

THE MENNONITE-POLISH FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

4824 East Butler Avenue

Fresno, California 93727

July, 1996

NEWS BULLETIN

CONFERENCE IN GDANSK, 1997

In my **January 1996 Newsletter** I raised the question of having a conference in Gdansk in connection with the city's 1000th anniversary. We received about a dozen responses very strongly endorsing this idea (no negative comments were received). Also, the Vice Rector of the University of Gdansk, Professor Brunon Synak, has sent another invitation in which he writes, "I am very deeply convinced that such a conference would be a matter of pride for our University. It would also enrich the program of the Gdansk Millenium" (30th May 1996).

I have also contacted the "Organising Committee of the 1000th Anniversary of Gdansk" and have received a warm invitation from Maria Kowalewska-Koska, the Secretary General of the Committee. She writes, in part, "We are glad to hear that you are interested in participation in Gdansk's forthcoming millenial celebrations. . . . The City authorities and I would be very pleased to meet you in Gdansk during the millenial celebrations. We suggest that it would be best to hold your sessions in the beginning of June. We hope that you will have both a pleasant and useful conference in our city" (letter received 26th June 1996).

Planning Committee

Following further consultation, we felt we definitely wished to accept the invitations, and hold a conference in Gdansk as part of the city's celebrations. A planning committee (John Friesen and Lawrence Klippenstein, Winnipeg; Paul Toews and Peter Klassen, Fresno) has begun to work on this project. We hope soon to have a member from Gdansk, as well as from The Netherlands and Germany. In view of the shortness of time, we feel we must begin before the committee is complete.

Advice requested

We need your help as we proceed. Here are some issues:

1. **Date of Conference**

We think that a weekend would probably be best (e.g., an opening dinner on a Friday night; sessions on Saturday and Sunday, perhaps including a service in the former Mennonite Church). We also would like to use the Hevelius Hotel as site of the conference (because of its location).

We have found that the Hevelius is already booked for some dates when we might have the conference. Possibilities still to be considered include the last half of June,

the last half of July, first half of August, or October. Do you have a preference?
Please let us know.

2. Content of Sessions

Some of you have indicated a willingness to present scholarly papers; we are delighted with this response. Are there other kinds of presentations or events that some of you would suggest or present/organize? Please let us know; we very much want you to help plan this special occasion.

3. Theme of Conference

When I met with Vice Rector Synak, he felt a series of papers on the general theme of the Netherlandic impact on the Vistula Delta would be a possibility. This could, of course, include such topics as artistic and literary contributions, Mennonites in the Werder, religious toleration, economic ties, etc. Do some of you have suggestions?

4. Financial Support

I suspect we are all aware of the difficult economic situation in Gdansk, especially now with the announced bankruptcy of the city's famous shipyards. One of the professors told me that no financial support for the conference could be expected from the University.

Perhaps some of you would like to help sponsor this special event. We expect to pay for printed announcements/programs; some of the expenses of our Polish guests, e.g., dinner for some University of Gdansk representatives, also perhaps from the local church, etc. Non-Polish participants are expected to pay their own way. If you wish to support this endeavor, please send your checks to one of the addresses below.

Also, please remember that we need your advice and suggestions.

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We hope many of you will want to attend this Gdansk Celebration!

For the Association,

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