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Preface

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Preface

The present edition of the Yearbook of the Institute of East-Central Europe has been prepared by Polish and Korean historians, thus becoming a result of the cooperation between the Institute of East-Central Europe and the Northeast Asian History Foundation in Seoul.

The Korean scholars decided to ponder upon the Polish-Russian and Polish-German dialogue about history and, by drawing on the Polish experiences, initiate a corresponding historical dialogue with those neighbors that Korea used to have very difficult relations with, especially Japan. Our first meetings and seminars, which took place within past two years in Seoul, the Jeju Island and Lublin, have clearly shown that both parties may learn a lot from each other by comparing their historical experiences.

At first glance, the very idea of following the methods of research used by comparative history might appear to be quite disturbing since Korea and Poland are the countries that are distant not only in historical, but also geographical and cultural terms. Nevertheless, if one introduces the context of the Polish-Russian and Polish-German relations, on the one hand, and the context of the Korean-Japanese relations, on the other, then a possible feeling of surprise could become less pronounced. However, thus emerging pattern of 'country the victim' and 'country the oppressor' would also be harmful and absolutely not promising. History might be told in a number of ways. Despite that fact that the positivist idea of 'the one and only' approach to history has been abandoned, from time to time there still occurs a conviction that the world should be presented with 'the true version' of history, which is 'our' version of history. Such an approach is nothing else but a trap. History ought to allow us to understand both the past and the others

as well. We do not have to share their opinions, but we should be able to notice and hear them out. I truly believe that the Polish experiences of history can be beneficial to Korean historians just as the Korean experiences may turn out to be valuable to Polish scholars.

The present volume of Yearbook would not appear had it not been for the great involvement of our Korean colleagues. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Mr Lee Hyun-Ju, the Secretary General to the Northeast Asian History Foundation in Seoul, and his team. Moreover, I wish to express my particular thanks to Professor Kim Yongdeog from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, who specializes in Polish history.

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