



Interview with His Excellency Mr Hans Michael Kofoed-Hansen, Danish Ambassador to Poland.

Anna Galyga: **Sir, how long have you been Danish Ambassador to Poland?**

His Excellency Hans Michael Kofoed-Hansen: I arrived six months ago from Budapest, where I spent last 3,5 years.

Does it mean that this is your first visit to Szczecin?

Yes, I have only passed Szczecin once before.

Sir, what is actually the aim of your visit to Headquarters apart from participating in Jule-Gløgg?

My aim is to see the Headquarters and hear about its activities and, of course, about the experiences gathered during a recent mission in Afghanistan.

What are your impressions then?

Polish-Danish cooperation not limited to military spheres only.

Written by AG

Tuesday, 04 December 2007 09:00

I think this is a very well functioning Headquarters, currently under a Polish lead, and this has already been proved by the fact that it was chosen to perform the mission in Afghanistan even being the smallest of the NATO Headquarters.

Let me take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the staff including the Danish personnel and all their families who have spent a lot of time here taking an enormous effort and important mission in the multinational aspect of the Headquarters. They all deserve praise. And those who have been on the mission in Afghanistan and their families waiting either in Denmark or here in Szczecin for their safe return their should also have a lot of thanks.

Talking more generally, what is the role of Danish Embassy in Poland?

The Danish Embassy has three major functions. Firstly, to make sure that we have the closest contacts and cooperation as possible between Denmark and Poland, which we have had for many years now. Secondly, to contribute to the further development of Poland after accessing the European Union. And thirdly, to make sure that the economic and business ties between both countries are developed. We contribute a lot in sectors such as environment, energy development and technology transfer and we have a very good cooperation, not only because we are so close neighbours.

Can you give me some examples how Denmark is promoted in Poland?

Denmark would like to present itself as a country or a nation that can cope with globalization, that means promoting innovation and technology transfer and also branding Denmark as an educational country and a good place to work. There is no secret that we, just like many other countries, are short of manpower and that we are very satisfied with the good skills and qualifications of a lot of Poles who work in Denmark. We have also realized that Danish companies, and there are quite a lot of them not only in the north-western part of Poland, employ between 20 and 30 thousand Poles and that works to the benefit of both sides.

Christmas is coming soon. What is actually the nature of Christmas in Denmark and how do you celebrate it?

We start celebrating Christmas on the Christmas Eve and it is a family get-together. In the afternoon many people go to church even though they do not do it so often during the rest of the year. The whole month of December is a month of celebration and we like to have receptions like Jule-Gløgg Party or Christmas lunches, so there is a lot of eating, a lot of preparing, a lot of cooking, a lot of buying gifts and then finally decorating the Christmas tree.

How about this custom called St. Lucia procession with little girls holding candles and singing?

Little girls holding candles and singing is mainly a Swedish tradition but it is also seen in Denmark.

I see. So let us talk about Jule-Gløgg, what is it?

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It is good sour-sweet drink based on wine with various spices, raises and nuts. It is drunk on several occasions in December and, to be honest, it is also a Swedish invention...But it has become very Danish now.

Thank you for talking to me.