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LOWER SILESIA LOOKS TO THE FUTURE. THE PROJECT OF WROCLAW – KŁODZKO COUNTY MOTORWAY (1927–1932) AS PART OF THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES’ MODERNIZATION PLANS

DOLNY ŚLĄSK PATRZY W PRZYSZŁOŚĆ. PROJEKT AUTOSTRADY WROCLAW – HRABSTWO KŁODZKIE (1927–1932) JAKO ELEMENT MODERNIZACYJNYCH ZAMIERZEŃ WŁADZ PROWINCJONALNYCH

ABSTRACT: The article presents the fate on an unrealized plan to build the Wrocław – Kłodzko County motorway (1927–1932), which was to connect the capital of Lower Silesia with the Sudetes. It was the object of discussion of regional authorities responsible for modernization of the road network of the Province of Lower Silesia.

KEYWORDS: history of industry, road construction, history of Silesia, Weimar republic

Historical literature used to a perceive of the interwar Lower Silesia in the perspective of successive political and economic crises¹. The increasing number of problems undoubtedly contributed to the weakening of this far eastern Prussian

¹ Suffice to mention the Revolution of 1918, the Czechoslovakian claims to the Kłodzko (Glatz) area, the Polish-German fight for Upper Silesia 1919–1921, the post-war economic crisis (with hyperinflation in 1923), the Kappa-Lüttwitz Putsch of 1920, the great economic crisis triggered in 1929, and the street clashes of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1919, the Prussian Parliament passed a division of Silesia into two provinces – the Province of Lower Silesia with its capital in Wrocław (Breslau) and the Province of Upper Silesia with its capital in Opole (Oppeln), but the executive act came into force only in 1923. For more information on the situation of Lower Silesia in the interwar period, see: Joanna Nowosielska–Sobel, Grzegorz Sobel, *Dolny Śląsk w latach 1918–1945*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński, Wrocław 2006, pp. 507–586.

province of Germany, but at the same time a number of positive transformations and initiatives cannot be ignored. In this context, it is worth to emphasize the efforts of the Lower Silesian authorities, who were trying to break down the development barriers of the region. Its peripheral location and at the same time rapid automotive progress made the adaptation of the road network of Lower Silesia one of the challenges of the 1920s and 1930s. This issue has not yet been discussed in greater depth, and partial findings have in fact only covered the construction of the “Hitler’s Roads”: the unfinished Berlin – Wrocław (Breslau) – Upper Silesia motorway (*Reichsautobahn*) and the scenic Sudeten Road (*Sudetenstraße*)². The Nazi motorway program has been of interest to historians for years, but, as German researchers have stressed, it should not overshadow earlier preparations³.

In Roland Gabriel’s monograph on the planning of special roads for automotive traffic in Germany before 1933⁴, there is a reference to the project of the Wrocław – Kłodzko (Glatz) motorway from 1929⁵, but apart from this exception, the Lower Silesian attempt did not become a subject of academic discourse. Unlike other pioneering motorway projects, especially HAFRABA (Hamburg – Frankfurt am Main – Basel)⁶, it was not commented on more broadly by specialists at the right time, which later resulted in little interest from historians. Among the reasons for this omission, one should mention the lack of information on the activity of the

² See, among others: Wolfgang Jäger, *Die Geschichte der BAB A 15 Dreieck Spreewald – Cottbus – Breslau*, [in:] <http://www.autobahn-online.de/a15geschichte.html> (access: 10 XII 2019); Tomasz Przerwa, *Wokół genezy Drogi Sudeckiej – nowe spojrzenie*, [in:] *Znowuż ‘z kufierkiem i chlebakiem’*, eds. Beata Konopska, Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Grzegorz Strauchold, Wrocław 2014, pp. 263–276.

³ For more information on German motorways before 1945: *Reichsautobahn. Pyramiden des Dritten Reichs*, ed. Rainer Stommer, Marburg 1982; Erhard Schütz, Eckhard Gruber, *Mythos Reichsautobahn. Bau und Inszenierung der “Straßen des Führers” 1933–1941*, Berlin 1996; *Die Autobahn. Von der Idee zur Wirklichkeit*, ed. Wolfgang Wirth, Köln 2005; Wolfgang F. Jäger, *Der Streckenentwurf der Reichsautobahnen 1933 bis 1945*, Köln 2013.

⁴ The construction of the motorway network was preceded by a discussion on the model of special roads designed exclusively for cars, which were supposed to serve the automotive progress in a similar way as the laying of the railroad tracks contributed to the development of the rail transport. In the process of establishing the technical and organizational-financial parameters, different definitions of motorways were used in Germany, such as *Autostraße*, *reine Autostraße*, *Automobilstraße*, *Autobahnstraße*, *Autobahn*, *Automobil-Verkehrstraße*, *Kraftwagenbahn*, *Kraftwagenstraße* and *Nurautostraße*. See Roland Gabriel, *Dem Auto eine Bahn. Deutsche “Nurautostraßen” vor 1933*, Köln 2010, p. 321.

⁵ Gabriel, *Dem Auto eine Bahn*, p. 40.

⁶ See Kurt Kaftan, *Der Kampf um die Autobahnen. Geschichte der Autobahnen in Deutschland 1907–1935*, Berlin 1955; Martin Kornrumpf, *HAFRABA e.V. Deutsche Autobahn-Planung 1926–1934*, Bonn 1990.

Lower Silesian authorities⁷, which is why it seems so important to include previously unused source materials stored in the State Archives in Wrocław⁸. Their analysis does not indicate that this project is of particular importance in the supra-regional dimension, but allows to understand its Lower Silesian context. There is, however, some uncertainty as to how far the first planned motorway would represent a breakthrough in the region's transport practice, but it can certainly be seen as an indication of future developments in this area.

The first press releases about the planned motorway connecting Wrocław and Kłodzko County (*Autostraße Breslau – Grafschaft Glatz*) appeared in September 1927 in the well-known tourist-resort periodical “Schlesische Bäderzeitung”. It should be noted that from the very beginning it was a protourist investment, which was to make it easier for the inhabitants of Wrocław to get to the Kłodzko Sudetes⁹. It was not a particularly unusual idea at that time, because the tourist purposes were already behind the construction of the Italian Motorway of the Lakes (*Autostrada dei Laghi*) Milan – Varese / Como / Sesto Calende, which provided a comfortable drive from the capital of Lombardy towards the Alps¹⁰. It was opened between 1924 and 1925 and is considered to be a precursor of European motorways. From 1925 onwards, similar concepts were proposed in Munich, where a link to the Alps (Garmisch) was also considered¹¹. In the case of the Wrocław project, Italian inspirations were not exposed, but they seem obvious, since the Motorway of the Lakes was widely discussed at the time.

In the light of the “Schlesische Bäderzeitung” releases, the motorway link between Wrocław and Kłodzko County was to be the subject of discussions between representatives of the Province of Lower Silesia, the Silesian Association of Tourism Promotion (*Schlesischer Verkehrsverband*) and the Federation of Mountain Societies

⁷ Roland Gabriel referred in his work (p. 377) to only one article titled *Schlesische Nur-Autostraßen-Pläne*, published in 1929 in the specialist periodical of Berlin “HAFRABA-Mitteilungsblatt”.

⁸ The State Archives in Wrocław (Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu, hereinafter: APWr), Local Government Department of the Province of Silesia in Wrocław (Wydział Samorządowy Prowincji Śląskiej we Wrocławiu, hereinafter: WSPŚ), ref. 2272: Nur-Autostrassen; ref. 2223: Kraftwagenstrasse Breslau – Grafsch[aft] Glatz; APWr, Regency of Wrocław (Rejencja Wrocławska, hereinafter: Regency), ref. I/9759, Automobilstraßen.

⁹ *Autostraße von Breslau in die Grafschaft Glatz*, “Schlesische Bäderzeitung”, No. 19, 14 XII 1927, p. 163.

¹⁰ Piero Puricelli, *Autostrade. Die Autostrasse Mailand – Oberitalienische Seen*, Milano 1925.

¹¹ Gabriel, *Dem Auto eine Bahn*, p. 228.

at the Owl (*Verband der Gebirgsvereine an der Eule*)¹². The latter sought to lead the motorway through one of the Owl Mountains Passes, which enjoyed growing popularity among the inhabitants of Wrocław. However, the potential benefits of the tourism industry in the Owl Mountains and Kłodzko Land have provoked powerful organizations: the Central Agency for Tourism Promotion in the Karkonosze and Jizera Mountains (*Hauptverkehrsstelle des Riesen- und Isergebirges*) and the Karkonosze Society (*Riesengebirgsverein*) to intervene with the *Landeshauptmann* of the Province of Lower Silesia, Georg von Thaer. They were concerned that the planned investment would affect the tourist preferences of the motorists – i.e. the more affluent – residents of Wrocław, which could be a double loss to the leading Karkonosze resorts at that time. Therefore, the aforementioned organizations were demanding equal treatment, i.e., simultaneous implementation of the motorway towards Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg) and Karkonosze¹³.

The *Landeshauptmann* tried to calm things down. He questioned the credibility of press releases and claimed that no provincial funding was planned for such projects. It cannot be ruled out that some other official favoured plans for motorway construction at that time, but Thaer himself clearly distanced himself from them. He underlined the need to modernize the network of the main road connections of Lower Silesia, but at the same time the potentially small interest in using the motorway, caused by the limited number of cars¹⁴. The reputable “*Schlesische Zeitung*” reported that the provincial authorities did not plan to build the Wrocław – Kłodzko County motorway, because it would be extremely expensive and there was a lack of money for more urgent tasks¹⁵. This approach to the problem was highly rational, which is why the modernization and expansion of the basic road infrastructure was supported by recognised industry associations in Germany (e.g. *Straßenbauverband Deutschland*) and study teams (e.g. *Studien-gesellschaft für Automobilstraßenbau*). Lower Silesian province officials knew their recommendations, yet they also heard about the financial failure of the toll Motorway of the Lakes¹⁶.

¹² *Autostraße Breslau-Eulengebirge-Grafschaft*, “*Schlesische Bäderzeitung*”, No 20, 28 IX 1927, p. 170.

¹³ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2272, pp. 1, 4–5, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Die Autostraße nach dem Riesengebirge*, “*Schlesische Zeitung*“, No. 509, 7 X 1927, 2. Bogen.

¹⁶ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2272, pp. 8, 15, 17–20.

At a time when the automotive industry in Germany was just gaining momentum, when the authorities were concentrating on adapting existing roads to the needs of car traffic, which required, among other things, hardening of the surface and widening of the roadways¹⁷, when there were ongoing discussions about transit connections and sections to improve traffic on the most heavily trafficked routes, the idea of building a tourist motorway to the Sudetes might seem like a distant future. This visionary project, however, had a considerable promotional potential, which probably decided about its undertaking again. Its main and, in fact, only significant advocate was the new *Oberpräsidenten* of the Province of Lower Silesia, the social democrat Hermann Lüdemann (1928–1932)¹⁸. It is now difficult to see why he supported this ambitious plan, but it is worth noting that he had a technical education and spent many years in Berlin, where he had to observe the rapid automotive progress. The enthusiasm of the *Oberpräsidenten* was not shared by the *Landeshauptmann* Georg von Thaer, whose scepticism was shared by many local government officials in Lower Silesia who were expecting to invest in the construction of roads in the region.

The key discussion on the Wrocław – Ślęża Massif (Zobten-Gebirge) – The Owl Mountains – Kłodzko Land (*Autostraße Breslau – Zobtengebirge – Eulengebirge – Glatzer Bergland*) took place on 13th August 1929. At the invitation of the *Oberpräsidenten*, about 50 participants attended the event, including: the President of the Regency of Wrocław, interested *Landrats*, representatives of Wrocław, the Labour Office, the Post, the Railways and chambers of commerce. Lüdemann persuaded the audience that the new road will significantly shorten the access to attractive mountain areas for the residents of Wrocław, which will result in the development of the local tourist industry. He mentioned the facilitation of transportation of goods and agricultural produce, and at the same time the possibility of using investments to fight unemployment. However, the presented vision had a weak point. It was a wishful

¹⁷ In 1926, they were registered in Germany as a whole 0.53 million cars, buses and motorcycles, and in 1930 – 1.08 million. In 1924, 87.2% of the national and provincial roads in Germany and 32.1% in 1933 had a gravel surface only. Only 24.5% of roads in these categories had the recommended width of 5.5–6.5 m in 1933, and only 3.7% were wider. See Gabriel, *Dem Auto eine Bahn*, pp. 12, 23, 35–37.

¹⁸ Hermann Lüdemann was born in 1880 in Lübeck. In 1908 he joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). From 1915 to 1922 he was a member of the Berlin City Council and from 1921 to 1929 of the Landtag of Prussia. Prisoned by the Nazis between 1933–1935 and 1944–1945, he died in 1959. See Gisela M. Krause, *Lüdemann Hermann*, [in:] *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 15, Berlin 1987, pp. 450–452.

thinking about the financing of the project, which later decided to gradually trim it down. Originally it envisaged the construction of a motorway running from Wrocław – to the east of the Ślęza Massif – in the direction of the Owl Mountains and further to Radków (Radkau), through the Stołowe Mountains (Heuscheuergebirge), to Duszniki-Zdrój (Bad Rainerz), Polanica-Zdrój (Bad Altheide), Bystrzyca Kłodzka (Habelschwerdt), from here through the Śnieżnik Massif (Glatzer Schneegebirge) to Łądek-Zdrój (Bad Landeck), Złoty Stok (Raichenstein) and Ząbkowice Śląskie (Frankenstein), from where one could return to Wrocław¹⁹.

The voices of those gathered at the meeting were divided into strong supporters and reserved sceptics. The former expressed hope for economic revival of the areas located in the vicinity of the planned road, while the latter pointed to the lack of any real justification for such an expensive undertaking. It is worth noting the opinion expressed by a representative of the Automobile Club of Germany (*Automobilklub von Deutschland*), who showed interest in the motorway, but did not believe in its creation, so he postulated an increase in expenditure on modernization of existing roads²⁰. At the request of the *Oberpräsidenten*, the meeting ended with the establishment of a committee (*Arbeitsausschuss für den Bau einer Kraftwagenstraße Breslau – Grafschaft Glatz*) to determine further details of the plan. The committee was made up of Prof. Louis Jaenicke of the Technical University (Wrocław), *Landrats* Friedrich von Degenfeld-Schonburg (Dzierżoniów/Reichenbach) and Emil Schubert (Nowa Ruda/Neurode), a city councillor Günter Trauer (Wrocław), and a director of a resort Georg Berlit (Polanica-Zdrój)²¹.

The Wrocław press informed about the course of the talks, however its tone was far from euphoric. On 15th August 1929, the “Schlesische Zeitung” published a short discussion of the project, which was clearly attributed to Lüdemann and linked to the development of tourism in the Ślęza and Kłodzko Massif. The author of this text acknowledged the importance of the project yet pointed to the unresolved problem of financing the construction of the road (120 km) estimated at 75 million marks. He expressed doubts whether in the country’s economic situation at that

¹⁹ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 1–4. It can be assumed that the Kłodzko part of the project referred to the idea of the “spa ring” (Bäderring), which was discussed in the Kłodzko tourist circles.

²⁰ A similar attitude towards the Munich – Garmisch motorway was presented by the Bavarian Automobile Club (*Bayerischer Automobil-Club*), whose representatives decided that the modernization of existing roads is more urgent than the implementation of an investment “of the future”. See Gabriel, *Dem Auto eine Bahn*, p. 228.

²¹ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 2–4; APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, pp. 51–52.

time the investment would be possible at all to implement and whether it would not be better to allocate the available public funds to other purposes²². The weak points of the project were pointed out by a representative of the Railways, who understandably considered the improvement of railroad transport as a cheaper and more effective solution. He noted that the new road will not have the potential to contribute to the mass tourism, as a limited number of cars will not allow it. He recalled the reservations of the representatives of Karkonosze organizations about the unequal treatment of the Jelenia Góra Sudetes, which could only be remedied by a double investment, but then the expected costs of such operations would be inconceivable²³. Let us add, for the sake of order, that the Karkonosze associations did not cease their protests and loudly demanded an improvement of communication in the region of the Western Sudetes²⁴.

In the summer of 1929, there was only an initial concept, which included a motorway connection of Wrocław with Kłodzko County, its ring road, and several motorway junctions, including an important access for tourists to the Tąpadła Pass in the Ślęza Massif²⁵. Detailed proposals were to be presented by the aforementioned commission, headed by the *Landrat* of Nowa Ruda, E. Schubert. Originally, this place was intended for the *Landeshauptmann* Thaer, but he refused to participate in the committee's work. He justified his refusal by his deep conviction that it was impossible to finance the construction of the motorway. He also allegedly did not want to give the impression that he preferred one of the tourist regions. The commission met for the first time on 10th September 1929 and asked the land construction councillor, Beiersdorf to design a road from Wrocław to the Owl Mountains, specifically to Woliborz in the Kłodzko (Nowa Ruda) part of the massif. The first results of these works were available at the beginning of December, and the members of the commission were able to read them during an outgoing meeting on 19th December 1929²⁶.

From the very beginning, the topic of fighting unemployment was a component of the motorway project, allowing to justify the investment in the social dimension and count on government support within the framework of aid programs. Without

²² APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, p. 49; APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, p. 5; *Eine kreuzungsfreie Autostraße nach der Grafschaft*, "Schlesische Zeitung", No. 412, 15 VIII 1929, 2. Bogen.

²³ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, p. 12 (Pischel, *Die kreuzungsfreie Autostraße*, "Schlesische Zeitung", 13 X 1929).

²⁴ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, p. 75.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 8–9.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 14–18, 26–27.

this money it was difficult to even think about financing the project. The great economic crisis which began in the autumn of 1929 strengthened the importance of this factor, but it had already been assumed that governmental aid programs would be introduced in Lower Silesia to help in overcoming the region's economic decline. Schubert convinced the *Landeshauptmann* that most of the costs of building the motorway could be covered by government loans and unemployment funds, but Thaer wanted concrete figures, and these could not be provided²⁷. The topic of raising money and lowering the investment costs was constantly accompanying the talks about the motorway. Depending on a technical standard and length of the section assumed, different amounts were given. For example, in the calculation from autumn 1929, the amount of 3.1 million marks was given for the first stage of the works, but the laying of a permanent (asphalt or paving) surface was omitted²⁸.

The program of building a motorway to the mountains and improving the road system within Kłodzko County was too ambitious, so it had to be scheduled for stages. From 1930 onwards, only the motorway Wrocław – the Ślęza Massif – the Owl Mountains (*Kraftwagenstrasse Breslau – Zobten – Eulengebirge*) was mentioned, but this also did not determine the success. The work of the commission lost its intensity at that time, which can be explained by the growing general crisis. The passing months were used to look for optimal solutions and verified patterns. It turned out that in Germany, one can only refer to the experience with the construction of the first Cologne – Bonn motorway (1929–1932)²⁹. The Wrocław project itself was not widely publicized in Germany, so it remained essentially a topic of intra-regional discourse. During the planning of the Lower Silesian investment, an attempt was made to determine how far it would shorten the passage to the Sudetes. The calculations showed that on roads running from Wrocław to Kłodzko County, cars were travelling at an average speed of 43 km/h. On the motorway running to the foothills of the Owl Mountains, the speed of 80 km/h was expected, on the mountain sections and non-upgraded Kłodzko roads only 45–50 km/h. The Wrocław users of the planned route were therefore to save 18 minutes on their way to the Tąpadła Pass, about 30 minutes to the Owl Mountains and 40–50 minutes

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 14, 17, 36, 72–73, 76, 78–79.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 11, 28–29; ref. 2272, pp. 16, 19, 21–26, 29–30.

to the Kłodzko resorts³⁰. These differences were not impressive, but the expected improvement in travel comfort and safety should be added to this.

The revised Beiersdorf's project was completed in early March 1930. It envisaged the construction of a 68.8 km long motorway for 12.6 million marks³¹. Its course was discussed at several meetings and field trips. The most questionable was the designation of the exit route from Wrocław: via Klecina (Klettendorf) or Oporów (Opperau), because it involved the need to solve the wider communication problems of the land capital³². Refining the details of the motorway project did not mean that doubts about its future were resolved. The opposition was invariably expressed by *Landeshauptmann* Thaer, who on 10th June 1930 explained to the local government officials concerned that the provincial authorities had not taken binding decisions on this subject and that it was likely that, due to the high costs, the project would not be implemented at all. Another time, he explained that the motorway programme will not deprive others of access to capital, because private investors will never lend their money for an unprofitable venture³³. He still remained an advocate of gradual modernisation of existing roads, including the construction of ring roads. The Provincial *Oberpräsidenten* was aware of the problems that existed, so at the beginning of 1931, in a letter to the President of the Regency of Wrocław, he mentioned that although the project "Kłodzko" should not be underestimated, at the same time he accepted the need to improve the condition of existing Lower Silesian roads³⁴. According to the information sent by the *Landrats*, only in this Regency of Wrocław 388 towns waited for a road connection. One of the *Landrats* stated on that occasion that the Kłodzko County already has good enough transport links to Wrocław, so he felt that the planned motorway had a purely technical dimension, while investment in the basic transport tissue was pro-development. The *Landrat* of Świdnica (Schweidnitz) regarded the project under consideration as a luxury (*Luxus-Autostraße*) and, in total, only the *Landrat* of Nowa Ruda supported the idea of building a new road to relieve the existing roads. He also expressed the opinion that the Kłodzko County should not lose out on the fact that other counties did not conduct proper work in the field of road

³⁰ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 21, 24.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 32, 46.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 47, 50, 56–57, 60, 62–65, 68–70.

³³ *Ibidem*, pp. 40–42; ref. 2272, pp. 20, 27–28.

³⁴ APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, p. 1.

construction³⁵. Lüdemann was at that time determined to support at least a part of the planned route and on 13th February 1931 he offered the *Landrat* of Niemcza (Nimptsch), Paul Seibold, funds (35,000 marks) for the construction of a short section crossing the Oleszeńskie Hills in the Ślęza Massif, if he would declare immediate commencement of work. The attempt to break the deadlock was not successful. The policy of small steps did not make sense when the course of the road was still under discussion and subject to constant adjustments³⁶.

At a meeting organised on 22nd August 1931, the *Oberpräsidenten* felt compelled to declare that he did not see any chance of implementing the original plan to lead the motorway towards Kłodzko County, and he advocated cutting the project down to the section connecting Wrocław with the Ślęza Massif. He considered the public financing of the project to be unrealistic, therefore he opted for the establishment of an association (company) and the collection of road tolls in the future³⁷. In the autumn of 1931, the committee presented its final conclusions on the “Ślęza” road, after which it stopped its activities. The proposed route was to be 26.7 km long, to leave the busy Wrocław–Świdnica road near Tyniec Mały (Klein Tinz) and lead to Przemiłów (Schieferstein) (Oleszeńskie Hills). In order to save money, the construction of collision-free junctions was abandoned, and the only major engineering facility was to be a viaduct over the railway line near Olbrachtowice (Albrechtsdorf). Although it was assumed that the road should ultimately be 12 m wide, a more modest solution adapted to the expected traffic volume (9 and 6 m) was initially proposed. Cuts were also visible in the case of road construction, limited to the base (15 cm) and gravel layer (18 cm). The upper layer was supposed to be a stone cube or bituminous cover (8 cm), but its laying was supposed to wait a few years, which allowed to “save” 1.3 million marks. Thanks to these decisions, the cost of the project was to be reduced to about 2.5 million marks³⁸.

On 19th January 1932, *Oberpräsidenten* Lüdemann convened a meeting during which he tried to persuade the *Landrats* of the four districts through which the “Ślęza” road was to run, to take their responsibility for preparing its detailed plans. The geodesic and design works were agreed to be co-financed by the representatives of Wrocław District. The others refused, on the grounds of lack of resources. The *Oberpräsidenten* ruled out the takeover of this expenditure by the province, and

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 5–46.

³⁶ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 87, 93.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 94.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 97–101, 128–130.

a *Zweckverband* (purpose association) was therefore being considered³⁹. It should be stressed that the disputes over the amount of several thousand marks needed to elaborate a proper project indicated further complications associated with the financing of the road. The expected annual cost of loan service (225,000 marks) and expenditure on the maintenance of the route (100,000 marks), with revenue from road tolls estimated at a maximum of 247,500 marks, would lead to a considerable deficit (77,500 marks). It is worth noting that the average motorway traffic volume was estimated at 400 cars and motorcycles and 100 trucks and buses per day (in the summer season), i.e. below the current traffic volume on the neighbouring routes: the Świdnica and Kłodzko routes (550 cars and motorcycles and 56 trucks on average). The negative impact of toll collection (1.5 and 3 marks respectively)⁴⁰, was probably taken into account, but it can still be seen from these calculations that the final balance of measures taken was not particularly promising.

The preserved documentation shows that Lower Silesian decision-makers were quite well aware of the technical and organisational solutions discussed and implemented in Germany at the time⁴¹. Such inspiration is also reflected in an article published on 19th February 1932 in “Breslauer Neueste Nachrichten”, in which reference was made several times to the Cologne – Bonn motorway which was currently being finalised⁴². It is worth stressing that it was a text unambiguously favourable to the idea of building a new road. The author referred to the social expectations related to this investment and stressed the inadequacy of roads to the rapidly growing car traffic. He also explained that the planned “Ślęza” road was to be the first stage in the construction of the Wrocław – Kłodzko County Motorway. It was conceived as a transit car route, making it easier for the inhabitants of Wrocław to travel to tourist resorts, but at the same time it gained a tourist dimension because it was supposed to expose the beauty of the mountain surroundings to the travellers already while driving a car⁴³.

At this seemingly predictable stage of preparation, there was an unexpected sharp turn. The worsening economic crisis, mass unemployment and political reshuffling in Berlin in 1932 made the launch of interventional road construction works

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 111; APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, p. 55.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 89–91.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁴³ APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, p. 57 (*Die Autostraße Breslau – Glatzer Gebirge*, „Breslauer Neueste Nachrichten”, No. 49, 19 II 1932).

financed from the central budget became realistic, as was persuaded by the President of the Reichsbank, Hans Luther, and the well-known Professor Emil Lederer, among others. Their proposals aroused again the hopes of the Lower Silesian authorities⁴⁴. In mid-June, *Oberpräsidenten* Lüdemann wrote optimistically to the President of the Wrocław Region that the project of a tourist road from Wrocław to the Kłodzko Sudetes, which was dropped for financial reasons, is once again gaining importance and supporters. Wanting to make good use of this opportunity, he convened another meeting (18 June 1932) and, anticipating the launch of major road construction aid programmes, he pointed out the need to quickly prepare projects that could be used in good time. As during previous such consultations, some decision-makers contrasted the Wrocław – Ślęża Massif – Kłodzko County motorway (then known as the Stołowogórska Road – Heuscheuerstraße) with the need for road modernisation. However, it was finally decided to establish the Working Committee on the Promotion of Transport from the Capital City to the Silesian Mountains (*Arbeitsausschuss zur Förderung des hauptstädtischen Verkehrs mit den schlesischen Gebirgen*), which was to bring together the authorities, associations and companies interested in the investment to promote the road and prepare the necessary documentation⁴⁵. The supporters of the project tried again to persuade the Landeshauptmann, but he – who was not present at the meeting (!) – informed the *Oberpräsidenten* that he, as well as the Land Road Construction Councilor Matthias Reumann, could not get involved in the project until it had been approved by the Local Government Department of the Province of Lower Silesia⁴⁶. The decision was not supposed to be made until August, while Lüdemann clearly insisted on speeding up the preparations and was looking for funds to refine the design of the Ślęża section (10,000–12,000 marks). For this purpose, the *Schlesische Zementindustrie* provided 1,000 marks, and Reumann – who was one of the supporters of the projects – tried to unofficially attract more “shareholders” from the road construction industry⁴⁷. All these activities soon lost their importance. In July 1932, Lüdemann was dismissed from the office of the *Oberpräsidenten* of the Province of Lower Silesia, which was connected with the removal of social democrats from the rule in Prussia. The motorway project thus lost its main promoter. The final end was made by the Local Government Department,

⁴⁴ APWr, Regency, pp. 67–68; APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 125–126, 139–140.

⁴⁵ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 127, 132, 137; APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, pp. 79–84.

⁴⁶ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 127, 131; APWr, Regency, ref. I/9759, pp. 69–70.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 133–136, 141–144, 147.

which on 13th October 1932 – answering Thaeer’s request – took a negative stance on the whole idea. It was stated that the project had no justification at the time and that there was no chance for its implementation (financing) in the foreseeable future either. Potential aid measures should therefore have served to modernise existing roads, the condition of which was deemed unsatisfactory⁴⁸.

The vision of the construction of the Wrocław – Kłodzko County motorway (Ślęza Massif, Owl Mountains, Stołowe Mountains), discussed in Lower Silesia shortly before Hitler came to power, undoubtedly exceeded the possibilities and needs of the time, as was being pointed out by its pragmatic opponents. Similar controversies were also present at that time in other projects of this type, because with limited financial resources, it was inevitable to choose between systematic improvement of the basic road infrastructure and bold concepts that look to the future. At the same time, however, it cannot be said that the construction of ring roads, road viaducts, the alleviation of curve radii and the hardening of the surface of ‘ordinary’ roads did not constitute clear progress in relation to the existing situation. Both strategies were present in Lower Silesia, which proves good discernment and, in a way, maturity of the Lower Silesian authorities, whose representatives were looking for an optimal solution to the crisis situation. In favourable circumstances, with the financial support of the central authorities, the motorway programme had a chance to materialise and in the long term it would probably contribute to the development of the region, but the laborious modernisation of the road network in Lower Silesia also led to it⁴⁹. It was not accompanied by spectacular achievements, however, it found the understanding of road users as expressed by representatives of this environment. The planned road could count on the support of tourism industry circles, but in this case there was competition for the direction of investment. Furthermore, it seems significant in assessing the value of the project that instead of promoting the Karkonosze centres, the strongest in the region, it envisaged support for the weaker Owl Mountain–Kłodzko region.

It was not possible to say who was the author of the idea of a motorway connection between Wrocław and Kłodzko County, nor who and how convinced the

⁴⁸ APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, pp. 137, 148–153.

⁴⁹ Between 1927 and 1929, in the Lower Silesian Province, the length of roads with the best pavement (*Schwere Decken*) increased from 309.7 to 343.5 km, with a medium (*Mittelschwere Decken*) from 49.9 to 115.7 km, and with a light (*Leichte Decken*) from 1673.3 to 1913.4 km. – APWr, General Presidium of the Province of Silesia (Naczelne Prezydium Prowincji Śląskiej we Wrocławiu), ref. 281: Verteilung des Kraftfahrzeugsteuer, Erhebungen über Straßen 1929, pp. 12–14, 32–34.

social democratic *Oberpräsidenten* of the Lower Silesian Province to support it. However, it should be mentioned that Lüdemann's involvement was fundamental. Cautious press releases seem to indicate that the project did not grow out of widespread social expectations. It could not have been otherwise, since in 1929, in the Regency of Wrocław it was recorded in total: 12,475 cars, 212 buses, 3,265 trucks and 19,037 motorcycles⁵⁰. At this stage of development of the automotive industry, in the face of a number of other problems, a motorway with a tourist profile was certainly not one of the most urgent undertakings. Attempts were made to balance its "luxurious" dimension by highlighting the programme to combat unemployment (intervention works) and the potential development of tourism services⁵¹. Similar objectives were later ascribed to the "Hitler's Roads"⁵², which were among the flagship investments of the Third Reich. In the assessment of the "boldness" of the Wrocław plan from 1927–1932, one should generally take into account the fact that as early as 1933 Hitler launched a German-wide motorway programme. As part of this programme, Wrocław was soon linked to Berlin. The works were carried out in the Upper Silesian sections. The Wrocław – Vienna⁵³, motorway was to lead by Kłodzko, and the first sections of the Sudeten Route⁵⁴. The Nazis preferred not to see any analogy with the "republican" projects, and the huge investments – as in the whole of Germany – were to be associated only with Hitler's rule.

The Lower Silesian project is an element of wider efforts and activities preceding the construction of the legendary "Hitler's Roads". Although it failed to move from the consultation phase to actual preparation and implementation in this case,

⁵⁰ In 1925, they were registered in the Wrocław region: 4,246 passenger cars, 70 buses, 1,472 trucks and 3,443 motorcycles, in 1932, respectively 11,344, 242, 2,747 and 25,558 – "Schlesien in Zahlen: Volk und Raum", 2 (1939), p. 48.

⁵¹ Only the richer strata of society could afford their own car. Other tourists could use public transport, which is why *Oberpräsidenten* Lüdemann wanted the buses to be free of charge on the motorway APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 2223, p. 128.

⁵² At this point, it is appropriate to question the view that the German motorways built in the 1930s were intended for military use. See, among others: Tomasz Przerwa, *Wpływ Reichswehry i Wehrmachtu na projektowanie autostrad i modernizację dróg krajowych na Śląsku w latach 30. XX w.*, [in:] *W garnizonie i na kwaterze... Wojskowi i cywile*, eds. Robert Klementowski, Marek Zawadka, Wrocław 2017, pp. 145–154.

⁵³ Tomáš Janda, Václav Líd1, *Německá průchozi dálnice*, díl I: *Severní úsek*, Praha [2008], [in:] http://knihovna.belaujev.net/dokumenty/nemecka-pruchozi-dalnice_Idil.pdf (access: 10 XII 2019).

⁵⁴ The small funds raised in 1932 in connection with the design of the Wrocław – Kłodzko County motorway were spent only in 1938 on the occasion of opening one of the sections of the Sudeten Route. See APWr, WSPŚ, ref. 87: Darlehen v. 1000 RM des Oberprärs. NS zum Bau einer Autostraße Breslau – Glatz, p. 1–8.

yet the same fate was met by most of similar initiatives taken in the 1920s in Germany. The initiative presented confirms that the ‘motorway’ discourse taking place in West and Central Germany was not only closely observed in Lower Silesia, but it was also possible to convert it into a bold intention. However, no innovative concepts and solutions have been developed in Wrocław which would later be more widely applied. Rather, attempts were made to adapt the already known ideas to regional circumstances. In this respect, the project presented allows for an indirect insight into the realities accompanying the development of the Lower Silesian automotive industry at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s.

STRESZCZENIE

W latach 1927–1932 prowadzono na Dolnym Śląsku rozmowy, których przedmiotem była budowa pionierskiej autostrady: Wrocław – hrabstwo kłodzkie. Miała ona połączyć stolicę regionu z ośrodkami turystycznymi położonymi w Sudetach. Ten przyszłościowy projekt wpisywał się w modernizacyjną politykę władz prowincji dolnośląskiej, ale nie doczekał się realizacji m.in. z powodu braku finansowania. Autostradowa soczewka pozwala uchwycić dyskusje na temat rozwoju infrastruktury drogowej w okresie przyspieszonego wzrostu motoryzacji. Oddaje dylematy ówczesnych elit, zmuszonych do wyboru strategii rozwoju prowincji. Wrocławska inicjatywa oddaje regionalne podejście do tematu autostrad, które były w tym czasie przedmiotem analiz w Niemczech i Europie. Dolnośląski projekt przewidywał rozwój turystyki i branży turystycznej, a jego szanse upatrywano w wykorzystaniu funduszy pomocowych do walki z bezrobociem.

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