

A View from the Side: Poland

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On September 5th, 2001 we celebrate 10th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Poland, which in 1991 restored independence they had been deprived of as a consequence of a Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. 10 years is a very short period of time for a nation. Every decade, however, differs a lot from the preceding one: one decade sees more events than the other, one decade brings up more or less active public figures in comparison to the other. Period of time we consider at the moment is a very special one. We know that sometimes during the previous decade relations between Lithuania and Poland showed they had been complicated. What the states never lacked was the commitment to end this complicated state of affairs. By virtue of this commitment two countries managed to introduce an essential turning point to relation between them. As a result, special, exemplary character of relations between Lithuania and Poland is now a well-known fact in Europe. Declaration on Good Neighborly Relations, signed on January 13th, 1992 on the occasion of the first anniversary of Soviet invasion in Vilnius was a milestone in the process of reconciliation and better mutual understanding. This declaration encouraged the development of permanent bilateral political dialogue that was completed once the Presidents of Poland and Lithuania signed a Treaty on Friendly relations and good neighborly cooperation. Once Parliaments of Lithuania and Poland ratified the Treaty the history of relations of the two countries saw the beginning of a new era.

There is another milestone event that symbolizes year 1997. I mean institutionalization of bilateral relations. That year two countries established three common institutions that coordinate cooperation between the governments, parliaments and presidents: Consultative Committee to the Presidents of the Presidents of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania, Council on Cooperation between the Governments of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania, and an Assembly of the members of the Parliaments of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania. As a result of these developments, dynamics of our relations have substantially improved.

A very intensive level of political dialogue has been reached during the recent years. The momentum gathered was maintained after the latest Seimas' elections in Lithuania. We are happy to know that Poland was the first country Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania and Minister of Foreign Affairs chose to visit after taking their office. Moreover, Poland was among the first countries Chairman of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania visited.

I am convinced that 10th anniversary of restoration of diplomatic relations is an auspicious occasion. We have a wonderful opportunity to evaluate the results of this period and consider the guidelines for our future cooperation.

Constant improvement of a-rapidly-improved mechanisms of economic cooperation is one of the most important elements in our relations. Besides, I think this is an advantageous moment to complete resolving the latest issues in our relations,

especially those concerning the status and psychological well-being of national minorities.

It is our pleasure to acknowledge successful development of cooperation in the area of the European integration. In this respect I would like to refer to the recent visit of Chief Negotiator J.Kulakowski in Vilnius. We hope that Lithuania and Poland become members of the European Union during the Union's first enlargement round.

Also, it is in our mutual interest that Lithuania succeeds in becoming a member of NATO. Poland has advocated the continuity of the "open doors" policy. Thus, we support efforts of Lithuania to join the Alliance. This is the position we have confirmed for many times. In this context, we are highly interested in developing a variety of forms of cooperation in security and military fields.

We are happy that our views on main aspects of foreign policy coincide more and more. In this context we would like to put special emphasis on the need to intensify multilateral cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. We are pleased to acknowledge that activities of the European Union in the region have been expanding. We aim at deepening trilateral consultations between Lithuania, Poland and Russia in order to prepare guidelines for future cooperation with the Kaliningrad region. Our sincere aim is to mould such mutual relations and relations with neighbors so that the functioning border regimes and Shengen commitments consolidate good neighborhood and serve the needs and expectations of the citizens. Finally, this human aspect would be the final test of our capabilities to withstand challenges of the 21st century.

Political realm in our relations is a very important one. However, in Lithuania-Poland's relations special focus should be always paid to cultural events. We are happy that in this area there are many events. Common heritage of both Nations' Republic is imperative in building mutual understanding among our elites and our societies.

Therefore, I would like to conclude by putting forward the idea, which, as my intentions tell me, should not be taken as a warning, but as an encouragement, instead. We should work toward ensuring that modern forms of cooperation amongst young people become stronger. These forms of cooperation are well known in Europe. One may get an impression that there is a lack of understanding of how important it is that the matters we talk about and write about every day on every occasion are transmitted into the minds of Lithuanians and Poles.