

MEMORANDUM

of the Polish Protestant ministers concerning the incorporation of Eastern Silesia — Duchy of Teschen — to Poland.

Although it does not lie in our power to determine to whom our country shall belong, we however feel that it is our duty in Christ and our conscience to raise our voices from the standpoint of the Gospel.

It is beyond all dispute that Eastern Silesia belongs geographically, historically and ethnographically to Poland.

a) Geographically, because it is divided on the West from the Sudet Mountains and country by the plain and river Ostrawitz, and belongs to the Carpathian lands.

b) Historically, because originally, until the 14th. century, it was part of the Kingdom of Poland and later, until the 17 th. century, a branch of the House of Piasts — the most famous royal dynasty in Polish history — ruled over Teschen.

c) Ethnographically, because the original nucleus of the population is Polish, although there is a sprinkling of Germans and Czechs, which must be accounted for by the neighbourhood and by the rule of the Czechs and later of the Germans. The Protestant Poles — about 80.000 — constitute 33 % of the whole Polish population of Silesia. If additional proof were necessary the three following facts will corroborate the above :

1) After the persecutions of the Counter-Reformation in the 17th. century, during the « toleration period » of Joseph II, the Protestants having no ministers of their own, and as there were none to be found in Poland, appealed for help to the Moravians and Slovacks, and the ministers who came from the latter countries at once learned Polish and became Poles. How could this have been possible if the people had been Czechs?

2) At that time of religious freedom the Protestants eagerly demanded

of German. « If these dry bones (Ezechiel 37) are to become alive again, and the spirit of God is to be breathed into them », we Polish Protestants of the Duchy of Teschen must be united with them and thus become the instrument which, with God's help might achieve this to the benefit of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We passionately long to return to the home of our fathers, to our native land and to be united with those who are our brethren not only by ties of nature and tongue but also by those of common faith in Christ. We believe that God has preserved us during so many centuries of persecution and oppression by foreign powers, in which time we have lost neither our faith nor our native tongue, because He has need of us still. We long to begin a new and higher epoch in our lives. We do not wish to convert or make proselytes of our Catholic brothers — that is a small matter — but we do wish to take part in building up the spiritual life and culture of our nation : we wish to bring into its intellectual life the Spirit of the Gospel from the Protestant standpoint, as in the « golden age » of Polish culture. We wish also to dispel the prejudice against our Protestant Church, under which it suffers in the eyes of the Polish nation, viz : that it is a forerunner and implement of a kind of « German God » and Prussian « Pickelhaube ». On the other hand, we wish to refresh our own souls through the lifegiving streams which flow from the deeply religious Polish poetry and philosophy.

Therefore we plead with all those who will consult together and determine the fate of the nations in the new organization of the world ; do not forget us Polish Protestants in Austrian and Prussian Silesia, P'osnania, Eastern and Western Prussia and Pomerania, but deal out justice to us. Unite us with the Polish mother country for which our hearts crave and where lies our work for the Kingdom of God.

In Teschen, Austrian Silesia, Dec. 3rd. 1918.

Karol Banszel,	<i>Vicar</i>	Francis Michejda,	<i>Pastor</i>
Andrzej Buzek,	<i>Pastor</i>	Karol Michejda,	»
Franc. Buchwaldek,	<i>cand. teol.</i>	Oskar Michejda,	»
Karol Grycz,	<i>Pastor</i>	Karol Michejda,	»
Pawel Heczko,	<i>Prof. relig.</i>	Pawel Nikodem,	»
Karol Kotula,	» »	Pawel Sikora,	<i>Prof. relig.</i>
Karol Krzywon,	<i>cand. teol.</i>	Jan Stonawski,	» »
Jerzy Kubaczka,	<i>Pastor</i>	Karol Teper,	» »
Karol Kulisz,	»	Karol Trombik,	<i>cand. teol.</i>
Jan Lasota	»	Jan Unucka,	<i>Vicar</i>
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Polish religious books such as the Bible and books of sermons, although there were more than enough of these in the Czech language which could easily have been procured. They only used the Czech hymn books, because the Polish ones could not be obtained.

3) In the year 1848, when the national movement began among our people, it started among the Protestants who brought forth the first public men and national leaders. It can therefore be understood that the Polish Protestants as well as all other Poles in Silesia, most earnestly pray that they may be united with their nation, just as the Israelites of old prayed to be released from slavery in Babylon : and this not only for national but just as much for religious reasons, as the following words will show :

1° There does not exist at present in Poland a thoroughly Polish nucleus of Protestants such as there was after the Reformation. The Protestants there are German colonists, of whom a small number in the cities have become Poles. We hold it to be a matter of vital importance for the Polish nation, that Christianity as it has developed in Protestant communities, be likewise represented.

2° It seems to us to be equally important for the Protestant Church that none of its national branches be allowed to wither or vanish, the « universality » of the Protestant Church depending among other things, on the preaching of the Gospel according to its teaching among all nations.

3° We expect and believe it to be just and right that the territories which have hitherto been Prussian, but are inhabited by Poles, i. e. Polish Silesia, Posnania, Eastern and Western Prussia, as well as the Polish districts of Pomerania, be incorporated to Poland. According to Prussian official statistics there are about half a million Polish Protestants living in these countries : in Prussian Silesia 120.000, in Posnania 20.000, in Eastern Prussia 300.000, in Western Prussia about 10.000, as well as several communities in Pomerania in the districts of Bytow and Lembork. In reality their number is much larger. The conditions among these Polish Protestants are such that they call to Heaven for vengeance. In the 17th. century these Protestants were still the leaders of the Protestant Poles. Polish books were printed there. There were Protestant authors who contributed great works to the Polish literature in general. These communities are now entirely without ministers other than German, who preach in a language which is not understood by the people. The teaching in the schools is in German from the very first year and the people are thus germanized. Wherever a certain number of people understand German the church services are held in that language, Polish services are reduced and prevented, christenings, weddings and funerals are held in German, and the ministers use Polish in private conversation only with such people who do not understand a word