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**The preparation and publication
of new history textbooks
for schools in European countries
in democratic transition**

Warsaw, Poland, 14 - 16 November 1996

Report

Council for Cultural Co-operation

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Seminar on

**"The preparation and publication of new history textbooks
for schools in European countries in democratic transition"**

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Report by

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Seminar was organised jointly by the Council of Europe, the Polish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Education, and the Polish educational publisher, Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne (WSIP). It brought together publishers and representatives of Education Ministries from 20 Central and Eastern European States, along with observers and representatives of several European non-governmental organisations, such as EUROCLIO, the European Educational Publishers' Group, the International Society for History Didactics and the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. Its aim was to take stock of the developments which have taken place in the teaching of history and the production of history textbooks in each participating country since the beginning of the process of democratic transition in 1989.

It was also an opportunity to: exchange experiences; reflect on the constraints, problems and challenges which were still hindering developments; and find out how these problems were being tackled in each country and with what effect. In this respect, it is worth noting that many of the problems identified here were similar in kind, if not in scope, to those which have been identified in most countries in Western Europe: financial constraints on school or local authority budgets for purchasing textbooks; cut-backs in in-service training for teachers to enable them to respond effectively to curriculum change; insufficient cooperation between publishers and curriculum planners brought about mainly by their different operational timescales and priorities; lack of information about how textbooks are actually used by teachers and pupils; and so forth.

Finally, it was an opportunity to look to the future and to identify ways in which agencies and non-governmental organisations with a European-wide brief might be able to provide support and assistance to those responsible for curriculum planning and textbook publishing in the countries represented at the Seminar.

Warsaw was an excellent venue for the Seminar, not just because of the excellent hospitality offered to us by our Polish hosts, but also because - as Mr Jan BORKOWSKI, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out when opening the Seminar - Poland, for geographical reasons, has traditionally served as a meeting point between West and East.

The Minister explained that the Seminar was one of the events which were being organised to mark the fifth anniversary of Poland's membership of the Council of Europe. After stressing "the role of the Council in creating the history of Europe", Mr BORKOWSKI described the challenges facing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in their process of democratic transition. "It is very important", he concluded, "to prepare the young generations to live in democratic civil societies. The role of new history textbooks for schools is not just an educational element in this process, but also a 'signpost' towards a new, united Europe".

In his reply, Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport in the Council of Europe, thanked the three Polish partners for their generous encouragement and support. He recalled that history and history teaching have always occupied a special place in the Council's education programme because of their importance in:

- (i) helping young people to develop skills and attitudes which are essential for all citizens of pluralistic democracies;
- (ii) establishing mutual understanding and confidence between the peoples of Europe.

In the past eight years, the Council of Europe had made a determined effort to support the reform of history teaching in schools in Central and Eastern Europe through:

- (i) the organisation of multilateral conferences and national workshops for policy-makers and practitioners;
- (ii) support for regional projects between neighbouring countries, in particular on sensitive issues in their shared history.

The Warsaw Seminar was part of this programme, and it would be followed, in 1997, by a further seminar - in Lviv, Ukraine - on the initial and in-service training of history teachers.

2. AIMS OF THE SEMINAR

The main aims of the Seminar were as follows:

- (i) to review the progress which has been achieved in the development and publication of history textbooks following the post-1989 political and economic changes and to identify the constraints and problems which have been, and still are being, experienced;
- (ii) to discuss the criteria which have been used and the minimum standards which have been applied in the preparation of textbooks (including criteria for the selection of topics, the presentation of historical content, the emphasis to be given to the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, etc.) and the minimum standards which should be applied when checking the quality and relevance of particular textbooks, whether by officials in Education Ministries, or by expert committees set up to authorise textbooks, or by the individual purchaser;

- (iii) to discuss *realistic* future developments and possibilities in educational publishing. It was suggested that the working groups at the Seminar should restrict their discussions to developments that were realisable within the next four to five years rather than focus on those innovations in publishing and educational technology (e.g. Interactive CD-ROM) to which the majority of their schools were unlikely to have access in the medium term.

A major element of the Seminar consisted of workshop groups which focused on each of these themes in turn. However, a number of speakers were invited to give plenary presentations designed specifically to feed into and to facilitate the workshop discussions. In this report, I shall briefly summarise those presentations, highlighting the points which seemed to have particular relevance for discussing the main themes of the seminar before reflecting on the deliberations in the workshop sessions and then concluding with some specific recommendations.

3. SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY SESSIONS

3.1 Keynote Address by Professor Jerzy WIATR on 'The preparation and publication of new history textbooks for schools in European countries in democratic transition'

Professor WIATR, Minister of National Education in Poland, began his address by stressing the potentially important role which history teaching and history textbooks can play in helping to create a more enlightened, democratic and just society. However, in States in democratic transition, the Minister of Education had far more limited powers to influence the history curriculum and textbooks than his predecessors. The Ministry can issue curriculum guidelines, monitor what is being taught in schools, and approve textbooks and put them on a recommended list but essentially, now, there was an open market of ideas.

He then went on to identify and explore two key issues regarding the teaching of history in many States in Central and Eastern Europe (which could also be critically important for many Western European States):

- (i) teaching about the remote past, particularly with regard to relations between neighbouring countries or ethnic groups within the same country;
- (ii) teaching about the very recent past, particularly the experience of communism and the period of democratic transition.

He felt that the way in which schools and textbooks treat remote history is one of the important tests of an education system's commitment to democratic pluralism. This applied particularly to the treatment of those dramatic events and tragedies where "victims" and "henchmen" are often inter-changeable depending on the individual's perspective and allegiances. In this respect, he drew attention to the value of bilateral and multilateral initiatives: curriculum projects, textbooks and youth exchanges. He emphasised that history teaching needed to be frank, open and honest - admitting atrocities committed by one's own people and "telling the truth as it is, even if it is painful". It also needed multiple perspectives - "to tell the other side of the story".

This open and pluralist approach to teaching history and to writing history textbooks was also critically important when dealing with recent events, particularly those which are still politically controversial and continue to divide communities and nations. Professor WIATR rejected the idea of a 30 years' moratorium but had doubts about the wisdom and value of teaching about events and developments which had just occurred or were still taking place. He was not sure that, in such instances, the teaching and classroom discussion could be sufficiently objective and detached. This issue was returned to in the question-and-answer session, and the Minister accepted that any decision about a cut-off point for the history curriculum would prove problematic. For one thing, it would vary from country to country. While he would propose 1989 for Poland, the cut-off point for the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic might be the dissolution of the Federation.

Professor WIATR concluded by returning to the need for openness and pluralism: "the good history teacher and the good textbook should try to explain to young people that there are times in history when decent, honest people differ."

3.2 "International Textbook Research" by Dr Falk PINGEL

In both his presentation and the written report circulated at the Seminar, Dr PINGEL, Deputy Director of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research emphasised how textbook research, particularly comparative research, has been changing. He explained that research of this kind had its origins in attempts to systematically identify and eliminate factual errors, stereotypes, prejudices and deliberate omissions and distortions from account of national history, the histories of other countries and accounts of international issues and conflicts. The main task was "to analyse the texts, to compare the findings, to relate them to acknowledged academic research and to formulate recommendations which often gave a positive account of mutual relations and listed missing issues as well as unacceptable views."¹

¹ Falk PINGEL, Summary of the Presentation on International Textbook Research, Council of Europe, CC-ED/HIST (96) 9.

He then went on to observe that, while this focus on intentional and unintentional bias still has a role to play in international textbook research, especially when looking at textbooks which focus on relations between countries that have a long history of mutual conflict, the nature of textbook research has changed. Researchers now give much more emphasis to the structure of textbooks, the authors' styles of writing; the perspective of the presentation of topics, themes and issues; the balance between narrative and source material; the use of illustrations, photographs, maps and statistics; and the appropriateness of the language, content and associated exercises to the age and level of ability of the students for whom they are produced. These changes have, in turn, led to the adoption of other methodologies to supplement the traditional quantitative analysis and qualitative content analysis. Dr PINGEL particularly emphasised the value of linguistic analysis within textbook research.

This shift of emphasis in textbook research has been accompanied by the emergence of a new role for textbook researchers: to provide support and guidance to authors and publishers, curriculum developers and Ministries of Education before new textbooks are produced rather than just to analyse them once they have been published. Finally, Dr PINGEL noted that, as yet, textbook researchers know very little about how teachers and students use history textbooks and this was an area that now needed to be developed.

3.3 "The preparation and production of history textbooks from the point of view of a commercial publisher" by Ms Barbro LARSSON

Ms Barbro LARSSON is both a commercial publisher of textbooks and Director of the Central Office of the European Educational Publishers' Group (EEPG) and her presentation drew on her experience of both roles. She provided some background information about the work of the EEPG. It has 19 members in 19 European countries plus associated members in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia. The activities focus on project development, research, exchanges of information, establishing a network of contacts throughout Europe, and liaison with the Council of Europe and the European Commission.¹

In the course of her presentation, she reflected on a number of issues which she felt were central to publishing textbooks today. Firstly, although in most European countries good relationships are being established between the curriculum planners and developers and the educational publishers the two groups often have to work within different timescales and planning cycles which reflect their different priorities and pressures. It is not unusual for publishers to receive information on curriculum changes at a very late stage, necessitating additional, unplanned expenditure.

¹ A report on the work and views of the EEPG was also distributed at the Seminar: EEPG, History Textbooks and Educational Publishers, Council of Europe, CC-ED/HIST (96) 11

Secondly, developments in education require new kinds of textbooks and support materials often necessitating teams of authors and the use of high-cost techniques. While the demand for more complex and sophisticated approaches is increasing, schools' budgets for purchasing textbooks are being cut, and, in a growing number of countries, the parents are now expected to buy the books. In this climate of financial stringency, the production of more ambitious and sophisticated textbooks entails considerable financial risk.

Thirdly, she observed that the illegal copying of educational books and materials, or sections of those books has been a growing problem for many years and developments in Information Technology have increased the problem. International co-operation will be necessary if publishers are to protect effectively their copyrights.

Ms LARSSON also asked the question: "What makes a good textbook?" Apart from the need to meet the requirements of the official history curriculum, it should also be "open", that is, encourage the student to use other sources of historical information as well. It should provide tools for research; help to create a commitment, enthusiasm and "feeling" for history; and recognise that *to know how and why* is just as important as *to know that* something happened in the past. Therefore, the "good textbook" should include activities and exercises that accommodate that need.

3.4 "What Makes a Good History Textbook?" by Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD

Ms VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD was speaking both as a highly experienced history teacher and as President of the European Standing Conference of History Teachers' Associations (EUROCLIO)¹. In her presentation, she addressed 12 questions about the function, content and context of history textbooks. Some of the key messages which emerged from her presentation were that history textbooks should:

- (i) challenge young people's curiosity about the past;
- (ii) examine the controversial, as well as the consensual, elements of a nation's history;
- (iii) offer pluralistic interpretations of the past;
- (iv) provide students with the tools to examine historical evidence critically;
- (v) offer assignments, questions, tasks and assessment exercises;

¹ EUROCLIO, What Makes A Good History Textbook?, Council of Europe, CC-ED/HIST (96) 10;

- (vi) cover the set curriculum but also leave space for experiments and extra-curricular activities;
- (vii) provide opportunities for independent learning.

In addition, she raised a number of issues for consideration at the Seminar. First, she suggested that, although the authors of textbooks needed to be well-informed about the latest developments in modern scholarship, above all they needed to have practical classroom experience of teaching history in schools. Second, she questioned whether the process of textbook authorisation which still operates in many European countries was either necessary or democratic in a pluralist society. Third, she argued that publishers needed to cooperate more closely with initial and in-service training institutes and the history teachers' associations to ensure that more innovative approaches are effectively implemented.

4. TWO EXAMPLES OF MULTI-LATERAL DEVELOPMENTS OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

On the second day of the Seminar, the plenary sessions focused on cross-national collaborations for developing textbooks. Each example involved authors and editors from neighbouring countries working together to produce a common textbook. The two presentations revealed some similar concerns and problems but also identified two different models for supporting curriculum development and innovation in history teaching.

4.1 "The Baltic History Textbook Project" by Mr Valdis KLIŠANS

Mr KLIŠANS, a history expert working at the Centre for Curriculum Development and Examinations in Latvia, ably substituted for his colleague, Ms Mare OJA from Estonia, who was unable to attend the Seminar. He started by explaining the origins of the project. Although most Europeans tend to perceive the Baltic States as an integrated entity, in fact the differences between Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians are substantial. Estonians are a totally different ethnic group, only a minority of people in the other two nations can speak or understand their language and little is known of their culture. Few publications (and no school history textbooks) were available in each country about the histories of their neighbours. The pre-Soviet textbooks had focused solely on national histories and had been full of stereotypes of the neighbouring peoples. The tradition of national history texts had been maintained during the Soviet era.

However, since the post-1989 political changes the climate of opinion has changed. In Estonia, for example, it will now be possible for students in secondary schools to choose a special course on the history of the Baltic States. It, therefore, seemed to be a good time to get together to produce a joint textbook which would:

- (i) meet the need for a text on the history of the Baltic States;
- (ii) identify similarities, differences and mutual influences;
- (iii) be suitable for use not only by schools which serve the majority populations in each country, but also those schools which cater for the linguistic minorities, including those whose first language is Russian or Polish;
- (iv) complement and support the initial and in-service training of history teachers in each country.

The main outcome of the project will be the Baltic History Textbook, which will be prepared in Russian, then translated into the three Baltic languages, English and possibly German (so that it could be used in countries outside the region and in English language classes). In addition, through its seminars for teachers participating in the project, it seeks to have a multiplier effect, hoping that these teachers will act as resource persons for other teachers.

The working method offers an interesting model of this kind of project. The book focuses not on the three national histories but on four common themes: statehood, foreign relations, the economy and culture. The various sections of the book are being written by history teachers in each of the three countries, and their work is then edited by a lead group who ensure that each section is fully integrated into the final book before translate into the different languages. The group comes together periodically for seminars to plan each section with the authors drafting text between the meetings.

The enterprise has not been without its problems. The authors all have full-time jobs so the project has taken a long time. The process of agreeing about the content of the textbook and the interpretation of events has sometimes proved to be difficult, involving long and stormy discussions. Finally, they have gradually realised that they have given much more thought to the structure and content of the text and the integration of the themes than was given to pedagogy. Rather belatedly, this is now being addressed by the editors.

4.2 "The preparation and publication of the joint textbook being prepared by the Ukraine, Poland, Belorussia and Lithuania" by Dr Yaroslav HRYTSAK

This was another interesting model for collaboration in that, instead of coming together to produce a school textbook on the history of the region, the partners have set out to produce a history book targeted on history teachers and those who could act as agents of change within the political, educational and cultural milieu. It is designed to broaden their thinking about the history of the region and, in that way, encourage them to produce new textbooks for use in schools.

The main aim of the project is to present the national histories of the four countries with a special emphasis on the development and preservation of democratic traditions and on examples of mutual influence and cooperation. The project had been carried out through a series of workshops at which the authors, editors and associated academic experts planned chapters and discussed completed drafts. Where there were differences of view regarding the interpretation of controversial issues and events, efforts were made to present the differences in mutually acceptable ways. The outcome will be a set of four volumes, one for each country's history, to be published in all four languages and in English.

Dr HRYTSAK is Director of the Institute for Historical Research of Lviv State University, and, in his estimation, the project is helping to introduce a new paradigm in writing national history in the four countries, by combating the tendency - prevalent amongst many historians within the region in the recent past - to define nations in wholly ethnic terms, as communities of common descent, sharing a common language and customs, thereby finding no place within accounts of national history for those national minorities which do not share the ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the majority indigenous population.

As with the Baltic History Project, the team have encountered a number of challenges and problems. The most difficult challenge was to reconcile different national interpretations of the same events and developments, particularly with regard to those political, cultural, economic and religious processes which transcended the ethnic territories of the four peoples. Linked to this was the problem of how to handle events and issues which were still sources of controversy between the different peoples. Echoing the point made earlier in the keynote address by Professor WIATR, Dr HRYTSAK observed that it was difficult in projects of this kind to reconcile the consciousness of a victim with that of a perpetrator when the perpetrators were often victims too.

It was also difficult at times for the authors to reconcile the theoretical framework of the project - the common heritage and mutual influences - at a time when in reality the four countries were moving in different directions and "very little is left from the common political and cultural traditions". Finally, Dr HRYTSAK also identified the

problem of teaching the young academic scholars who had been selected to write the books how to communicate effectively to a broader audience than just their academic peers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 A review of the progress achieved

Almost exactly two years ago in Graz, delegates from 16 Central and Eastern European countries came together to discuss the reform of history teaching in their schools. At the end of that Conference the General Rapporteur concluded that:

"The majority of these countries still have great difficulties in supplying schools with textbooks or other materials from which a class of 30 or so pupils may learn. In many there is a serious financial problem. At one end of the spectrum, there is a shortage of paper, and the actual technology of printing is very antiquated. The provision of even one revised book for all schools is almost impossible.....In quite a number of countries, there are as yet no new books, especially for senior secondary school pupils. They must still learn most of their history from slightly adjusted old books...." ¹

There were more countries represented at the seminar in Warsaw than were at Graz, and my colleague's comments only referred to the majority of countries there. Nevertheless, the exhibition of textbooks from a wide range of countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the discussions in plenary and working group sessions clearly indicated that a remarkable degree of progress has been made in a very short time.

Of course, progress is not uniform across all 20 countries, but it would be fair to say that most countries are moving in the same direction even if they are moving at different speeds. This is hardly surprising. Some countries started the process of educational reform and textbook development earlier than others. Some countries have been able, relatively speaking, to put proportionately more resources into educational publishing, and some countries have larger internal markets for educational textbooks. Even so, most of the countries represented here have at least passed through the first critical stage of addressing the problem of textbook supply.

Clearly, technical developments in textbook production have been very rapid in some countries so that schools are able to choose between several well-produced textbooks written for the same year group. On the other hand, some delegates reported that there are still significant gaps in the provision of textbooks which need to be filled. In some countries, new textbooks are not yet available for every year-group or form, or for

¹ Ann LOW-BEER, The Reform of History Teaching in Schools in European Countries in Democratic Transition, Graz, Austria, 27 November - 1 December, 1994.

every level of schooling. Also, the initial impression, at least, is that priority has been given in most countries to the development of textbooks on national history. That is not surprising given the need of some countries to concentrate on either recovering or re-discovering their nation's history and generating a sense of national identity. However, it has meant that new textbooks on European, regional or world history are not yet available. Indeed, some reported that they are still using Russian textbooks that were produced in 1992.

So, perhaps the second stage of development in most countries will need to be a period of consolidation where progress is made in filling in the gaps and improving the technical quality of some of the books currently available. However, this brings me to the paradox which Dr PINGEL of the Georg Eckert Institute raised on the first day of the Seminar.

There was virtual consensus amongst participants that they wanted to produce textbooks with more pictures, graphs, maps and reproduced in colour, but this is going to make them more expensive which, in turn, is bound to have an effect on the market for these books, especially if parents or school boards have to buy them. This may mean that schools and local authorities may opt for using just one textbook rather than a range of books or a main text and supplementary texts.

There was also considerable discussion in the working groups on the constraints and problems which have been and still are being experienced.

The publishers referred to the high cost of textbook development, the commercial constraints which are particularly associated with educational publishing, especially in the smaller countries, and the marketing costs when schools or parents are free to choose which textbook to purchase. In countries where the State continues to control the publishing of textbooks, the problem is more likely to be one of an inadequate technical infrastructure for producing textbooks using the latest design techniques.

Ministry officials also focused on financial constraints imposed on educational budgets. Indeed, this seems to be a universal problem. The paper produced for this Seminar by the European Educational Publishers Group indicated very clearly that publishers and educational authorities across the whole of Europe are experiencing the same kinds of financial constraints.

However, discussions on problems and constraints was not wholly dominated by financial considerations. A number of other issues were also raised:

- (i) in most countries, the pool of authors needs to be significantly increased. In some countries, it was reported that the authors who are writing the new textbooks are those who used to write them before the transition. This also related to the question of who should write history textbooks for schools: academic historians or history teachers? The

majority view appeared to be that textbooks should be written by people who have direct experience of classroom teaching. Generally speaking, I would agree with that view, but there may be situations where this is not yet practical, if, for example, the pool of teachers with experience of writing textbooks is very small or even non-existent. There is a strong case for publishers to look at ways of bringing the expertise of the classroom teacher and the academic together in the development of textbooks, and I do not just mean by using the academic historian as the final arbiter of whether the content of a textbook is factually correct. The real potential value of this kind of collaboration would be if it ensured that textbook writers could draw on new thinking, new interpretations and current historical research. At present it can take at least three or four years for new thinking to filter down to history teachers and influence their teaching;

- (ii) if textbooks are to become more attractive to pupils through greater use of photographs, illustrations and maps, more will need to be done in some countries to protect and financially support the existing stock of archive material. This is particularly important in those countries where there is a pressing need to reflect, in the new textbooks, the histories of ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities;
- (iii) a number of delegates also referred to the need for more international co-operation to address copyright problems;
- (iv) the final constraint is pedagogical. During periods of rapid and wide-ranging curriculum reforms, there is often a tendency to assume that textbooks can act as the vanguard of that reform. If, for example, it is intended that history teaching should give greater emphasis to the development of critical thinking and historical interpretation than was previously the case, it may be thought that the development of textbooks which provide questions, activities and source material as well as text will bring about that change. In practice, this tends not to happen unless in-service training is also provided. Without this in-service training, many of the teachers will continue to teach in the same way using the text and ignoring the source material and other activities.

5.2 Criteria and standards for textbook production

One of the questions which was addressed in each working group was: "What is a good textbook?"

Mr Colm HOLMES, an observer from the European Educational Publishers' Group, who is also a commercial publisher in Ireland and the United Kingdom, offered a very

succinct answer to this question: *"A good textbook is one which sells thousands of copies; a bad textbook is one which sells very few copies"*.

That may not be the kind of answer that educationalists would give to this question, but it is an important reminder that, like most historical questions, the answer to this one will vary according to the individual's perspective. Curriculum developers will define a good textbook as one which covers the required history curriculum and is in harmony with its educational aims and objectives. Teachers will apply pedagogical criteria: *"Does it fit in with their style of teaching and will it help their pupils to learn"*. Pupils will apply other criteria: *"Is it boring? Will I be able to understand it?"* Parents, school managers or municipal authorities will ask *"Can we afford it?"* Are all of these groups entitled to expect that their own criteria should be taken into account by the publishers and authors?

During the discussions on criteria for good textbooks, some delegates stressed the importance of ensuring that the books are factually correct; that the statements made are "true", "objective" or "unbiased". Other delegates questioned whether "truth" or "objectivity" was a realisable goal except at a very mundane level of names of people, dates and sequences of events, and so forth. In all other respects, subjectivity intrudes through the selection of content and through historical interpretation of events and developments which are capable of being interpreted from a variety of alternative perspectives.

One solution to this problem which emerged in discussions is to write textbooks which consciously set out to reflect a variety of perspectives. We have seen some excellent examples of this at this Seminar, particularly with regard to bilateral and multilateral projects involving neighbouring countries. But, at a more general level, some concern was expressed about the possibility that the emphasis on multi-perspectivity might lead to relativism in which every viewpoint and perspective is treated as if it was equally valid.

In such circumstances, the best that we can hope for is that statements and interpretations in textbooks should be consistent with the available evidence. That, indeed, is precisely the criterion which we apply to the books of academic historians. Why not also apply this criterion to school textbooks as well?

A number of other criteria have emerged in discussions, and I shall just briefly list the key ones here and refer you to the more detailed discussion of these criteria in the written papers presented by Dr Falk PINGEL, Ms Barbro LARSSON and Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-Roord:

- (i) the treatment of history should not be one-sided; in particular, it should not present national history solely in a positive and uncritical light;
- (ii) the selection of content, the written text and the selection of illustrations should not encourage stereotypical, prejudiced or racist thinking;

- (iii) illustrations such as photographs and drawings should not just be included just to break up the text on the page and to make the textbook look more attractive and interesting. They need to be selected to serve as stimuli for discussion and to illustrate and complement what is being said in the text;
- (iv) national history textbooks need to be sensitive to the past and present experiences of minorities;
- (v) there should be a good balance between narrative and assignments, questions, tasks and source material, including opportunities for independent learning;
- (vi) they should be written in a language which is appropriate to the age and level of the pupils;
- (vii) they should promote the use of good language. This is a criterion which is often overlooked in discussions about history texts, but in most countries there is an implicit requirement on all subjects that fall within the Humanities curriculum to encourage good use of language and literary style;
- (viii) finally, a good textbook should be stimulating, challenging and help the student to think more deeply and critically about history and historical processes and not just about the specific content to be covered in the curriculum.

In addition, a number of issues emerged regarding the content and use of textbooks.

The first relates to the balance in the textbook between text and other material, such as illustrations, assignments, and tasks. There appeared to be a widely held view amongst delegates that the balance in many of the textbooks published in Western Europe and the United States has gone too far in the direction of non-textual material. My own view is that the way in which textbook production evolves will, and should reflect, cultural traditions and practices to some degree.

This links to the next issue, which is that we actually know very little about how textbooks are used in the classroom by both teachers and pupils. This point was made by several participants, and one of the Polish observers suggested that more should be done to evaluate and monitor their use. The onus for this kind of evaluation must probably lie with the Ministries. At present most commercial publishers have a very simple criterion for evaluating their textbooks: how many copies are sold? Whether they could be persuaded that it would be a good investment to evaluate their publications more systematically must remain an open question.

Another important issue was raised by Ms Barbro LARSSON in her presentation. This is that textbooks should be "open" rather than "closed". Perhaps another way of expressing this point would be to say that textbook authors and publishers should not seek to be encyclopaedic in their coverage, even in circumstances where there are few or no alternative texts and the curriculum offers a comprehensive survey. The result will be a textbook which atomises or fragments history.

There is one final issue I would like to address here. It was raised initially by Professor WIATR, the Polish Minister of National Education, in his keynote speech. What should be the cut-off point for teaching modern history. This is a difficult issue. In many countries, contemporary events are covered in civics lessons or social studies rather than history but it often seems, not least to the pupils themselves, rather arbitrary to say that the events of the last five years will be excluded from consideration in their history lessons. Indeed, it is difficult to reconcile this position with those official curriculum guidelines which emphasise the role that history plays in helping young people to understand the present. Also teachers tend to find that when history lessons place greater emphasis on the development of skills and not just the absorption of knowledge then the students want to discuss contemporary developments and place them into a broader historical context.

5.3 Future developments

The list of themes and questions which was presented for discussion in the working groups was ambitious given the time available. Consequently, the groups found little time to discuss this theme in any depth. Clearly, publishers in some countries are now looking at how they can improve the scope and quality of their textbooks, and some, of course, are now working on the third and fourth generation of new textbooks. But, as one of the working groups pointed out, it is difficult to identify realistic future possibilities even over a limited period of five years when so many decisions depend on how current economic and political problems are resolved.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 We heard a great deal at this Seminar about bilateral and multilateral commissions and joint projects between neighbouring countries, and there were fascinating presentations on two such projects. It would be useful if the Georg Eckert Institute undertook to map all of these projects and commissions and produce a short guide with basic information on each of them regarding what kind of project it is, who is involved, who are the contact people and when will there be an outcome.
- 6.2 Although the Council of Europe has encouraged and reported on regional projects in Western and Northern Europe, the ones we have been hearing about at this Seminar make new demands on the textbook writers, authors and

publishers because of the sensitive nature of the content. As a member of one of the project teams put it, people in each country often perceive themselves as the victims and their neighbours as the oppressors. There is, therefore, much to be learned from this, and a seminar which brought together teams working on more of these projects at differing stages of development to share their experiences could be extremely fruitful.

- 6.3 There is also a good case for the Council of Europe to consider, within its education programme, the organisation of some seminars aimed at the teaching of history at the level of higher education, both in terms of academic history and also the didactics of history for student teachers. To repeat the point made earlier, curriculum reform cannot be carried out solely through curriculum guidelines and new and more innovative textbooks.
- 6.4 I would also like to support the recommendation made originally by Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD at this Seminar, that the Council of Europe consider developing and promoting criteria for textbooks at different levels, including national, regional, European and global history.
- 6.5 It was noted earlier that there is a need in some countries to expand the pool of authors of history textbooks. The development of networks, the use of the Internet and perhaps the organisation of some seminars on writing textbooks, which could bring together inexperienced and experienced authors to share expertise and develop exemplary or model materials for dissemination, could facilitate this process. Clearly, the EEPG is now an important forum for publishers across Europe. Is there now a case for an extension of its activities which would involve not only publishers and commissioning editors but also technical staff concerned with layout, design, illustration and marketing?
- 6.6 Finally, we have seen across Europe that the more open the textbook market becomes, the more tenuous and problematic the relationship becomes between textbook publishers and curriculum developers, unless steps are taken to establish good two-way lines of communication. This is because there is usually a discrepancy between the planning timescale that a commercial publisher needs to respect and the timescale within which Ministers and curriculum developers work. This can be particularly problematic when curriculum developers make changes in the curriculum after the publishers have gone to print or where the Ministry does not authorise textbooks until they have been printed. In both cases, more needs to be done to establish an effective exchange of information based on recognition of the constraints within which both groups have to operate.

APPENDIX I

EVALUATING HISTORY TEXTBOOKS: A CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

The history that is taught in schools is not the sole preserve of the academic historian, the teacher, the textbook writer and the publisher. It is widely perceived to be public property. Politicians, pressure groups, ethnic and language minorities, and parents in general often feel that they have a right to try to influence the content of the history curriculum and the ways in which it is taught to a much larger extent than they would ever attempt to do with the curriculum for mathematics, science or geography. In this respect, history textbooks are also public property, and all kinds of groups within the same country, and in neighbouring countries, may have valid concerns about the content of these books:

- the explicit and implicit messages and assumptions transmitted by the text, the illustrations and source material, as well as by what has been included and omitted;
- the appropriateness of the teaching and learning styles employed by the writers;
- practical concerns related to cost, availability and value for money.

What kinds of questions need to be asked in order to evaluate a textbook before deciding whether to purchase and use it? This short paper is intended to serve as a stimulus for further discussion. It is not written with the intention of seeking to offer a definitive answer to the question 'What is a good history textbook?' Indeed, one of the assumptions behind this paper is that the answer to this question is likely to vary from one educational system to another. Consequently, any attempt to offer a definitive answer usually leads to little more than broad and rather platitudinous generalisations. Of course, there may be certain pedagogic principles and design features which may apply to any history textbook, but these are unlikely to be sufficient to ensure that a given textbook is appropriate and suitable for every circumstance. The context in which a textbook is written, published, marketed, purchased and used in classrooms is also critically important. Therefore, the evaluative questions in the following checklist have been organised into three main categories:

- questions designed to **evaluate the content and pedagogy** of history textbooks;
- questions which focus on **the intrinsic qualities** of textbooks (and which are likely to apply regardless of the country in which they are published and used, the content covered, or the age and ability ranges of the students for whom they are written);
- questions which focus on **the extrinsic factors** which are external to the processes of writing, publishing and using textbooks yet impinge on and influence those processes.

2. EVALUATING THE CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

History teachers and committees authorising textbooks will, no doubt, look at possible textbooks in some depth before deciding which ones are most suitable. Others may be able to obtain much of the evidence for answering these questions by some skim reading, looking at the treatment of two or three topics in more depth, examining some of the assignments and assessment exercises at random, and by making some simple lists (e.g. list of topics covered to compare with the topics covered in the history curriculum, number of pages devoted to different topics, etc.)

Content

1. Which historical period or periods are covered? Do these periods exactly match those covered in the relevant curriculum guidelines or syllabuses? Are there any gaps which would need to be filled by other textbooks or teaching materials?
2. How is the content organised in terms of structure and sequence? Does the textbook present a fairly comprehensive chronological survey of an extended period of time? Or, a more selective survey? Or, focus on a few important periods in national, regional, European or world history (e.g. Antiquity, Middle Ages, the Explorations, Nineteenth Century Europe, the Cold War)? Or, does it focus on broad historical themes and developments (e.g. the Christianisation of Europe, the Emergence of the Nation State, Industrialisation, Imperialism and Colonialism)?
3. Is the structure of the content in the textbook in line with the structure or framework used in the history curriculum?

4. How many pages are devoted to each period covered? Does this allocation reflect the coverage in the official curriculum?
5. How much emphasis is given to political, diplomatic, economic, social and cultural history within the contents of the textbook? Does the emphasis or balance between these different dimensions vary significantly according to the period covered? Does the emphasis in the textbook match or complement the emphasis in the official history curriculum?
6. Does the textbook focus predominantly on national history, regional history, European history or global history or some combination of these? Does this focus match or complement the emphasis in the official history curriculum?
7. If the textbook includes some coverage of regional, European or world history, what is the perspective? For example, does the textbook tend to offer a national perspective on European or regional history? Does it tend to offer a predominantly Eurocentric perspective on global history? Does it tend to present a Western European perspective on events and developments in Eastern Europe, or vice versa?
8. Does the coverage of national history involve looking at how other countries and peoples might have perceived events and developments in the home country?
9. If the textbook is essentially about European history, how is Europe defined explicitly or implicitly in the text? Does it include Western, Central and Eastern Europe or only one region? Does it focus on the common cultural heritage or on those factors which highlight diversity?
10. Can any patterns be discerned in those topics, events, groups, dimensions and perspectives, which are omitted from the text, illustrations, source material or assessment tasks? Are there any implicit messages in these omissions?

Pedagogical approaches

11. What prerequisite knowledge, if any, is required for the student to access and use this textbook effectively?
12. What prerequisite skills and understanding, if any, are required for the student to interpret any source material, and to attempt any activities and assessment tasks contained in the opening sections of the textbook?

13. Does it function as a workbook as well as a "text" book? Does it include source material, activities and tasks, as well as narrative text? *If it does*, where are the other elements located in the book? How are they organised? For example, is there source material and/or other learning activities at the end of each chapter? Or are these all located at the back of the book? (The location of the different elements can have implications for how the teacher and the student will use the textbook.)
14. If the textbook includes assignments, questions, tasks and assessment exercises, what appears to be their function? Do they seem to be mainly concerned with the student's recall of information supplied in the text. Or do they provide the student with opportunities to examine historical evidence critically, recognise how the same evidence can be open to more than one interpretation, evaluate the likely biases of different sources of historical evidence, provide the tools and the encouragement to undertake some independent historical research, etc.?
15. Are there any opportunities for the student to look at ways in which the selection of evidence, the sources available, and the individual historian's own values can influence interpretations of the past?
16. How do any illustrations, photographs, maps and diagrams relate to the text? Do they illuminate or exemplify points made in the text? Do they provide links between points made in one chapter and something that the student would have read in an earlier chapter? Or, does their main function appear to be to 'break up' the text and make the individual page look more interesting?
17. Does the textbook have "advance organisers" at the beginning of each chapter? If so, what is their function? Do they just outline what the following chapter will cover? Or do they also make links between this and other chapters and identify the key ideas, concepts and methods which will be explored in the chapter?
18. Does the textbook seek to introduce the student to key historical concepts, e.g. continuity and change, centralisation and fragmentation, development and decline, evolution and revolution, etc.?
19. Does the textbook attempt to involve the student in the historical events, issues and developments which it covers? For example, does it seek to show how people would have perceived not only the events and developments they were living through but also the options and alternatives open to them at any given time and how they were shaped by their own past?
20. How does the textbook present historical processes?

21. How does it reinforce the student's sense of chronology, particularly when the themes and periods covered in the textbook are not always sequential?
22. Does the textbook provide opportunities for the student to develop a comparative perspective by, for example, contrasting events or developments in two or more countries or regions? Or, by showing similarities in the historical developments of two or more countries or regions? Or by showing how events at a national level were influenced by what was happening elsewhere? Or, by showing how different cultures have influenced each other?

3. INTRINSIC QUALITIES OF HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Much of the evidence for this can be obtained by a combination of skim reading and taking a few paragraphs at random and examining them in some depth.

23. Is the balance between text and the other elements (illustrations, maps, statistical tables, extracts from official documents, letters, pictures of artefacts, assignments, questions, assessment exercises, etc.) appropriate to the age range or ability level for whom it is produced? While it is certainly the case that younger and less able students prefer textbooks with less text and more illustrations, it is also the case that the more source material that they are required to use, the more difficult they find it.
24. Are there any examples of monocausal, over-simplistic or reductionist explanations of historical events and developments?
25. Does it offer a plurality of interpretations of the past (i.e. multiple perspectives)?
26. [*Examine any sections on international relations, relations with neighbouring countries, wars or colonial history; then examine at random some of the accompanying cartoons, paintings and photographs, and examine the treatment of some of the nation's heroes and heroines, and then consider the following*] Is there consistent evidence of:
 - biased treatment of events;
 - nationalistic interpretations of the past;
 - racist interpretations of the history of particular ethnic groups;
 - ideological interpretations (political, religious and cultural) which are unsupported by evidence or not balanced by other perspectives;
 - ethnocentrism;
 - Eurocentrism;

- stereotypical attitudes and images (i.e. over-simplified generalisations, usually of a derogatory nature, about particular nations, groups, races or gender);
 - tokenism (the inclusion of arbitrary and standardised illustrative material that seems to bear little relation to the text)?
27. How is the past portrayed? Is the present perceived as the inevitable outcome of past events? Is history portrayed as "the triumphal march of progress"?
 28. Will the textbook challenge the student to think about history as a discipline?
 29. Is it likely that this textbook will arouse their interest in the subject and their curiosity about the past?
 30. Does the material in the textbook reflect recent research or current thinking amongst historians?
 31. Is the text written in a style which is suitable for the age range and ability level for whom the textbook has been produced? [*Take a few paragraphs at random and check the length of sentences, the use of technical words and jargon without explanation, whether the narrative is written predominantly within the passive or the active voice, etc.*] It should be neither condescending nor written "above the heads" of the students. It should be readable, but it should also help the student to develop a style of writing appropriate to the discipline of history.

4. EXTRINSIC FACTORS IN EVALUATING HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

Much of the information for this can be obtained through looking at the cover of the book, the preface or foreword, and a brief skim through the pages. Publicity material issued by the publisher will also help.

32. When was the textbook first published? This provides some indication of the political context in which it was written and authorised. It also gives some indication of how up-to-date it is likely to be in approach and content (subtract up to two years from the publication date for an indication of when it was written). This can be particularly important if the textbook covers recent national and regional developments.
33. Does the author show clear evidence that she or he is aware of current practice in classrooms? [*Note that this is not quite the same thing as asking whether the author was or is a history teacher. Some academic historians, with the help of their publishers, have done their homework and are up-to-date with modern*

classroom practices; some history teachers who write textbooks can be out-of-step with current practice].

34. Has the book (or parts of it) been field tested or trialled with teachers and students?
35. Does it specify a particular target readership (e.g. age range, ability range, type of school, type of course or examination for which it is produced)?
36. Does the preface or introduction give an indication of the writer's approach, aims and objectives?
37. Will it require considerable supplementary material (published and/or developed by the teacher) to fulfil the requirements of the specific history syllabus or curriculum for which it has been produced?
38. Is the quality of design (layout, colour scheme, typography, etc.) consistent throughout?
39. Will the textbook survive everyday classroom use for a reasonable period of time?
40. Is the textbook well-designed for the price? Does it compare well with other textbooks currently available on the market within the same price range? Is it good value for the money?

APPENDIX II

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR

Wednesday 13 November 1996

Arrival and registration of the participants

Dinner at the Hotel Mercure

Thursday 14 November 1996

CHAIR: Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI

09.30 - 11.00 Plenary Session

Opening of the Seminar by:

- i. Professor Jerzy WIATR, Minister of National Education of Poland;
- ii. Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe;
- iii. Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI, Director of Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne;
- iv. a Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.

11.00 - 11.30 Keynote speech by Professor Jerzy WIATR, Minister of National Education of Poland

Break

11.30 - 13.00

Plenary Session

Introductory statements by:

- i. Dr Falk PINGEL, Deputy Director of the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig (Germany), on "The main problems encountered in the Institute's work on the revision of history textbooks and the main characteristics of a good history textbook";
- ii. Ms Barbro LARSSON, Director of the Central Office, European Educational Publishers' Group, on "The preparation and production of history textbooks from the point of view of a commercial publisher";
- iii. Ms Joke VAN DER LEEUW-ROORD, President of EUROCLIO, on "The characteristics of a good history textbook seen from the point of view of an international association of history teachers".

Discussion with all the participants

13.00 - 15.00

Lunch

15.00 - 16.30

Three parallel working group sessions

16.30 - 17.00

Break

17.00 - 18.00

Plenary Session

The Chairs and Rapporteurs of each of the working group sessions should report back on their discussions.

Discussion with all the participants.

19.00

Reception offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Friday 15 November 1996

CHAIR: Ms Magdalena MAZINSKA

09.30 - 11.00 **Plenary Session**

Presentations on joint history textbook projects:

- i. the Baltic History Textbook Project by Ms Mare OJA, Ministry of Education of Estonia;
- ii. the joint textbook being prepared by Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine by Dr Yaroslav HRYTSAK, Institute for Historical Research, Lviv State University, Ukraine.

Discussion in plenary session

11.00 - 11.30 Break

11.30 - 13.00 Working groups

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch

14.00 - 16.00 Visit to the Polish educational publishers, WSIP

Return to the Hotel

16.30 - 18.00 Working groups - discussion on the preparation of the conclusions and recommendations to be presented by the rapporteurs of the working groups at the closing session of the Seminar.

The conclusions and recommendations of the rapporteurs of the working group sessions must be submitted to the Secretariat by 20.00 hours on Friday 15 November at the latest.

19.00 Dinner offered by the Minister of National Education

Preparation of the conclusions by the General Rapporteur of the Seminar on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations of the rapporteurs of the working group sessions.

Saturday 16 November 1996

CHAIR: Professor Andrzej JANOWSKI

10.00 - 11.30

Plenary Session

- i. Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the rapporteurs of the working groups

Discussion with all the participants

- ii. Presentation by the General Rapporteur of the overall conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar

Comments by the participants

Closing speeches of the Seminar by:

- i. Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe;
- ii. Mr Andrzej CHRZANOWSKI, Director of Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne;
- iii. a representative of the Polish Authorities;

Excursion for the participants in the afternoon

Dinner offered by Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne (WSIP)

Sunday 17 November 1996

Departure of the participants after breakfast

APPENDIX III

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