

Trudla Malinkowa: Shores of Hope. Wends Go Overseas. Translated by Luise Green, Konstantin Hahn, Carl E. Roemer. Concordia University Press: Austin/Texas 2009, 302 S., Ill.

Almost exactly twelve years ago, I was in the midst of finalizing my travel plans for my much-anticipated internship at the Sorbian Institute. Since my grandfather's family came from the Serbin area and were long-time members of St. Paul Lutheran Church, I had grown up hearing stories about the Wends and knowing that they were different from the other Texans around them. My interest in history led me to wonder about the culture and history of the Wends/Sorbs who remained behind in Lusatia, and with the help of Dr. Joseph Wilson, I was able to make contact with Dr. Susanne Hose at the Sorbian Institute.

To this day, I treasure my memories and experiences from Autumn 1998 and from my return in 2000 to Dresden to study and work on my master's thesis. I was generously given a copy of "Ufer der Hoffnung" during my stay in Lusatia, and I enjoyed the opportunity to meet Trudla Malinkowa and to discuss her experiences and research in Texas. Of course, it was a delight to hear her mention names of family acquaintances and relatives from Serbin and to realize that in terms of Sorbian culture and heritage, the world is indeed small. To a great extent, I felt "at home" in Lusatia, where I encountered warmth, kindness, and acceptance. Ultimately we Texas Wends, descendents of those who gambled on both actual and imagined dreams in the American wilderness, are rooted in the green rolling Lusatian hills, and perhaps being in this landscape strikes a chord deep within all of us.

Malinkowa's book I first read in German over ten years ago. Under the guidance of Dr. David Zersen, Managing Editor of Concordia University Press, "Shores of Hope. Wends Go Overseas" was produced by a team of three German translators: Luise Green, Konstantin Hahn, and Carl E. Roemer. The English publication resembles the German book in both size and format. Almost all of the original illustrations are included with a few new images added to the mix. In terms of physicality, the book is printed on good-quality paper, and the small, chunky size makes it easy to hold and read. The translation itself represents a large amount of work. As someone with experience in the translation realm, I understand the effort that is required to work through a text of great length and the responsibility that is entrusted to you to produce text that is both accurate and clean. It is clear that Green, Hahn, and Roemer devoted great energy and time to this book project. In general, a high degree of accuracy exists in the English translation, and the primary source quotations retain most of their emotional and observational power. For English readers, the information in this book will be interesting and may provide impetus for personal historical research into family stories and events.

Supplemental to the textual basis already present in "Ufer der Hoffnung", Malinkowa added valuable new research material for the 2009 publication of "Shores of Hope". Specifically the section on the Wendish settlers in Iowa will be of interest to those who are intrigued by the complex story of Wendish emigration to the United States. Very little has been previously written about the Wends in Iowa, and thus, Malinkowa's research is significant since it expands the information available on the decentralized Lower Wendish immigration patterns in the Midwest.

With these positive comments in mind, there are two main issues that seem to arise regularly throughout the book. The main weak points are tied to poor editing and occasional mistranslations, especially of words or concepts that could have two possible equivalents in the English language. Even the title of the English publication gives a

signal of the translation issues that arise later. Although “Shores of Hope” is an accurate translation of “Ufer der Hoffnung”, the subtitle “Wends Go Overseas” is abrupt and awkward and is only a loose translation of “Sorbische Auswanderer nach Übersee”, which could have been more elegantly translated to “Wendish Immigrants Overseas or Wendish Immigrants Abroad”. In general, the German sentence structure is maintained in the English translation. This results in text which, at times, is overly stilted and complex. Periodically the prose lacks clarity, leaving the reader uncertain about the main point of certain sentences. The instances of mistranslations also contribute to the lack of clarity. For example, the word “Gemeinde” can be translated into English as “community” or “congregation”, words that usually cannot be used interchangeably. On pages 150 and 152, the translators chose to use the word “community” instead of “congregation”, although Malinkowa is undoubtedly making reference to St. Paul Church and not to the Serbin settlement. This issue of religious language also impacts the following sentence: “Kilian referred to a contact from the Australian Wends who were interested in his ministry [...]” (p. 135). A more accurate and clear translation of the German sentence would have read as “Kilian indicated that the Australian Wends had extended to him a pastoral call [...]” Since most of the potential readers of “Shores” will have Lutheran roots, it is unclear why the translators did not use the recognized word “call” here, especially since they did translate “Ruf” as “call” later in the book.

Interestingly, the spelling of names is not consistent in the translation. Although the names “Jan Kilian”, “Georg Boback”, and others were not shifted into English spelling forms, the name “Karl Höhne” appears more than once as “Carl Höhne”. In such cases, the reader wonders why some names were changed and others were not. Inconsistency of comma and number usage (numerals or word equivalents) arises frequently throughout the book. In most publications that fall within the history discipline, the grammatical and structural standards of the Chicago Manual of Style are applied. This was not done in this instance, but if these standards had been utilized, they would have eliminated the numerous small grammatical problems that plague the text.

In the end, the reader is left feeling as if no strong editorial hand was applied to this book. Not only are small typos scattered among the pages (such as “prevented” instead of “presented” on p. 72), but the sentences often lack elegance and lucidity. For example, “[...] groups, families and individuals repeatedly emigrated” (p. 14) implies that the same emigrants kept emigrating over and over again. Instead the phrase should read, “[...] more and more groups, families, and individuals chose to emigrate.” Also, “On behalf of the authorities three doctors were assigned to stem the epidemic, although several more people died” (p. 122) would have made more sense as “The authorities assigned three doctors to stem the epidemic; however, the number of deaths continued to increase with each passing day.”

Finally, as a kind of wishful criticism, the original German publication and the English translation both lack significant citations for the primary quote material and for the events that are described in the text. As an academic press, it would have been beneficial if CUP could have arranged with Malinkowa to add the citations as footnotes or endnotes, a change that would have made the book much more usable for scholars. As it is, the citations are limited to only the longer text excerpts that appear in italics throughout the book, while all of the in-text primary source quotations are uncited. In conclusion, this book is a valuable addition to the limited array of English-language studies dealing with the Wendish immigrations to various countries. However, the obvious absence of a strong editorial presence weakens the overall quality of the book. By the time “Shores” is reprinted, hopefully the text will have been handed over to an

editor with strong German skills to carefully polish and refine it. Furthermore, the addition of the missing source citations would raise the English translation from being an intriguing general interest book to functioning as a well-documented historical study that could be used as a springboard for future research endeavors into the inter-connectedness of Lusatia and the Wendish colonies scattered around the world.

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