The Slovincian Coast

excerpted from ***Kashubia, Homeland of the Baltic Slavs***
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Of the so-called "Slovincian Coast' which extends from Kolobrzeg (Ger: Kolberg) eastward to the mouth of the Piaśnica (Ger: Piasnitz) River, only the eastern and middle parts will be considered here as belonging to Kashubia in the broader sense. The region has been for centuries an intersection of the German, Polish and indigenous Kashubian cultures. Still living among the Germans at the start of the 1900s were Evangelical Kashubes, called "Slovinces" *(or Łebe-Kashubes" in the eastern sector)*. This culture has fascinated researchers not only in Germany and Poland, but from all over the world. Today, *(more than)* a half-century after World War II, its forgotten history is being rediscovered

Łeba



Łeba (German: Leba) is a small seaport town at the mouth of the river by the same name on the Slovincian Coast. The first report of the settlement "Lebamuende" was in 1282. The village at that time sat two kilometers west of the present river estuary. In 1357 it obtained municipal rights and Heinrich Fleming was appointed as its magistrate. *[*In 1373 Dietrich von Weiher was the hereditary judge, and in 1389 Nikolaus von Weiher was the hereditary town advocate. In 1440 Łeba joined with Lęborg, (Ger: Lauenburg) in the Prussian League, to break the power of the Teutonic Order.]*
**[Comments by translators]*

The settlement developed as a fishery seaport and lumber trade center. For centuries its bitterest enemies were the shifting coastal sand dunes and dangerous floods which wreaked devastation in 1396, 1441 and 1467. The river mouth shifted two kilometers eastward in 1491. In 1558 the town was directly threatened by the advancing dunes, but it was the flood of 1572 that finally forced the residents to flee. The church was built in the new town, reportedly from materials salvaged from the old church *(which had been erected before 1357, and a remnant of it still stands today)*, the oldest structure of the original town. The chapel burned down in 1682, whereupon the present Fishermen's church was erected in 1683.

In the mid-1700s, the Prussian king *[Friedrich II]* ordered that the surface of Łeba Lake be lowered and that construction of a large harbor be started. In the course of this work, a 34-meter wide canal was dug, linking the lake with the Baltic Sea. The lowering of the lake surface also dried up the marshes around Smołdzino (Ger: Schmolsin), Gardna (Ger: Garde), Izbica (Ger: Giesebitz) and Gać (Ger: Speck). Alongside the canal, the first commercial goods were already stored up for the ships that began to appear on the Łeba route. However, an unexpected storm on 4 March 1779 destroyed not only the canal itself, but also put the entire vicinity under water. The residents of Łeba, fearing further floods and worried that the whole tongue of land would be washed away, backfilled the canal. The Brenckenhoff Canal, named after its surveyor and architect, had cost the Prussian king 21,000 thalers, a staggering sum in those days. The angry monarch put the blameless surveyor into the army as a lance-corporal.

In the early 1800s the river mouth again shifted eastward. The present hotel "Neptun" was built on the heights sometime before the problems with nature were partially solved in 1886-7 with the construction of breakwaters and flood regulators *[and a new canal]*. After that it was the drifting sand that continued to threaten the harbor. Therefore, from 1910 on into the 1970s a dredge was kept busy sucking sand from the canal and guaranteeing a minimum depth.

Shortly after 1800, Łeba still had a Slovincian character and the Slavic residents conducted their own church services *[until about 1850]*. However, the later development of highway and railroad connections brought an ever-larger influx of tourists. After World War I, a small number of people *[from Pomerelia]* who did not wish to remain in the lands taken over by Poland settled here.

In the final Soviet offensive of World War II, the Russians took Łeba on 10 March 1945. After a period of chaos, violence and plunder, the first settlers from Kashubia and Poland arrived in April and May. The town has grown somewhat after that, and thanks to foreign commerce has become affluent.

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Cecenowo

Cecenowo (Ger: Zezenow) was bequeathed *(in 1252-1258 by Duke Świętopełk II of Pomerelia)* to the Norbertine Cloister at Suckow (Ger: Zuckau). [*Ewald von Masson purchased it from the cloister in 1510, and it remained the property of this family until 1777. After 1795 the village belonged to the von Zitzewitz family, and the last owner, Wilhelm Sigfried Otto Martin von Zitzewitz was expelled by the Poles in 1946.]* The manorhouse was built in the 1700s and the church dates to the mid-1800s. Masses in Kashubian (Slovincian) were celebrated here until 1876. The nearby cemetery has a chapel built in 1860 and several old graves.

[In 1864 the teacher Kopelke still had many school pupils who spoke only Kashubian in their homes. In 1945 the village served as an internment camp for expatriated Germans, and within a period of six months nearly 500 people died here of hunger and disease.]

Glówczyce



Glówczyce (Ger: Glowitz) is one of the largest and oldest villages of the region of the Slovincian Coast, and is today the seat of a township. According to legend, the church parish already existed in 1026, thus being the oldest parish in Yonder Pomerania. The manorhouse of the Puttkamer family stems from the 1800s. The neo-Gothic church built in 1890 stands on the site of an older church that burned down in the 1870s. In the old cemetery are the chapel from 1869 and only a few gravestones.

[*The village was first mentioned in 1252. In later years it had a machine shop, a brick factory, a dairy, a sausage factory and a flour mill. In 1713 the church had 3,152 Kashubes and 464 Germans as communicants. In 1733 there were 2,204 Kashubes and 701 Germans. Under the pastors Johann Christian Koberstein (served 1802-1828) and Heinrich August Kuesel (served 1829-1852) the Kashubain numbers shrank further, while the German numbers steadily increased. In 1881 there were 5,335 Germans and only 105 Kashubes. By 1886 the number of Kashubian communicants had dwindled down to 18, and in 1887 the Kashubian language was discontinued for religious services following the death of the retired pastor Ernst Cornelius Engelbert Lohman (served 1853-1885). Then for a few years the new pastor Johannes Wegeli conducted private Masses in Kashubian for elderly people in their homes.]*

Kluki

Kluki (Ger:Klucken) is a small fishing village which once consisted of several parts, named for the neighboring villages of Kluki Smołdziński (Ger: Schmolsiner Klucken), Kluki Żelasni (Ger: Selesener Klucken) and Kluki Ciemiński (Ger: Zemminer Klucken). Reportedly, more than 200 houses stood here before World War II. Because of the boggy terrain and the isolation, there were virtually no German settlers here; thus, the indigenous Slovinces were only partially assimilated by the early 1900s. The best known Slovincian inventions are the 'clumpy' wooden shoes which are fastened by straps to horses' hooves. With these, the horses could move around better in the surrounding marshy zones and sand dunes.

After World War II an effort was made to 're-Polonize' the Slovinces, as it was called then. This was of course a paradox, since the ancestors of these anglers were last subject to Polish dukes around 1300. Perhaps the plan would have worked had it not been for the bleak situation and the total injustice that prevailed after the war. The Polish People's Militia acted with the purpose of evicting the Germans, with no regard for ethnic considerations, and classified the Slovinces simply as Germans or Poles.

The teacher Feliks Rogaczewski played a major role in Kluki during the First Polish years. Thanks to his knowledge of German and some fragments of Kashubian which were understood by the local fishermen, he succeeded in winning over the Slovinces. The mutual contacts, long conversations and sincerity began in fact

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