

MENNONITE-POLISH FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

4824 E. Butler Avenue
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NEWSLETTER, APRIL 1993

Retrospect and Prospect

Those of us who are interested in the Mennonite story in Poland/Prussia are always glad to hear of concrete efforts to build understanding between Poles and Mennonites. Some new developments continue to strengthen our hope and conviction about the role our association can play in this endeavor. Before I discuss these, however, just a quick update:

(1) The plaque we placed in the former Mennonite Church in Gdansk

I have been pleased to note that visitors to Gdansk are seeing this memorial to a shared past. Last summer, MPFA Vice President John Friesen led a tour group that visited the church and surrounding area. The local congregation continues to be warm and friendly.

(2) The cemetery in Heubuden (Stogi)

As a result of the good work of Dr. Arkadiusz Rybak, labor performed by Poles and Germans (and a few North Americans), and about \$1500 from MPFA, the fence has been completed. There has been some discussion of placing a historical marker in the cemetery.

(3) German Mennonite involvement

As a result of the leadership of two members of MPFA, Pastor Peter Foth (Hamburg), and Eckbert Driedger, Chair of the Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, a memorial plaque will be placed in the Catholic Church adjacent to the cemetery. Last summer Peter Foth led a group of about 80(!) German Mennonites to Poland.

(4) Related events

Last summer a conference on Dutch Mennonites was held at the University of Amsterdam. Piet Visser, MPFA Board member, was a leading organizer; Edmund Kizik (University of Gdansk), presented a paper.

This coming September promises to be an unusual time. Dr. Roman Klim, Director of the Maritime Museum in Gdansk, is planning a conference on Mennonites in the Vistula Delta. This is not an MPFA event, but is certainly of interest to us. Dr. Klim is also trying to establish in Tszew a museum on "Dutch Culture" in the region.

On the Horizon

(1) Research by Edmund Kizik

Dr. Kizik has written to me about extensive Mennonite documents he has gathered, especially in Merseburg, former archival center in East Germany. The collection is now being moved to Berlin. Dr. Kizik would like to prepare a manuscript on the general theme of Mennonites and death (funerals, cemeteries and inscriptions, related religious teachings, etc.). He writes that he

needs financial support, since the Gdansk University provides no funding for such work.

The MPFA Executive Committee recommends that we try to raise \$500-\$1000 to support this effort. What do you think?

(2) Projected conference organized by Dr. Klim

Dr. Klim earlier tried to organize such a conference, but financial difficulties prevented him from completing the project. The Executive Committee recommends that we try to raise \$500-\$1000 to assist Dr. Klim. Again, what is your wish?

Please fill out the form below. If you are interested in supporting the proposed ventures, the links between Poles and Mennonites will be strengthened. Please stay in touch, whether or not you choose to assist these efforts.

Also, if you have information that should be shared with MPFA friends and members, please send it to me. The next newsletter is scheduled for October 1993.

Thanks for your continuing involvement.



Peter J. Klassen

P.S.

Paul Toews and I are again leading a group to Poland (and Ukraine and Russia) this summer. We will be in Gdansk from June 27-29 (Hevelius Hotel). We plan to meet with various Polish friends, including those at the church. Should any of you be in the area at that time, we'd be delighted to see you.

Name _____

Address _____

Annual dues (\$20 US) _____

For Kizik research _____

For Klim conference _____

Please return to address above, or to the Canadian address: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4