

ARTICLES

Swetlana Fink, Dietrichswalde: East Prussian Marpingen? Marian Apparitions in Comparison

Just as Marpingen was called the "German Lourdes" by contemporaries so was Dietrichswalde called the "East Prussian Marpingen". Since the appearance of the Virgin Mary in Lourdes in 1858 dozens of Marian apparitions throughout Europe have been reported. Against this background, the article compares the two pilgrimages in the western and eastern border territories of Prussia. Methodologically, the treatise refrains from theological argumentation. It is rather committed to studies of social and cultural history with their socio-historic analytical categories like power, class, status, gender.

The apparitions in Dietrichswalde are typologically similar to other Marian apparitions in Central Europe in the 19th century. Yet, the differences and specific qualities must not be overlooked. The visionaries of Dietrichswalde belonged to a minority speaking a Polish dialect in Southern Warmia. They were strongly influenced by Polish national piety. During the "Kulturkampf" (culture struggle, culture clash) the Warmian Poles were challenged by the Prussian government to defend their claim on language. Prussian authorities had dissolved Lonk Monastery in West Prussia of former Prussia belonging to a royal Polish part of the country. The visionaries hoped for a restoration of the monastery by the Virgin Mary. Into the present, especially since the time of the Polish millennium in 1966 and after the approbation of the apparitions by the Polish church in 1977, the sanctuary of Dietrichswalde remained an often visited destination of pilgrimage. It had a similar political function for the German church when, in the thirties, Bishop Maximilian Kaller made it a centre of religious demonstrations of Germans and Poles against the oppression by Nazism.

Krzysztof Murawski, Pilgrimage to Lonk. A Study of the Religious Life in West Prussia in the 19th Century.

Up to the end of the 19th century, Lonk (Polish: Łąki Bratiańskie) north of Neumark (Nowe Miasto Lubawskie) in the former district of Löbau / West Prussia was called "Tschenstochau of the North" or "West Prussian Tschenstochau". This place of pilgrimage was the centre of Catholic life in the south-easterly part of the Province of West Prussia, and the link of Marian devotion with Polish tradition strengthened the feeling of national unity amongst Polish people. In these Marian devotions, however, no anti-German attitudes became apparent; on the contrary, many pilgrims were Germans, and masses during the pilgrimage and the patron saints' days were celebrated both in German and Polish. The pilgrims were united in a religious community, which was fundamentally supra-national. Yet, that did not mean that there were no national manifestations in the vicinity of the sanctuary.

The most important place of pilgrimage and, at the same time, the oldest calvary mountain in Pommerellen, called Kashubian Jerusalem, is in Neustadt (Wejherowo) with its Way of the Cross. The sanctuary in Pehsken (Piaseczno) in the district of Marienwerder (Kwidzyń) near Mewe (Gniew) was of similar importance for the inhabitants of the region of Kociewie (left of the Vistula with its capital Preußisch Stargard /Starogard Gdański), its tradition of pilgrimages dating back to the late Middle Ages. Both Neustadt and Peshken were very important and well-known religious centres, which radiated into the nearby and further-

off vicinities. Mainly, however, they remained sanctuaries of regional importance. The sanctuary of Lonk had a completely different character. It must be called a centre of supra-regional importance. It was well-known to the inhabitants of the district of Kociewie and to Kashubians. But there were also Warmians, Kurpians and Masurians who liked to make pilgrimages there. Polish people as well as Germans came to Lonk.