

## **Transcript of the interview with Dietmar Nietan (SPD), member of the German Bundestag**

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Place: Institute for Western Affairs, Poznan (Poland)

Interviewer and compiler: Viktor Savinok, project assistant

**Question: Can you, please, introduce yourself?**

My name is Dietmar Nietan, I am a member of the German Bundestag working in the committee for foreign affairs. I am dealing there with the countries of Middle and Eastern Europe. I am also a Coordinator of the German government for the German-Polish relations.

**Question: Do you have any professional interest in the field of the politics of memory due to your educational profile or research background?**

No. When I was elected to the parliament in 1998, it was clear for me that the responsibility, the German parliamentarian bears, includes also the responsibility for Germany's history, and that was for me a pillar for my political work to deal with the history of our continent, to deal with the history of the German crimes during the Nazi era, but also dealing with European integration and reconciliation with the countries, bordering Germany. That is my background. Later on, I was engaged in dealing with the issues related to prevention of genocides, and it brought me to all those historical questions.

**Question: Did you take part in the preparation of the Bundestag's resolution on Holodomor?**

Yes, took part. I was a rapporteur on that issue from the Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and worked very tight together with my colleagues, not only from the Greens and the Liberals [meaning the Free Democratic Party, FDP], but also my colleague Knut Abraham from the Christian Democrats (CDU), because we wanted to ensure that the motion on Holodomor gets the broadest possible majority, not only from the governing parties.

**Question: How did the procedure of preparation of the resolution look like? Who initiated it? Who wrote the text? And why was it initiated?**

For us in the ruling coalition of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Liberals it was clear that we want to do something to recognize Holodomor as genocide, but we had a long talk on how we should do it. And then the opposition party, the Christian Democrats, came first with their own motion [on this issue]. After that we were willing to prevent the situation, when at the end of the day the parliament

had to choose between two motions – one coming from the opposition, and the other from the coalition parties. And, if I may say so, the pressure from the opposition made us to speed up our own work and brought us together at one table with the opposition to elaborate one motion. And the motion was prepared by the people like Knut Abraham, member of the Bundestag from the Christian Democrats, Ulrich Lechte, MP from the Liberals, Robin Wagener, who is representing the Greens, and myself from the Social Democrats. So, finally, four of us came together to several meetings to find common ground. And at the end of the day, we wrote the final text of the resolution together with our staffers.

**Question: You mentioned that you have been a member of the Bundestag since 1998, so probably you might have noticed also previous initiatives regarding Holodomor, coming among others from Ukrainian diaspora in Germany. So why the resolution was adopted this time, whereas the previous initiatives were not that successful?**

To be honest, one reason for that the attention to the issue of Holodomor and importance of its recognition as genocide was not really well received by a lot of policymakers within the German parliament. The second reason is that in the previous decade we discussed on recognition of the genocide of the Armenian people from the Ottoman Empire. And, even if it sounds cynical, we concentrated first of all on the Armenian issue, and told, we will look later on the issues related to Holodomor. Of course, the imperialistic war of Russia made us clear that there is no time to waste.

**Question: In your opinion, how important are the issues of the politics of memory in general for the German politics?**

I would say that for all political parties the issues of memory of the past are very important. But especially for the Social Democrats it is very important, because we are the oldest [German] political party. We are 160 years old [this year]. And if you have made such a long way, you feel responsibility for historical issues. The second thing is that we could observe that if you really want to come to reconciliation and peace, you need clear analysis of the past. So, when we are dealing with memory or history, we don't want to do that because we want to look back, but we are aware that only knowing the past we can create a better future.

**Question: Is it a routine for the German Bundestag to consider the issues of the politics of memory in its activities?**

It's not a routine that no, we will make that or something else. But it is a tradition. So, if you look into the motions, we adopted on the issues related to the role of German Wehrmacht during the Nazi era, the motions on reconciliation with the

Jewish people, the motions celebrating the 30s anniversary of the German-Polish Neighbourhood Treaty or the 50s anniversary of diplomatic relations between Germany and the State of Israel, [you can conclude that] it is not a routine, but a tradition to look for a moment back in order to make clear, why we should do this or that regarding the future.

**Thank you very much.**