



STUDIO FÜR
DOKUMENTARFILM

GOLDAP - In Polish Siberia

A Documentary by Irene Langemann

Goldap, a district town in the eastern corner of Masuria, is embedded between in a landscape of idyllic hills and dreamy lakes. Since Poland's accession to the EU last year, things got going around here. Though the small health resort bordering on the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad has to shoulder the burden of 40% unemployment, and many people seek their luck abroad, its inhabitants love their town and its pristine landscape. The people of this region, which is known as "Polish Siberia" due to its remoteness and extreme winter temperatures, handle daily life with humour and prudence, in spite of the harsh living conditions. Though Goldap sometimes seems to be at the far end of the world, this region is now firmly entrenched in Europe. Since the accession to the EU, young families receive markedly more financial support for their children, farmers learn that EU subsidies are actually being granted and the town's mayor proudly points to two construction projects, which not only brought EU money but also employment to town. The tourism industry is still struggling to come to terms with the new norms and regulations, but an increase of visitors is already discernable. Yet many things remain unchanged. Pensioners can't survive without home-raised or grown small livestock and vegetables, and many still flock westward, to supplement their income during Germany's asparagus and strawberry harvest.