

Polish-Silesian Conference

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The Polish-Silesian Conference was a short-lived church unit that comprised contested territory during the tumultuous post-World War II years, from 1919 to 1921.

Territory and Statistics¹

Period: 1919-1921

Territory: Polish or Eastern Silesia

Membership: 543

Churches: 17

Origin of Seventh-day Adventist Work in the Territory

The first church unit that covered Polish Silesia was the East German Conference. It was organized in 1901 and comprised several East German provinces and kingdoms, including the province of Silesia.² Mission work in Silesia probably began in the first years of the 20th century.³ At the German Union meeting at Friedensau in July 1906, the provinces of Posen and Silesia were organized into the Silesian Conference. The change took effect at the commencement of the following year.⁴ It will require further research to determine when the Adventist message reached the part of Silesia which became known as Polish Silesia.

Organizational History

Czechoslovakia declared independence on October 28, 1918, and this new political reality called for reorganization of the church units in the Czech lands. The Czechoslovakian Union was organized a year later at a meeting in Brno on November 13 to 19, 1919.⁵ It comprised five church units: the North Bohemian (German believers), Moravia-Silesian, and Polish-Silesian⁶ Conferences, and the Central Bohemian and Slovakian Missions.⁷ The territory constituted what “belong[ed] politically to the Czechoslovakian Republic.”⁸ The territory of the Polish-Silesian Conference is not clearly defined in records the author has found, beyond being called Polish or Eastern Silesia.⁹ Neither are the initial officers listed in the report from the organization meeting.¹⁰

Where the borders lay between Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland was still contested in 1919. It would take these three nations until 1922 to settle fully on the partition of Silesia. In the end, Czechoslovakia got a small spot called Czechian Silesia, Poland got two easternmost territories which it organized into the district Silesia, and Germany retained most of Silesia and organized it into the provinces Upper and Lower Silesia. Because of this, the Czechoslovakian church unit, the Polish-Silesian Conference, proved short-lived.¹¹ When Poland gained most of East Silesia and Galicia, reorganization was again necessary. The Polish-Silesian Conference left that part of its territory which remained Czech to the Moravia-Silesian Conference. It added Galicia, another region which now belonged to Poland, to its territory. It was renamed the Silesia-Galician Conference and assigned to the Polish Union Mission, which was organized at a meeting in Bydgoszcz on October 6 to 9, 1921.¹² However, due to the wars and political tumult of the years after World War I, it is difficult to verify the date and the organizational steps by which the Polish-Silesian Conference became the Silesia-Galicia Conference.¹³

List of Presidents

Polish-Silesian Conference president: Unknown (1919-1921).

SOURCES

Englert, P. "Bericht der Jahreskonferenz der Schlesisch-Galizischen Vereinigung." *Der Adventbote*, March 1, 1922.

Frauchiger, Emil E. "Report of the Czechoslovakian Union Conference." *General Conference Bulletin*, May 28, 1922.

Ising, W. "Sechste Jahresversammlung der Deutschen Union-Konferenz." August 20, 1906, *Zions-Wächter*.

Rühling, Richard. "Die Abteilungskonferenz in Brünn." *Zions-Wächter*, December 17, 1919.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Various years. <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/>.

Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1920.

NOTES

1. Numbers from *Statistical Report of Seventh-day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1920), 6. Territory and period gathered from other sources.
2. "East German Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1904), 61.

3. Further research of the various quarterly reports from these years published in *Zions-Wächter* would disclose precisely when mission work began in Silesia.
4. W. Ising, "Sechste Jahresversammlung der Deutschen Union-Konferenz," August 20, 1906, *Zions-Wächter*, 272; "Silesian Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1907), 81.
5. Richard Rühling, "Die Abteilungskonferenz in Brünn," *Zions-Wächter*, December 17, 1919, 236; Emil E. Frauchiger, "Report of the Czechoslovakian Union Conference," *General Conference Bulletin*, May 28, 1922, 304.
6. In the *SDA Yearbook* of 1920-1921, the Moravia-Silesian Conference is called the West Silesian and Moravia Conference.
7. Richard Rühling, "Die Abteilungskonferenz in Brünn," *Zions-Wächter*, December 17, 1919, 236-237. According to Rühling, there were two church units extant before the organization of the Union: Bohemian Conference and Moravia-Silesian Conference. However, if there was a Bohemian Conference, it is not found in the reports. The Bohemian Mission is reported in all the quarterly reports of the Central European Union in 1918. In 1919, no Czechian church units are listed. The first report of the Czechoslovakian Union, the fourth quarter of 1919, lists the Bohemian Mission still. The first quarter report of 1920 then lists the five church units.
8. Richard Rühling, "Die Abteilungskonferenz in Brünn," *Zions-Wächter*, December 17, 1919, 236. Czechoslovakia and Poland argued over and adjusted their border several times from 1920 to 1924. This accounts for the open territorial description.
9. These names probably refer to that part of Silesia which Poland and Germany contested.
10. Richard Rühling, "Die Abteilungskonferenz in Brünn," *Zions-Wächter*, December 17, 1919, 236-237.
11. Its only place in the *SDA Yearbook* is the list of church units in the newly formed Czechoslovakian Conference in 1920. See "Czecho-Slovakian Union Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1920), 136.
12. For the organization, see P. Englert, "Bericht der Jahreskonferenz der Schlesisch-Galizischen Vereinigung," *Der Adventbote*, March 1, 1922, 74; Ludwig Richard Conradi, "Die Gründung der Polnischen Union," *Zions-Wächter*, December 1921, 206-207; Ludwig Richard Conradi, "The Organization of the Polish Union," *ARH*, March 9, 1922, 11.
13. Statements about when the Polish-Silesia Conference became the Silesia-Galicia Conference are conflicting. According to the *SDA Yearbook* of 1926 and onward, the Silesia-Galicia Conference was "organized 1920." "Silesia-Galicia Conference," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1926), 116. Englert erroneously contradicts the reports on the organization of the Polish Union Mission by stating that the Silesia-Galicia Conference was both organized and assigned to the Polish Union on January 1, 1921. This is not possible, since the Polish Union was organized later in the year, in October. I could not confirm whether the conference was indeed organized in 1920 or at the meeting in October 1921.

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