the public apology in December 1998 by then German President Johannes Rau for the injustice Germany had inflicted on the forced labourers.

b) In contrast to former German payment schemes, which were administrated by a German “state bureaucracy,” the claims under the Foundation EVZ law were not received, processed, decided upon or met by a *German* office, but by international partner organisations that were for the most part designated by the governments of the former “victim countries.” Our partner in Poland was the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation. The Foundation EVZ merely had the function of monitoring whether the partner organisations were correctly applying the law and organising an international cooperation framework. As a result of this joint action, which was completed in 2007, more than 1.66 million forced and slave labourers [*or their legal heirs*] received payments amounting to 4.37 billion euros. Some other groups of tens of thousands of victims – for example, those with property claims or victims of pseudo-medical experiments – also received individual payments or were involved in humanitarian projects organised by our international partner organisations.

c) The political approach did not concentrate on questions of historical guilt, but on responsibility for the victims. This enabled today’s people and companies to support the consensus that justice could not be served through accusations of guilt on account of the age of those involved. Conversely, avoiding accusations of guilt strengthened the willingness, especially of younger people, to take responsibility, open themselves to the perspective and suffering of the victims and participate in encounters with the victims.

d) The Foundation’s supervisory board is comprised not only of German members, but also of representatives of the countries, such as Poland, that suffered most under the Nazi regime, and representatives of victim organisations and NGOs.

e) With the conclusion of compensation payments in 2007, the Foundation did not regard its work as complete. On the contrary, the Foundation underlines its continued responsibility to build bridges of remembrance and responsibility between the past and today’s challenges.

The Foundation has a long-term mandate to support international projects that promote remembrance and cooperation in a spirit of partnership between Germany and those countries subjected to particular suffering under National Socialism.

The Foundation provides around seven million euros each year, primarily for international programmes and projects in the following three focus areas:

- **A critical examination of history and remembrance of the victims of National Socialism**
- **Humanitarian commitment to these victims**
- **Working for understanding between peoples and for human rights today**

In practice, this means that:

- The Foundation initiated and financed a large-scale international exhibition on the system of National Socialist domination policy and forced labour. The German President is patron of this exhibition. After its inauguration in Germany, its first foreign station was in Moscow in 2011. Its next foreign station is to be Warsaw at the end of 2012.
- The Foundation carried out a wide-ranging project involving audio and video interviews with almost 600 survivors from over 20 countries. The interviews, which are several hours long, have been edited by academic experts and are now available on the internet to all interested, thus in other countries as well, to use for educational or research purposes. In this way, the Foundation wishes to permanently and publicly document the point of view of the survivors themselves regarding what they experienced, suffered and worked through in the post-war period.
- The Foundation organises humanitarian assistance for the surviving victims of National Socialism, administered by organisations in their countries.
- The Foundation participates in a youth exchange programme, in which young people spend one year working in humanitarian projects for survivors in our partner countries.
- The Foundation supports projects that invite former forced labourers to visit Germany and encourages young people to explore the life stories of these persons.
- The Foundation implemented a scholarship programme with all Berlin universities, which gave young people who are the descendants of victims of National Socialism the opportunity to study in Germany.
- It promotes international initiatives that work for understanding between peoples and human rights.
- It promotes active commitment to the human rights and empowerment of minorities like Sinti and Roma, while working to combat xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism.
- It encourages young people from Germany, Central and Eastern Europe and Israel to undertake international volunteer work in social and cultural projects. Through their active involvement, the young volunteers become

more aware of social issues and acquire a deeper understanding of the culture and history of the host country.

These examples of our activities make it clear that the Foundation is involved in a multi-dimensional process of social and political transformation. This is also painful. The victims, who were disregarded for so long, have now received social recognition. We are able to provide humanitarian assistance to many of them still today, but they will all have died in the next few years. For the Foundation EVZ's payments process, this has already meant that many applicants did not live to receive the payments due them and that these went instead, in whole or in part, to their legal heirs. Thus, very soon, there will be no more survivors for personal communicative encounters with the following generation. They and their associations are also losing their public presence in contemporary society, in Poland and Germany, for example. Thus, "communicative remembrance" is shifting to "cultural remembrance." In future, young people will only have the documented memories. However, the process of transformation also means that we live in a united Europe and that there are infinitely many levels of international exchange and of need for cooperation.

The concept of the "remembrance" of injustice means more than merely looking back to a past that one wishes to understand now. This confrontation with history also constitutes a process of identification for young people today – a process that can be summarised in a simple question: what does this history – and for Poland this history includes Stalinism – mean for us personally today? And what political conclusions do we draw from it for our coexistence today, in Germany, in Poland, but also in all of Europe?

I see two tasks that our countries must complete. The first is that we can permanently anchor the memory of this injustice in a living dialogue between European remembrance cultures. The second task is for both countries, their civil societies and citizens, with their background of confronting past injustice, to support European policies that actively counteract the new marginalisation of minorities, growing nationalism and xenophobia.

IV. A key political question remains: Beyond meeting the material needs of the victims, what has been the ultimate impact of the Foundation EVZ's work in our neighbouring countries? Have we made an important contribution to reconciliation between Germany and, for example, Poland? Such a question is difficult to answer and should not primarily be answered by those who have provided this material support. Furthermore, the Foundation is only one among many social and political stakeholders who are seeking Polish-German reconciliation, cooperation and ultimately the European integration of both

countries.

We know from many victims living in Poland that not only the money they received from the Foundation EVZ, but also Germany's recognition that they had been treated unjustly was important to them. There is no possible restitution, in the deepest sense of the word, for this injustice. That is why all payments were only "symbolic" payments, with respect to both the amount and the rationale. One can make such payments with a moral undertone of: "Now don't come back; we have paid our debt." Alternatively, such a programme can be implemented with the awareness and the moral attitude that we – also we, the descendants – are still ashamed, even decades later, and will not forget the injustice or its victims. Only this latter attitude builds the moral foundation for a real process of reconciliation. I can only hope that the work of the Foundation EVZ has contributed to this end and will continue to do so.

V. My remarks were intended to show what Germany has done and also in part to reveal the "internal rationale" behind its actions. I am not advocating that other countries with their own particular histories of injustice should tread this same path. Each country that bears responsibility for war crimes and human rights violations has to find its own way of dealing with the past, with the claims and rights of the victims and with its need to take an honest look into the "mirror of history." But it is also true that *neglecting or* refusing to come to terms with injustice will impede reconciliation and peace between societies and countries for generations to come and may sow the seeds of new conflicts. This is the reason why nations like Japan, Korea and other Asian countries as well as their populations and NGOs should be encouraged to find deeper paths to truth, historical awareness and reconciliation with the past.

[Session III-2]

Statement of Dariusz Pawłoś for the Conference "Polish-German relations since 1945 – a source of inspiration for Korean-Japanese future relations?"

Coming to Terms with the Past

Jonathan T. Chow, Asan Institute

- Dariusz PAWŁOŚ, Chairman of the Board of the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation

- Günter SAATHOFF, Co-Director of the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future"

Ladies and Gentlemen! First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation to Seoul to this interesting and important conference and I would like to express my satisfaction with the fact, that I and my German colleague Günter Saathoff have been entrusted in dealing with such a difficult issue, namely: **Coming to Terms with the Past** and shortly about Perspectives for the future Polish-German relations.

I am afraid that twenty minutes are too much for my speech because as we heard during previous sessions, Polish-German Relations are perfect and will be even better..

On the other hand, this issue is much more serious and complicated, especially bearing the tragic moments in the Polish-German neighbourhood in the 20th century.

The year 2011 is a special year for the Polish-German relations. It is a year of the anniversary of Polish-German Treaties, a round anniversary of the creation of many Polish-German institutions and organizations including the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation, which I have the privilege to lead.

Twenty years ago both Treaties, that is the Border Treaty and the [Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation](#) created strong and solid foundation for our good relations in most areas of political, economic, social and cultural life.

Unfortunately, with one exception: Painful problems resulting from II World War were not taken up.

In this aspect Polish post-war history resembles a little Korean history.

Of course many countries were really destroyed after the II World War but the Polish and Korean case are particularly interesting. Poland suffered great losses in population, losses of territory and material, but apart from that there was a political change.

Not only communists who were in minority took the power but Poland was also under soviet dominance, for the next forty years after War. In the beginning, it was only the area of its influence but soon because of the soviet hegemony in this part of Europe, “Moscow’s dictate” in Poland became fact and this situation lasted until 1989.

That were the years of the Second World War that caused a great collapse of civilization of our country. After the war, which we, in fact, did not loose, Poland had 20% smaller territory than at the start of the war. The population of Poland decreased by 11 million, that is about one third (6 million people were mortal victims of the German National Socialist Regime). And it is not only about quantitative losses but also about qualitative ones. The Nazi policy of exterminating the Polish people aimed in the first phase of

occupation not at the elimination of the Polish Jews, but at the elimination of Poland's leadership class, Polish intelligentsia. Now, I give one of the most spectacular examples to support this thesis. Under the leadership of Hans Frank - appointed by Hitler Governor General, of those parts of Poland that had not been incorporated into the Third Reich, all professors of the Jagiellonian University and other Universities of Cracow were arrested and dispatched to the concentration camps.

Due to a lack of time I will not mention Poland's enormous economic devastation, planned and systematic destruction and plunder of cultural property and material goods.

Before I move to the exact forecasts and proposals concerning Polish-German relations, please let me explain how Poland and Germany tried to solve these painful issues resulting from the past. I mean issues of compensations and war reparations.

I begin by reminding that the regulations concerning the German compensations after the Second World War have always been disadvantageous for Poland. The Potsdam Agreement about German compensations from September 2nd, 1945 stipulates, that „The Poles were to receive [reparations](#) not from Germany itself, but from the [Soviet Union](#) share of those repatriations”. That was a very disadvantageous solution for Poland, because that prevented us from laying a claim to the German State. In practice the situation was even worse. Poland was to obtain fifteen per cent of the Soviet reparation share (later from GDR) and fifteen per cent of industrial devices which were assigned to the USSR from the Western occupation zone. According to archival documents Poland has never obtained reparation in the declared amount. As an interesting fact, I can add that for example in supplies of goods in 1949 two books appeared. The first book – “History of the Communist party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) Short course“ in Polish, was in one million copies of the value of 1,8 mln marks. Second book – “The Essential Classics of Marxism-Leninism” in Polish, in five million copies of the value of 8 million marks. Please, try to imagine that these two books constituted almost 10 % of reparation supplies in 1949. For such a “generous” gesture of Soviet Union, Poland obliged itself to supply the USSR annually with coal for a special price that was a tenth part of world prices at that time.

The issue of German compensations looked later much more worse. In the Statement from 23 of August 1953 the government of the People's Republic of Poland decided, under the pressure of Moscow, to resign on the 1st January 1954 from the payment of reparations for Poland towards Germany. *I would like to stress it once again, not only towards recognition at that time from German Democratic Republic but also towards entire Germany.*

The fact, that the Polish victims were not included to the **German Restitution Laws** that were enacted in the 1950s in West Germany, was very unpleasant for Poland. Polish victims living behind the Iron Curtain must have been waiting for any humanitarian help from Germany until the communism was overthrown. With one exception. The group of about 5500 victims of pseudo-medical experiments that were carried out in German concentration camps, received individuals compensations in the 1970s.

Unfortunately the turning point occurred very late, that is after communism in Poland was overthrown and German reunification. After a conclusion of the above-mentioned treaties, the Government of Poland and Government of Germany reached an agreement on taking the needs of the most harmed Nazi victims in account.

The result of this agreement was the establishing of The Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation. *Mr Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, present at this conference, was then The Prime Minister of Poland.*

In addition to what Mr. Saathoff mentioned before about the activities of the Foundation „Memory, Responsibility and Future” I would like to add some figures:

Since the very beginning of our existence, that is from 1992 to 2004 we have paid financial aid, so called „humanitarian aid” of more than **732 million PLN (over 163 million EUR, over 250 billion won)** to over 700.000 Nazi victims. In the years 2001-2006 the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation has paid money that had been obtained from the Foundation „Memory, Responsibility and Future” to over 484.000 people that were entitled to obtain over **3,5 billion PLN (975,5 million EUR, about 1,5 trillion won)**. I would like to add that compensations for forced labour for some beneficiaries were real material aid, especially for prisoners of concentration camps, ghettos or other prisons where conditions were comparable to those in concentration camps. Compensation for this category of victims amounted from about fifteen thousand PLN to twenty five thousand PLN. However, a significant part of victims obtained symbolic payments between two thousand and eight thousand PLN. For example former forced laborers in agriculture, children, prisoners of transit camps etc. It is hard to consider such amount of money as real compensation for their suffering.

To my great surprise during payments realization, there was my personal experience, that there was a real interest from Korea and Japan. TV crews and newspaper journalists from both of these countries were visiting our Foundation quite regularly. I remember a visit of Korean TV MBC but I also had the opportunity and privilege to present the activity of our Foundation to High Representative of the Prime Minister of Korea, Mr Jung Byung Gyu. I remember

very well a lot of interesting conversations with Koreans, for example on parallels regarding the classification of victims of the Second World War.

In post-war history, The Federal Republic of Germany has paid out **over 68 billion euros (more than 104 trillion won)** until today, within the compensation politics. The German public opinion is aware of this fact but not that Nazi victims living in Poland were excluded from most of this regulations due to political reasons. Despite the fact that most of the victims lived and still live (relatively the biggest number of victims) in our country and this part of Europe, the direction of German compensation politics was so far different (western countries, the USA, Canada, Israel). It means that the Polish victims got only under 3 per cent of the above-mentioned amount of money and felt discriminated and treated in an unjust way. At the same time, the German public opinion is convinced that Polish people benefited and still are benefiting from a great compensation money.

On the other hand, I should mention many different ways in which our foundation, other Polish-German institutions, the German Government and the German public sector help the victims of the Nazi terror. Apart from numerous financial aid programmes, there are educational programmes for young people from Poland and Germany, meetings with the still-living victims and of course volunteering. A lot of volunteers from Poland, Germany, Austria and other countries work with elderly people who have suffered from the Nazi terror. Finally, many German companies, mainly those running business in Poland, are expected to take responsibility and help financially or through other humanitarian projects. However, I would like to stress, that all these activities should be developed all the time, especially the humanitarian and financial help should be improved, not only on the bilateral, but also on the European level.

Getting back to the contemporary matters I would like to tell you about a few important elements that affect, and certainly always will, our relations.

I. First of all, we are witnessing a real turning point. Not only Poland, but also Germany is transforming. Inner and foreign politics in both countries are changing. It is obvious that Germany is extremely important for the EU and the rest of the world. The German economy is the fourth economy of the world, and the first in Europe. Also, it is politically the strongest one in the EU.

All that has a tremendous influence on the Polish-German relations.

Similarly to numerous experts, I am of the opinion that we have just entered a completely new era in our relations. The former asymmetry is disappearing and Poland is becoming an equal partner for Germany. That is a real cause for

optimism.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski, just as many other Polish politicians, admits that **Poland and Germany share the same political goals as well as democratic values.**

The co-operation between the contemporary Poland and Germany has never been better. Germany is the largest trade partner of Poland. **The trade exchange is rising: the Polish export to Germany in 2010 was of almost 31 billion euros (47,5 trillion won)**, that are 5 billion more than in 2007, before the global crisis. **Our trade exchange with Germany is bigger than that of Germany with Russia.** There are 600 unions of twin towns in Poland and Germany. 700 German economic entities invested 25 billion euros (38,3 trillion won) in Poland, whereas Polish companies, 1 billion euros (over 1,5 trillion won) in Germany. We were very happy to notice a ground breaking quote of Polish investments in the first half of 2011 behind our western border – 600 million euros (over 920 billion won).

Some experts emphasize that the situation above does not result from a good co-operation between governments and institutions or the youth exchange, but from the fact that Poland's international position is getting stronger. That means that the Polish administration, diplomacy and EU politics are becoming better. We are effectively learning, mainly from Germany, how to negotiate, what rhetoric to use, how to build political coalitions and persuade other countries to our ideas. That was especially visible in situations such as initiating the Eastern Partnership or creating the coalition around the CO₂ certificates.

Last but not least, Poland has tackled the first wave of the global crisis, its economy is getting stronger. I hope we are starting to perceive ourselves as an important partner for Germany, which will surely improve our relations.

As to particular projects, I think we could co-operate as two countries interested mainly in shaping the eastern politics of the EU, because political and economic transformation in the eastern countries is beneficial for both, Germany and Poland. *And eastern countries are not the only members of the Eastern Partnership, but also Russia.* Poland and Germany could offer many enterprises within the Eastern Partnership. Common projects can be a chance for us to show good practices and initiatives, which succeeded in our countries, concerning three fields: civil society, public administration and infrastructure.

What still needs to be done and relates to the future generations is the

student exchange. The youth exchange between Germany and Poland has been truly successful thanks to the Polish-German Youth Cooperation (Jugendwerk). Over 2 million young Poles and Germans have met since the start of the programme in 1991.

Therefore it is hard to understand that only 8.5 thousand students from Poland (whose population is of 38 million people) study at German universities and less than 600 students from Germany study at Polish universities. And Germany has a population of more than 80 million. We should really improve those figures.

II. There are also elements which have a negative effect on the Polish-German relations. They are, and will be in the nearest future, the object of many consultations and explanations :

- first of all there is the matter of energy and natural resources, which concern the energy security of Poland. Germans living near the Polish border fear the nuclear power plants which are planned to be built in Poland. Many German regional politicians demand that Warsaw should change its nuclear plans.
- The next difficult question is the construction of the Russian-German gas pipeline – Nord Stream. Poland was against this investment from the beginning on, because the Nord Stream had no economic justification and was ecologically dangerous for the Baltic Sea. Our country presented many alternative projects, which considered Polish participation. Unfortunately, they were not accepted. In 2006, Radosław Sikorski, the former Defence Minister, and the contemporary Minister of Foreign Affairs, compared Nord Stream plans to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.
- There is also an arguable matter of the German expellees – the German citizens who had to leave the area of Poland after the Second World War and who nowadays claim damages from the Polish state. Also, there is the problem of neo-Nazi activity in Germany.

Ladies and Gentlemen, summing up my a bit longish speech, I want to come back to the idea, I mentioned in the beginning. Poland and Germany are dealing well with their history. The Polish-German relations are good and they are heading in the right direction. And if our states, our societies as well as the different Polish-German institutions and organisations can complete the ambitious plan called "The programme of the cooperation accepted by the governments of Poland and Germany to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Treaty of Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation", we can be calm about the common future. I hope that no problems faced on our way will

destroy it. And one more thing: it would be wonderful if the Polish-German experiences could be a good example for other countries.

Thank you for your attention.