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Unsuccessful Moravian Missionary Efforts in East Prussia

Summary

The article examines the Moravian missionary activity in East Prussia. It discusses Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf's plan to initiate a mission among the exiles from Salzburg in the Province of Lithuania. Not expecting the approval of his plan by the Lutheran Church, in 1736 he turned directly to King Friedrich Wilhelm I. The monarch initially expressed interest in the "Lithuanian Cause" but eventually decided that the plan was impractical. The Herrnhuters continued their missionary efforts by sending emissaries to spread Moravian Pietism among the Salzburgers. The article analyses their missionary endeavours and the reasons why these brought only insignificant results.

Keywords: Zinzendorf, Moravians, Herrnhuters, Lutheran Church, East Prussia.

In 1736, on the way back to Berlin from Livonia, Count Nicolaus Zinzendorf (1700–1760) laid out a plan for a mission among the Salzburgers in East Prussia. Most of these wealthy and God-fearing Lutheran farmers were forced to leave Austria's Catholic Archbishopric of Salzburg to avoid religious intolerance. In 1732, they settled in the northern region of East Prussia, primarily in the Gumbinnen district, which had lost about 50 percent of its population to famine and pestilence in 1709–1711.

Inspired by his warmhearted welcome in Livonia and Estonia and the initial success of the Moravian mission among the local population there, Zinzendorf wrote a letter to the king from Memel (Klaipėda) on October 15, 1736. He was deeply inspired by a religious revival in these regions, and this prompted him to intensify the activities of the brethren not only among Latvians and Estonians but also to

initiate a somewhat similar program in the Province of Lithuania (Germ. *Provinz Litauen*) in East Prussia.

Students of the period only briefly mention Zinzendorf's "Lithuanian Cause" (Germ. "*Litauische sache*"), and those who do note it, rarely comment on a later Moravian mission in East Prussia. Erich Beyreuther, a well-known expert on Zinzendorf's biography, mentions the count's intentions to institute a missionary program in Prussian Lithuania and correctly states that shortly thereafter he "shelved the 'Lithuanian plan' for the time being as not yet 'workable'" and "never spoke of it again."¹ However, the Herrnhutian emissaries did not give up on their efforts and continued their mission in the region. They were able to attract enough converts to establish a congregation in Königsberg.

The present author attempts to provide a more complete picture of the Moravian mission in East Prussia from 1729 to 1748 when King Frederick II (1740–1786) issued a decree banning Herrnhutian activity in his realm. The study is based on primary sources, including royal decrees, correspondence between leading East Prussian churchmen and theologians, Zinzendorf's personal correspondence, reports of the Moravian Brethren to their church leaders, and other contemporary historical records.

The "Lithuanian Cause"

Zinzendorf was convinced that the spiritual care of the Salzburgers was his special vocation. Their position was very similar to that of the Moravian Brethren. Just as the Moravians left Bohemia and Moravia for the new homeland in Herrnhut, so the Salzburgers had to leave their old homeland for East Prussia. Just as the Moravians experienced a great spiritual awakening in Herrnhut, so the Salzburgers made great sacrifices for their faith in Austria and developed such an ardent religious fervour that, in his opinion, it would be inadvisable to leave their pastoral care to the established church in their new homeland. Zinzendorf's first biographer, August Gottlieb Spangenberg (1704–1792), wrote:

Our count was very sympathetic to these Salzburgers who had left their homeland for the sake of religion. He knew from the lips of those who did not lack the opportunity to get to know them intimately that most of them, when they went out, had nothing less in mind than true conversion of the heart. Therefore, he wanted them to penetrate to the core of religion and experience the grace of God in Christ for their salvation and happiness in their hearts... He thought it would be of

1 Beyreuther, Erich (1961). *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit 1732-1760*. Marburg an der Lahn: Francke, p. 145.

great benefit if some of the Moravian Brethren, who were also in the same circumstances as the Salzburger, could speak to them of the cause of their hope. Therefore, he not only did not resist but also helped the brethren, who showed a desire to visit these emigrants and see if they could do something for their benefit.²

The sole purpose of Zinzendorf's mission among the peasants and exiles was to "impart to them the knowledge of Christ for the salvation of their souls."³ Because of this noble goal, he even ignored the fact that his standing as an imperial count would suffer in this respect, and not only the nobility but the Prussian king himself would consider him a "ridiculous, half dangerous individual."⁴ This is what he wrote about himself to Friedrich Wilhelm I (1688–1740) on February 14, 1736:

This blissful fate of my life to live among nothing but peasants and exiles, has probably made me quite alien to the height of this earth, and if at the same time I enjoy the bliss of being left in my sweet silence, I would be glad to wish the Lord's blessing on everyone anointed of the Lord, and to lie at the feet of my dearest sovereign with the most tender subjects, without bothering one or the other of the majesties with my little name and letters.⁵

Zinzendorf was interested in the prospect of missionary work among the Salzburger as early as 1728, when they faced growing religious intolerance in Austria. In April of that year, he sent Melchior Nitschmann (1702–1729) and Georg Schmidt (1709–1785) "to serve the awakened Salzburger with evangelical encouragement." Their mission failed as they were arrested and imprisoned on the way to Eisenberg in Bohemia. He made contact with them again when they were in the process of emigrating. Christian David (1690–1751) visited two large groups of Salzburger on their way to Nürnberg and said that emigration would do them no good unless each of them had a living experience of Jesus in their souls. As a farewell, he distributed 300 copies of the controversial edition of the Bible published by Zinzendorf in Ebersdorf.

2 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1773). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*. Vierter Theil. [Barby]: Brüdergemeine, p. 801. English transl. by the present author.

3 When asked, "What have the brethren aimed at and achieved in Livonia?" Zinzendorf replied, "The brethren have certainly had no other object in view, than to make known Christ crucified, for the salvation of souls." Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*. London: Samuel Holdsworth, pp. 215, 334.

4 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 219.

5 Ense, K. A. Varnhagen, von (1830). *Leben des Grafen von Zinzendorf*. Biographische Denkmale. Fünfter Theil. Graf Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Berlin: Reimer, p. 212.

The local authorities did not want to turn the emigration into a demonstration of Lutheranism, so they confiscated as many Bibles as they could find.⁶

Inspired by a successful trip to Livonia and Estonia in September and October of 1736, he turned his attention to East Prussia, believing that the field was now ready for sowing the seeds among the Salzburgers. The situation between Livonia and East Prussia, however, was different. In Livonia, the movement was able to attract a number of the nobility and the clergy. Zinzendorf himself was cordially welcomed in Riga and Tallinn and invited to preach from the pulpits of the principal churches of these cities.⁷ In East Prussia, however, he had no followers yet, and the Lutheran Church there was not so hospitable towards him. For this reason, he decided to bypass the established church, and on October 15, 1736, he turned directly to King Friedrich Wilhelm I himself with a very humble request to allow him to contribute to the welfare of the “Salzburg plant garden in Lithuania”:

Most Serene Highness, etc., the special love I have for exiles moves me to lay this leaf at the feet of Your Royal Majesty and to humbly ask whether you would deign to have me, an unworthy but loyal subject, at your Salzburg plant garden in Lithuania and to grant me a small promotion while maintaining a great purpose with these your foster children. My extensive external circumstances do not allow me to devote myself entirely to the cause or to be everywhere in person. I hope, however, by the grace of God, to find a way not to labour here without benefit if Your Majesty will not disapprove of my most humble service,

6 Ward, W. Reginald (2002). *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 118.

7 According to Zinzendorf’s “Livonian Plan,” the Moravian Brethren were meant to help the Lutheran clergy in fulfilling some of their pastoral duties. The spiritual functions of the clergy were to remain intact. They were to continue their ministry in accordance with the 1686 Swedish church law and the German, Estonian, and Latvian liturgical handbooks of 1699 and 1708. The church law, nonetheless, imposed certain duties that the clergy could not properly fulfill under current circumstances, especially in large parishes, some of which had more than 10,000 members. Here they were to be helped by the brethren. Zinzendorf particularly recommended that the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* model be applied in the congregations (Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 218). The missionaries were to gather Latvians and Estonians into small catechetical groups for the study of the Holy Scriptures and the advancement of practical Christianity. The ongoing revival would promote the gradual conversion of the local population and in this way expand the kingdom of God. The help of the Moravian Brethren was to be only temporary. They were gradually to be replaced by “national workers” who would take over the spiritual care of the local Latvian and Estonian population. For this purpose, a teachers’ seminary was to be established (it was founded in 1738 in Valmiera in a manor belonging to Magdalene von Hallart). Initially, the clergy and nobility did not foresee any irregularity, but soon the *ecclesiola* began to take the shape of an independent *ecclesia*. Awakened Latvians and Estonians were divided into so-called “choirs” according to gender and marital status and began to organise their spiritual life independently of the Lutheran Church. Their groups transformed themselves into closed communities with their own prayer houses and schools, church order, liturgy, devotional books, and unique religious practices. In 1742, about 3,000 Latvians and 11,000 Estonians were firmly bound together in “Chören.” Beyreuther, Erich (1961). *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit 1732-1760*, pp. 135-136.

and the advancement of the good cause will be my reward. I humbly ask two things of Your Majesty's grace. One is that my most inexpressible thoughts, both as a whole and in their prospective parts, remain only among a few so that I am not subject to obstructive judgments in advance and that I particularly avoid rumour as to whether I want to transfer the Herrnhut congregation there, which is the least necessary, but considering all imaginable possibilities are somewhat probable, since I can testify with full confidence to Your Royal Majesty that this congregation and I have experienced on behalf of His Majesty, the King of Poland, under whom we have hitherto and still live daily, justice and benevolence, and one might say much endurance and patience which I can show against the general rumour. The other thing is that Your Royal Majesty judges the matter yourself according to your high God-given talent, and if you find no displeasure in your heart, I should first be thoroughly and seriously examined by faithful and competent men regarding my person and the acceptability of the suggestions hereunder. And since there are quite different opinions concerning my person among some people, in this case I would like to establish myself in such confidence that Your Majesty have no doubt that my heart is sincere, my purpose is upright, my abilities are supported by divine goodness, and the mistakes of which I am concerned partly be overlooked with grace, partly be corrected without far-reaching actions. I remain in the deepest humility and reverence for Your Royal Majesty, most humble and obedient Nicolaus Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf. Self-scripted. On the return journey from Livonia on October 15, 1736.⁸

Zinzendorf elaborated his thoughts in an appendix: "*Nähere Erläuterung des allerunterthänigsten Vorschlages zu einer Salzburgerischen Anstalt*" ("A More Detailed Explanation of the Humblest Proposal for a Salzburg Institution").

Influenced by a "Philadelphian" ecclesiology that sought to unite "the true children of God" regardless of their theological differences within one movement based

8 Zinzendorf's letter, dated October 15, 1736 was published in Ense, K. A. V. *Leben des Grafen von Zinzendorf*, pp. 230-232. English transl. by the present author.

on brotherly love,⁹ Zinzendorf suggested that “*Privatus*,” familiar with the region and its inhabitants buy an estate, the so-called “*Meierhof*,” from which all the activities of the local Salzburg settlement would be run. First, selected residents would be invited to work in the area, and then awakened families who were not yet established or not sufficiently established would be welcomed to settle here. Establishing an “orphanage” was also proposed, which was to become not only a shelter for orphans but an educational institution, a seminary where orphans would be prepared for future school and church services. A church or parish could not be considered “until the people settled down to stay.” For the time being, catechists, probably brethren sent from Herrnhut, would take care of the spiritual life of the locals. The structure was to become economically self-sufficient and eventually develop into a kind of spiritual edification center for the Salzburg community in East Prussia.¹⁰

“Thus, by divine providence, it would be possible to occupy a place with Salzburgers who over time spiritually and physically could become an example for others, edification for Protestants, and perhaps even the occasion for some commercial enterprise in Lithuania,” he stated.¹¹

Zinzendorf expected that some would attempt to defame his name and that of the Moravian movement, so he supplemented his proposal with a letter of defense to Swedish King Frederick I (1676–1751), dated December 1735 where he presented his confession of faith and claimed that the faith of the Unity of the Brethren (*Brüdergemeine*) agreed with the Augsburg Confession. He also argued that the *consilium abeundi* (“advice to leave”) was issued against him in Copenhagen for other than theological reasons. He found it necessary to defend his activities because it was well known that in March 1736, he had been banned from entering Saxony. He was accused of taking serfs from other estates, religious separatism, and general disturbance of public order. The Moravian community was allowed to stay in Herrnhut, but in 1737 another decree was issued, declaring that the activities of the Unity of the Brethren were to be tolerated in Upper Lusatia only to the extent

9 The term “Philadelphia” refers to the Philadelphian Church in the Book of Revelation and the “brotherly love” shared by the true children of God. In the age of Philadelphia, which should follow the era of Sardis, the true children of God, who have kept the word and patiently endured (Revelation 3:7-13), will be gathered “from the four winds” (Matthew 24:31) to be the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9). Zinzendorf’s “Philadelphian” ecclesiology was based on John 11:52 which stated that Jesus died not just for one nation “but also for the scattered children of God to bring them together and make them one.” The crucial text of such ecclesiology was “that they all may be one” (John 17:21). Peucker, Paul (2015). *A Time of Sifting: Mystical Marriage and the Crisis of Moravian Piety in the Eighteenth Century*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 13.

10 Rackwitz, Werner (2006). Der “Soldatenkönig” und der “Prediger der Herzensreligion”. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Wilhelm I. und dem Grafen Zinzendorf. In: *Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins*, 102. Jahrgang. Heft 1. Januar, p. 312; Beyreuther, Erich (1961). *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit 1732-1760*, p. 137.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 312. English transl. by the present author.

that they adhered to the Augsburg Confession and ceased organising conventicles which had a negative effect on neighbouring Lutheran congregations.

Compared to the Livonian program, the “Lithuanian Plan” was somewhat more modest. Zinzendorf did not even talk about the immediate construction of a prayer house but only about providing catechists for the spiritual care of the local Salzburgers. Unlike Livonia, Prussia was not so hospitable towards him. In fact, when he stopped briefly in Königsberg on his way to Riga in late August 1736, no one met him. Upon learning of his arrival, Franz Albert Schultz (1692–1763), professor at the University of Königsberg and member of the consistory, told his colleagues: “We want to have little in common with him.”¹² “In Königsberg, he did not speak to anyone, but spent two days in silence, concentrating on his work,” Spangenberg wrote.¹³

The King’s Response

Zinzendorf’s proposals to improve the living conditions of the Salzburg immigrants immediately aroused the king’s interest. That year, he visited the Insterburg and Gumbinnen districts to see how the Salzburgers had settled in their new homeland. The plan seemed attractive also because it would not require a lot of funds since *Privatus*, and by this Zinzendorf meant himself, would purchase the estate in question. In any case, the costs incurred by the king would not exceed the expected future income. Therefore, on October 24, 1736, the day on which Zinzendorf hoped to travel through Berlin, the king invited him to an audience at his temporary residence in Wusterhausen. “Make sure that he comes out tomorrow,” he instructed his Court Chaplain Daniel Ernest Jablonski (1660–1741).¹⁴

Zinzendorf arrived a day later and went straight to the king’s residence. The interview lasted three days. Spangenberg reported the count’s experience in the following words:

The king spoke, the first day, very coolly, yet profoundly, with me; the second, candidly and confidentially; but, on the third, he declared, in the presence of the whole court, that he had been misinformed and deceived with respect to me; that I ought not to be suspected either of heresy or disloyalty; that my only sin was that being a Count and a man

12 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*. Schriften der Synodalkommission für ostpreußische Kirchengeschichte. Heft 28. Königsberg: Beyer in Komm, p. 44.

13 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1773). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*, p. 982.

14 Rackwitz, Werner (2006). Der “Soldatenkönig” und der “Prediger der Herzensreligion”. Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Wilhelm I. und dem Grafen Zinzendorf, p. 313.

who was looked up to in the world, I had devoted myself entirely to the ministry of the gospel. He assured me of his affection, his complete confidence, and that he would believe nothing more against me, but serve me wherever he was able.¹⁵

Zinzendorf himself, however, described the event somewhat differently. Ten years later, he wrote:

“It was a terrible reception. I saw what a monarch is capable of and learned to understand why some people fall silent in front of him. I can not describe the reception to anyone ... He intended to throw me off balance ... but that did not work, and when the ideas that he had of me were gone, another one came, namely, to get a motive from me, and since he had that, the third idea was there, namely, the greatest love and respect. His country would be open to me and my community.”¹⁶

The reason the king wanted to meet Zinzendorf was to learn more about the motives behind his religious activities. He found out that the count’s sole intention was to promote Christian piety. The king himself was also concerned with the spread of true Christianity. “If I rebuild and improve the land and make no one a Christian, then all my efforts will not help me in the least,” he declared in 1722 amid his efforts to reconstruct (*Rétablissement*) East Prussia and especially the Province of Lithuania.¹⁷ “True Christianity” to him was the Francke-type Pietism, but it is not entirely clear that he understood at the time the significant differences between the two types of Pietism. Zinzendorf ignored the “struggle of repentance” which for August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) was a precondition for conversion. Among other issues the count spoke about with the king was his ordination as bishop of the Moravian Brethren.

On October 28, Friedrich Wilhelm I informed Zinzendorf that he wanted to learn more about the “Lithuanian Cause”. He would be content if the count went to Berlin and discussed this issue in detail with Jablonski. On the same day, he instructed his court chaplain to meet with the count and talk about the matters in which he considered advice was necessary:

15 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 221.

16 Beyreuther, Erich (1961). *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit 1732–1760*, p. 143. English transl. by the present author.

17 Brehm, Johannes (1913). *Entwicklung der evangelischen Volksschule in Masuren im Rahmen der Gesamtentwicklung der preussischen Volksschule von der Reformation bis zur Regierungszeit Friedrich Wilhelms I.* Königsberg: Karg & Manneck, p. 5; Gawthrop, Richard (1993). *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 252.

Having now seen and spoken with Count Zinzendorf myself, and found him to be an honest and intelligent man, whose only intentions are to promote true and real religion and the salutary doctrine of the word of God, it is my will, that when you speak with him in Berlin, you discuss those points with him which he proposes, and afterwards furnish me with your report upon them, according to the letter of this day's date to you on the subject.¹⁸

On October 30, Jablonski informed the king that he had spoken to Zinzendorf three times and learned that (1) he wanted his orthodoxy to be examined by Berlin theologians; (2) he wished his episcopal consecration to be done quietly to avoid scandal; (3) he wanted to purchase an uncultivated piece of land in the Province of Lithuania for the establishment of an orphanage; (4) he showed an inclination to explore the possibility of becoming the king's fief outside the Holy Roman Empire.¹⁹

In a letter to Jablonski on November 2, the king outlined his position regarding Zinzendorf's examination and consecration as a bishop. His Lutheran orthodoxy was to be examined by both provosts of Berlin and Cölln, and if their testimony were positive, there should be no obstacle to his consecration.²⁰

18 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 221.

19 Rackwitz, Werner (2006). Der "Soldatenkönig" und der "Prediger der Herzensreligion". Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Wilhelm I. und dem Grafen Zinzendorf, p. 314.

20 "From your statement of 30th October, I have seen what has transpired in your conference with Count Zinzendorf. With regard to the examination of his orthodoxy and religious sentiments, I have, for certain reasons, entrusted it to the two provosts of Berlin. If their testimony, as I hope, should prove favourable, you can ordain him at his desire, because I am myself of the opinion that the ministerial profession is worthy of all honour, and degrades no one" (Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, pp. 221- 222). Zinzendorf's Lutheran orthodoxy was examined by Provosts Michael Roloff and Johann Gustav Reinbeck in April 1737. This was his second examination for the holy ministry. The first took place in the spring of 1734 in Stralsund, Swedish Pomerania. He was subsequently ordained on December 19, 1734, by the decision of the Lutheran consistory of Tübingen (Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1773). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*, pp. 858-860). Friedrich Wilhelm I responded as follows: "I have seen with pleasure from your report respecting Count Zinzendorf that you have not found him holding any other doctrines than those of the Lutheran Church. I await his proposals respecting the regulations he thinks of making concerning the Moravian Brethren" (Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 232).

Various objections were raised regarding Zinzendorf's consecration, so the king asked his court chaplain for a personal opinion. Jablonski, whose grandfather was Johann Amos Comenius, a famous pedagogue and bishop of the Unitas Fratrum, saw no obstacles to the count's consecration. The king responded on May 15: "I have seen, from your statement of the 11th instant, that you regard the ordination requested by Count Zinzendorf as perfectly harmless, and injurious to no one. Seeing, therefore, that he persists in it, you may comply with his wishes, in God's name, and quietly ordain him, as he desires, bishop (*antistes*) of his Moravian Brethren" (Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1838). *The Life of Nicholas Lewis Count Zinzendorf, Bishop and Ordinary of the Church of the United (or Moravian) Brethren*, p. 233).

The provosts found no fault with his Lutheran orthodoxy, and Zinzendorf's consecration took place on May 20, 1737, in Jablonski's house, officiated by Jablonski and David Nitschmann (1696–1772) in the presence of several brethren from Herrnhut.²¹

Friedrich Wilhelm I, however, was hesitant to accept Zinzendorf's proposals regarding the "Lithuanian Cause". Although on November 20, 1736, Zinzendorf wrote to Spangenberg: "I have to keep my eyes ... on the king of Prussia in connection with the Salzburgers,"²² and a few weeks previously, on November 2, 1736, in a letter to Jablonski, the monarch stated that the plan was not yet viable. "The plan to set up an orphanage or something similar in Lithuania is good but not yet practicable, however over time, when everything gets better there, it may well come true."²³

The king began to show increasing cautiousness regarding Zinzendorf's enthusiasm, his peculiar approach to spiritual matters, and the "wealth of bold phrases and expressions of the heart" in his language. In addition, some hymns in the recently printed Moravian hymnal seemed to him "extraordinarily mystically dark and incomprehensible." In his letter dated April 8, 1738, Zinzendorf responded that he was considering revising the hymnal. The monarch left this marginal note in the letter: "[He] should remain with the Augsburg Confession, enlarge Christ's kingdom but serve God in silence without affectation."²⁴ All this led the king to think that there was something dubious behind Zinzendorf's activities and to wonder whether the opinion he formed in 1736 about the count was correct.

A similar cautiousness concerning Zinzendorf was expressed by the well-known writer and later Prussian Chamber President, Johann Michael von Loën (1694–1776), who personally met with the count during his visit to Frankfurt (Main) in 1736:

Everything is full of emotion when one speaks of Count von Zinzendorf... Some make this earl out to be an arch-swindler and another Muhammad. Others, on the contrary, regard him as a new apostle sent by God and as a saint. I think both opinions are exaggerated. The count seems to me neither a swindler nor an apostle. Nevertheless, I find something in his character and in his undertakings that can give rise to both judgments... As to his new constitutions in the religious system, I must confess that I find it difficult to pass judgment on them. It is too good to reproach

21 Daniel Ernst Jablonski was elected senior of the Unitas Fratrum for Major Poland and Prussia in 1699 at the Synod in Lissa and consecrated as senior (bishop) on February 28 (Kvačala, Johann (1901). *D. E. Jablonsky und Grosspolen*. Posen: A. Förster, pp. 19–28). Nitschman was consecrated by Jablonski in 1735.

22 Beyreuther, Erich (1961). *Zinzendorf und die Christenheit 1732-1760*, pp. 137–138.

23 Rackwitz, Werner (2006). Der "Soldatenkönig" und der "Prediger der Herzensreligion". Der Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Wilhelm I. und dem Grafen Zinzendorf, p. 315.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 317.

anything. It is too ambiguous to praise anything. It is too strange not to raise suspicions.²⁵

Subsequently, the king found the “Lithuanian plan” impractical. Most likely he realised that if he handed over the pastoral care of the Salzburgers to Zinzendorf, he would hear multiple grievances from the Lutheran Church. Zinzendorf himself probably realised the king’s doubts concerning his project. He soon began to consider the “Lithuanian Cause” unworkable and directed his missionary efforts elsewhere.

Reaction of the East Prussian Lutheran Church to the Moravian Missionary Efforts

Zinzendorf’s consecration further complicated his relationship with the Lutheran Church. Now there were suspicions that Friedrich Wilhelm I might entrust him with ecclesiastical responsibilities in the Prussian territories. When the count arrived in Berlin in 1738, the Lutheran clergy closed their pulpits to him and advised him to hold open services from the attic of his rented house on Leipzig Street.

In the early 1730s, however, relations were cordial between the leading East Prussian churchmen of the Pietist persuasion and the Moravian Brethren. When the emissaries from Herrnhut, Christian David and Timotheus Fiedler (1700–1748), visited Königsberg from October 8–19, 1729, they were warmly welcomed by the church and the university. They established friendly relations with Georg Friedrich Rogall (1701–1733), professor of theology and pastor of the cathedral church, and Johann Friedrich Heinrici, inspector at the Friedrich College. They also met with university rector Heinrich Lysius (1670–1731), professors of theology Abraham Wolff (1680–1731), Johann David Kypke (1692–1758), and other academics. David looked forward to further cooperation with the leading Königsberg clerics and hoped that the brethren would be invited to East Prussia to work as teachers.²⁶

In the months of June to August 1732, exiles from Salzburg settled in Prussia, and they immediately became the mission target of the brethren. The Herrnhuters arrived in Königsberg on April 22, 1733. Christoph Demuth (1689–1754) and Friedrich Böhnisch (1710–1763) were still warmly received by Professors Schultz,

25 Loën, Johann Michael, von (1750). Abbildung des Grafens von Zinzendorf im Jahr 1737. In: *Des Herrn von Loën gesammelte Kleine Schrifften*. Besorgt und herausgegeben von J. C. Schneidern. Erster Theil. Frankfurt; Leipzig: Hutter, pp. 290, 293, 302. English transl. by the present author.

26 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century. In: *Königsberg. Beiträge zu einem besonderen Kapitel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts*. Begründet und herausgegeben von Joseph Köhnen. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, p. 342.

Daniel Lorenz Salthenius (1701–1750), and Inspector Christian Schiffert (1689–1765) of the Collegium Fridericianum. Schultz introduced them to several Salzburger. The brethren then went to the Gumbinnen district, visiting the Tapiau, Wehlau, and Muldszen congregations along the way. Some clergymen already viewed their activities with suspicion. Although Gottfried Schumacher of Muldszen invited them to stay at his house, he asked: “Don’t you think that there are good people in Prussia who can encourage and awaken the people of Salzburg? Aren’t you making too much of yourselves?”²⁷

Extant records of the Herrnhuters, in which they described their experiences from visits to East Prussia, testify to the fact that already in 1733 there were obvious theological differences between the two types of Pietism. Apart from ecclesiological, eschatological, liturgical, and other distinctions, the most significant theological difference was their teaching on conversion. Zinzendorf rejected Francke’s teaching concerning penitential struggle (“*Busskampf*”) as a precondition for rebirth. Instead of looking for obstacles within the soul, which in his opinion only delayed conversion, Zinzendorf advised to trust the wounds of Christ and meditate on the washing in the blood of the Saviour, since the blood of Christ frees the soul from sin and death. “The former [the Pietist] has his misery before his eyes and looks toward the wounds [of Christ]; the latter [the Herrnhuter] has the wounds before his eyes and looks at the misery. The wounds comfort the former in his timidity; the other is shamed of his misery in his blessedness.”²⁸

Theologians at Halle and Königsberg considered Zinzendorf’s approach as erroneous and considered the count to be unconverted. They argued that the only way to conversion was through the repentance struggle evoked by the proclamation of the law of God and the threat of eternal punishment. Such a *Busskampf* brought a person to the point when God sent down his grace that made the penitent a new man. Through this born-again experience regenerated persons were able to indicate the time and place of their conversion.

For his part, Zinzendorf felt that from childhood he was in a state of God’s grace. Raised in a Pietist environment, he considered Jesus as his friend from his youth. “For many years I associated with him [Jesus] in a childlike manner [and] conversed with him as friends for hours.”²⁹ He was one of the few Christians whom Philipp Spener would classify as those who did not lose the regeneration received at Baptism. Although, with Francke’s encouragement, he also attempted to undergo such a conversion through penitential struggle, he was unable to arrive at such a

27 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 105.

28 Atwood Craig D. (2006). Understanding Zinzendorf’s Blood and Wounds Theology. In: *Journal of Moravian History*. No. 1, Fall, p. 36.

29 Atwood Craig D. (2004). *Community of the Cross. Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 45.

dramatic experience. “I have passed through a hundred times more agony and tears than I would ever require of any sinner.”³⁰

In the end, he decided that the struggle of repentance was no longer necessary because Christ himself performed penance for everyone in his passion. Zinzendorf advised focusing on the blood of the Saviour flowing from the cross which should impress the believer with the reality of the atonement. Persistent meditation on the bleeding Christ, on his beautiful and horrible wounds assures him that he is being washed in the Saviour’s blood that releases him from sin and despair. To emphasise Francke’s *Buskampf* is to underestimate the great penitential struggle performed by Jesus through his passion. Such a penitential struggle was something like “a chimera, an imaginary illness, and a self-induced sickness.”³¹ In Zinzendorf’s words, a Halle “Pietist is a man who cannot be converted in the cavalier way that we are, but needs more circumstance, has to have his affairs in better order, and his books in credit.” “We ride and the Pietists go on foot.”³²

This different approach to conversion was noted by Demuth and Böhnisch. After meeting several Salzburger in Königsberg, the brethren observed: “They probably think well, but they do not have the right feeling about sin.” They also met a young lady under the name Cantin and were surprised that she, who had never lost the grace of baptism, was forced to go through the struggle of repentance. “She remained in the baptismal covenant until the age of seventeen, never experienced outbreaks of sin, and yet the Pietists forced her to undergo a special struggle of repentance.”³³

30 Zinzendorf describes his *Buskampf* in the following words: “Although, in 1711, 1714, 1717, 1719, and 1721, I felt the power of grace within me, and was as certain of my salvation as of my existence, I listened to the assertion of M. Mischke, who told me that I was not converted. I then began a kind of struggle, which I now feel was not necessary, but which, at all events, had a happy issue. From that time on I often felt that God had sealed my salvation and my adoption, and I felt it so powerfully that I ceased to entertain any fear of falling by those means into spiritual pride. It has always been the blood of Jesus Christ that has brought me to this state of assurance. I have passed through a hundred times more agony and tears than I would ever require of any sinner. The course I followed may, perhaps, be justified, inasmuch as it served me in my special vocation; but I consider it, nevertheless, absurd, and it is a roundabout way that I would advise everyone to avoid” (Bovet (1865), p. 200).

31 Ward W. Reginald (1999). *Christianity Under the Ancien Régime, 1648-1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 117.

32 Ward W. Reginald (2006). *Early Evangelicalism. A Global Intellectual History, 1670-1789*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 103.

33 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 102, 106.

The removal of August Gottlieb Spangenberg from Halle in 1733 drove a wedge between the Moravians and Halle.³⁴ This deterioration of relations soon manifested in Königsberg. The university was in need of a Hebraist, so in the fall of 1734, Schultz invited Samuel Lieberkühn (1710–1777) to become an extraordinary professor of oriental languages. A student in Jena and Halle and companion of the Salzburgers to Königsberg, Lieberkühn was already in personal contact with Zinzendorf. He visited Herrnhut and was so taken by Zinzendorf's theology of grace that instead of accepting the offered professorship, he joined the Moravians and subsequently became head of their community in Gnadenberg.³⁵ However, the attitude towards Zinzendorf in Königsberg was not antagonistic. When the count arrived in the city on the way back from Livonia in 1736, he was invited to speak at the Collegium Fredericianum.³⁶

Despite Zinzendorf's doubts about the prospects of the "Lithuanian Cause," the Moravian Brethren continued to come to the region and explore the possibilities of their mission among the Salzburgers. In 1738, they visited the parishes of Mallwischken and Stallupönen in the Province of Lithuania and established contact with the settlers. On October 25, 1738, they attended the Pietist conventicle in Königsberg. Theological differences again became apparent. When the brethren offered a faster way to conversion through "grace and reconciliation," they were met with mistrust and suspicion. Kaspar Häfner recorded his experience in his diary: "Satan could not stand this and tried to vilify us as if we were rejecting repentance and prayer. Thus, the souls became suspicious, and the good preachers also regarded us as such people who led the minds astray. They asked us to take the walking staffs and set foot further, but the Saviour gave us some souls."³⁷

The Moravian missions did not cease even after a royal decree against the conventicles was issued by King Friedrich II on November 23, 1742. It was not specifically directed against the Moravians but stated in general terms that edification should take place in the public worship of the congregations. In this way, the king responded to the activities of Pastor Heinrich Schubert (1692–1757) of Potsdam and other clergy who were sponsoring conventicles and caused divisions among their

34 In 1732, Gotthilf August Francke offered Spangenberg the position of extraordinary professor of theology at the University of Halle and superintendent of schools associated with the orphanage. He accepted the offer, but disagreements soon arose. Spangenberg found religious life in Halle too formal, external, and worldly. When Francke learned of his private celebration of the Lord's Supper among the awakened, he and the faculty suspected that Zinzendorf was behind it. The faculty senate suggested that Spangenberg either repent publicly, follow orders from his superiors, and distance himself from Zinzendorf, or resign and leave Halle. Subsequently, he was stripped of all teaching and administrative positions and expelled from the city. Burkhardt, Guido (1866). *Zinzendorf und die Brüdergemeine*. Gotha: Verlag von Rud. Besser, p. 144; Ward, W. Reginald (2002). *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, p. 140.

35 *Nachrichten aus der Brüder-Gemeine* (1843), p. 235. Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg nach Rogalls Tode in Briefen*, p. 25.

36 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 107; Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). *Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 338.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108 fn. 4.

parishioners.³⁸ On December 9, 1742, Friedrich II issued a circular, explaining that his decree against the conventicles was not directed only against Schubert and a few others but was meant to include all Prussian clergy.³⁹

A few months before the king's decree, on September 18, 1742, Herrnhut envoy Adam Heindel and his wife came to Königsberg. By that time, a critical attitude toward Herrnhuterian activities in the region began to take shape. As he wrote to Bishop Johann Nitschmann on December 28, there was a big uproar among the city clergy when they heard that the "Herrnhuters appeared." In a conversation with Joachim Justus Rau (1713–1745), extraordinary professor of oriental languages, Heindel introduced himself as a "Salzburger" who had joined the Herrnhut community and now came to visit his countrymen. When asked to present a cover letter from his congregation, he replied: "Our dear bishop has blessed me with prayer and many tears and has left me in peace and hereby commended me to the grace of God." "I myself was a letter," he said, a Herrnhuter who "found righteousness in Jesus' wounds."⁴⁰ Rau apparently accepted his explanation and told him that there were 700 Salzburgers in Königsberg under the care of Pastor Johann Heinrich Kunzmann (1707–1775). However, Kunzmann was hostile to the Moravians.

Heindel went on an intensive journey through the country. He visited the Salzburgers in Rastenburg, Angenburg, and then went to Goldap, Darkehmen, Pillupönen, and Stallupönen in the Province of Lithuania. His impressions of missionary prospects among the settlers were rather bleak. "Dear brother," he wrote to Bishop Nitschmann, "I must have passed through over a hundred villages and towns and

38 Erdmann Carl (1849). *Die theologische und philosophische Aufklärung des achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Mit besonderer Rücksichtnahme auf die religiösen Bewegungen und kirchlichen Bestrebungen der Gegenwart. Leipzig: Brandstetter, pp. 342–350.

39 "Circular- Verordnung wegen derer Privat-Versammlungen in denen Häusern von 9. Dec. 1742." *Corporis Constitutionum Marchicarum. Continuatio II. Derer in der Chur- und Marck Brandenburg, auch incorporirten Landen, ergangenen Edicten, Mandaten, Rescripten, von 1741. biß 1744. inclusive*. Berlin und Halle: Buchladen des Waisenhauses, [ca. 1744], pp. 91–94.

The Pietists of Königsberg did not have a unified attitude toward conventicles. Heinrich Johann Lysius, who served three terms as rector and ten terms as dean of the Faculty of Theology, did not approve of the *collegia pietatis* because of the manifestations of a sectarian spirit (Riedesel, Erich (1937). *Pietismus und Orthodoxie in Ostpreußen*. Auf Grund des Briefwechsels G. F. Rogalls und F. A. Schultz' mit den Halleschen Pietisten. Ost-Europa-Verlag, Königsberg und Berlin: Ost-Europa-Verl., p. 8). Georg Friedrich Rogall, professor of theology and pastor at Königsberg Cathedral assembled the conventicles immediately after arriving in Königsberg in 1724 (Wotschke, Theodor (1928). *Georg Friedrich Rogallis Lebensarbeit nach seinen Briefen*. Schriften der Synodalkommission für ostpreußische Kirchengeschichte. Heft 27. Königsberg 1928, pp. 16, 66). Franz Albert Schultz approved of the conventicles, but he preferred to promulgate Pietism through educational institutions. The school, like the church, was to become "a center for the spread of the Holy Spirit." After the king banned conventicles, he and other Pietists continued to gather "in the small company" with the same blessing (Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 81).

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

spoke to over a few thousand people from Salzburg, most of whom were dead and cold, and I said: ‘When you do not want to listen, my soul must cry.’⁴¹

He left a note in Königsberg about the attitude towards the brethren and the Pietist conventicles.

The clergy in Königsberg agreed among themselves not to get involved with the Herrnhuters, lest they should also be disgraced just like in Livonia. And now the royal decree is already in force that the Pietist pastors – a total of ten – should not hold meetings in their homes under risk of severe penalty, and it is being read from every pulpit, and there is a great uproar. The others will not rest until the Pietists are driven out from the city.⁴²

In 1743, Adam Heindel and Reinhard Meisner resumed their missionary trips in “Lithuania.” They visited Pillkallen, Tollmingkehmen, Stallupönen, Pellingken, Insterburg, and Gumbinnen as well as some congregations in nearby Masuria. Again, in some places they were received favourably, but elsewhere, especially in Stallupönen, with hostility. “In no place did the people of Salzburg look at us as badly as here.”⁴³

When they returned to Königsberg on November 25, Heindel and Meisner were confronted by Rau who charged them with thirteen counts. (1) Adam Heindel appeared everywhere as a Salzburger, although he was not. (2) They talked much about the blood of the Lamb but rejected the proper order of repentance and faith, and when a pious citizen in one congregation confronted them, stating that the blood of Christ must be taken in the right order, lest it be falsely appropriated, he was told not to reason too much but only to trust in the blood of the Lamb. (3) They exhorted this very citizen not to stay and work but to engage in the conversion of others. (4) When asked why they found themselves only among the pious and awakened, and not among the ungodly, they replied that this was precisely their calling. (5) Their activity was particularly offensive in the Tolmingkehmen parish. When asked the question, “How his soul was doing,” a pious Salzburger answered, “Why should I talk much, I am a poor sinner!” then Meissner told him: “Come here, poor sinner, step between us! Receive the Holy Spirit, you justified sinner.” This Salzburger was completely mind-blown because of this. (6) They sowed confusion among the pious to the point that some no longer understood whether the true doctrine was that of Luther or that of the Moravians. (7) They were inconsistent in their speech to the extent that one no longer knew what to make of them since they would not let

41 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 120.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

a commoner speak but talked and chattered so much that they ultimately won him over to their side. (8) When they were not welcomed by the pious, they showed no love and sometimes severely scolded them. (9) Their long walking sticks upholstered with brass on top and bottom, the so-called “staffs of the apostles,” evoked strange connotations. (10) They pretended that Schultz had allowed them to hold private conventicles. (11) They claimed that some devout students in Königsberg became their followers. (12) They could not bear to be told the truth and fled when things did not work out. In particular, they did not want to hear anything about the corruption of their souls. (13) They advertised their Herrnhut constitution in such a way that some of the pious sincerely hoped that they would never return to “Lithuania.”⁴⁴

Despite strong opposition, the Moravians continued their mission among the Salzburgers. From December 1733 to March 1744, Meisner visited the parishes of Bartenstein, Szabienen, Darkehmen, Goldap, Pillupönen, Willuhnen, Pillkallen, Tilsit, Piktupönen, and Memel (Klaipėda). On his return to Königsberg on March 25, 1744, Meisner found that the city’s clergy and theologians were united against the Herrnhut community and its activities on their land.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, on April 16, 1743, Tsarina Jelizaveta Petrovna (1709–1762) banned all assemblies of the Moravians in the Baltic provinces. This prompted Zinzendorf to go to Livonia and St. Petersburg to defend the Moravian cause. After his short detention in the Riga citadel, an imperial decree was issued on January 9, 1744, forbidding him and his companions to cross the border. Her Majesty did not see fit to open any inquiry into his person or his theological stance. He was to leave her territories immediately, and any violation of her orders would result in his arrest.⁴⁶

On his way back from Livonia, Zinzendorf stopped in Königsberg, and on January 21, 1744, he requested the members of the theological faculty and city clergy to conduct an inquiry into his orthodoxy and that of the Moravian Brethren. Among the fourteen points, he asked whether they considered that he had ever claimed to have started a new sect or wanted to secretly or publicly introduce it alongside the Lutheran Church; whether he lured any persons away from the Lutheran Church; whether his contacts and work with the Moravian Brethren who had fled to his jurisdiction since 1724 provided evidence of his departure from Lutheran orthodoxy, especially when he accepted the episcopacy of the Moravian Church; whether it can be proved from his writings or hymns that he deviated from the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession? After all, he wanted to know whether the Moravian Brethren associated with his institutions were not themselves pure Lutherans because of the addition of

44 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, pp. 125–126.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 128–130.

46 Harnack, Theodosius (1860). *Die lutherische Kirche Livlands und die herrnhutische Brüdergemeinde. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte neuerer und neuester Zeit*. Harnack. Erlangen: Bläsing, p. 91.

the Moravian ecclesiastical constitution to the unaltered Augsburg Confession, and if they were in error, what kind of errors could be found?⁴⁷

Having learned that Dean Johann Lysius was being assisted by Vice-Dean Schultz, he wrote him a letter on January 28, 1744, asking to start conducting an inquiry. “I will allow myself, by the grace of my Lord, to most willingly and modestly answer all questions and inquiries, even those that seem unnecessary and even suspicious,” he stated, for without such an investigation it would be impossible to form a true opinion of his activities and that of the brethren. “I am always ready to take responsibility, but I do complain about the indifference of our Lutheran theologians concerning the inquiry about the true state of a congregation of God since without such investigation they cannot make a sound judgment.”⁴⁸

In his response, Schultz made it clear that the faculty would not initiate the inquiry. However, it intended to respond *in pleno* as soon as possible.⁴⁹ The count then replied that he did not expect any more answers from the faculty since this explanation was sufficient.⁵⁰

Zinzendorf subsequently learned in a verbal conversation with a faculty member that, among other things, the professors did not want to get involved in the inquiry because under the current circumstances that would have meant getting involved in a public debate. He then suggested that a member of the faculty, Johann Lysius or Daniel Heinrich Arnoldt (1706–1775), be assigned to confer with him to find out whether the Moravian connection with the Lutheran Church was worthy of being maintained. As this proposal was rejected, the count departed from Königsberg for Berlin in the first days of February.⁵¹

Upon learning that at Königsberg he was still being spoken of as distancing himself from Lutheran doctrine, he again tried to defend himself in a public debate against the charges levelled against him. In June 1744, he formulated some questions for the Königsberg theologians and petitioned the Berlin Supreme Court to urge the faculty to provide an answer.⁵² His request was rejected in Berlin, so he never received a response from Königsberg.⁵³

47 *Büdingische Sammlung einiger in die Kirchen-Historie Einschlagender Sonderlich neuerer Schrifften* (1744) Das XV. Stück. Büdingen: Stöhr, pp. 416–421.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 515–517.

49 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1774). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*. Fünfter Theil. [Barby]: Brüdergemeine, pp. 1550–1551.

50 *Büdingische Sammlung einiger in die Kirchen-Historie Einschlagender Sonderlich neuerer Schrifften* (1744), pp. 517–518.

51 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1774). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*, pp. 1551–1552.

52 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1751). *M. Aug. Gottl. Spangenbergs Declaration über die Zeither gegen Uns ausgegangene Beschuldigungen, Sonderlich die Person unsers Ordinarii betreffend*. Leipzig; Görlitz: Marchesche Buchhandlung, p. 154.

53 Spangenberg, August Gottlieb (1774). *Leben des Herrn Nicolaus Ludwig Grafen und Herrn von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf*, p. 1553.

Moravian missionary efforts bore some fruit when their congregation was established in Königsberg in the early 1740s. Their prayer meetings at the estate of merchant Johann Christoph Sack (1706–1794) soon provoked a reaction, and in 1747 a commission was instituted to investigate the Moravian case. Some of the brethren were summoned to the consistory to give an account of their activities but this was not enough to force the converts to give up their convictions. With tears in his eyes, calico printer Francois Barre (Baar) (1692–1771) warned the commission to refrain from taking any action against their congregation and “not to encroach on the blessing of God.”⁵⁴ The investigation was also carried out in educational institutions. Two instructors at the Collegium Fridericianum were found to be spreading Moravian doctrine and they were subsequently fired.⁵⁵

Now King Friedrich II himself took action. On February 14, 1748, a decree was issued to the East Prussian government in Königsberg, instructing them to pay special attention to the emissaries from Herrnhut and to check whether they were engaged in converting the population. Herrnhuterian private meetings and so-called edification hours were banned, and Zinzendorf’s emissaries, where they tried to make converts, were to be immediately repulsed and taken to Königsberg.⁵⁶ On April 24, 1748, this decree was followed by yet another order. It stated that the clergy were to keep a vigilant eye on Herrnhut activities and let no “disciple of this sect preach” from their pulpits but adhere to the symbolic books, especially the *Repetitionem Corporis Doctrinae Prutenica*, and if “any should be seduced,” they were to report the matter immediately to the consistory.⁵⁷

The royal decree was read from the pulpits. This prompted clergy to openly preach against the Moravian Brethren and warn the parishioners about their efforts. General Superintendent Schultz was a particularly strong opponent. In his eyes, Zinzendorf’s associates were enthusiasts (Germ. “*Schwärmer*”) whose proselytising activities demanded resolute opposition.

The Moravian congregation remained very small. According to Daniel Heinrich Hoyer, a group of only 11 people “associated with the torment and death of Jesus

54 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). *Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 338, 342.

55 Zippel, Gustav (1898). *Geschichte des Königlichen Friedrichs - Kollegiums zu Königsberg Pr. 1698-1898*. Königsberg: Hartung, p. 96.

56 Beckher, Wilhelm Heinrich (1769). *Preußische Kirchenregistratur, oder: Kurzer Auszug Königlich-Preußischer Edicten und Verordnungen, welche in Kirchen- und Schulsachen in dem Königreich Preußen publiciret worden, und von den Erzpriestern und Predigern wie auch übrigen Kirchen- und Schulbedienten beobachtet werden müssen, oder irgend sonst dieselben angehen*. Zweyte, um die Hälfte vermehrte Auflage. Königsberg und Leipzig: Zeise und Hartung, p. 57; Jacobson, Heinrich Friedrich (1839). *Geschichte der Quellen des evangelischen Kirchenrechts der Provinzen Preussen und Posen, mit Urkunden und Regesten*. Erster Theil. Die Provinzen Preussen und Posen. Zweiter Band. Königsberg: Bornträger, p. 156; Wotschke gives the date of the royal decree as February 10, 1848, but does not indicate the source. Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 111.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

actually gathered in Königsberg” around 1747.⁵⁸ By the time of Schultz’s death in 1763, their number had increased to about 50.⁵⁹

According to a register made by Peter Conrad Fries in 1763, the Moravian membership in East Prussia consisted of 287 people in 48 towns and villages. In addition to Königsberg, Fries mentioned the towns of Gumbinnen, Goldap, Georgenburg, Insterburg, Tilsit, and Memel and the villages of Bresslauken, Baudsedschen, and Madzudken located between Gumbinnen and Goldap. All these places were visited by Meisner in 1744.⁶⁰

At the dawn of the Enlightenment, the brethren community in Königsberg experienced somewhat greater tolerance. In 1765, it had expanded enough to have its own clergyman. Ernst Siegmund Fockel (1715–1795), a Silesian from Herrnhut, came that year to minister to 159 members. Five years later, in 1769, its membership increased to 251. In 1776, the diaspora outside of Königsberg consisted of only 19 people.⁶¹

Before Fockel’s arrival in 1765, the Königsberg community worshipped in private homes, initially at Sack’s warehouse near the *Reiferbahn*. On Fridays they gathered for prayer and singing, and on Sundays they worshipped in the Lutheran churches they had always attended. Fockel reported that they were scattered among 14 churches in the city. In the first years of his pastorate, services were held in Schiffert’s house near Krämerbrücke. After Schiffert’s death in 1770, the congregation rented a small house in the Altstädtische Langgasse.⁶² No private house could accommodate the congregation of about 160 members, so they gathered in three different groups on Sundays. It was time to consider buying a house with a prayer hall which played a central role in the life of any Moravian community. It appears that the elders were hesitant to take such a step because they thought that the general population still did not favour their gatherings. Daniel Heinrich Hoyer indicated in his report on May 13, 1769: “The higher and lower authorities, the consistory, and the theological faculty want to know nothing about us.”⁶³ In 1774, the community bought a building with a large hall in the name of brother Kulschewsky.⁶⁴

The situation changed when on July 19, 1788, King Friedrich Wilhelm II (1744–1797) issued the Religious Edict. According to its terms, the Moravian Brethren now were granted the legal status of a “tolerated sect.” The second paragraph stated:

58 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 111.

59 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century, p. 343.

60 Gaigalat, Wilhelm (1904). *Die evangelische Gemeinschaftsbewegung unter den preußischen Litauern. Geschichtliches und Gegenwärtiges. von Dr. phil. W. Gaigalat, Prediger. Schriften der Synodalkommission für Ostpreußische Kirchengeschichte. Heft 1. Königsberg: Beyer*, p. 4.

61 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 335–336.

62 Ibid., pp. 365–366.

63 Wotschke, Theodor (1929/1930). *Der Pietismus in Königsberg*, p. 114.

64 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century, p. 366.

“The sects publicly tolerated in our dominions until now are, besides the Jewish nation, the Herrnhuters, the Mennonites, and the society of the Bohemian Brethren, which hold their religious assemblies under the protection of the sovereign, and they shall retain that liberty, which is nowise injurious to the state.”⁶⁵

In 1795, the congregation decided to legalise its prayer house as its property. With the consent of the city magistrate, Privy Councilor Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel (1741–1796), Mayor of Königsberg, sent his recommendations to the Prussian Minister of State, Johann Christoph von Wöllner (1732–1800).⁶⁶ On August 10, 1796, Friedrich Wilhelm II issued the following order-in-cabinet: “My dear Minister of State von Wöllner, I have nothing against the Evangelical Brethren of Königsberg in Prussia buying the house that they have used in the old town for 20 years for their worship, and you can make my consent regarding the same known.”⁶⁷

The house was purchased in the name of the congregation that same year. Christian August Stegmann (1732–1809), the new pastor of the congregation, wrote on September 5: “Sunday meetings have been made public so that anyone can have access to them. Since then, many new people have visited us, and some of them have testified that they have benefited from it.”⁶⁸

In 1795, there were 159 members in the Königsberg congregation, with twenty candidates for admission. There were also 102 members in Gumbinnen, 40 in Insterburg, 8 in Memel, and 2 in Tapiau.⁶⁹

Conclusions

The Moravian mission in East Prussia was established in the early 1730s by emissaries sent from Herrnhut. In 1736, Zinzendorf attempted to start a wide-ranging program that he called the “Lithuanian Cause.” His goal was to carry out a spiritual and social mission among the exiles from Salzburg who settled in the Province of Lithuania in 1732. Although King Friedrich Wilhelm I initially expressed interest in Zinzendorf’s proposal, he eventually decided that the plan was impractical. The count presented his program without even consulting with the Lutheran Church, so the king probably realised that if he handed over the pastoral care of the Salzbergers to

65 “Circularre an alle Inspectoren der Churmark, nebst Edict vom 9. Jul. die Religions-Verfassung in den Preußischen Staaten betreffend. De Dato Berlin, den 25. Jul. 1788.” *Novum Corpus constitutionum* 1791, pp. 2175–2184; English translation in *Ségur* 1801, pp. 437–450

66 Beck, Hamilton H. H. (1994). *Moravians in Königsberg in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 370.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 369.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 371. Beck gives the date of Stegman’s letter as 1795, but the document already refers to von Hippel’s death († 1796), indicating that the actual date of the letter was 1796.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 336.

Zinzendorf and the Moravians, he would hear multiple grievances from the Lutheran Church.

Although the king rejected the “Lithuanian Cause,” the Moravian Brethren continued to carry out their mission among the Salzburger. The results of their efforts were negligible due to strong opposition from the Lutheran Church and the Faculty of Theology at the University of Königsberg. In addition, Zinzendorf’s conflict with Halle over the expulsion of August Gottlieb Spangenberg had negative consequences also in Königsberg. By 1734, his mission activities were considered ambiguous and controversial. The Lutheran clergy of East Prussia were suspicious of the Moravian emissaries not only because of their inclination towards ecclesiastical separatism but also because of their emphasis on mystical reflection on the blood of Christ instead of penitential struggle which was considered as an essential condition for conversion among the Francke-type Pietists.

The royal decree of 1748 banning the Moravian mission thwarted their plans. In addition to some mission stations, their sizeable congregation was established only in Königsberg, but even this congregation faced intolerance until 1763. The Moravian Church was granted the legal status “as a tolerated sect” in 1788 under the terms of Wöllner’s Religious Edict.

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