



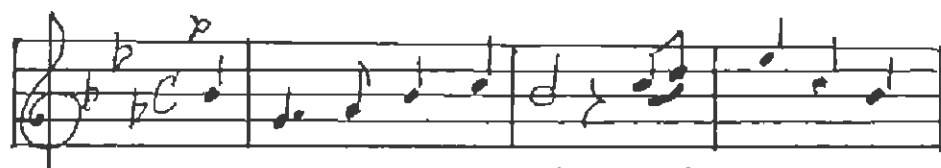
# Texas Wendish Heritage Society

NEWSLETTER

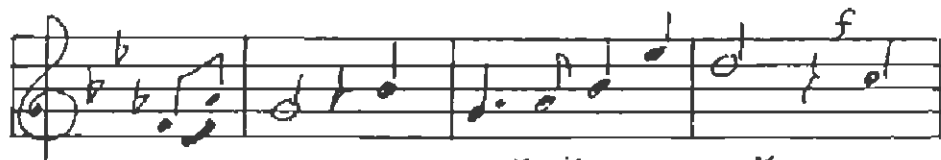
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## PROSTWA - PRAYER

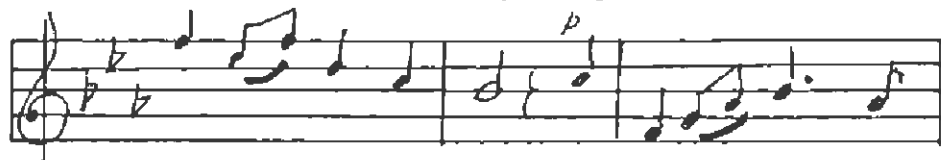
by Jan Kilian - 1846



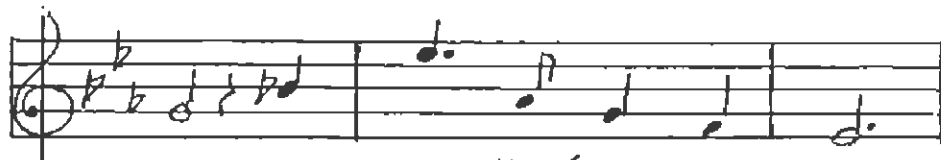
Ow wo - la lu - bo sće stań ty sy na -



de - mnu ! Ja chcu, štož je-no chceš; we



te-bi wot-poč - nu, we te-bi je - no



mam ja zbo - žnosť tu a tam.

Editor's Note: In the Volume V, No. 2, Jan-March, 1984 issue of the NEWSLETTER we gave the words of this beautiful PRAYER by Rev. Jan Kilian. In observance of the 130th Anniversary of the Wendish Immigration, 1854-1984, we present the melody. JJS

The second book of Lutheran origin mentioned by Repp that was written in Wendish (and the first one in High Wendish) was Wenceslaus Warichius' Catechism which appeared in 1597, 23 years after Moller's Catechism-Hymnal, and over fifty years after Luther's death. This seems to have made a decided impact on the Wends of Upper Lusatia, according to a statement made by Nielsen: "Bohemia held Upper Lusatia during the Reformation in Germany and also during 1581 when Lutheranism became the Sorbs' dominant religion. The Reformation was an important event for the Sorbs because Luther's emphasis on the vernacular encouraged people to translate material into Sorbian."

Do you see what kind of a picture develops when we put Nielsen and Repp's studies side by side? The Wends were a people who resisted the Christian religion as long as it seemed to be forced on them by bishops and priests who conducted masses in a foreign language and showed little or no interest in them as people. But when Moller and Warichius showed enough interest in the Wends to write books for them in their own language, the response was immediate and it was quite general. The Wends were not anti-religious; it was just that foreigners speaking in foreign languages had never really reached them with the message of the Gospel of Christ.

The third work mentioned by Repp was The Seven Penitential Psalms by Gregor Martini in 1727. Note: there was no Bible in the Wendish language up to this time; this was evidently a fragment that preceded the completion of the Wendish translation of the entire Bible. By this time the Thirty Years' War had reached Lusatia--after all, it began in Bohemia in 1618 and Lusatia was one of the areas devastated by this war. When the war ended for Bohemia in 1635, Upper Lusatia was ceded to Saxony. From this time on both portions of the Wendish homelands were under German control and the Lutheranization of the Wends could go ahead in full force. In 1728 the Bible appeared for the first time in the High Wendish language. Note that this was almost two hundred years after Luther's translation of the Bible into German and only a little over a hundred years before the Wendish immigration to Texas. In 1770 the first High Wendish hymnal

appeared. The Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord were not available (or any dialect of Wendish) until John Kilian translated them shortly before coming to America in 1854.

One thing I have failed so far to find in any work on the Wends is any sort of hint of problems with the Calvinistic reformers, particularly in Upper Lusatia. Apparently Lusatia was left to the Lutherans. Perhaps the Calvinists didn't consider the gains to be made among the Wends worth their time--or was it that there were no Calvinists who knew or were willing to learn the Wendish language, and no one who knew the Wendish language who followed Calvin's teachings rather than Luther's? The enforced merger of the Lutherans and Calvinists in Prussia by Friedrich Wilhelm III after 1817 did draw fire from John Kilian, who said in a sermon quoted by Bewie in Missouri in Texas: "One of two things is likely to happen. Either the State Church, which is now Lutheran, will fall away from the Lutheran faith, and then we shall have to leave it, or the State Church will remain Lutheran and then the false brethren will have to get out." There is no concrete evidence, however, that this was the reason behind the Wendish immigration as Bewie implies when he says, "The time came when, in order to remain true Lutherans, Rev. Kilian and his group would have to leave the State Church." It could have been a factor for those Wends whom Kilian served in the Prussian part of Lusatia, but as Nielsen shows quite clearly, they had the privilege of forming independent congregations not controlled by the State Church for some years before the Wendish immigration. So, until someone shows me good reason to believe otherwise, I will continue to believe that Calvinism did not have any noticeable influence on the Wends and that the nineteenth century merger of the Lutheran and Calvinistic-Reformed Churches affected them only indirectly.

Summing up then, the Wends, up to the time of the Reformation, did not make much of a splash in the history of Europe, largely because there were no means of getting their history down on paper--nor had Christianity made much of an impact on the Wends until Luther began to emphasize that religion had to be brought down to the level of the common man by bringing him the Gospel in his own language, the language he spoke in his home. When that took place the majority of the Wends became as thoroughly Lutheran as any nationality in Europe, and it was to a great extent this loyalty to their Lutheran faith that brought so many of them to America and perhaps also to Australia. (THE END)

WENDS IN <sup>TH</sup>AUSTRALIA: The BIEHLE Family  
by Doris Biehle Reagan

About a year ago I began researching my family background for the 2nd Gerhardt and Theres Biehle family reunion held in Sept., 1983. In my telephone calls I contacted a relative that had received correspondence from relatives in Australia requesting information on their American relatives for a book to be distributed at a reunion in Feb., 1982. What a surprise!

I have been in contact with our newly discovered relatives and have learned that while my great-grandfather (August Biehle - father of Gerhardt Biehle) came to America from Groditz, Germany, sometime between 1864-1870, my great grandfather's brother, Johann Biele (spelled Biele in Germany and Australia -- the spelling was changed in the U.S.) immigrated to Australia in 1858. A great-aunt, Anna Biele - married to Louis Gerber - remained in what is now East Germany.

A descendant by marriage, Colin Graetz, has written a most interesting book on the Biele family in Australia entitled, "The White Wendts of St. Kitts." The title of the book came from the Wendish meaning of the word "biele", "white", and the fact that they settled in the "town of St. Kitts." The book is complete with family photos, birthdates, marriages, occupations, and a brief description on each of the families. There are about 1,000 descendants of Johann Biele in Australia.

Copies of the above book are available for \$17.00 which includes costs of mailing from:

Mr. Colin Graetz, P.O.Box 6, Sheaoak Log, South Australia, 5371.

Another Biele family reunion is scheduled in September 1986 at the time of the 150 Jubilee of the State of South Australia.

Our thanks to Doris Biehle Reagan for this interesting story.