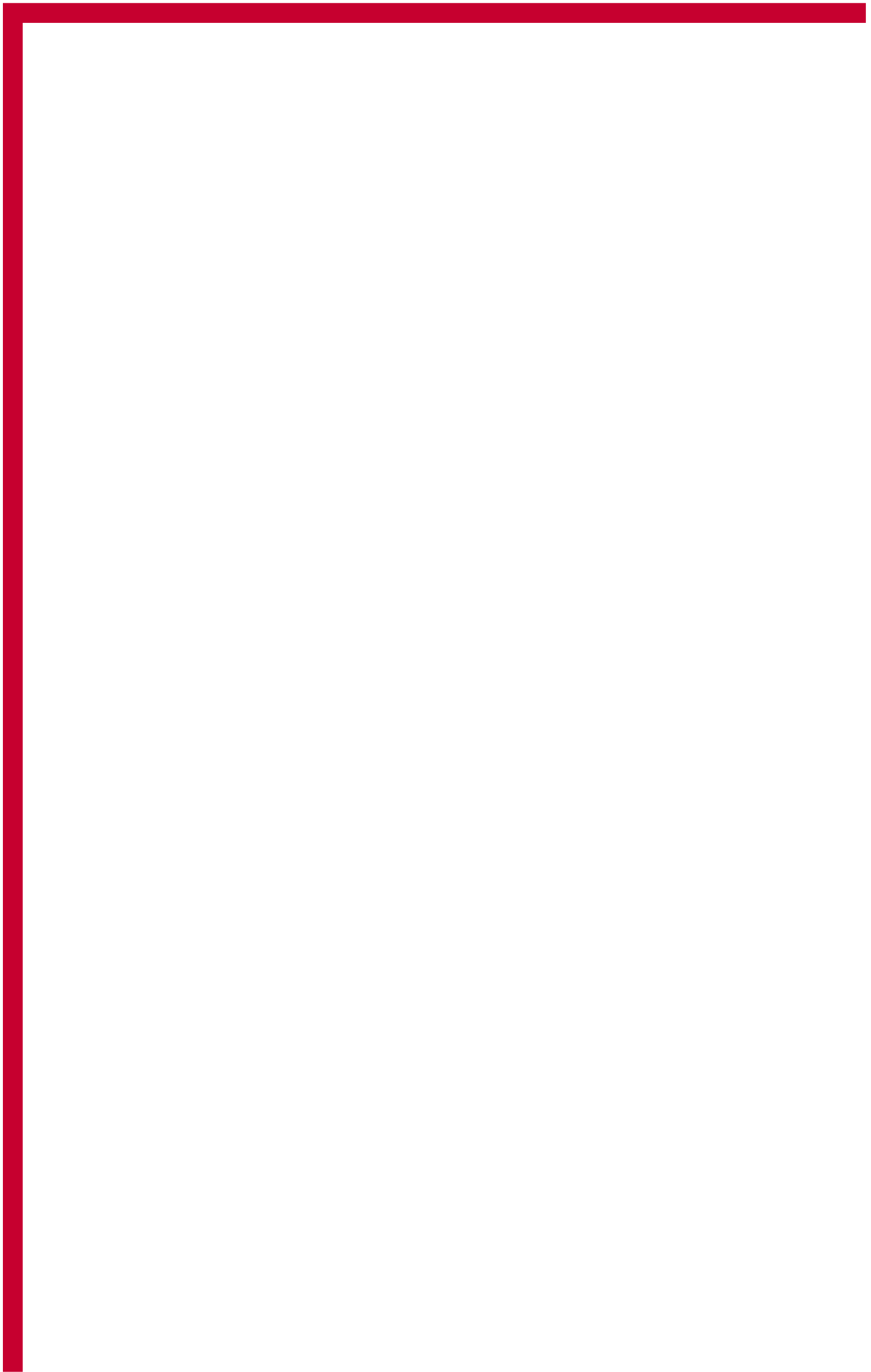


THE EASTERN HOUSE MESSAGE



Document of cooperation of individuals, communities and institutions in the context of the Eastern House – a place of social mobilization facing the war in Ukraine, repression in Russia and Belarus



BACKGROUND

The quarterly “Karta” magazine Vol. 25 (the fall of 1998) published an account by Janusz Przewłocki (of the single-member Historical Commission of the Sybiraks’ Association), who also described in it the history of his family home. On this occasion, the Przewłocki family decided to donate to us – after its possible recovery – their former mansion (a palace and park complex in Mordy near Siedlce), seized in October 1945 by the State Treasury under the agrarian reform decree. The Przewłocki family had been trying since 1990 to get back this property, which had been donated years ago to the Higher School of Agriculture and Pedagogy in Siedlce [*Wyższa Szkoła Rolniczo-Pedagogiczna w Siedlcach*], and had been falling into disrepair since the turn of the political system. In 1998 a decree by Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek came out to halt the sale or encumbrance of property to which the former owners had made claims, giving the Przewłocki family hope of regaining the family property.

In February 1999, the Przewłocki family signed an agreement with the KARTA Center declaring that, in the event of regaining rights to the palace and park complex, it was ready to donate it for purposes defined by the Center. We tried unsuccessfully to arrange relations with the university, renamed to Podlaska Academy in time, which formally owned the object, but did not use it, nor did it try to save it. It was only in 2018, after a lengthy court proceedings, that the family’s representative – Michał Przewłocki, a grandson of the pre-war owner – was re-registered in the land records. The property was entrusted to the Eastern House Foundation, established especially for this purpose in November 2019.

The revitalization of the Eastern House – the palace, outbuildings and park in the palace and park complex in Mordy – will be carried out by the Eastern House Foundation and has been scheduled for subsequent years – so that successive areas of activity can be introduced there. The renovation is to restore functionality to the buildings and park, currently unfit for use. The entire complex (the palace and the roofed outbuilding is about 4,000 sq. m., and the park is 10 hectares) will be available primarily to the communities working together, as well as to residents of the city and the surrounding area and visitors to the site.

The Eastern House is intended to combine two dimensions in its name – place and space: in the long run, a specific set of buildings and the East, understood as the area of the European part of the former Soviet Union and post-war Poland, that is, the area outlined as follows – the western and southern borders of Poland, the southern border of Ukraine, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea, the Urals, the northern border of Russia, the Baltic Sea. The town of Mordy is located in Poland, on the border of Mazovia and Podlasie, close to the border with Belarus, not far from the borders of Ukraine, Lithuania and Russia

(Kaliningrad). The name Mordy, whose meaning is derived from the Polish word meaning “collective killings”, can be understood as a challenge to the Eastern House. Within the area, which Timothy Snyder called the “bloodlands”, the work of closing the accounts left there by the 20th century is to take place.

In this context, the East is understood as part of geographic Europe, but also as an area burdened in 1930–49 by gigantic suffering that has left deep social wounds present here to this day. Both totalitarianisms, Sovietism and Nazism, violated its complex ethnic fabric most deeply, pushing hatred and crimes of one against the other, marking them both with evil. Still, to this day, the nationalist epigones of those ideologized systems seek to exploit the painful past for their own immediate purposes, taking the “bleeding” as a reference point, using their declared innocence and guilt of others to incite conflicts.

The Eastern House concept means acting for the sake of the community of nations, on the basis of their equal partnership. Working through the past in solidarity, in the international dimension, is a prerequisite for easing tensions. Better coexistence depends on freeing our region from the burden of past guilt, which is not served by keeping silent about it. Societies aware of their history and willing to face it in dialogue will be more resistant to pseudo-historical propaganda spreading hatred and justifying aggression. The independence of all partners from dictatorships and their supporters has been chosen as the foundation for this action.

In 2019–21, consultations were held with a number of individuals and communities – Polish, Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian – with the idea of building the foundations of the Eastern House as an ideological agreement among all partners. The first joint statement was announced on the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Riga.

In a statement *One hundred years after Riga*, signed by 15 communities:

The last century has determined Poland’s borders – the current state of affairs is not challenged by world powers or neighbors; the Polish Republic does not formulate territorial claims. The country’s geopolitical stability can be considered a good finale of the tragic 20th century. For the Polish borders, the Treaty of Riga, signed on March 18, 1921 with Bolshevik Russia, became a significant reference point. This act enshrined a vision of the Polish *raison d’état* which was brutally challenged by the subsequent decades. Despite its defeats in subsequent stages, the state eventually gained a more secure status in Europe – today it can treat its eastern neighbors differently.

The Treaty of Riga, ending a period state of war lasting more than six-year for the East, brought a sense of relief to most citizens of the Second Republic. The state was gaining guarantees of temporary balance. Nonetheless, the treaty overlooked the rationale of not inconsiderable social groups. Poland – by recognizing the assignment to the Soviets of the vast former territories of the First Republic, east of the newly demarcated border – deprived the numerous Poles there of a connection with their homeland, and Polish landowners of a chance to reunite their estates with their country; the fate of the far-flung borderlands, however, was a foregone conclusion. At the same time, Poland’s Ukrainian and Belarusian allies, hoping to gain their own sovereignty between it and the Soviets,

found themselves on both sides in the role of subject nations. This is how the territory shared at Riga was marked – multitudes of people, against their will, found themselves in a foreign state.

The deprivation of the right of Ukrainians and Belarusians to state subjectivity has since taken hold for seven decades – for Poland and its neighbors, the Soviets became the only real eastern reference. This ruthless totalitarianism, destroying all freedom and identity, turned the “Soviet-Polish” border strip into an increasingly featureless territory. The Treaty facilitated the transformation of a rich multinational space into a dark abyss of mutual hatred, which was significantly reinforced during World War II by the three-year occupation of these lands by the Third Reich. One hundred years ago, Poland made its own deal with the Soviet empire; today, with the backing of the European Union, it can make deals with its neighbors against imperialist reverses.

On the centennial of the Treaty of Riga, we are establishing the Eastern House with the goal of democratic dialogue with all the peoples of the region. In the town of Mordy near Siedlce, since spring 2022, we hope to begin working together on the past of the “bloodlands”. In the palace and park complex there, the future site of the Eastern House, a common, multinational space will be opened, free of nationalisms and remnants of authoritarianism.

March 18, 2021

(Signed by: KARTA Center and Eastern House Foundation (initiators), Belarusian Solidarity Center, ZNAK Christian Culture Foundation, Lena Grochowska Foundation, Borderland Foundation, College of Eastern Europe, Center for Armenian Culture Studies in Poland – Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Krakow, Grodzka Gate – NN Theater Center, East European Democratic Center, “For Free Russia” Association, Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, Society for the Management of Memorial Sites, Ossoliński National Institute, Union of Ukrainians in Poland)

The vision of launching at least an outbuilding on the site of the complex in Mordy in the spring of 2022 proved impossible to fulfil – not only the lack of funds for revitalization, but also subsequent events in the East made such a turn of events impossible.

In November 2021, in response to the information that came from Moscow, the people who co-authored the Eastern House plans formulated an open letter in defense of Memorial.

In the statement, “Memorial” as an asset to the world, signed by 20 individuals and 12 communities:

News reached us on November 11 that the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Russian Federation has filed a lawsuit to dissolve the International Memorial Society. The hearing in the Supreme Court is scheduled to take place in Moscow on November 25 this year. This act of political aggression affects us deeply. We know the groundbreaking contribution of Memorial to the work of memory, through which Europe is healing from the totalitarian experience of the 20th century. We appeal to world opinion to defend it.

Memorial – since its inception – has gained in the eyes of the world the rank of the conscience of modern Russia. Its work – in search of historical truth

and in defense of human rights – has an international dimension; we personally participated in some of its work. Several times Memorial has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Of fundamental importance for Poland was the participation of Memorial in uncovering the truth about the “Polish NKVD operation”, the Katyn massacre and other mass repressions. We remember the great work of dissidents, which the authority of the people of Memorial is deeply rooted in; including those highest honored by the Republic of Poland: Sergey Kovalev, Arseniy Roginskiy, Jan Raczynski, Alexander Gurjanov, Alexei Pamiatnych, Nikita Petrov. Arseniy Roginskiy was a member of the International Auschwitz Council for years – the only one from Russia; he is honored in the Garden of the Righteous in Warsaw.

We would like to express our deepest solidarity with all those who co-create Memorial – as a universal value and transnational community. Especially now, when the institutions of the Russian Federation award them in such a peculiar manner for more than three decades of fruitful work. 33 years is the time when a new generation has grown up under the wings of the greatest figures of Memorial. It is them who, through their moral choices, will continue to carry the memory of the dissidents’ attitudes. Perhaps this will prove salutary for Russia, Europe and the world in the future.

The common good is born not from the domination, but from dialogue, which has always been sought by Memorial. We hope that on the anniversary of the end of World War I, the freedom to remember will triumph over political enticements – in the name of world peace.

Warsaw, November 15, 2021

(Signed by: Bogdan Białek, president of the Jan Karski Association; Dr. Piotr M.A. Cywiński, president of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation, member of the Moscow Memorial; Krzysztof Czyżewski, president of the Borderland Foundation; Anna Dzienkiewicz, editor of the Russian Katyn series at the Memorial; Professor Mirosław Filipowicz, Institute of History at the Catholic University of Lublin; Zbigniew Gluza, president of KARTA, chairman of the Committee of the Garden of the Righteous in Warsaw; Agnieszka Holland, film director, president of the European Film Academy; Dr. Łukasz Kamiński, former president of the Institute of National Remembrance, working with Memorial; Robert Kostro, director of the Museum of Polish History; Agnieszka Magdziak-Miszewska, former diplomat (also in Moscow), head of eastern programs; Professor Piotr Mitzner, writer, member of Memorial since 1991; Marek Mutor, chairman of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience; Dr. Adam Pomorski, president of the Polish PEN Club; Dr. Marek Radziwon, Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw; Rafał Rogulski, director of the European Memory and Solidarity Network; Professor Adam Daniel Rotfeld, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and co-chairman of the Polish-Russian Group on Difficult Matters; Marian Turski, chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee (Auschwitz number B9408); Alicja Wancerz-Gluza, co-founder of KARTA, co-founder of the EUSTORY network; Professor Mariusz Wołos, Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Pedagogical University of Cracow; Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda, who has been working with Memorial since 1992; Center for Polish-Russian Dialogue and Understanding, Stefan Batory Foundation, ZNAK Christian Culture Foundation, Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Club of Catholic Intelligentsia in Warsaw, College of Eastern Europe, “Nowaja Polska” Magazine, KARTA Center, The Open Republic – Association against Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia, Polish PEN Club, Watchdog Poland Civic Network, Jan Karski Association)

The KARTA Center, as a permanent partner of Memorial, since November 2021 till February 2022, was the recipient of multiple requests to create facilities in Warsaw for the Society, which was losing its basis in Moscow. In this context, KARTA entered a competition announced by the Warsaw-Śródmieście District for a separate premises that could serve such a purpose. The Center had submitted the application before the Kremlin began the war. After three months of Russian aggression, the District authorities finally granted KARTA the premises at 6 Constitution Square [*plac Konstytucji 6*].

In a statement from the KARTA Center:

Today, just before noon, the Supreme Court in Moscow issued a verdict marking the end of the Memorial International, the Society's central structure. This is a shameful step by the authorities of the Russian Federation, which sparked widespread protests in Poland and around the world. Now, in the midst of the Kremlin's bestial invasion of Ukraine, this act of judicial aggression may fade into the background, despite being an essential component of the tyranny that has taken hold in Russia. Memorial, as in every case of historical or contemporary repression and crimes, takes the side of the victims.

The KARTA Center, being the Polish partner of the Memorial Society for 30 years, has undertaken joint documentary projects, related to the history of Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviets – international work in each of these projects has been a prerequisite for meaningful action. In view of today's verdict, strengthening cooperation becomes our duty.

KARTA was promised by the authorities of the Warsaw-Śródmieście District to obtain premises in the city center for the activities of the Eastern House, which has been planned for several years (ultimately in Mordy near Siedlce), to deal with the Poland–East dialogue. We will accelerate the launch of the House in Warsaw, expanding its tasks to include the documentation of current crimes. It is planned to establish an archive in Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian languages at the new location.

The Eastern Day will be held in Warsaw on April 8 to launch the activities of the Eastern House together with more than twenty partners – Belarusian, Lithuanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish... A multilingual Declaration of the Eastern House shall be announced then.

All of KARTA's cooperation with Memorial, beginning with the "Week of Conscience in Poland" in April 1992, is carried out for the sake of the understanding of the peoples of Eastern Europe, the alleviation of historical traumas. This idea cannot be crossed out by the war; on the contrary, the war is its obvious justification.

Warsaw, February 28, 2022

It was not possible to hold the Eastern Day on April 8, 2022, exactly on the 30th anniversary of the Week of Conscience in Poland – the new premises were not made available until the end of May. Nevertheless, in the middle of that month, the *Declaration of the Eastern House*, which was to become a kind of program document, was agreed upon and signed. In the end, it was created before the Eastern Day.

In the *Declaration of the Eastern House*, signed by 19 individuals and 15 communities:

We declare for the Eastern House the strict rule of equality of partners and making our joint activities free from competing national, political or religious perspectives. For the analysis of the past, we take the perspective of the victim as a basis, rather than the justification of the perpetrator, invoking the rationale of ideology, geopolitics or religion. We understand the accession to the Eastern House as an announcement of readiness for dialogue and the search for truth, free from the constraints of local patriotism or group loyalty. [...]

Dialogue will be conducted in the Eastern House on the basis of the equivalence of nations, represented by those who do not side with despotic regimes. We assume that the entire East is in a process – a transition from total state forms to an uncontrolled parliamentary democracy upholding human rights. This is a prerequisite for reconciliation in a region where no ideologized historical politics can set goals or forms of understanding. We are convinced that this historical process will be stopped neither by the militaristic, genocidal policies of the Russian government, nor by the ruthlessness of Russia and Belarus in domestic politics. [...]

We do not accept as conclusive the theory of “resigned societies” that would agree to give up freedom for a more peaceful existence. The experience of Belarus in 2020/21 proves how false such an assumption would be. The East has been and is being destroyed by ruthless authorities and the conformists who support them, but the Eastern House will refer only to a free Ukraine, the citizens of Belarus and Russia who fight for their freedom. Only free people of all our countries can communicate, taking mature responsibility for the past of their own nations. The condition for constructive dialogue is not to acknowledge one’s own guilt for the evils perpetrated by past generations of compatriots – but rather to consciously allow the memory which is a burden to “one’s own side” to speak and to accept civic responsibility for it. [...]

The Eastern House is being built to herald a communal East, from which a peaceful, harmonious neighborhood shall emerge. This place will not tolerate attitudes of ideological aggression, defining the enemy. Nationalism, present in all of our countries, must not affect the course of cooperation. Allowing such attitudes as options would predetermine the failure of the venture. The future peaceful East is therefore to be an alternative to today’s East, which is hugely influenced by anti-democratic, bloody dictators. The Eastern House is to be a place of order among the peoples of Eastern Europe – proving on a possible scale that it is viable. [...]

The Russian part of the Eastern House must be formed outside any influence of the Russian Federation administration – as a component of the multinational community of the East, and not a representation of the “imperial society”. The Russian signatories of this message stand on the side of a free Russia (a few months of 1917 and a few years in the first post-Soviet decade can be considered its historical manifestations), defending the non-imperial perspectives. [...]

Ukraine’s integrity and independence is an obvious condition for a democratic order in the East, and anyone’s approval of the Russian invasion of Ukraine precludes any partnership with the Eastern House. [...]

The authorities in Minsk, who are dependent on the Kremlin, should be treated equally – both as maintaining themselves with lies and force, and as usurping their own people, and as criminal. Both dictators should be tried by the International Criminal Court in The Hague as having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. Representatives of the Belarusian state, like those of Russia, must be systemically excluded from any international relations decided within the framework of the Eastern House. The Belarusian representation present defines itself unequivocally as opposing the self-proclaimed dictator. [...]

The signatories of this message form an initiative group, which today has started building a community of historical heritage – cross-border, carrying universal values – and the tasks of social diplomacy that can help in the current situation in the East.

Warsaw, May 2022

(Signed by: Bogdan Białek, Igor Cependa, Jarosław Chołodecki, Piotr M.A. Cywiński, Zbigniew Gluza, Władysław Grochowski, Adolf Juzwenko, Paweł Kazanecki, Magdalena Kornacka, Alvydas Nikžentaitis, Aleksiej Pamiatnych, Michał Przewłocki, Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Leszek Włochyński, Rafał Wnuk, Henryk Woźniakowski, Kazimierz Wóycicki, Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda, Leszek Zasztowt; Belarusian Solidarity Center, Eastern House Foundation, European Belarus Foundation, Lena Grochowska Foundation, Leaders of Change Foundation, KARTA Center Foundation, Borderland Foundation, KARTA '97 – Charter'97, College of Eastern Europe, Museum of the Small Homeland in Studziwody, Grodzka Gate – NN Theater Center, East European Democratic Centre, “For Free Russia” Association, Ossoliński National Institute, Union of Ukrainians in Poland) _____

THE EASTERN DAY

The dynamics of the situation in the East, the ongoing war and the growing repression, leads us to focus on the practical dimension of the planned activity.

The acceleration came with the emergence of the designated premises, at 6 Constitution Square [in Polish: *plac Konstytucji 6*] (corner of Koszykowa Street) in Warsaw – with huge show windows. The Eastern House, with its future destination in the Palace and Park compound in Mordy near Siedlce, can begin operations here immediately. We have named this place the Eastern House’s SHOW WINDOW [in Polish: *Witryna Domu Wschodniego*, abbreviated to *WDW*] as it is the forerunner of a far-reaching process: dialogue between the peoples of Eastern Europe – in the face of war crimes and regime’s repression, but not a “reconciliation at any price”, i.e. not by remaining silent about the depth of the conflict.

On 23 June 2022, in the series of Open Days for the 40th anniversary of KARTA, the launching of the Eastern House’s Show Window took place under the banner of the Eastern Day. It was supposed to be a mere prelude to the future day-to-day activities of the venue, temporarily impossible due to the lack of technical facilities, but the course of the meeting suggested otherwise. One could read it as the initiation of fundamental undertakings for future peace in the East of Europe.

On behalf of the authorities of the Polish capital city, the site was opened by the Mayor of Śródmieście – the central district which has made the 300-square-metre premises available to the KARTA Center (the ground floor for club activities and public meetings; the basement for a library and archive for Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian and Polish-language publications, including resources which had not been available before; the mezzanine floor for reading digital and physical collections in these languages).

The Eastern Day was opened by the Ambassadors – of Lithuania in Warsaw, of Poland in Kiev, Vilnius and Minsk. The just-appointed Ambassador of Ukraine in Warsaw could not be present, but we received a signal of support from him, too. All of them announced their systemic support for the Eastern House’s Show Window, which may suggest that the grassroots movement we intend to establish here may gain diplomatic support in the relationship between, or on behalf of, the capitals of the region (the Polish Ambassador to Belarus has not been able to return there for a year and a half now). The situation of the current war, as well

as the repression in Belarus and Russia, make it necessary, as it were, to join all forces against the regimes that persist there.

In the texts in Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian languages, the House is referred to as East European for the sake of substantive clarity about which East is involved.

Eduardas Borisovas,

**Ambassador of Lithuania to the Republic of Poland,
during the Eastern Day:**

I believe that systemic work on our common past will not only result in more historical publications, but will also help to draw lessons for the future, which will contribute to conflict resolution and future peace. I regard the opening of the Eastern House's Show Window as an international success. A facility with its own library and archive is being established, which will contribute to scientific and face-to-face dialogue between our peoples. I am happy and proud that Lithuania will also contribute to the operation of the Eastern House's Show Window. I have just received confirmation that the Lithuanian Special Files Archive has agreed to exhibit copies of Soviet documents, including those of the State Security Committee (KGB) of the Lithuanian SSR.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

The declaration handed over by Ambassador Eduardas Borisovas can be seen as a confirmation of the international community's readiness to work in solidarity on the common past – in the name of systemic liberation of the region from the influence of an anachronistic yet bestial empire. The KGB archive in Vilnius is unique in that all of it has been preserved in the hands of democrats freed from the influence of the Kremlin – a Russian-language resource that is extremely useful for researching a system returning to its criminal policies in Russia. Partnership in the Show Window's activities was also confirmed by the Ambassador-inspired Center for the Study of Genocide and Resistance of Lithuanian Residents in Vilnius.

Artur Michalski,

**Ambassador of the Republic of Poland to Belarus,
after the Eastern Day:**

The Eastern House's Show Window is the first stage in the implementation of the great Eastern House project, whose creator is the KARTA Center, which is extremely merited in the area of building civil society in Poland and dialogue with neighboring nations.

The goals set by the organizers strengthen the foundation for peaceful coexistence of free societies and close cooperation between the independent states of our region. Without an honest discussion of the past, the legacy of totalitarianism, as well as mutual feuds, without making an effort to meet the other, to listen to their arguments, without an honest presentation of one's own experience – it

will be difficult to build close relations, so necessary for the entire transatlantic community.

By establishing the Eastern House's Show Window, the creators of the project want to provide a space for a friendly meeting. Given the achievements of the KARTA Center to date, one can be convinced that this project is in good hands and worthy of all support.

The support of Ambassador Artur Michalski, unable to return to his post in Minsk, was particularly important to KARTA, due to the need for joint arrangements with representatives of the Belarusian diaspora – in the following months the Center benefited from the Ambassador's competent advice.

Mirostaw Skórka,
president of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland,
during the Eastern Day:

I would like to express the wish that this place builds an awareness of history for the future, because the acumen of the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, the Ukrainian national minority, has had various experiences here, when this common Polish-Ukrainian past was used rather not to communicate with each other.

We are now operating in a specific historical context. Marian Turski in Auschwitz spoke about the fact that places like Auschwitz did not emerge out of nowhere, that they were slowly prepared. Today we are facing Putin's imperialism, which also did not emerge out of nowhere, it was slowly, very systematically built as well. This is our greatest threat, against which we must prepare for years to come. It is said that the war, that Russia's aggression against Ukraine will continue. We may run out of weapons – let's hope not, but we must not run out of intellectual ammunition for the fight to ensure that the narrative of Russian, Putin imperialism does not dominate our narrative of Europe.

In the Polish-Ukrainian context, this is extremely important, because our history is extremely rich. From this history we have drawn only some of its elements. With extreme reverence, we have cherished only the painful stories, avoiding others that would allow us to look more to the future. And at a time when the people in Ukraine are fighting for their dignity, and fighting in such a way that brings awe and wonder, when two million refugees have arrived in Poland, it turns out that we have actually understood very little of this history. Tales of Polish-Ukrainian history, even for these last thirty years, have not prepared us in Poland to look at each other as two independent nations – Poles to Ukrainians.

Knowledge of Ukrainian history in Poland is extremely selective – and this is to our detriment. This seems to be a huge challenge facing a place like the Eastern House, as well as intellectuals, historians and people who think as Juliusz Mieroszewski and his ilk thought – that the future is to determine our narratives about history. Our community of interests could be what puts an effective dam on the Russian narrative about their specific role in Europe. This is what the Paris

“Kultura” community warned us against and constantly informed us about. So we hope that the Eastern House will also be such a place for us, for the Ukrainian communities in Poland – both the old Ukrainians, i.e. the national minority, and the new ones who have appeared here just now. Perhaps many of them will settle in Poland for longer or permanently. We desperately need such a place for conversation, for understanding, for looking into each other’s eyes and telling different stories, sometimes stories we are not fully aware of.

I very much hope that it will be a joint success, one to which our organization has contributed as well.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

The Union of Ukrainians in Poland has been a partner of KARTA since the mid-1990s in activities related to the “Poland-Ukraine: difficult questions” series. That time the process of fundamental dialogue for both nations was not closed, political tensions prevented agreement. Now one can see how deeply mistaken the then representatives of the Polish state were in preventing the Polish-Ukrainian Congress from taking place in 2001.

With the Center for Eastern Studies (OSW), KARTA had been making plans for nearly four years to make the special collection available, the OSW Director confirmed on the Eastern Day.

Adam Eberhardt,

director of the Center for Eastern Studies,
during the Eastern Day:

We have such a treasure at the Center, which we have not boasted of so far, it is what I have called the “OSW Freedom Archive”, which is an archive of newspapers and magazines from the period of transition – from the late 1980s to the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. There are 1,437 folders, at least several centimeters thick. We have agreed with the initiators of the Show Window that we will create a kind of joint venture – we will make this archive from the transition period in Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, the South Caucasus countries available to researchers, scientists. This collection is really huge. I have the impression that some of these periodicals are white ravens; unavailable in libraries, and above all – they are not available electronically, either. And this is the second element of our cooperation, which we will want to implement at the Eastern House, that is, a joint project to digitize these sources and make them ultimately available online as well.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

The space allocated for the library and archive at the Show Window is too small to accommodate the “OSW Freedom Archive”. We have agreed with the Center’s management that as soon as the reading room at 6 Constitution Square can be opened, physical collections can be delivered to the ordering party from the OSW, which is not far away, and after digitization – all digital collections.

Jan Malicki,

Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw,
during the Eastern Day:

I have students who need to be assigned with thesis topics, and here will be something most valuable – there will be sources, the press will be here that most of our students have never seen. And not only students, but our colleagues as well. This will be an opportunity to make this wonderful archive alive and operational. So I express my joy at this new place that is also being created for Polish science.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

Previously, KARTA had attempted, together with the Center for East European Studies at the University of Warsaw, to create an Eastern-languages library at Warsaw University, but these attempts were unsuccessful.

Maria Charmast,

“For Free Russia” Association, during the Eastern Day:

We would like the Russians in the House, with the help of Poles, Ukrainians and Belarusians, to start their own debate on the essence of imperialist Russia. Russians ontologically are not evil. They just don't know, don't know how, don't have the words to talk about Eastern European history without these imperialist resentments or imperialist language. That's why we want such a debate to start right here. There are a lot of Russians in Warsaw now; we want them to find their meeting place, their integration in the Eastern House, also learning about the history of Poland, about the history of the many nations that inhabited Poland, about the history and values of this region. Counting very much on this, we declare our participation, our support in all the undertakings.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

Piotr M.A. Cywiński,

Auschwitz Museum, Memorial Society,
during the Eastern Day:

Russia will not disappear. It may change, as a result of this idiotic war it has unleashed, but it will not disappear. It will continue to be a very important factor in our talks. Maybe even more important factor for our conversations than for the perspective of the giants of this world – China, the United States, the European Union... And even if, watching the events, we can be appalled by the breadth and depth of the presence in Russia of what is called *homo sovieticus*, I would like to thank very much those people, among others from Memorial, who came here today, because I think their presence is extremely important.

If in our discussions – among Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland – we do not take into account this Russian factor and try to abstract from the future, which after all must look different, such abstraction will be something worse than foolishness – it will be a mistake. I believe that in the richly promising program of the Eastern House there will be room for a series, perhaps some kind of workshop, of Lithuanian-Belarusian-Ukrainian-Polish meetings with invited friends from, for example, Memorial, who are in an equally difficult situation, for other reasons, to reflect on the Russian question.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

The director of the Auschwitz Museum, a member of the Russian Memorial in Poland, was in 2021/22 the most active person mobilizing Poles to directly support the Society.

Małgorzata Naimska,

East European Democratic Center, during the Eastern Day:

We very much hope that the Eastern House for Eastern Europeans will be able to be a platform for dialogue, for conversation, for settling issues that are not settled so far. The external threat has created a need for all of us to unite, to interact. I hope that the Eastern House will create such an opportunity.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

Rafał Wnuk,

Grodzka Gate – NN Theater Center, during the Eastern Day:

I would not like the Eastern House to be a place where we get along, because we won't get along – too many variables, but I hope it will be a place where we can talk. Talk with empathy, because I think that without empathy we won't achieve anything. I think that by bringing the achievements of Grodzka Gate in addition to all those state nations of Central and Eastern Europe, we would like to bring our experience in Polish-Jewish dialogue, because throughout this area Jews are the group that co-creates the cultural, political and intellectual environment of the region.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

Laurynas Vaičiūnas,

College of Eastern Europe, during the Eastern Day:

Our Central European solidarity is something incredible, it can disarm and destroy the biggest, worst imperialisms. So I hope that the Eastern House will emanate throughout Europe, setting an example.

Warsaw, June 23, 2022

The declarations of the Polish partners of KARTA strengthened the Center's conviction that together it will be easier for us to build the organizational basis for such international activity in Warsaw. Speeches by the state partners (like the Juliusz Mieroszewski Center for Dialogue, Bielsat TV, the Copernicus Science Center) and non-governmental partners (like the Eastern House Foundation, the Lena Grochowska Foundation, the Leaders of Change Foundation) – argued that one can count on the Show Window for cross-environmental energy and integration in working for future peace in the East.

During the Eastern Day, speeches by four leaders of the Belarusian diaspora, who have a significant share in the anti-regime struggle in their country, and now – forced to emigrate – lead communities organized by themselves in Poland, could stimulate the imagination. They generally operate separately, defining political differences between themselves, but the Show Window could be a place for permanent meetings, agreeing on common rationales, searching in solidarity for more effective methods of collective action. This is how a tighter representation of the Belarusian diaspora could emerge, strengthening its social power through integration.

During the Eastern Day, an announcement was made that the Eastern House Show Window will start in its target daily formula from the beginning of October 2022. The KARTA Center plays the role of tenant of the premises and organizer of the whole thing, but the various communities entering this space with their activity will be the true hosts here. A common assumption has resounded, that from individual grassroots activities – Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, Lithuanian, Polish... – an integrated social front will begin to emerge, striving for freedom in the East.

MOBILIZATION

No country consciously chooses to remain under dictatorial rule, and our societies have sufficiently demonstrated this over the past four decades. The domination of authoritarian power was broken in no small measure by waves of grassroots rebellion – the Polish Solidarity movement, the Ukrainian Maydan, the Belarusian March. In the face of the current tyranny, a pro-democratic movement of the entire East is necessary.

In the second half of 2022, after the initial launch of the Show Window, which does not yet have sufficient technical and personnel facilities, the Eastern House partners performed with closer presentations of their own ideas about the path we are to take together.

Rafał Wnuk,

Grodzka Gate – NN Theater Center:

The Eastern House and its Show Window are to create a place for dialogue between representatives of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe – a dialogue about the past, present and future. Lublin’s Grodzka Gate – NN Theater Center, based in the Grodzka Gate, which until World War II united the Christian and Jewish cities, has been a space for the meeting of cultures, traditions and religions since its inception. Initiating the Eastern House The Gate and KARTA are united by thinking in civic categories. The reflection on the past, present in both institutions, flows from the pro-democratic beliefs of the founders of both institutions, shaped by the experience of living under an authoritarian, mono-party system. Hence the conviction that without knowledge of history, without constantly facing its bright and dark sides, it is impossible to build either a future-oriented state or a mature civic community. A community of values predestines Lublin’s Grodzka Gate to work closely with the Eastern House’s Show Window.

The question remains, what can the Gate community bring to the Eastern House? Certainly, we can serve the network of contacts built up over decades with historians, political scientists, social activists and history lovers from Ukraine,

Belarus, Lithuania, Germany, Israel or Russia. At the center of our activities from the beginning was the history of the Jews, for hundreds of years co-creators of the Eastern European mosaic of nationalities and religions, and today almost absent from the region. In the era of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the memory of the murder of Jews is particularly valid. Putin – like Hitler once did – has decided that he has the right to decide which nation has the right to exist and which does not; that he has the right to forcibly change national borders and commit crimes in the name of imperial pipe dreams. The Nazis considered the Jews to be subhuman, to be slaughtered for the sake of humanity. Today, Kremlin propaganda calls Ukrainians defending their independence as fascists, who must be destroyed for the good of humanity, no matter the cost. Contempt for the weak, hatred of dissent and rejection of the concept of human rights show that Russia has not understood the meaning of the Holocaust.

When the idea of the Eastern House was born, we were at a different point in history. The massive pro-democracy protests had not yet begun in Belarus to be brutally crushed later by the Lukashenko regime, and Russian troops had not yet advanced on Kiev, Kharkiv and Odessa. As a rule, truth is the first victim of war. In the current war situation, the Eastern House should become a place where truth can survive. Dialogue about the past and present cannot be replaced by war agitation. The response to the lying media campaigns of anti-democratic regimes must not be to resort to propaganda simplifications and stereotypes. The Eastern House should build bridges over the moats dug by anti-democratic dictators. At the “round table” of the Eastern House, next to the place of Poles, Ukrainians, Jews or Lithuanians, there must be chairs for democratic, pro-Western Belarusian and Russian activists.

Bogdan Białek,

Jan Karski Association:

The Jan Karski Association of Kielce was established in 2005 as a continuation of the Civic Association “Memory–Dialogue–Reconciliation”, formed by a dozen residents of Kielce just before the 50th anniversary of the Kielce pogrom, an outbreak for reasons of racist prejudice, entrenched anti-Semitism and religious superstition, hatred leading to violence, as a result of which more than forty people died, and the Jews of Poland left the country and Europe, as a place that was a constant threat to them.

The patron of our Association has repeatedly said that “making the world a better place is possible, that making relentless efforts to this end is necessary, and that failure to correct and indifference to evil is a crime and a sin”. Therefore, in our widely conducted activities, we first and foremost emphasize the formation of attitudes of openness to other people, regardless of where they come from, who they are, their beliefs, their faith, their social or economic status. After many years of experience, we already know with certainty that countering racism or anti-Semitism will not produce any desirable result without focusing on respect for every human being, recognizing his or her uniqueness, freedom, dignity and the resulting human and civil rights. Hence our commitment to interreligious

dialogue, support for initiatives in favor of the LGBT community, involvement in any civic activity in defense of the rule of law, the persecuted, the discriminated against, the object of any violence.

Since Russia's attack on Ukraine, we have been taking care of a group of refugees, for whom we have created an autonomously operating day care center. In addition to social activities, we emphasize various forms of activity there, allowing refugees and their children to overcome the stereotypes with which they came to Poland from Ukraine – especially towards Roma or Russian-speaking Ukrainians.

We are now making, for now tentative, but also the matter is very delicate, attempts to build Ukrainian-Russian relations, which perhaps in the future, after the end of the war and the Ukrainian victory, will result in the building of bridges between these two nations so tragically experienced.

Since the violation of human and civil rights is already an obvious practice of all authoritarian regimes or those aiming at authoritarianism, we maintain contacts with pro-democracy organizations, and we ourselves also conduct trainings and conferences on civil rights, thus building a network of people sensitive to these issues.

The Eastern House seems to us a natural meeting place for people, ideas and experiences to build civil, democratic and free societies.

Małgorzata Naimska,

East European Democratic Center:

The Eastern House, in our opinion, should play a primarily educational role. The nations of Eastern Europe have suffered in the past and are currently experiencing a very difficult coexistence. To understand this context, a great deal of educational work and broad debate is needed. It is necessary today to educate in the field of correctly reading the intentions of the propaganda of regime systems. In this area, the Center can contribute the results of its achievements.

We also see the role of the Eastern House as a place that offers hope for reconciliation in light of the truth between these nations. This truth is perceived differently by each nation, so true reconciliation will not be easy and will certainly not happen in the short term. However, the constant work of clarifying the problems that divide us, showing different aspects of them, will surely give a good result in the end. One can try to find consensus on individual issues and step by step create an atmosphere of mutual trust.

At the same time, we think it is a good idea to make the premises and archival resources of the Eastern House available to trusted (verified, which the Center can help with) communities for organizing various forms of activity. We see the need to develop a program of activities to cover several-years.

As the cataclysm of the war, the symptoms of the genocidal behavior of the Russian military in Ukraine deepened, there was growing resistance in the Ukrainian community in Poland to any communication with the Russians, but also with the Belarusians. In the end, we agreed that the beginning of cooperation would primarily mean Ukrainian-Polish dialogue.

Mirostaw Skórka,

Union of Ukrainians in Poland:

The Union of Ukrainians in Poland has taken up cooperation with the KARTA Center in the Eastern House's Show Window, which it considers a much-needed facility for the study of Polish-Ukrainian relations in the historical past and their formation in the difficult present of the time of war and the wartime exile of Ukrainians to Poland. It is not a place for ad hoc assistance, but a social *think-tank* – important for shaping the future, which also works in the perspective of new social challenges, such as the need to arrange common relations between people and nations in this part of Europe.

KARTA has always worked towards democracy and human rights – the Eastern House's Show Window is intended to strengthen and expand these activities. We will run a series of events here together under the title “Common Issues. Polish-Ukrainian meetings”. KARTA in its 40 years of work has repeatedly proved that the issue of the history of mutual relations between our peoples is treated with the utmost attention, with integrity addressing the most difficult, often very painful topics. It does not act opportunistically – as is also often the case today, when new institutions, foundations, centers are created, for which helping Ukrainians and Ukraine is an excuse to make money. The institutional history of the KARTA Center is a confirmation of its enduring system of values, in which there is room for the diversity of cultures, narratives and traditions of our region. These values are central to our 21st century societies.

The Union of Ukrainians in Poland has named Prof. Aleksandra Hnatiuk, vice president of the Ukrainian PEN Club, as a person particularly predestined to lead a principled Ukrainian-Polish dialogue.

Aleksandra Hnatiuk,

in the proposed plan for Ukrainian-Polish meetings:

Poles have set an example of solidarity with Ukrainians more than once over the past quarter century: they rushed in crowds to support the Orange Revolution in 2004, they were the first to provide aid to the victims of the Revolution of Dignity in January 2014, and in 2022 one can already speak of a common mass movement, without which the Polish state would not have been able to cope with the influx of refugees. Polish solidarity has once again become a role model for the West.

Since joining the European Union in 2004, Poland has tried to play the role of an expert in Ukrainian affairs. Poles believe that they know much more about Ukraine than their Western neighbors. The interest in Ukrainian issues in Poland – from politics and the economy to culture and education – is indeed difficult to compare with any other country. This keen interest has been influenced not only by neighborhood or linguistic proximity, but also by history, both ancient and recent. The common historical heritage has often been the subject of intellectual reflection. There were multiple debates and a *modus vivendi* was searched for, with greater or lesser success. Practitioners, sometimes supported by politicians, have

sought to preserve this heritage for future generations. There were also projects to develop a common history textbook, even though a common vision would seem not so much distant as utopian. For this would mean, if one were to accept the principle of equivalence, abandoning the national historical narrative, which is the glue of the national community. Not the only glue, because, after all, the most important thing is our choices in the face of present challenges, but undoubtedly an important one.

Polish-Ukrainian discussions of the last 30 years have been dominated by the past. The last 10 years have been marked by the dispute over Volyn. This historical perspective has largely obscured politicians' thinking about the present and future. Meanwhile, Polish and Ukrainian societies, especially in the last 10 years, have become increasingly closer to each other. Suffice it to say that according to opinion polls of recent years, Ukrainians consider Poland and Poles to be the most friendly country and nation. No one – from an ordinary citizen to a politician of the highest rank – hides his or her emotion when thanking for the support Poland and Poles have given to Ukraine and Ukrainians in the face of war.

The number of Ukrainians in Poland has increased every year since 2014. At the end of 2021, there were no less than one and a half million of Ukrainians in Poland. In 2022, the number has increased significantly. According to various estimates, Ukrainians now make up about 10 percent of Poland's population. Over the past year, we got to know each other better and closer in the most dramatic circumstances. History has receded into the background in the face of the most serious challenge facing Poles and Ukrainians since the end of World War II. It is clear, however, that there are still some circles trying to play on historical resentments, and where that doesn't work – they reach for the tried and tested arsenal of xenophobia, i.e. the threat allegedly brought by refugees.

In a series of meetings, we would like to look at the present through the prism of history and try to draw conclusions for the future, so that as soon as possible we can talk about true partnership, and not, as in the past, about Poland as an “advocate” and Ukraine as a “client”; about dialogue, and not, at best, about the asymmetry of two narratives; about a common future in a secure Europe and a secure world, and not about fighting “for our freedom and yours”. This common future is being created here and now. We would like the Ukrainian presence in Poland to be seen not as a challenge, but as an opportunity for a better future for both our peoples.

The planned Ukrainian-Polish meetings are to take on the character of wide-ranging debates and will be held in a hall capable of accommodating several hundred participants.

After the Eastern House Foundation was constituted, founded by the Przewłocki family and the KARTA Center, its first substantive initiative was the Academy of the East, which has been in operation for three years.

Kazimierz Wóycicki,

Academy of the East:

The Academy of the East [in Polish: *Akademia Wschód*] is made up of a small team of academics and publicists convinced of the need for a new approach to

the problems of Eastern Europe, free from the stereotype linking this part of the continent primarily with Russia. The Academy's activities to date include conferences and seminars (mostly online) and expert studies published on its website (akademia-wschod.domwschodni.org).

The Academy's team members share a common perspective on the eastern part of the continent as a highly diverse and heterogeneous area. The individual states of the region need to be treated separately, taking into account their distinctiveness and peculiarities. Unique and still ongoing processes of nation-building overlap with the social transformations associated with modernisation, with the difficult era of Soviet-Russian domination as a backdrop. We analyse the political processes in the region in the context of deeper cultural layers and historical conditions.

We assign a special role in this analysis to Ukraine – not only because of the current Russian aggression. Its independence is changing the political system not only in the entire region, but also in the European dimension. Hence the importance of Ukrainian studies, which should not be combined with studies on Russia, as has been a common approach and research practice so far. An important thread of the discussions we undertake is the transformation of the perception of contemporary Ukraine in individual European countries, in particular, in Poland and in Germany.

We treat the term Eastern Europe with a critical distance due to the numerous and often negative stereotypes associated with it and with the geographical and historical nomenclature. While giving special focus to Ukraine, we try to complement it with the observation of processes taking place in Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and the North Caucasus region. In the case of Belarus, the analysis of the nation-building process seems particularly relevant. Lukashenko's dictatorship and repression do not stop this process, which should be studied in its multiple manifestations.

The current situation in the Russian Federation and Russia itself requires new research tools. We treat the Federation as a colonial empire. Urgent attention needs to be paid to the identities of the individual nations and ethnic groups within its borders, their history and their aspirations for independence. The Russian nation-building process, distorted by the imperial idea, requires a separate analysis.

While emphasising the issues of culture and historical narrative, we also try to take into account economic issues and demographic factors. We are familiar with the comparative approach, allowing us to better perceive the specificities of individual countries as well as more general patterns. Our activities are intended to contribute to international dialogue, serving European integration. This is particularly relevant for today's Ukraine.

As part of the cooperation between the Academy of the East and the Centre for East European Studies of the University of Warsaw, we are launching a programme of cyclical lectures at the Eastern House's Show Window, in the 2022/23 academic year, devoted to key issues that are the subject of our studies and discussions.

Russia's war with Ukraine is being fought not only on the military and narrowly-defined information front. It is also a clash of grand historical narratives. On the one hand – the Russian idea not only of the empire itself, but of a world

order designed to resist forcibly imposed spheres of influence and patterns of populist-dictatorial rule, and on the other – the idea of democracy and civil liberties of the Western world. Regaining security for Ukraine and the West is possible only with a full victory over Russia and the collapse of the empire, and steps in this direction require both the necessary military action and the expansion of our knowledge of Ukraine and the colonized peoples inside the Russian Federation.

The presence of the Academy of the East in the Show Window gives hope that a potential, most likely path for the breakup of the Russian Federation will be worked out in the course of its activities. Such an agreed concept can be verified through the practical activities of the Eastern House.

On October 10, 2022, at the KARTA's 40th Anniversary Gala (to celebrate its 40th anniversary), Professor Antoni Dudek announced a social fundraiser for the Show Window.

Antoni Dudek

in a speech *New Maisons-Laffitte*¹:

The recent dramatic events in the east of Europe have led some analysts to believe that history has come full circle before our eyes and – of course, in different geopolitical realities – we have returned to the situation of a century ago, when the fate of this part of the continent was at stake on the outskirts of Warsaw. Others went even further, referring to the events of the 18th century, when a Russian empire was born at the expense of Sweden and Turkey, and above all Poland. Regardless of which historical analogies ultimately prove more accurate, one thing is no longer in doubt: a new order is emerging before our eyes in this part of Europe. Its future shape depends primarily on the outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian war. But not only on it, for we know of examples in the past of numerous unused victories.

Therefore, we need a new Eastern policy that is consistent and based on a broad cross-party consensus. Its foundations must be based on both in-depth reflection on both Poland's past and future role in the east of the continent. It must also be created in dialogue – often very difficult – with representatives of all the nations of Eastern Europe who accept democratic values and human rights. Of course, under conditions of deepening polarization in Poland, such a policy cannot be pursued today. This is because foreign policy has in recent years become a sphere completely subordinated and subservient to domestic politics, or more precisely, to the increasingly brutal struggle for power.

This does not mean, however, that it is no longer possible to create concepts for a new Eastern policy today. After all, for several decades during the People's Republic of Poland, this was consistently done by Jerzy Giedroyc, Juliusz Mieroszewski and other people who co-created the "Kultura" milieu in Maisons-Laffitte near Paris. However, this must take place outside the arena of current party fights, because their logic inevitably leads to fueling divisions rather than

¹ Part of the speech is based on an article by Antoni Dudek that appeared in "Rzeczpospolita" [published 17.10.2022].

building understanding. In the latter field, the experience of organizations such as the KARTA Center, which is the largest Polish NGO dealing with history, is invaluable. It was the head of KARTA, Zbigniew Gluza, and his colleagues who initiated the Polish-Ukrainian dialogue among historians in the mid-1990s, carefully defusing the minefield of mutual accusations and prejudices. It was KARTA that reminded us of the existence of Belarusian national identity and democratic opposition since the beginning of Lukashenko's dictatorial rule. Finally, it was this organization that for many years cooperated with the just-awarded Nobel Peace Prize and Putin's outlawed Russian Memorial, bringing unique materials on Soviet crimes to Poland with its help.

There is no more deserving and at the same time competent team of people in Poland today than KARTA to undertake such a difficult mission as laying the foundations of our new Eastern policy. No longer only with research on the difficult past and education in this regard, although these will continue as well, but also with a look to the future.

Anyone who remembers the history of the Cold War, during which the Americans and their allies spent trillions of dollars on armaments, is also aware how much was achieved with relatively microscopic expenditures to support free speech behind the Iron Curtain and how crucial these efforts were for the final victory. It was dealt with on a large scale precisely by the Maisons-Laffitte Literary Institute, which published "Kultura". And among its most important achievements was convincing Poles of the need to recognize Poland's wartime territorial losses in the east, while promoting the view that the sovereignty of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus (ULB) would constitute one of the foundations of the Polish Republic's geopolitical security after the projected collapse of the USSR.

The Soviet Union ceased to exist more than 30 years ago, and Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia managed to build sovereign, democratic states firmly embedded in Western political and military structures. However, the collapse of the USSR did not mean, as it turned out early in the 21st century, the end of the era of Russian imperialism. This was vividly demonstrated by the Kremlin's actions toward Chechnya, Georgia and finally Ukraine. Hopes, also nourished in Poland, for a "reset" of relations with Russia turned out to be an illusion. This means that Jerzy Giedroyc's ideological legacy has still not been fully embraced. For this to happen, Ukraine must defend its sovereignty, Belarus must become a democratic state, and Russia – following the example of former colonial empires – must undergo a kind of decolonization.

Of course, the latter challenge is the most difficult and should be viewed not through the prism of years, but of the next few decades. However, it is not an impossible task, especially since the necessity of this is now understood by an admittedly small but already noticeable group of Russians – for example, former deputies of the Russian State Duma, who met in November 2022 at a congress in Jabłonna, near Warsaw. "Putin's days are numbered, and the Russia of the future will depend on how effectively we act" – declared Ilya Ponomaryov, a former Duma deputy who organized the congress.

The primary task today is to support the fighting Ukraine and oppose attempts, appearing more and more frequently, to stir up anti-Ukrainian sentiment. At the same time, it is necessary to intensify the historical dialogue with Ukrainians, because the accusation most often repeated by opponents of

Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation is that of Kiev's promotion of banderism. This requires consistently explaining to Poles that Ukrainians will always look at the UPA differently than we do. After all, for them it is not primarily the organizer of the genocide of Poles in Volyn, but the largest anti-Soviet (and in today's context, anti-Russian) partisan fighting for the independence of their homeland.

However, considering the Polish-Ukrainian issue "for today" as the most important cannot mean ignoring other eastern directions. The most urgent of these seems to be that of Belarus, for while it is conceivable that Putin will be replaced in the Kremlin by another, albeit arguably less aggressive, Russian imperialist, it is much less likely that the Lukashenko regime will remain in Minsk once its founder loses power. And that moment will begin to approach faster and faster if the Russians fail to regain the initiative on the front and stand at the gates of Kiev again. For Russian defeats on the Ukrainian front weaken Lukashenko's regime no less than that of the Kremlin. And it is obvious that it is the former that has much weaker foundations. That is why designing the process of bringing Belarus closer to the family of democratic states and supporting the Belarus-Ukraine dialogue seems to me one of the most urgent tasks of the Eastern House's Show Window.

The process of agreeing at the Show Window on the principles of cooperation of the Belarusian diaspora – possibly the most effective against the Lukashenko regime – is underway. KARTA has appealed to all Belarusian opposition leaders present in Poland to work together in solidarity.

Belarus Solidarity Center:

Belarusians, who took up the fight for freedom in their country in 2020, faced a whole new national challenge with the outbreak of Putin's war.

In 2021, the street protest in Belarus was finally crushed. Lots of honest and courageous people were sent to prisons, where the conditions are an affront to human dignity. Hundreds of thousands of our compatriots experienced violence. Many were forced to leave their homeland. They often made decisions to flee in minutes – leaving everything they had. Millions of Belarusians were subjected to intimidation attempts. Terror began to be used in the country against anyone whose actions were not in the slightest degree in line with the ideological stances of the Lukashenko regime. From now on, one could be put behind bars for wearing the "wrong" socks (for example, white with a red stripe) or for subscribing to the "wrong" news site.

Being completely dependent on the Russian dictator, Lukashenko surrendered the remnants of his military sovereignty to the Russian army. It was from Belarus that columns of Russian tanks left for Kiev in the first days of this terrible war, and from the "peaceful sky" that Lukashenko was so fond of talking about, missiles fell on Ukrainian territory.

It would seem that after the events of 2020 – the bloody pacification of peaceful demonstrations, torture and mass arrests – nothing could shock Belarusians anymore. However, the morning of February 24, 2022 was a moment that each of us will remember for a lifetime. For a brief moment, all of us, the millions of

Belarusians who opposed the dictatorship, were completely confused. A crime had been committed in our name. perhaps one of the worst crimes in modern history.

In 2020, we finally learned to be proud of being Belarusians – a free and strong people. On February 24, this proud name was stained with blood. And this blood belongs to a friendly nation whose language we understand without interpreters, with whom we have never fought in history.

How can we help the Ukrainians? What can we do to stop two crazy dictators? How do we defend our good name and join the fight for our collective victory? Each of us began to seek answers to these questions in our own way. Brave railwaymen stopped trains with Russian tanks (for which several of them were shot in the legs by Lukashenko's security forces), indifferent Belarusians sent gigabytes of photos *en masse* illustrating the movements of the Russian military, which allowed Ukrainian intelligence to more effectively determine the occupier's plans, still others joined the fighting in defense of Ukraine as volunteers. Belarusians residing in Poland did not remain idle either, and the Belarusian Solidarity Center in Warsaw, run by us, became one of the points of assistance for Ukraine.

We already had experience of working with thousands of compatriots who fled their country two years ago, so, starting from the very first days, together with the Polish state and other organizations, we immediately began to help people who, in the chaos of the war, were completely at a loss as to what to do and where to look for support. Thanks to us, thousands of Ukrainians found accommodation and got the most necessary things, many also received legal support for legalizing their stay in Poland and psychological assistance. We have expanded our school specifically for Ukrainian children – so that they can learn their native language, Polish and English, draw, sing, go on trips and find new friends. This is important, because if the children are safe and taken care of, their parents can organize their lives in Poland in peace.

For hundreds of Ukrainians, aid from Belarusians came as a surprise. Often war makes the world black and white. News headlines are the first to lose color. Because if rockets are flying from Belarusian territory, it means that the enemies of the Ukrainians live there! What kind of help can we talk about then? However, experiencing various forms of support, coming every day with their children to our Warsaw headquarters, over which the white-red-white flag is hanging, seeing real solidarity, thousands of Ukrainians felt and understood that there can be no equal sign between Belarusians and the Lukashenko regime. We believe that the Ukrainian children who attended our school over these past months and found many Belarusian friends will maintain this bond throughout their lives, and this will bring our nations even closer together.

What is happening now is a very important lesson for all of us – telling us that all grudges, historical conflicts and interpersonal disputes can be overcome. This is proven not only by our experience, but also by the millions of Poles who have joined in helping the Ukrainians.

Work at the Belarusian Solidarity Center is mainly about helping people in the here and now. However, the experience of previous generations has convinced us that the progress, but also the very existence of humanity, is based on the transmission of knowledge, and this in turn means that history and memory are inextricably linked to our tomorrow. It is not without reason that one of the key targets that dictators attack is memory. The executioners are trying with all

their might to erase all memories of their crimes and create a wonderful world in which they will be heroes. Putin's desire to make history has caused the suffering and bloodshed of millions of innocent Ukrainian citizens. At the same time, the Belarusian dictator is not only trying to destroy the memory of the recent protests by blocking websites and repressing journalists, but is also fighting the long-dead soldiers of the Home Army by destroying their graves.

We, Belarusians, cannot allow the memory and soul of our nation to be taken away from us, therefore, in cooperation with the Eastern House's Show Window, we want to create the most extensive Belarusian archive possible – which, after the liberation of our country, will become one of the pillars of the campaign to revive the memory of the lived events, not only of recent years, but of the entire modern history of Belarus.

We must not forget about the future, either, hence the idea to inaugurate a series of meetings later this year in the hospitable space of the Warsaw headquarters of the Eastern House, with the participation of Belarusian intellectuals who, together with invited guests and the assembled audience, will reflect on the challenges awaiting our country. The series will consist of six meetings, held once a month. Its concept was developed by Alina Koushyk, a representative of the United Transitional Cabinet for the national revival of Belarus.

Alina Koushyk,

**national revival representative
of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus:**

Poland today, as well as the entire Baltic-Black Sea region of the former lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, provides important support for the development and strengthening of the democratic and national movement of the Belarusian people. The joint efforts of Eastern European nations to establish regional security and oppose Moscow's colonial and imperial policies lead us to close cooperation and the need to understand overall goals and objectives. The activities of the Eastern House in Warsaw to strengthen the partnership between nations and its contribution to the understanding of the strategic goals of the struggle for self-determination is an important foundation for the work on the national rebirth of Belarus itself. At the same time, under the latter we primarily understand the activities necessary to popularize and spread culture and education in the national language, the return to an unadulterated version of history, the policy of decommunization and the opening of archives from the Soviet era, the struggle against the propaganda of the idea of a "Russian world".

Within the framework of our common interests, we strongly support the idea of establishing a national Belarusian archive at the Eastern House, which would be able to store and process important evidence of the time and documents of historical significance that also testify to the effectiveness of Belarusian self-organization. Undoubtedly, a good follow-up to this initiative could be a public Belarusian library with a reading room, where Belarusians abroad could request new and old editions of Belarusian books and other printed materials. Such a center of intellectual culture and historical memory seems essential for preserving the national spirit and

perpetuating traditions. But by combining history with the present, we are very keen to make the Eastern House for Belarusians a place of interesting discourse. Such a fusion of generations and cultures is a very important step for our common future, the truly independent and democratic development of Belarus.

One of the Belarusian opposition leaders with whom KARTA has been working for several years is Andrei Sannikov, Lukashenko's challenger in the 2010 presidential election.

Andrei Sannikov, European Belarus Foundation:

The idea of the Eastern House as a project to study the cultures and histories of the neighboring countries of the Eastern European region and as a center for cultural dialogue deserves all the support and encouragement it can get. The territories of the “bloodlands”, as Timothy Snyder called them, are important not only for research; the processes taking place in this region still largely determine the most important developments in the whole modern Europe and influence international developments.

The KARTA Center, which is the driving force behind this initiative, is known for its selfless work in recording and making history available to the public, especially its complicated and not always “convenient” moments, with an emphasis on the individual, on the feelings and memories of the person who witnessed that history at the time. It is precisely this approach that is very important for our region today. The importance of the processes taking place here for international peace and security, for the fate of the people living in Europe and Asia, and beyond, sheds a tragic light on the war unleashed by the former Russian Empire, which forcibly seeks to regain not only regional power, but also the lands it once occupied and dominated.

Unfortunately, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist camp, only tentative attempts were made to address the complex issues of the relations of those countries whose territories were controlled by that totalitarian state. Joint commissions – bilateral, trilateral or multilateral – were established to resolve disputed historical issues. In the case of Belarus, such commissions or groups cooperated with Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. However, their work was soon curtailed due to changes in the political situation in Belarus and then Russia.

All authoritarian rulers are primarily interested in silencing history that is unprofitable for them, distorting historical facts and creating historical forgeries – in order to show their imaginary greatness. Today Belarus and Russia are actively rewriting history that our citizens have not had time to learn. School textbooks are being rewritten, books are being banned, archives are being closed. Instead of carefully reconstructing the true history of the “bloodlands”, the lies of the Putin and Lukashenko regimes are being actively superimposed on the earlier “Soviet” lies. Because of this barbaric attitude of the current illegitimate Belarusian authorities toward history, part of Belarus’ history is being detached from the history of its own country and becoming an appendix to historical research and even canonical textbooks of neighboring countries.

The war that Russia has unleashed in the region has once again underscored the importance of understanding the historical behavior of different countries and peoples, including in order to prevent such tragedies.

It is very important that in addition to organizing a virtual space, the Eastern House has already opened a meeting and discussion space in the center of Warsaw – in the Show Window, and in the near future will allocate a palace and park complex in Mordy, close to the borders of Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania and Russia, for the project. This center for dialogue among Eastern European countries, which is located on the territory of free Poland, is an ambitious but very important project. Work on it is an integral part of the struggle for freedom currently being waged by the Belarusian people and other nations of the “bloodlands”.

The Belarusian community in Studziwody, a district of Bielsk Podlaski, has developed its own original version of work on national identity.

Tomasz Sulima,

Museum of the Small Homeland in Studziwody:

Founded in 1986, the Museum of the Small Homeland has been at the center of our interests since its inception – the East. Here stands our spiritual, material and social Home. This is how it was in the history-rich past of Podlasie, and we are convinced that it will also be so in the future of our region. Since the museum’s launching, our mission has become to creatively respond to the needs of the local community. We still have a need to get together, because we are connected by blood ties, language, culture, Orthodox Christianity and curiosity about history and culture in the broadest sense. Over the years Studziwody has become recognizable on the map of Poland remaining a unique embassy of traditional culture, small history and a window to the East – the cruel 20th century left it outside the political border of our country. So we began to renovate the old bridges and build new ones.

Sightseeing trips to Polesie, and ethnographic and folklore research, resulted in a unique phenomenon – Podlasie-Polish musical encounters that effectively blurred the political boundary between Poland and Belarus, revealing the spiritual community of the region. For many artists from Belarusian Polesie, a trip to Podlasie was an astonishing discovery of the fact that “people live there who talk like us and sing the songs we know”. Our intuitions were confirmed during the Slavonic Literature Days, which led to lively discussions among historians, writers and intellectuals, allowing us to build our *Russkiy mir* across political and world-view divides. For us, Byelorussians of Podlasie, whose parents and grandparents survived the post-war nightmare of the armed activities of the Cursed Soldiers, facing our *Ruthenianness* today has a therapeutic dimension.

The social, moral and political crisis that hit our part of the world at the beginning of this decade shows the importance of organic and systematic grassroots work. Discovering one’s own history and nurturing one’s identity took quite a bit of courage. I write these words in Polish because my grandparents refused to leave their land, which was to become “Poland for Poles” after the war. They refused,

remaining at home, with the baggage of their non-Polishness. Their parents left in 1915, heading deep into Tsarist Russia, into the Flight. I am from a family of refugees who fled from trepidation, exactly the kind of trepidation that now accompanies people trying to cross the Polish-Belarusian border in the Belovezhskaya Pushcha. We understand it and empathize with it. The events of the Minsk summer of 2020 made Studziwody an asylum for Belarusian cultural refugees, for whom we have always been a place where they felt like in their Belarusian home. We do not accept the closure of the Polish-Belarusian border, which entails the isolation of local communities in Podlasie and Polesie.

The war in the East, which began in 2022, is something we cannot rationally explain to ourselves. We are devastated. Leaving aside the human dimension of the grievous tragedy of millions of Ukrainian citizens, not only of Ukrainian nationality, we are horrified by the evil that is associated with the Russian-Ukrainian symbolic conflict. Russian aggression and related war propaganda, appropriating for imperial purposes, among other things, the notion of *Ruskiy mir*, is a real challenge facing our community as well. The bridges between Russia and Rus are being torn down before our eyes, in the face of which we cannot remain indifferent. We are ready to support their reconstruction when the awaited peace comes.

We have high hopes for the establishment of the Eastern House. We share the ideas behind this important initiative and declare our willingness to start permanent cooperation.

In addition to the regular Academy of the East series, the Show Window runs a regular Russian series, organized by “For Free Russia” Association.

Maria Charmast,

“For Free Russia” Association:

On February 24, 2022, the Kremlin, on behalf of its citizens, launched a war against Ukraine. The attack on the neighboring country was undertaken in violation of the laws of the Russian Federation, in violation of international obligations – and sparked many protest actions in Russia itself in the spring. This criminal decision is a great tragedy not only for the Ukraine attacked by Putin, but also for the Russians and Russian women whose future was taken away. We Russians, Ukrainians and Poles, affiliated with the “For a Free Russia” Association, have taken a strongly anti-war stance.

The Russian diaspora in the West – united on the occasion of the 2021 protests in defense of Alexei Navalny, which took place from Canada to New Zealand – could become an important influence on those who have remained in Russia. Poland and Warsaw have become an important place on the map of Europe for anti-Putin Russian emigration.

The new Russian diaspora regularly conducts anti-war actions in Warsaw, Cracow, Wrocław and other Polish cities; it also coordinates its activities with groups around the world.

On the Polish-Ukrainian border, in Przemyśl and Medyka, there is a group supported by the associated WOT Foundation – “Russians for Ukraine”. Russians

from all over the world come to the border to help refugees; they raise money for this initiative and organize humanitarian transports to Ukraine. Similar Russian-led initiatives operate in Turkey, Slovakia, Montenegro, among others.

We also support political refugees from Russia. In May alone, our association helped about 30 people leave Russia for Poland – finding housing, insurance, medical assistance, providing Polish language courses. We intervened with the Ombudsman regarding conditions for refugees in the guarded center in Przemysł. We face a huge challenge in helping Muslim refugees – especially those who are active within the Kremlin’s outlawed Hizb ut-Tahrir organization, and most often do not have public acknowledgments of social activity, because they operate underground.

We appeal to our Polish friends, civil society activists: “Support the Russian Diaspora!” – in the interest of Poland, Ukraine and our common future. The war is the result of years of degradation of the Russian political system, which Russian civil society could not prevent. Ukrainians are dying in the fight against imperial aggression. We understand and recognize our responsibility to the Ukrainian people and believe that we should stand by their side in this war. Some of us support not only humanitarian actions, but also fundraisers for the army or for weapons for Ukraine (during the fundraiser for the “Polish Bayraktar” there was a separate, “Russian” piggy bank).

We, citizens of the Russian Federation, living in different countries of the world and united by our belief in the rule of law, civil society and human rights, want to create a civic network of Russians for the benefit of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. We started separately, but we are uniting because we understand the power of working together. This is our front in this war – humanistic and humanitarian. Our network unites initiatives around the world – to help and support each other more effectively in our work.

As part of the Eastern House, we sincerely hope that its affiliated organizations will partner in our initiatives – and with reciprocity. Together we work for the victory of Ukraine, for the victory of us all!

Anna Mirkes-Radziwon, Polish Memorial Society²:

The idea first appeared in 1992, when the KARTA Center established cooperation with the Russian Memorial. At that time, however, the organization was not established. For a few years now, KARTA and the Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum have become ardent promoters of the establishment of a Polish Memorial. The Director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum invited Arseniy Roginskiy, chairman of the Memorial in Russia, to the Museum Council.

The Polish Memorial is created together with Piotr Mitzner, editor, poet, literary researcher, Anna Dzienkiewicz, editor and associate of the KARTA Center, Tomasz Kizny – photographer, journalist, researcher of the GULAG and

² The statement is based on excerpts from an interview with Anna Mirkes-Radziwon for OKO.press [published 29.10.2022].

Stalinist repression in the USSR – longtime friends of the Russian Memorial; Marek Radziwon, editor and lecturer, also associated with Memorial, and Anna Gawina, a Belarusian living in Poland, journalist, extremely active during the protests in Belarus, who is now forming a staff of volunteers to help Ukrainians.

Memorial cannot be eliminated, because it is more than an organization – it is a social movement that defends fundamental values – the human right to life, memory, freedom of conscience and speech. This cannot be stopped, suppressed. Here in Poland, there are organizations for which the values of Memorial are the basis of action: KARTA Center, “For Free Russia” Association, Amnesty International...

I see our task here and now, however, primarily in documenting the testimonies of today’s war from the perspective that has always been closest to Memorial, that is – the perspective of the individual, the concrete, individual fate. We participate in the “Voices of War” project of the Kharkiv Human Rights Defense Group, which records evidence of war crimes in Ukraine.

Extremely important are the voices of those who remained in Ukraine, but equally important are the testimonies and experiences of those who were forced to flee, losing everything. Failure to document their fate would be a shameful omission in the face of history unfolding before our eyes. We are planning several important film projects, documenting the testimonies of the war. The authors are a great creative and family tandem: Ukrainian director Elena Holosyj and Russian screenwriter Vladimir Gromov. We intend to participate in the projects of the Eastern House, the KARTA initiative.

One of the roots of evil is an unlearned history lesson. Russian society has not worked through the past of the Soviet Union, Stalinism. This made it possible to return to totalitarianism and invade Ukraine. Our mission is to remind the sources of evil not only to Russians, but to all people. Restoring the memory of state crimes against the individual is grassroots work.

An important voice of opposition to harmful oversimplifications on the topics of Russian cultural guilt has appeared in “Gazeta Wyborcza” – an article by Ukrainian Yevhen Zakharov, who is chairman of the Kharkiv Human Rights Defense Group, chairman of the board of the Ukrainian Helsinki Union, and a long-time member of Memorial International. He is a moral authority for me. Meeting him became my personal, very important reason to create the Polish Memorial. His approval of joint projects is an ennoblement for us.

Ten months of ongoing war, and there are still no illusions about the advent of a peaceful situation in Eastern Europe. The Kremlin’s policies, contrary to the good of humanity, seem to have no limits in experiencing evil. The tyrant who has chosen Ukraine as a target is paralyzing the world with a nuclear threat, but he is not winning anything. Ukraine is defending itself successfully, the democratic world is not withdrawing military support. This may mean that there will be a prolonged stalemate in the reality of the front, but this should not inhibit anti-war public activity. The Show Window, launched in Warsaw, and later the planned Eastern House in Mordy, is intended to help jointly chart a path toward peace. Jointly – because agreed with representatives of all nations that are in the area of Putin’s attack.

On December 10, 2022, the Nobel Peace Prize was presented in Oslo – to the Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties; to Ales Bialiatsky (imprisoned), head of the Belarusian Center for the Defense of Human Rights “Viasna”; to the Russian Memorial Society (ruthlessly destroyed in Russia). The logic behind the selection of this year’s laureates turned out to be completely in line with the tenets of the Eastern House’s Show Window – a place open to all anti-regime forces in the diaspora. The Show Window, dubbed “an intellectual bayraktar” by Professor Antoni Dudek, will look for ways in which various social groups, alone or joining together in joint formations, can strive for the liberation of their countries and the entire East of Europe.

The prerequisite for liberation is, of course, victory at the military front. Nevertheless, even if it were possible to take back from Russia all of Ukraine’s territory, conquered in the past eight years, and a truce were implemented on the border, one could not yet speak of the advent of peace. For that, the fall of tyranny in Moscow and Minsk is necessary, not just the end of Putin and Lukashenko. Therefore, in addition to the military mobilization of the world against the invading armies, it is necessary to prepare the region’s societies for action in the long march toward a future democratic system. Without achieving it, freedom throughout the region would not be possible.

Adopting the name Eastern House for our activities in the longer term, “East” has been adopted as a geographic category, not a mental one. The inviolability of borders in Eastern Europe is treated as an indisputable axiom in geopolitics, while within them “Eastern civilization” (*Russkiy mir*) may be increasingly scarce – and this is what the Show Window defines as the goal of liberation efforts.

The Show Window’s space can help in the emergence of a social representation of any eastern national diaspora present in Poland. The largest of them, the Ukrainian one, also needs this kind of representation – despite the presence of the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw; horizontal social ties between nations should not be determined solely by the politics of states. The smaller diaspora, Belarusian, can be helped by political representation taking shape in exile, but participation in a common civic front should be free of any party or ideological attitudes; this is not the time for internal divisions, when it is difficult for any national policy to be effective. An even smaller diaspora, the Russian diaspora, must be free of any ties to the political structures of the Russian Federation, including those with a semblance of opposition; the real politicians-oppositionists Putin has destroyed or imprisoned, so those at large can hardly be trusted. Especially in the latter case, civic representation should be formed from the bottom up.

The emergence of leaders or leadership groups from individual communities would provide an opportunity for arrangements at a higher level – no longer ad hoc, operational, but more general, opening up long-range perspectives. Simply identifying them is not easy when some kind of formal voting cannot be conducted. The category of social authority, the quality of which can rather be tested in a consciously triggered process, probably has to play. We propose that the national series that are organized at the Show Window should try to set such a goal as well. If it were possible to establish social representations of the diasporas, it would be possible, in the coordination structure they set up, to define the rules of operation of the entire emerging cooperation network.

The thing boils down to the formation of an international social movement in solidarity against the dictatorship. Such an idea is not a theoretical hypothesis. Just in Poland it has been tested in practice, thanks to Jacek Kuroń’s apt concept: social movements as a force

to break up a totalitarian system. Established in the bottom-up order: KOR – Solidarity – Civic Committee – proved to be a battering ram piercing the gate to freedom. Societies do not have weapons, so military fronts are decided by states. However, social determination is necessary for a political upheaval – and that is indeed what is needed in the European East.

An integrated, international movement, coordinated within the eastern diasporas of many countries around the world, can play a great role in the future process of change. Also having clandestine representatives in various enslaved communities, it can influence collective attitudes in moments of regime shake-up. By collecting historical and contemporary documentation, it can look to the political or social processes taking place for answers to the question of the most effective methods of action and put them into practice. By collecting data on the persecuted and their persecutors, it can lay the groundwork for the future establishment of justice (something that has not been done in the Bolshevik-occupied territory for 105 years).

Our not inconsiderable advantage is the commonality of fate, if only within the post-war post-Yalta arrangement. “Kultura” of Paris, with the voice of Juliusz Mieroszewski, raised the ULB model in the 1970s – as a symbol of the potential empowerment of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus, then stifled by Sovietism. Poland and Russia were also countries conquered in such a way. It can be considered that now the entire area around the ULB (with the center in Ukraine) is a region of Europe, which, by joint efforts, is to set itself free of this tyranny. With Russia in the mix – because only there can the victory of democracy bring a deep breath of freedom to us all.

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