

To Prof. Dr.Phil.KARL PELLENS, 1. Vorsitzender,
INTERNATIONALE GESELLSCHAFT FUER GESCHICHTSDIDAKTIK

Sixty years ago, into a Germany very different from that of today, was born a man who would make his mark on history education in all its aspects. In his "village, city, and nation," (to quote from the title of one of his books) and then beyond these locales to the international dimension, Karl Pellens, has quietly, professionally, and persistently, provided leadership in the field of history didactics.

April 13, 1934, Karl Pellens saw the light of day in Essen. As a young man in the immediate postwar years he welcomed opportunities for international travel and study, allowing him to get to know a great many countries, including Switzerland and the United States. His university studies, completed in 1957, trained him as an historian of medieval Europe, as his publication on Dietrich II von Wied, Archbishop of Trier, 1212-1242, attests. He was further influenced by his work at the Institute for European History at Mainz, 1961-1972. In addition to his original historical scholarship, he cultivated an interest in history education, preparing and publishing materials for school children, for their teachers, and for those who teach the teachers. In 1972 he became professor of history and history didactics at the Pädagogische Hochschule in Weingarten, Baden-Württemberg, where he has remained to this day.

In 1980 he was one of the founding members of the International Society for History Didactics, and he undertook the editorship of its periodical publication, *INFORMATIONEN/MITTEILUNGEN/COMMUNICATIONS*. He is still the moving force behind this trilingual journal. Patiently, meticulously, and creatively, he has worked with his colleagues to bring forth this unique forum for discussion of issues on history education, its theory, and its practice.

I first had the privilege of meeting Karl Pellens in the mid-1980s, and I have since worked closely with him on several projects, including a new edition of the international bibliography on history didactics, first published as *Geschichtskultur--Geschichtsdidaktik* in 1984. In his essay in that volume entitled "Die Internationale Dimension der Geschichtsdidaktik," he outlined some of his philosophy of history education.

"The better future, the common future for those who adopt ethical values, or ethical standards for justice, i.e. a just future--is one that is desirable for the didactics of history for the young generation. . . . This future must be a future of more justice, the tensions between nations and the classes of the nineteenth century must be done away with, and a basis of common goals and standards must be established and made to bear fruit."

Even before the dramatic events which ended the cold war and brought down the barriers between Western and Eastern Europe, Professor Pellens was working to open historical communication and improve educational and historical understanding on both sides of what we once called the "iron curtain." Now, in the 1990s, from his important position in German history education and as President of the International Society for History Didactics, he has worked closely with colleagues in eastern Germany, in Hungary, and from many other states, to bring new and exciting approaches to teachers and to students of varying backgrounds. Even as his studies in medieval and early modern history led him to the recognition of the value of ecumenical understandings in religious affairs, his actions as an international leader in history education circles have shown the same breadth of mind and spirit.

In 1987 he wrote: "Zum selbstverständlichen und aner kennenswerten Stil eines gut geführten Hauses gehört der Wunsch, mit möglichst allen Nachbarn beständige und gute Kontakte zu haben." So also is it with those who write and who teach history. Karl Pellens is a living example of this good neighborliness, as a scholar, a teacher, and a colleague. Long may he continue in his outstanding leadership in our profession!



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