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Silesian administrative authorities and territorial transformations of Silesia (1918-1945)

Abstract:

The publication concerns conditions in the 19th and 20th centuries leading to the dissolution of Silesian unity as well as the viewpoints of German, Polish and Czechoslovakian political authorities regarding Silesian unity following World War I, while also taking into account the viewpoints of Church institutions. The text is an analysis and a summary of existing works on the subject matter, with the main area of interest being the analysis of legal, organizational and administrative institutions concerning their policies towards the dissolution of Silesian unity.

The latter half of the 19th century was chiefly responsible for the breakup of Silesian unity, due to the rise of the idea of nationalism leading to the idea of nation-states. The materialization of this idea in respect of Silesia, a region inhabited by three nations, two of which were then building their own states, could only mean the dissolution of the monolithic administrative structure erected within the Second German Reich. The realisation of these ideas was brought on by World War I, in whose wake the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Czechoslovakian were born, while the Second German Reich collapsed.

Keywords:

Silesia, administration, Church history, political life, interwar period

Introduction: political and legal factors behind the disintegration of the uniform province of Silesia

The defeat of the Wilhelmine Reich in the First World War brought about the final collapse of the territorial unity of Silesia; it has never been restored. After the war, German and Polish nationalisms clashed, which led to mutual hostilities and final decisions of the League of Nations in the Treaty of Versailles, which in consequence led to the division of Silesia into German and Polish parts. Initially, Germany consistently defended the idea of retaining its pre-war part of Silesia, putting forward various arguments, especially raising the issue of war reparations, which they allegedly could not repay without Upper Silesian industry¹. The opportunity to establish a new border was supposed to be opened up by a plebiscite proclaimed by Article 88 of the Treaty

¹ Adam Galos, *Literatura historyczna o dziejach Górnego Śląska w latach 1918-1922 (próba ogólnego przeglądu)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds Andrzej Brożek, Teresa Kulak, Wrocław 1996, p. 7 et seq., which refers to the work of Maxime Mourin, *Histoire des européens*, vol. 1, Paris 1962, pp. 54-55. Similar arguments were had already been used in

of Versailles². Propaganda activities of the Polish side, which announced the granting of autonomy to the Polish part of Silesia through the Organic Statute of 15th July 1920, forced the German side to respond in kind by announcing their own law on the autonomy of Upper Silesia, which in turn led to the dissolution of the uniform Province of Silesia and the formation of two new units³. The defeat of Germany in the First World War thus intensified disintegrating factors in Upper Silesia that were closely related to the problems of Polish and Czech national minorities, although the situation in Europe at that time also encouraged many other national minorities to take action⁴.

At the beginning of the Weimar Republic issues concerning Silesia were handled by temporary authorities that took over power during the German revolution, in particular the Central Council for the Province of Silesia, which was active in 1918-1919. The council had to solve the problem of how to retain power in Lower Silesia, but it also tried to seize power in Upper Silesia⁵. At that time a clear objective was to maintain the unity of the province, which was associated with attempts to create strongholds in Upper Silesia, especially in the Upper Silesian industrial district. Guidelines were created aimed specifically at campaigning against the agitation actions of the Polish side, and in this respect the German left-wing parties did not intend to differ substantially from the major right-wing parties. None of the major political forces abandoned the programme of maintaining the unity of Silesia⁶. The activities were organized by a central propaganda office created on 6th December 1918, whose aim was to focus on the eradication of Polish influence in Upper Silesia⁷. The elections to the Weimar National Assembly represented another opportunity to increase the activity of all Weimar political parties⁸. Most of the German political groups adopted

contemporary opinion journalism, see A. Galos, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16, which mentions a number of works by Anglo-Saxon, French and Italian authors who succumbed to German economic pressure.

² Dz. U. (Journal of Laws) of 1920, no. 35, item 200. A. Galos, *op. cit.*, p. 16 et seq. cites a vast number of post-war publications relating to the period of the Versailles Conference which allow us to trace how the concept of the unity of Silesia began to disappear due to political relations, when it turned out that as an outcome of the war some part of Silesia would be granted to Poland. What naturally emerged was the additional idea of also dividing German Silesia in order to minimize the risk of losing Upper Silesia to Poland.

³ The Constitutional Act of 15th July 1920 containing the Organic Statute for the Silesian Voivodship, Dz. U. R.P. (Journal of Laws), no. 73, item 497. The literature on the autonomy of the Silesian Voivodship in the Second Republic of Poland is enormous, see. Józef Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska (1922-1939)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 157 et seq.

⁴ Manfred Alexander, *Ursachen der Integrations- und Desintegrationsprozesse nationaler Minderheiten in Grenzgebieten Europa*, [in:] *Podział Śląska*, p. 75 et seq.

⁵ Edmund Klein, *Rada ludowa we Wrocławiu. Centralna Rada dla Prowincji Śląskiej*, Warszawa-Opole 1976, p. 201 et seq.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 203.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 203, see also E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty niemieckiej w styczniu 1919 roku na Górnym Śląsku*, 'Studia Śląskie. Seria Nowa', 14 (1969), pp. 37-158.

a fairly common approach to counteracting the idea of incorporating Upper Silesia into Poland⁹. German clergy of the Catholic Church, whose position in Silesia was strong, advocated maintaining the unity of the Silesian Church by keeping one bishopric See for the whole province, in Wrocław (Breslau, Vratislav), on the German side¹⁰. Jewish group also opted for Silesia belonging to the German Reich, and engaged in anti-Polish activities to help achieve this goal¹¹. Only the Lutheran Church was torn, as the political views of individual parishes were determined by the national affiliation of pastors¹².

It was hoped that the aspirations of a number social groups in Upper Silesia to incorporate the area into Poland would be mollified by the Silesian autonomous movement, but its political programme was poorly defined. The demands of this movement concentrated mostly on the right to use the Polish language¹³. The emergence of this demand was, however, of paramount importance, because autonomy meant tacit agreement on abandoning the idea of a united Silesia. The German side understood the potential consequences of losing Upper Silesia to Poland and to minimize this threat they were forced to abandon the most preferential solution, that is the unity of the province of Silesia. To retain German rule the authorities even turned to the hated Catholic clergy, which gave Catholic Upper Silesian politicians access to the positions of state administration for the first time since the *Kulturkampf*¹⁴. The fight with the Polish national movement was followed by conflict with the Czech movement, which aimed at the secession of southern Upper Silesia from Germany¹⁵. Thus, the development of Polish and Czechoslovak nationalisms made it impossible for the German state authorities to retain the whole region of Silesia.

In the final weeks of the First World War the activity of the Polish national movement in Upper Silesia began to grow. It was influenced by various groups, especially from the Kingdom of Poland¹⁶. The internationalist SDKPiL (the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania) called for the end of nationalist oppression

⁹ E. Klein, *Rada ludowa*, p. 210.

¹⁰ Jan Kopiec, Jerzy Myszor, *Główne problemy działalności Kościoła katolickiego na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1918-1925*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 107 et seq.

¹¹ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 216 et seq.

¹² Rudolf Pastucha, *Kościół ewangelicko-augsburski (luterański) wobec powstań oraz plebiscytu na Górnym Śląsku 1919-1921*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 125 et seq.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 218.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 221 and 222; Günther Doose, *Die separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1922)*, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 8-9.

¹⁵ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 223.

¹⁶ Kingdom of Poland was created during the Congress of Vienna of territories possessed by Russia. Therefore since 1815 Kingdom was in personal union with and since 1867 was administrative part of Russian Empire.

from Germany¹⁷. An opportunity to activate the Polish national movement was the June 1918 by-elections to the Reichstag in the district of Gliwice – Lubliniec (Gleitwitz, Hlivityce – Lublinitz) where Wojciech Korfanty, the leader of the Poles in Upper Silesia, fought for a seat in the diet. Korfanty's victory came as a shock to the German right wing¹⁸. A lot of political forces claimed credit for the victory, especially the Catholic movement which Wojciech Korfanty was connected with. Moreover, a fierce battle for permission to use the Polish language in public places continued. The use of Polish was especially opposed by the German army¹⁹.

In the final days of the war, when Maximilian of Baden, the last Chancellor, came to power, it became obvious that the Poles in Upper Silesia came under the famous Thirteenth Point of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's statement²⁰. Both sides began to put forward claims to the largest part of Upper Silesia, which eventually made it impossible to maintain Silesia as a single territorial unit. The German side did not yet foresee the possibility of losing any part of Silesia, nor did they see the necessity of dividing it into two provinces in order to prevent losing territory to Poland²¹. After all, the Berlin authorities had a bad reputation in Upper Silesia, given their somewhat hostile attitude towards political Catholic parties²². However, the political changes in Germany under the rule of the last Wilhelminian Chancellor led to a liberalization of the domestic situation, which allowed the Poles to implement their own demands²³. On the other hand, however, it gave rise to the resistance of the German side that was composed of various formations for the 'defence of the fatherland'²⁴.

At the time of the elections to the German National Assembly, most political forces within Germany did not agree to concessions for Poles living in Silesia. Anti-Polish attitudes were also present in the activities of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), including those related to the printing of public notices in Upper Silesia²⁵. Paul Löbe, the chairman of the SPD in Silesia, was also careful in making statements²⁶. Opposing opinions came from the breakaway Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD), which held more left-wing views and thus

¹⁷ E. Klein, *Górny Śląsk w ostatnich tygodniach I wojny światowej*, 'Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis' (further referred to as: AUWr.) no. 908, series: Prawo CXLIX, Wrocław 1989, p. 77.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 80 et seq. It was not the first victory of Korfanty in parliamentary elections: see Guido Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873-1953) oder Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen/Carl Ulitzka (1873-1953) albo Górny Śląsk pomiędzy dwoma Wojnami Światowymi*, Düsseldorf 2002, p. 139 et seq.

¹⁹ E. Klein, *Górny Śląsk*, p. 84 et seq.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 89 et seq. G. Hitze, *op.cit.*, p. 173.

²¹ E. Klein, *Górny Śląsk*, p. 100 et seq.

²² G. Hitze, *op.cit.*, pp. 174-175.

²³ E. Klein, *Górny Śląsk*, p. 107 et seq.

²⁴ G. Hitze, *op.cit.*, p. 173.

²⁵ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuancy*, p. 72 et seq.

²⁶ G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

demanded concessions for national minorities. This resulted from its strictly leftist and internationalist programme. But even USPD would not support territorial concessions to Poland, which may be exemplified by activity of some USPD members in the government authorities²⁷. On the other hand, the Communist Party of Germany, which had only recently been formed, did not say much with regard to Upper Silesia; the party limited its statements to general issues concerning a proletarian revolution and the collapse of the system of national oppression, mainly because of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht²⁸.

The elections also activated other political groups, especially the Catholic Centre Party, which was extremely influential in Upper Silesian politics. After rejecting proposals of autonomy, the Centre Party spoke cautiously about the status of Silesia, choosing to argue in favour of retaining the status quo, that is leaving Silesia on the German side. The main 'face' of the Upper Silesian Centre Party was its leader, Carl Ulitzka, a prelate of Racibórz (Ratibor, Ratiboř) and also a Centre deputy to the National Assembly²⁹. The son of a Silesian landowner and Korfanty's coeval chose, unlike the latter, the German option. They both remained in their respective positions as the leaders of the German and Polish Silesian people. The election campaign of the Centre Party focused on the protection of the Catholic Church, which it hoped would encourage the majority of the inhabitants of Upper Silesia to choose its programme³⁰. The position of the German Democratic Party (DDP), which had supported the foundation of the Weimar Republic, is worth noting. With regard to the issue of whether Silesia should be divided, the DDP explicitly advocated against a split and for leaving the entire province of Silesia within Germany³¹. The agitation was also led by the far-right German National People's Party (DNVP), which was established on the ruins of the Conservative Party. In the matter of the German political system and the future of Silesia, DNVP leaders took a cautious stance³². Soon, however, the party applied the rhetoric of 'defence of the endangered Silesian German language'. By contrast, Polish groups were increasingly in favour of incorporating Upper Silesia into Poland, hence they demanded a boycott of the elections³³. The German parties were definitely unfriendly or even hostile towards the actions of the Polish groups, as they were concerned that strong Polish actions would encourage decision-makers at Versailles

²⁷ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty*, pp. 77-79, G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 174 et seq.

²⁸ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty*, pp. 80-81; G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 191 et seq.

²⁹ G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 165 et seq. For information on his activities in the National Constituent Assembly see p. 197 et seq.

³⁰ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty*, pp. 81-94, especially from p. 87. G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 188 et seq.

³¹ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty*, especially p. 101.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 95 et seq.

³³ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty*, p. 113 et seq., G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 26 et seq.

to give Upper Silesia to Poland³⁴. The way the situation developed was analogous to that of the elections to the Prussian National Assembly, which also took place in January 1919³⁵.

A clear propagandist manoeuvre was the advocacy of the above-mentioned commissioner of the Prussian government to enter the *Regierungsbezirk* (governmental district) of Opole (Oppeln) in the spring of 1919. The candidate for this position had to be Catholic, have a deep understanding of Upper Silesian relations and the ability to speak Polish³⁶. The goal was clearly to encourage the people of Upper Silesia to support the German side. The idea of establishing a commissioner was, for obvious reasons, supported by the Central People's Council, which urged the government in Berlin to quickly appoint a commissioner³⁷. The appointment of Otto Hörsing was particularly supported by left-wing forces which hoped that, by not evoking such negative feelings as right-wing politicians among the Polish population, he would play an important role in the people of Upper Silesia warming to the idea of the whole region staying within the Reich. Fairly soon those desires of the German left wing were denounced by Polish nationalists, especially those of left-wing provenance³⁸. It is difficult to determine conclusively whether the appointment of the commissioner had a significant impact on the subsequent events connected with the plebiscite and the disintegration of Silesia, yet his decisions arising from his social-democratic worldview often led to protests by Christian Democratic politicians and the religiously committed.

The German authorities were also more active during the peace conference at Versailles, hoping for a favourable course of events. What is more, at the conference the German side presented Upper Silesian experts who submitted opinions favourable to the Weimar Republic³⁹. The key battleground was in propaganda and the fight lasted right up to the plebiscite. German authorities brought to Upper Silesia Western journalists, whose articles presented German point of view⁴⁰.

As the content of the Treaty of Versailles was formulating and becoming more evident for German authorities, the German side noticed that by the arbitrary decision of the Entente some areas in Lower Silesia would be granted to Poland and

³⁴ E. Klein, *Wybory do Konstytuanty...*, p. 123 et seq. G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 22 et seq.

³⁵ E. Klein, *Wybory do konstytucyjnego pruskiego zgromadzenia krajowego w styczniu 1919 r. na Górnym Śląsku*, 'AUWr. No 982, Prawo CLXI', 1988, p. 123 et seq.

³⁶ E. Klein, *Ustanowienie komisarza*, p. 91. Por also G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 47 et seq.

³⁷ E. Klein, *Ustanowienie komisarza*, p. 93.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 109. The profile of the commissioner is presented by G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 223 et seq.

³⁹ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, *op. cit.*, p. 226. One of them was a leading politician, Matthias Erzberger, see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 209 et seq. On his murder see p. 567.

⁴⁰ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, pp. 228-229.

Czechoslovakia⁴¹. Thus Silesia was beginning to be torn apart by three countries⁴². The most important part, however, was Upper Silesia, where the British delegates managed to force through a plebiscite, despite the proposals of the Cambon commission which were more favourable to Poland. Increasingly gaining in strength was the autonomist movement, which at that time was already divided into two groups: pro-German and pro-Polish, both of which viewed the plebiscite as a chance to attract undecided people⁴³. At the same time, under the influence of the SPD, which opposed the expansion of autonomy, a project to establish Upper Silesia as a separate province took its final form, which was strongly supported by the Centre Party in particular⁴⁴.

The initial period of the Weimar Republic was particularly important for the development of separatist ideas. On the one hand, it was buoyed by the resistance to changes taking place in Berlin, where revolution was taking place, and the idea of detachment from 'red Germany' was positively received by financial and economic circles in Silesia. On the other hand, in many German *Länder* (states) a separatist movement was spreading, which, to some extent, have remained strong in Saxony and Bavaria until today. In November 1918 Silesian separatist agents proposed the creation of a southern new state for the local *Länder* in order to sever ties with 'red Prussia'⁴⁵. There were also utopian plans to create a new state of Silesia with its own government, army and police, which would be able to fight the Poles and the Czechs⁴⁶. Some believed that Berlin should agree to secession because it would be easier to defend the integrity of German Silesia against the demands of Poland and Czechoslovakia⁴⁷. The contemporary view that the Poles and Czechs would be satisfied with cultural, linguistic and religious autonomy, which was particularly propagated by the Centre Party, seems quite naive⁴⁸. Nevertheless, the idea was effectively sold at the end of December 1918 by Silesian local state authorities to the authorities in Berlin, under the premise that they would renounce separatism when the Reich government

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 236. Cf Tomasz Kruszewski, *Zmiany podziału terytorialnego na Śląsku w XIX i XX w.* Wrocław 1999 (=AUWr, no 2144, series: Prawo CCLXIV, *Studia historycznoprawne*), pp. 171-194. See also Dan Gawrecki, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918-1921*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 85 et seq.

⁴² See Wojciech Wrzesiński, *Śląsk między Polską, Niemcami a Czechosłowacją w latach międzywojennych*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 177 et seq.

⁴³ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 238 et seq.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 244-245. The views of the Centre Party are discussed in detail by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 51 et seq.

⁴⁵ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, pp. 248-249; G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 10, especially p. 36 and further.

⁴⁶ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 251. For more on this issue see G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 90 et seq.

⁴⁷ Contradictions of the views on Upper Silesia between the governments of the Reich and Prussia are discussed by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-72.

⁴⁸ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 252, G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 184 et seq.

acknowledged the autonomy of Silesia, as indeed was later realized on a verbal level⁴⁹. It should also be remembered that the communist element was strong, especially in Upper Silesia, and although it admittedly did not hold a unanimous view on the future of Silesia, the more internationalist factions supported the idea of self-rule of the people, which meant consent to the loss of part of the territory of Silesia to neighbouring countries⁵⁰.

The end of 1918 brought a more significant activation of the movement for Silesian autonomy for which the Catholic confession of the most Upper Silesian residents was a fertile ground. The initiators of this movement were, however, people of Polish origin: Edward Latacz, a lawyer from Wodzisław Śląski (Loslau); Alojzy Pronobis of Bytków (Bittkow), and Jan and Tomasz Reginek, two brothers of which the latter was a priest⁵¹. Before long they all began to quarrel as their visions of autonomy diverged. Latacz called for the creation of an independent state of Upper Silesia with close ties to Germany, and, despite his Polish origin, his biggest fear was that Upper Silesia would be incorporated into Poland⁵². Pronobis held a different view, believing that the best solution would be to create a Polish-German Autonomous Republic of Upper Silesia, which would evoke memories of the old Piast duchy and yet still be part of the Land of the Reich. The Reginek brothers, on the other hand, looked to the Habsburg legacy and, together with Austrian Silesia, they wanted to create a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic state modelled on Switzerland. The brothers, however, remained under the influence of Polish culture and they eventually opted for incorporating Upper Silesia into Poland on the basis of autonomy⁵³. Finally, two groups of autonomists emerged: one had a vision of an autonomous state within Germany and the other within Poland. The first group included Hans Lukaschek, a well-known Christian Democrat politician⁵⁴.

The existence and further development of the autonomous movement was associated with the contemporary political situation. The idea of autonomy was very seductive and, in consequence, most of the leading German and Polish politicians in

⁴⁹ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, p. 253, G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 172 et seq.

⁵⁰ E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, chapter X, p. 259 and further.

⁵¹ G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 17 et seq. (for the views of the Reginek brothers: pp. 90-95), E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu autonomicznego w listopadzie i grudniu 1918 roku*, Wrocław 1992 (=AUWr., No. 1044, Prawo CCXV, *Studia historycznoprawne*), Wrocław 1992, p. 143. Latacz and the Reginek brothers, being autonomists, were closely observed by the leader of the Centre Party, C. Ulitzka, see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 177 et seq.

⁵² G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 177 et seq.

⁵³ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 144. The brothers were also seeking support in Prague, see G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 28 et seq.; G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 189 et seq.

⁵⁴ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 145; G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 224, for his profile see p. 252 et seq.

Upper Silesia used it to attract people of the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole (Oppeln, Opoli) to one of these options. One such party was the above-mentioned Central Council, which often supported the actions of the autonomists⁵⁵. The Council, which brought together leftist forces, viewing them as the most effective weapon against German nationalists, regarded Pronobis's proposal to be the most practical at the turn of 1918 and 1919. At a conference in Kędzierzyn (Kandrzin, Kandřín) (December 1918) self-government representatives from Upper Silesia considered all three of the above-mentioned solutions to be equivalent, but in the vote that subsequently took place only a few activists supported the ideas of Latacz and Pronobis; the majority were in favour of the plan put forward by the Reginek brothers, that is creating a state modelled on Switzerland⁵⁶. At the same time, the autonomists were forced to take into account a third factor: the Czech nationalist movement. When trying to communicate with the President of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Masaryk, they got a cool reception. The Czechs had their eyes on the southern part of the district (Kreis, *powiat*) of Racibórz and the autonomists' ideas were a threat to that aim⁵⁷.

At the turn of 1918 and 1919 the idea of separating Upper Silesia continued to spread rapidly under the patronage of the Central Council but eventually, at the beginning of 1920, the Centre Party-the most important political force of the region-abandoned the idea of detachment from Germany, thus marking the dawn of the idea of political autonomy⁵⁸. Moreover, in January 1919 the Union of Upper Silesians emerged, which became the dominant organisation of the autonomists⁵⁹. Its conflict with the Centre party began to escalate⁶⁰. The Centre Party, led by prelate Carl Ulitzka, instigated an active campaign in various European capitals⁶¹.

The chaotic political situation ended on 7th May 1919 in Versailles when the original draft of the peace treaty was released. The treaty provided for the return of the majority of Upper Silesia to Poland, which led major political parties in the region to support the idea of a centralist nation-state with its capital in Berlin. The separatist movement in Silesia began to dwindle and was gradually replaced by agents solely

⁵⁵ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 153 et seq. It is accurately described by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 73 et seq.

⁵⁶ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 157. On the conference in Kędzierzyn see also G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 41 et seq. G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 167 et seq. On the policy of the Central Council as well as the views of Latacz and the Reginek brothers see p. 73 and further. On the role of Ulitzka see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 183 et seq. On further actions of Pronobis see *ibidem*, p. 288 et seq.

⁵⁷ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 158.

⁵⁸ E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, p. 170. Abandoning of the international autonomy by the Centre is described in detail by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 150 et seq.

⁵⁹ Its programme is discussed in detail by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 110 et seq. On the role of C. Ulitzka see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 233 et seq.

⁶⁰ G. Doose, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-131.

⁶¹ Biography of C. Ulitzka is presented by G. Hitze, *op. cit.* See also G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 161 et seq.

conveying the ideas of autonomy⁶². The activities of the Centre Party, led by Carl Ulitzka, also began to evolve in that direction⁶³. A resolution adopted in Kędzierzyn on 10th September 1919, which Ulitzka called the ‘Magna Carta for the solution of the Upper Silesian issue’, held symbolic importance. This autonomous programme, however, was critically received by other political groups⁶⁴. What also grew stronger was the opposition from supporters of national separatism in Upper Silesia, who defended the Polish dialect (*Wasserpölnisch*). After the First Silesian Uprising a majority of these supporters opted for autonomy within the Polish state⁶⁵.

It is clear, then, that a series of important political events after the First World War led to the disintegration of a uniform province. It was not possible to maintain the unity of Silesia, which was ultimately confirmed by the course of the three following Silesian Uprisings⁶⁶.

Summary of the views of administrative authorities on the division of Silesia after the First World War

The purpose of this discussion is to present the views of the state and local administration in the province of Silesia on the unity and disintegration of Silesia⁶⁷. However, there will be no direct references to the views of particular political parties. This issue is well-established in the literature, both for right-wing, centrist and left-wing parties⁶⁸. What has not been researched as much is the position of those parties as expressed by their representatives in the administrative and self-government bodies in Silesia, which will be presented here and supplemented by references to the shorthand reports of the provincial diets (*sejmy*) of both Silesian provinces.

The division of Silesia after the First World War was not settled at Versailles, but became a logical consequence of the plebiscite provided for in Article 88 of the

⁶² E. Klein, *Rada Ludowa*, pp. 256-258. An interesting discussion on the settlements of the Treaty of Versailles for Upper Silesia compared to other similar decisions of the peace conference is presented by Andrzej Brożek, *Sposoby regulowania zmian granicznych w Europie po I wojnie światowej*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 63 et seq.

⁶³ The Upper Silesian issue is discussed in great detail in G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 203 et seq. On participation of Ulitzka in the proceedings see p. 227 et seq.

⁶⁴ G. Doose, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-173.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 174 et seq. Accumulation of these opinions is presented by G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 225 et seq.

⁶⁶ The literature concerning these events is immense. Part of it is collected by A. Galos, *op. cit.*, p. 23 et seq. The propaganda activities of both sides are discussed by Waldemar Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien 1919-1921*, Dortmund 2002.

⁶⁷ The overall picture of the events is presented by Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs, Rościsław Żerelik, *Historia Śląska*, Wrocław 2002, p. 352 et seq.

⁶⁸ A. Galos, *op. cit.*, p. 22 et seq. remains the most important literature regarding the standpoints of Deutschnationale Volkspartei, Deutsche Volkspartei, the Centre Party and the leftist parties.

Treaty of Versailles. It was organized on 20th March 1921, and after the Third Silesian Uprising it led to the final division of the province of Upper Silesia which had been established in October 1919 by Poland and Germany⁶⁹. By the Act of 14th October 1919, the province of Silesia ceased to exist and was replaced by two new provinces: the *Regierungsbezirke* of Legnica (Liegnitz, Lehnice) and Wrocław created the province of Lower Silesia with its capital in Wrocław, whereas the area of the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole was transformed into the province of Upper Silesia with its capital in Opole (the seat of self-government was Racibórz)⁷⁰. The law was passed by the Prussian National Assembly (*Landesversammlung*) and started a several-year-long process of dividing Silesia. At the same time two processes began: on the one hand – the division of Silesia between Poland and Germany; on the other hand – the creation of the provinces of Lower and Upper Silesia within Germany⁷¹.

The dissolution of the Province of Silesia was triggered by the defeat of the Reich in the First World War. The Germans, who accepted with reservation the proposals to detach the whole area of the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole from Germany propagated at Versailles by the Polish delegation, started counterpropaganda activity through the Act of 14th October 1919 on the establishment of a separate Province of Upper Silesia⁷², but as early as autumn 1918 some political agents in Berlin had put forward ideas of granting autonomy to Upper Silesia⁷³. The next step was the appointment of Friedrich Otto Hörsing as commissioner of the Reich and Prussia in Upper Silesia, who was associated with the German left wing and believed in halting the aspirations of Poles in Silesia to separate Upper Silesia from Germany. All such activities were aimed at gaining support for the government from the people of the new Province of Upper Silesia⁷⁴.

⁶⁹ On the plebiscite and the clash of both nations see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 346 et seq.

⁷⁰ There is a lot of literature on the division of the Province of Silesia. Cf, for instance, Gerhard Webersinn, *Die Provinz Oberschlesien. Ihre Entstehung und der Aufbau der Selbstverwaltung*, 'Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität zu Breslau', 14 (1969), p. 275 et seq. The 70th anniversary of the division was marked by the publication of articles from the conference on this event in the form of the above-mentioned collective work, *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*.

⁷¹ The final demarcation of the territories of the two new provinces was introduced with a bill of 25th July 1923, *Preussische Gesetzsammlung* (further referred to as PGS), Jg. 1923, p. 354; Cf G. Webersinn, *op. cit.*, p. 299 et seq.

⁷² PGS, Jg. 1919, p. 169: *Gesetz betreffend Errichtung einer Provinz Oberschlesien*.

⁷³ G. Webersinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-278, E. Klein, *Początki górnośląskiego ruchu*, pp. 141-177. On the standpoint of the Central Council on the issue of Upper Silesian self-determination see G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 135 et seq.

⁷⁴ For more information on Hörsing see G. Webersinn, *op. cit.*, p. 278 et seq., and also E. Klein, *Ustanowienie komisarza rządu państwa pruskiego dla rejencji opolskiej na wiosnę 1919 r.*, AUWr., No. 1277, Prawo CXC VII (SHP), 1992., pp. 89-121. On the conflict between Ulitzka and Hörsing see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 241 et seq.

The ideas of statutory autonomy were continued to be conveyed by prelate Ulitzka, who frequently sent reminders to Berlin. At that time, the views on autonomy expressed by both governments were converging in Berlin⁷⁵. The activities of the Centre Party did not stop even during the plebiscite⁷⁶.

The German side had for a long time not seen the propaganda benefits of the Polish law – the Organic Statute for the Silesian Voivodeship of 15th July 1920 – and only after three uprisings and the plebiscite did the *Preussische Landtag* (Prussian representative assembly) in Berlin also pass a law on the autonomy of Upper Silesia⁷⁷. In contrast to the Polish act, the German law turned out to be little more than a political ploy. It envisaged special protection of the rights of national minorities. It was adopted during a period of rebuilding the German administration, which German nationalists used to unleash post-plebiscite terror on the areas not allocated to Poland⁷⁸.

Maintaining a united province of Silesia was not possible mainly due to the Upper Silesian plebiscite announced at the proceedings of the Versailles conference. It was feared that some, yet unknown, part of Silesia would be granted to Poland. Those concerns and the efforts to discourage the participants of the plebiscite to vote for Poland, led to the idea of splitting the region into two provinces. For this reason, the idea of a united Silesia was abandoned for pragmatic reasons, that is for fear of the results of the plebiscite.

To understand the views on the dual division of Silesia (separation of the Polish Silesian Voivodeship and the division of the German Silesia into two provinces) after the First World War it is worth recalling-by way of introduction-the most important administrative authorities in Silesia⁷⁹. The views of the governments of the Reich and Prussia in this respect were realised by two-because of the division of Silesia into two new units, provinces – *Oberpräsidenten* (high presidents) of the province. In the Province of Lower Silesia the *Oberpräsidenten* were, successively: Hermann Zimmer (1920–1928), Hermann Lüdemann (1928-1933) and Helmuth Brückner, a *Gauleiter*

⁷⁵ G. Doose, *op.cit.*, p. 183 et seq.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 193-203. The literature on the plebiscite is immense. Essential information on this subject can be found in works on the overall history of Silesia, see Arno Herzig, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, *Śląsk i jego dzieje*, Wrocław 2012 (original title: Arno Herzig, *Schlesien. Das Land und Seine Geschichte in Bildern, Texten und Dokumenten*, Hamburg 2008), p. 194 et seq.

⁷⁷ PGS, Jg. 1922, p. 205, *Gesetz betreffend die Regelung der Selbstständigkeitsrechte der Provinz Oberschlesien. Vom 25. Juli 1922*.

⁷⁸ On the conflict between Ulitzka and Korfanty, see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 256 et seq. For the following period see p. 281 et seq. The former one was referred to by some as a ‘German Korfanty’, see *ibidem*, p. 267. On the terror see p. 369 et seq.

⁷⁹ That division was basically threefold, if we mention the southern part of the district (powiat, Kreis) of Racibórz (the so-called Hlučín Region) assigned to Czechoslovakia.

(party leader) of the Silesian district of NSDAP (1933-1934)⁸⁰. In the Province of Upper Silesia the first was the commissary *Oberpräsident* Joseph Bitta, then Alfons Proske, and, finally, the above-mentioned Lukaschek (from May 1929)⁸¹.

This chapter is naturally focused on local self-governing agents, because they were the only fully internal factor in the territorial integration and disintegration of the Province of Silesia. The most important authorities, in the sense that their views on the unity of Silesia were the most important, were the provincial diets of both German provinces. The introduction of a new order in Upper Silesia was, however, put on hold until the plebiscite. These types of legal solutions were imposed by the Treaty of Versailles and the consonant provisions of the Weimar Constitution (Article 167). On the basis of this regulation, the *Reichstag* passed a law for Upper Silesia, which was intended to be a counterpropaganda reaction to the Polish Organic Statute for the Silesian Voivodeship of 15th July 1920. The German law was passed by the *Reichstag* on 25th December 1920, and it suspended German and Prussian law on Upper Silesia until two months after the division of the plebiscite areas as decided at the Conference of Ambassadors of the League of Nations⁸². This meant elimination of the current Silesian provincial diet and replacing it with two new ones.

The basic rules of the operation of provincial diets resulted from the Constitution of Prussia of 30th November 1920. Article 71 of that constitution still projected the division of Prussia into provinces, and the following provision guaranteed the diets the privileges of local government bodies (maintaining, however, state supervision). Article 73 guaranteed rights to national minorities⁸³. To explore the views of political parties functioning in the period of the Weimar Republic in Silesia one must remember the most important representative bodies, namely, the provincial diets of both new provinces. The system of the diets of that period did not differ significantly from the previous one of 1876-1919. This resulted from the fact that until the

⁸⁰ On the profile of Zimmer see E. Klein, *Rada ludowa*, p. 40, 41, 69, 73, 167, 343 and 385. Cf also Teresa Kulak, *Propaganda antypolska dolnośląskich władz prowincjonalnych w latach 1922-1925*, Wrocław 1981, p. 19 et seq. For more information on Brückner see Karl Höffkes, *Hitlers politische Generale. Die Gauleiter des Dritten Reiches. Ein biographisches Nachschlagewerk*, Tübingen 1986, p. 37 et seq., T. Kruszewski, *Partia narodowosocjalistyczna na Śląsku w latach 1933-1945. Organizacja i działalność*, Wrocław 1995, pp. 64-66; P.W. Jakubaschk, *Helmut Brückner, sein Kampf und Sieg um Schlesien*, Hirschberg 1933, pp. 143-147; Helmut Neubach, *Parteien und Politiker in Schlesien*, Dortmund 1988, p. 202 et seq.

⁸¹ The profiles of Bitta, Proske and Lukaschek are developed by G. Webersinn, *op.cit.*, p. 286, 302 and 325. Detailed data concerning these people are also included by G. Hitze, *op.cit.*, *passim*, e.g. on the appointment of Lukaschek see p. 723 et seq.

⁸² *Reichsgesetzblatt*, I (further referred to as *RGBl I*), Jg. 1920, p. 1987; Cf G. Webersinn, *op.cit.*, p. 291 et seq. Polish and German propaganda concerning autonomy is discussed by W. Grosch, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-182.

⁸³ *PGS*, Jg. 1920, p. 543, *Verfassung des Freistaats Preußen. Vom 30. November 1920, Abschnitt VIII. Die Selbstverwaltung*. See also G. Webersinn, *op.cit.*, p. 294 et seq. Art. 73 concerned the so-called legislative autonomy, and Art. 72 concerned administrative autonomy.

dissolution of the diets in 1933 the system was still determined by the provincial electoral law (PO) of 29th June 1875. The only rules which changed completely concerned the election of deputies to provincial diets (Article 74)⁸⁴. The PO regulations of 1875 were repealed in the Weimar Republic and replaced by the principle of four-point electoral law. Those regulations were later changed three times, in 1920, 1925 and 1929. The culmination of this trend was to be a law of autonomy for the Province of Upper Silesia adopted by the Prussian Diet on 25th July 1922⁸⁵. It allowed, in accordance with the political programme of the People's Catholic Party (the Centre Party), for the freedom of the *Oberpräsident*, the president of the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole and the chairman of the provincial college school to take decisions towards maintaining the religious and ethnic freedom of the people, in accordance with Articles 72 and 73 of the Constitution of Prussia.

An important part in the adoption of this law was played by the 59th common diet for both established provinces, which at its first session in April 1921 became the subject of a fierce debate on this issue. The first step on that road was a parliamentary committee report, whose rapporteur was Axel von Freytagh-Loringhoven, one of the most prominent politicians of the monarchist German National People's Party (DNVP)⁸⁶. This took place at the session on 8th April 1921⁸⁷. That renowned scholar could not put aside his deep right-wing worldview while presenting views on that issue. Digressing to legal matters incomprehensible to some members of the left, he tried to fit the drafted act into the regulations of the Constitution of Prussia, Article 70 of which referred to local government, drawing attention to the tasks performed strictly by local government and other tasks commissioned by government authorities. He spent a lot of time dwelling on the duality of state and local government. To understand the views of conservatives on the announced changes to the political system, it should also be borne in mind that there was significant manoeuvring in the ongoing political turmoil of the time. On the one hand, Axel von Freytagh-Loringhoven was on the side which sought to strengthen state power, but on the other hand, he saw that it was necessary to reduce tensions between state and society. Coming from Russian

⁸⁴ For more information see T. Kruszewski, *Sejm prowincjonalny na Śląsku (1824-1933)*, Wrocław 2000, p. 389 et seq.

⁸⁵ *PGS*, Jg. 1922, p. 205; Cf G. Webersinn, *op.cit.*, p. 294 et seq.

⁸⁶ T. Kruszewski, *Axel von Freytagh-Loringhoven – profesor prawa narodów na Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim*, [in:] *Nauka i nauczanie prawa w dziejach*, ed. T. Kruszewski, Wrocław 2011, pp. 91-100.

⁸⁷ *Verhandlungen des 1. Niederschlesischen Provinziallandtages. 1. Tagung vom 3. bis 6. und 8. April 1921, 2. Tagung – 21. April 1921*, (further referred to as *INSL*), *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen des 1. Niederschlesischen Provinziallandtages, des (59) Oberschlesischen Provinziallandtages und Gemeinsamen 59. Schlesischen Provinziallandtages*, no. 6, 8. April 1921, p. 141 et seq.

lands, he feared that a conflict similar to the October Revolution, still fresh in his mind, could take place. In the end, the rapporteur was torn: on the one hand he saw the usefulness of autonomous solutions, but on the other hand he feared that separatists could use that autonomy for their own purposes. He was thinking, of course, of the Polish national movement, though he did not state that explicitly.

Other parties had not yet joined the debate, and pursuant to the resolution of 13th April 1921, the draft was submitted to the committee for further work⁸⁸. The debate, limited though it was, took place only at the second session of that diet, which lasted from 21st to 25th March 1922, when work on the bill in Berlin was well under way⁸⁹. The discussion was once again dominated by the above-mentioned Count von Keyserlingk, the former Minister of the Reich⁹⁰. As one of the two rapporteurs of the special committee he spoke out against the bill on provincial autonomy, mainly for financial reasons. Supported by reliable calculations, he claimed that the act was unfeasible due to the lack of resources at the disposal of the provinces, and he claimed the promises of increasing them by 50% were false, as they were not followed by any specific activities. Summing up his argument in five points, he rejected the bill on behalf of the committee for the following reasons: 1. although the idea of extending provincial autonomy was right, it was unfeasible without undertaking a reform of government and municipal administration, as well as economic reform; 2. the proposal to make the province responsible for enforcing compliance with the law should be rejected (only the state should perform this task), and in fact the existing scope of provincial government should be retained or expanded; 3. the bill's proposal to transfer administrative powers to local government bodies was a positive step; 4. the advisory bodies created by the bill were insufficient, and the participation of the provincial government in the activities of the state should be expanded; 5. if the bill entered into force, much more money should be provided, otherwise the bill would not be realized.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, no. 8, p. 209.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, *Stenographischer Bericht über die Verhandlungen des 1. Niederschlesischen Provinziallandtages, des (59) Oberschlesischen Provinziallandtages und Gemeinsamen 59. Schlesischen Provinziallandtages*. – 2. *Tagung* – (21. bis 25. März 1922). Nr. 12, 24. März 1922, p. 340 et seq.

⁹⁰ Robert graf von Keyserlingk-Cammerau was born on 10th March 1866 in Munich and died in 1959. He was a prominent lawyer, ministerial director and co-founder of the DNVP. His first reached the upper echelons of the party in 1910 when he was appointed the president of the Regierungsbezirk of Królewiec (Königsberg, Královec). During the First World War, in 1915-1917 he was the ministerial director in the Prussian Ministry of Agriculture. In 1917 he was appointed an adviser to the General Quartermaster of the Army, General Erich von Ludendorff in the Headquarters. Then, in the years 1917-1918 he was the Reich Commissioner for Lithuania. During the Weimar Republic he was a member of the organization of employers in agriculture between 1921 and 1933, and in 1927 he became a member of the Prussian State Council. In 1932 he supported with Hindenburg the appointment of Hitler to the position of chancellor.

Additional remarks were provided by the second rapporteur, Ulrich Burmann of the SPD and the first mayor of Bolesławiec (Bunzlau, Boleslav, Slezská Boleslav). He expanded on the somewhat laconic remarks of his predecessor, drawing attention to the social and financial aspects and noting the inconsistencies of the government project.

In 1922 the Centre Party, under the active leadership of Carl Ulitzka, called for the establishment of a separate Upper Silesian country within the German Reich. Those views were not supported in political journalism that did not share Christian Democratic ideas, especially that which centred around the DNVP⁹¹. A conflict with Polish minority groups was also beginning to take shape. Ulitzka was especially keen during the drafting of the bill to expand the autonomy of the Province of Upper Silesia. Most of all he confronted the DNVP, as is clear from his famous quote: ‘The enemy stands on the right’⁹².

On 3rd September 1922, after the act entered into force, a referendum was held in which the inhabitants of the Province of Upper Silesia were asked whether they would like to remain within Prussia, or to form a separate country of the Reich. This took place after the decision to split the plebiscite area between Germany and Poland. The vast majority of the voters (513,126 versus 50,400 representing the opposite view) opted for the first alternative⁹³. This meant the defeat of the autonomists and it limited their activities, even though it did not lead to a complete cessation of their actions⁹⁴.

The stance of Lower Silesian authorities towards the disintegration of an united Province of Silesia

During the period of the Weimar Republic, the provincial government in Lower Silesia persisted in its extremely negative assessment of the division of the Province of Silesia. The idea of a united Silesia was ruined by nationalist ideas. German nationalism, which consistently opted for keeping the whole of Silesia in German hands, clashed with a new Polish nationalism which sought to recover the biggest possible part of Silesia. This led to an even further division of the Province of Silesia into two provinces. It should be remembered that two conflicts coincided with one another – an internal German fight between both provinces, accompanied by propaganda attacks

⁹¹ G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 532 et seq.

⁹² *Ibidem*, pp. 548-559. Quoted from p. 547.

⁹³ G. Webersinn, *op. cit.*, p. 292; the turnout was 74 percent. A broad political overview of the struggle to create an autonomous land is presented by G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 209 et seq.

⁹⁴ G. Doose, *op. cit.*, p. 244 et seq.

on the existence of the Polish part of Upper Silesia. For the issue of the disintegration of Silesia's unity discussed in this chapter, it seems important to present the stance of political parties sitting in the provincial diets. The provincial authorities of Lower Silesia did not focus solely on local attacks, but, following the lead of central institutions, they attacked the Polish state as a whole. A special role in this field was played by the Institute of Eastern Europe in Wrocław⁹⁵. Of interest for this chapter are those arguments which clearly indicated the importance of the loss of the Upper Silesian coal basin, as well as those regarding the loss of markets for Silesian goods⁹⁶. At the same time, it should be remembered that the whole period of the Weimar Republic was characterized by the dissemination of propaganda against Poland. Provincial authorities could act through social and scientific organizations, spreading the idea of 'the Great Silesia region'. This included even archaeologists who, engaged in a fight with Polish colleagues, were asked to find evidence for the alleged German influence of prehistoric Silesia⁹⁷.

Authorities of both German provinces shared an aversion to the existence of the Silesian Voivodeship. When the post-uprising terror had finished, the Province of Upper Silesia began to pursue a policy of Germanization against Polish minorities. But the majority of anti-Polish actions came from the Province of Lower Silesia.

The clash of German and Polish nationalisms in the interwar period grew ever deeper. The German side carefully analysed the slogans in Poland that proclaimed that in future they could acquire the entire area of Upper Silesia. Such views were expressed by Polish journalists and were treated by Germany as a threat to their territory⁹⁸. In response, German journalists warned their readers of the threat of a potential 'Slavicisation of the German East'. Perhaps the mildest articles of this nature were those published in the press connected with the SPD⁹⁹.

The views of the authorities in Silesia had not undergone any significant changes until the collapse of the Weimar Republic, but they clearly differentiated. The local government of Lower Silesia focused on current operations and their only activity towards counteracting the deepening division of Silesia was a successful sabotage of the actions of the Province of Upper Silesia on the division of the joint institutions which had not yet been divided. However, the government authorities at all times supported various anti-Polish activities that particularly escalated under the influence of minister Gottfried Treviranus, who in his public speeches called Poland 'a seasonal

⁹⁵ T. Kulak, *op. cit.*, p. 52 et seq.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 70 et seq.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 81 et seq.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 87 et seq.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 95 et seq.

state¹⁰⁰. Such actions took a variety of forms, including even cartography. A greater number of various maps of an anti-Polish nature were printed, indicating losses in many political, demographic, and economic spheres resulting from the creation of the Silesian Voivodeship¹⁰¹. The authorities of the Province of Lower Silesia also supported practical activities, such as lectures, revisionist meetings, political demonstrations, exhibitions, presentations of photographs and slides. The media was also utilized, including films, radio and the press, and propaganda trips to the German–Polish border were also highly popular¹⁰².

The examples provided here do not represent an exhaustive list of actions. It should also be noted that both central and local, self government authorities participated in some of them. An example of this are the visits of Western diplomats, accompanied by staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One regular member of such parties was Georg von Thaer, the country starost (*Landeshauptman von Niederschlesien*), who expressed clear anti-Polish views to representatives of foreign diplomatic posts¹⁰³. Business circles were also employed to help make a case against Poland, which was not difficult because of the anti-Polish attitudes frequently expressed by industrialists and landowners (a prominent politician of the DNVP, Robert graf von Keyserlingk-Cammerau and his wife are often mentioned)¹⁰⁴.

It is worth noting that the political actors in Lower Silesia in the initial period of the Weimar Republic were not reconciled to the collapse of the unity of the province. For them, a sufficient shock was the loss of Silesian Voivodeship and – if it depended on them – they would never allow for the creation of the Province of Upper Silesia¹⁰⁵. The reverse perspective on the process came from the authorities of Upper Silesia, who emphasized the usefulness of the division to release them from the dominance of the other province. The dispute, which was mainly played out in the press, was especially serious in the 1920s, when both provinces held their positions. The Silesian authorities also prevailed in attacking the existence of the Polish part of Silesia.

The first half of the 1920s saw the collapse of the idea of a united Silesia within Germany. The sole guardian of this bankrupt idea was the provincial diet of Lower Silesia, which could not come to terms with the end of the uniform Province of Silesia. Lower Silesian deputies were supported also by the press in this regard. However, the Upper Silesian press supported Upper Silesian diet in the fight for the overall

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 130, 180-182. A popular slogan in Poland was ‘*Treviranus upadł na nos*’ (‘Treviranus fell on his nose’).

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 130-152.

¹⁰² *Ibidem*, pp. 152-177.

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*, p. 179 et seq.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ For more information on this subject see *ibidem.*, p. 24 et seq.

distribution of the assets of local government¹⁰⁶. In addition to economic reasons, the disintegration of the unity of Silesia also had a political basis. The Upper Silesian provincial diet fought for the division of joint property, accusing its Lower Silesian counterpart of sabotaging the division. The latter often cited reasons of economic efficiency when claiming to the Upper Silesian diet that some institutions would not meet the economic criteria for independent existence after the division¹⁰⁷.

The stance of Upper Silesian authorities towards the disintegration of a united Province of Silesia

The local government of Upper Silesia frequently expressed clear pro-separatist opinions¹⁰⁸. They were in favour of the division as it would form a basis for self-government of the new province. The political practice of the province was clearly associated with the views of the Centre Party, and in particular its leader, Carl Ulitzka, who, in his own words, sought to combine Christianity with politics¹⁰⁹. One of his political slogans concerned nationalist issues which always included a religious element: ‘a nation is a community established by God’¹¹⁰.

The factors which distinguished Upper and Lower Silesia clearly influenced the policy of the government of the Province of Upper Silesia. It differed significantly from the other due to the dominance of a different religious confession, which often covered another national affiliation. A significant number of residents of the Province of Upper Silesia were concerned that in the case of a unification of both provinces they would find themselves under the existing dominance of the Lower Silesian Protestants. The existence of a separate province seemed to be an effective barrier against a repetition of the anti-Catholic policy of the Second Reich. Many politicians still remembered Chancellor Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*. Support was provided to the local governments of Upper Silesia by politicians of Polish descent. This was especially true of the group that was of Polish origin but opted for Germany. Their surnames, and sometimes first names, were still Polish, they spoke mostly a Silesian dialect of Polish, but their sense of national awareness was quite labile and tended towards at the German cultural community. On the other hand, politicians that consciously viewed themselves as members of the Polish

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 27 et seq.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 29 et seq.

¹⁰⁸ For a general description of the province see *Historia Górnego Śląska. Polityka, gospodarka i kultura europejskiego regionu*, eds Joachim Bahlcke, Dan Gawrecki, Ryszard Kaczmarek, Gliwice 2011, p. 228 et seq.

¹⁰⁹ For more detailed information on the subject see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, p. 560 et seq.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 805 et seq.

minority also supported the autonomy of the Province of Upper Silesia, considering it a decent half-measure to first tear it away from Germany and in the future connect the whole of Upper Silesia to Poland. Polish interests were expressed by the Polish Circle (Polish fraction) in the Upper Silesian diet. So the balance of political forces until 1933 clearly strengthened separatist tendencies and thus strengthened the policy of permanently dividing a German Silesia into two parts.

The attitude of the local *Landtag* was unequivocally positive about the existence of a separate Province of Upper Silesia. Debates there rarely referred explicitly to the idea of ideological distinctness of the Province of Upper Silesia, but this could be seen when the local diet fought for the largest share of the liquidated assets of the local government from the dissolved Province of Silesia¹¹¹. The consensus of the main political forces in Upper Silesia was evident, and even included the left-wing SPD¹¹². However, the Upper Silesian DNVP were clearly opposed to separatist tendencies¹¹³.

Thus, the period of the Weimar Republic was characterized by two contradictory trends regarding the German part of Silesia. The local government of Lower Silesia had never come to terms with the collapse of the united province and guarded those administrative elements which in theory could be divided between the two new provinces¹¹⁴. For this reason, the local authorities of the two provinces were in conflict with one another. A number of factors overlapped, of which the political and the religious ones were the most prominent. The main political force in the period of the Weimar Republic in the Province of Lower Silesia was the SPD, which did not remain on good terms with the Christian Democrats (former Centre Party) ruling in Upper Silesia. In addition, the Upper Silesian autonomists were supported by the Catholic Church, which was not the dominant religion in Protestant Lower Silesia.

The preserved minutes of the proceedings of the two provincial diets quite clearly show the political conflict of interest. Lower Silesia wanted to maintain the closest possible relationship between the new provinces, whereas Upper Silesia sought its own independent position in the Reich, starting with autonomy.

Autonomy of the Silesian Voivodeship in the Second Polish Republic

The establishment of the Polish national movement in Silesia in the late 19th century caused after the First World War destruction of the territorial unity of Silesia,

¹¹¹ *Verhandlungen des Gemeinsamen 60. Landtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien – 4. Tagung – (8. und 9. Mai 1925), Stenographischer Bericht...*, p. 1.

¹¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 1 and 2.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ For a general picture see M. Czaplinski, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *op.cit.*, pp. 365-382.

the effects of which are still felt today¹¹⁵. The reborn Polish state successfully joined the fight to connect Upper Silesia to Poland, which inevitably led to the end of the unity of the province. In the actions that led to the creation of the Silesian Voivodeship, a significant role was played from the very beginning by Polish nationalists belonging to the Central Citizens' Committee (CKO) in Poznań (Posen), who were of a national democratic persuasion¹¹⁶. The CKO explicitly advocated for joining all the lands of the Prussian Partition inhabited by the Poles to Poland, which was to be achieved by an armed uprising. At the time of regaining independence, Upper Silesian politicians formed an alliance with the Supreme People's Council, the successor to the CKO¹¹⁷. Of symbolic importance was the idea of convening a *Polski Sejm Dzielnicowy* (Polish Parliament of Partitions) which would represent the Poles from the Prussian Partition and democratically elect the representatives of Silesia. At the assembly convened in Poznań (3-5.12.1918), 441 delegates out of 1,299 represented Silesia. This region was represented by well-known political activists, particularly the National Democrats¹¹⁸. The proceedings were associated with a number of resolutions, the most important of which was called *Ustawa politycznej organizacji Polaków zamieszkających w dotychczasowych granicach Rzeszy Niemieckiej* (the Act on the political organization of Poles living in the existing borders of the German Reich). Implementing those demands would, first of all, increase the political and cultural autonomy of the Polish population. Support for this could also be found in the Polish councils emerging – like the German ones – that wanted to propose them to the above-mentioned German Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies¹¹⁹.

The SPD activists ruling in Berlin initially tried to seek an agreement with the Polish councils. In the capital of the Reich it was not yet clear that the scarce voices demanding Polish autonomy in Silesia would evolve to demands for Upper Silesia to join Poland. At that time the Poles issued limited demands in which they claimed autonomy within Prussia. The ruling Social Democrats, trying to gain the support of the Polish side, withdrew the most extreme nationalists from power (especially those who were members of *Ostmarkverein*)¹²⁰.

¹¹⁵ For an analysis of the views of the organs of state and local government on the economic consequences of the split see Krystian Heffner, Wiesław Lesiuk, *Ekonomiczne i społeczne skutki podziału Górnego Śląska w 1922 roku*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 135 et seq.

¹¹⁶ For more information on the subject see E. Klein, *O polską władzę na Górnym Śląsku 1918-1922. Ogólne założenia polskiego samorządu narodowego w Prusach*, 'Studia Śląskie, Seria Nowa', 38 (1981), p. 13 et seq.

¹¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 20 et seq.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 25 et seq.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 31-33.

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

The German authorities also tried to influence the Poles through the above-mentioned system of councils, but the escalating conflict of both sides inevitably ended with armed struggle. The case of state power in Silesia had been internationalized and – as already mentioned – was settled at the peace conference at Versailles.

The final division of Upper Silesia was approved at the Ambassadors' Conference on 20th October 1921. After the division of Silesia, which resulted from the plebiscite and the Silesian uprisings, the Silesian Voivodeship was established and granted domestic autonomy by the Polish authorities; however, it was also proscribed by international law¹²¹. The basic regulations were contained in the Constitutional Act of 15th July 1920, which contained the Organic Statute of the Silesian Voivodeship. The Organic Statute provided that the Polish part of Silesia would be given autonomous institutions, of which the most important was the Silesian Parliament (Article 4 et seq.) The Silesian Parliament was entitled to pass laws of a very broad scope, covering 17 areas (including, among others, legislation on the use of Polish and German, as well as on the administrative system)¹²². There was also another group of cases that were already under the remit of public authorities in Warsaw, but the introduction of those provisions required the consent of the Silesian Sejm (Article 5). This included economic legislation, which was so significant for the voivodeship¹²³.

The interwar period ultimately brought an end to the territorial unity of Silesia. From the point of view of the interests of the Polish state, efforts, in particular until the May Coup by Józef Piłsudski (1926), were concentrated on complying with the regulations of autonomy, and the state doctrine in Silesia was clearly anti-German, emphasizing the Polish identity of the region. Journalistic reports and opinions should be distinguished from the policy of government, which did not engage in revisionist activities that would aim at extending the area of the Polish part of Silesia¹²⁴. Polish journalists, on the other hand, often wrote about the Polish identity of the whole of Upper Silesia, and their activity especially intensified after 1933, when the National Socialists carried out a Germanization policy in German Silesia (changing proper names, family names etc.)¹²⁵.

¹²¹ J. Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska*, p. 157 et seq.

¹²² For information on ecclesiastical legislation see Bolesław Reiner, *Wyznania i związki religijne w województwie śląskim*, Opole 1977, p. 111 et seq.

¹²³ Cf J. Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska*, p. 159 et seq. On the characteristics of the Silesian legislation see p. 162 et seq.

¹²⁴ For an overall picture see M. Czaplinski, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *op.cit.*, p. 394 et seq.

¹²⁵ Cf T. Kruszewski, *Udział instancji NSDAP na Śląsku w akcji zmiany nazwisk*, AUWr., no 1715, *Studia nad Faszyzmem i Zbrodniami Hitlerowskimi* (further referred to as *SnFiZH*), vol. XVIII, Wrocław 1995, pp. 221-234. See also Karol Fiedor, *Bund Deutscher Osten w systemie antypolskiej propagandy*, Warszawa-Wrocław 1977.

The political situation in the Silesian Voivodeship at the time of its creation resembled in some respects the situation in the Province of Upper Silesia¹²⁶. There, too, the Catholic religion was dominant and the Christian Democrats inevitably played a significant political role. They had a crucial impact on the shape of the Organic Statute, which is not surprising when one takes into account the political importance in Silesia of Wojciech Korfanty, the leader of the Christian Democrats, for example¹²⁷. Just like their German counterparts from the Centre Party, they fought for the autonomous regulations of Upper Silesia to be as extensive as possible. In the process of creating the Statute they also looked at solutions from the Austrian Partition, the pretext for this being the inclusion of so-called Austrian Silesia to the voivodeship. Their first views were changed in the Statute because a part of the Christian Democrats perceived the Silesian Voivodeship as a state within a state, and even a union of two states: Poland and Silesia. In this respect they inherited the autonomous view from the First World War described above. The importance of the Christian Democrats in the creation of the Organic Statute was significant. The authors of that legislative act included leading Christian Democratic activists¹²⁸.

Not having achieved success in the broader international arena, Silesian autonomists focused on the legislative powers of the Silesian Parliament. They tried to make them extremely extensive, though even in this field they suffered some setbacks when one compares their demands with the ultimate effects¹²⁹. They failed to weaken the basic influence of the constitution and Polish legislation on the voivodeship. The scope of Silesian legislative was important, but its content was limited to the region. This is evident in the scope of jurisdiction (see Articles 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16, 39 and 44), where the issue of using the Polish and German languages came to the fore, but no conclusions about the official character of the latter can be drawn. The right to use both languages was rather due to the observance of international law, as the guarantees of the protection of national minorities were included in the Geneva Convention of 15th May 1922¹³⁰.

¹²⁶ On the active role of prelate Ulitzka see G. Hitze, *op. cit.*, for the autonomy of the Silesian Voivodeship see *ibidem*, p. 932 et seq., on his policy after the May Coup towards voivode Grażyński see *ibidem*, p. 959 et seq. There were violent clashes with the voivode because of his anti-German policy, see *ibidem*, p. 983 et seq. For his frequent clashes with Korfanty ('Polish *hakatyzm*'), see *ibidem*, p. 969 et seq.

¹²⁷ Andrzej Drogoń, *Śląscy chadecy a projekt statutu organicznego województwa śląskiego*, 'Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego', No 782, Studia Iuridica Silesiana, vol. 11, 1986, pp. 152-166.

¹²⁸ Andrzej Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego w pracach Klubu Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji w I Sejmie Śląskim*, Katowice 2003, p. 48 et seq.

¹²⁹ J. Ciągwa, *Funkcja ustawodawcza Sejmu Śląskiego w latach 1922-1939*, 'Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne', 54 (2002), issue 2, pp. 67-88.

¹³⁰ *Ustawa z dnia 24 maja 1922 r. w przedmiocie ratyfikacji konwencji niemiecko-polskiej, dotyczącej Górnego Śląska, podpisanej w Genewie dnia 15 maja 1922 r.*, Dz.U. of 1922, no 44, item 370.

Changes to the statutory rights to autonomy did not come about until the passing of the April Constitution of Poland (1935), which undermined the autonomous guarantees by repealing Article 44 of the Statute. This caused further fierce disputes between Katowice (Kattowitz, Katovice) and Warsaw¹³¹.

The significance of the Upper Silesian Christian Democrats also had a significant impact on the legislation in force in Silesia. The Christian Democrats initiated a number of bills in Silesia, the content of which explicitly reflected the autonomous nature of the voivodeship¹³². Christian Democrat deputies were a tightly-knit group in the Silesian Sejm and they defended the Organic Statute against the centralistic attempts of the authorities in Warsaw, which particularly intensified after the May Coup (1926)¹³³.

The existence of the autonomy of Silesia was – as already mentioned – the essence of the political concepts of Christian democratic parties which were dominant in the Silesian Voivodeship. Christian Democratic parties played a dominant role in the functioning of the autonomy¹³⁴. These issues must be seen in parallel to those of the German Province of Upper Silesia, as in the early interwar period both regions were ruled by Catholic groups. It can actually be assumed that the Christian Democrats in both administrative units of Silesia first helped bring about their creation and then defended them. These forces successfully defended the Province of Upper Silesia from the encroachment of Lower Silesia and the Berlin government and, in the case of the Silesian Voivodeship, from the authorities of Warsaw¹³⁵.

Polish Christian Democrats, especially until the May Coup, continued to have a significant impact on the functioning of the administrative authorities in Silesia. This was the result of the important role played by these political forces during the

¹³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 76-77.

¹³² A. Drogoń, *Stosunek chadecji wobec obowiązywania ustaw śląskich*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Katowice 1994, pp. 121-138, especially p. 124 et seq.

¹³³ Of considerable importance were the Christian Democrat deputies who were the members of the Legal Committee of the First Silesian Parliament – see A. Drogoń, *Z prac Komisji Prawniczej I Sejmu Śląskiego (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 4., Katowice 2003 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No 2031), pp. 98-120.

¹³⁴ See A. Drogoń, *Chadecja na śląskim pograniczu. Kilka uwag o roli nurtu chrześcijańsko-demokratycznego w autonomicznym systemie ustrojowym województwa śląskiego*, [in:] *Wielokulturowość polskiego pogranicza. Ludzie – idee – prawo. Materiały ze Zjazdu Katedr Historycznoprawnych, Augustów, 15-18 września 2002 roku*, eds Adam Lityński, Piotr Fiedorczyk, Białystok 2003, pp. 575-587; *idem*, *Ustrój autonomiczny województwa śląskiego jako przedmiot badań współczesnego historyka prawa – pasje naukowe Józefa Ciągwy*, [in:] *Państwo, Prawo, Społeczeństwo w dziejach Europy Środkowej. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Józefowi Ciągwie w siedemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, Katowice-Kraków 2009, pp. 151-174.

¹³⁵ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 83 et seq. The political significance of the Christian Democrats is shown by the number of Catholics in the Silesian Voivodeship, which is around 1.2 mln, while there were 50,000-80,000 Protestants and 8,000-18,000 Jews. See *ibidem*, p. 86. Detailed data see B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

Third Silesian Uprising¹³⁶. This situation lasted until the mid-1920s, when, under the influence of the events of 1926, the Christian Democratic Party began to divide as some of its members appeared to be in favour of cooperation with the new Sanation voivode of Silesia, Michał Grażyński¹³⁷. After 1922, this influence was further intensified, which applies both to the executive power (the voivode's office was staffed by Christian Democratic politicians), and the representative bodies (Silesian Voivodeship Council). What should be borne in mind is the strong character of PMO groups that were associated with a prominent Józef Piłsudski follower and voivode Michał Grażyński¹³⁸.

The Christian Democratic group was vitally important in the Silesian Parliament, as evidenced by the various political activities it undertook. The group continued to exert an influence on the authorities governing the Silesian Voivodeship, as the most important posts were filled by Christian Democrats, for example the position of voivode, which was filled by the following members of this political group, in order of assuming office: Józef Rymer, Antoni Schultis and Mieczysław Bilski. During this period the Christian Democrats diverged from merely imitating the Centre Party in order to build their own party to operate on the Polish political scene¹³⁹.

The Christian Democrats spoke out on issues which they deemed particularly important in light of their political agenda. Of course, of greatest importance to this group were religious issues. Religious legislation and the method of proceeding in these matters imposed a confessional element on ethnic conflicts, as a large part of the German minority confessed one of the Protestant denominations and the Jewish minority was usually of the Jewish faith¹⁴⁰. Ethnic conflicts also occurred in the area of education. Legislative and executive bodies were involved in disputes with the representatives of the German and Jewish minorities. Disputes also took place, however, between the legislative and administrative bodies on issues such as the employment of teachers (Silesian autonomists accused the authorities of Warsaw of

¹³⁶ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 63 et seq.

¹³⁷ See A. Drogoń, *Przed rozłamem. Z dziejów chadecji w województwie śląskim (1919-1928)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 3, Katowice 2002 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 2048), pp. 128-140. On the situation after the May Coup see *idem*, *Pozycja Klubu Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji w I Sejmie Śląskim (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 1, Katowice 1996 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 1581), especially p. 167 et seq.

¹³⁸ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 67 et seq.

¹³⁹ A. Drogoń, *Pozycja Klubu Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji*, p. 157 et seq. Konstanty Wolny, the marshal of the Silesian Parliament, was also important here.

¹⁴⁰ A. Drogoń, *Stosunek klubu parlamentarnego Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji w Sejmie Śląskim do polityki wyznaniowej Sejmu Śląskiego w latach 1922-1929*, [in:] *Z dziejów sądów i prawa*, Katowice 1992 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No 1277), especially p. 87 et seq.

replacing local teachers with immigrants from Galicia and Congress Poland)¹⁴¹. Another source of conflict was the implementation of land reform, which in the Silesian Voivodeship led to clashes over the parcelling of estates that, frequently, belonged to Germans¹⁴². The main subject of this policy were the administrative authorities, with the voivode of Silesia playing a leading role, but they had the support of the Silesian Parliament¹⁴³.

The activities of Polish administration throughout the interwar period were aimed at maintaining the status quo, meaning that they defended the territorial disintegration of Silesia. This was in accordance with the Polish *raison d'état*, as it must be remembered that a significant part of government revenue was derived from the Silesian Voivodeship, which was the richest voivodeship in Poland. On the other hand, in the first few years after Silesia became part of Poland the German minority did not disseminate – for obvious reasons – strictly revisionist ideas. *Volksbund*, the main organization representing the Germans which was founded on 27th July 1922, called on German teachers and officials to remain in their positions, but the tendency of those people to leave to German territories grew stronger. After a brief appeasement of the situation in *Volksbund*, anti-Polish tendencies were growing, which especially manifested themselves through attacks on the new Polish teachers from the former Galicia and Congress Poland¹⁴⁴.

An important possibility for the German minority to engage in public activities was given by the right to make parliamentary interpellations, which was regulated by the Silesian Parliament on several occasions¹⁴⁵. The German minority raised objections to a wide variety of issues, including German education, but most of all with respect to obeying the Convention of Upper Silesia. It was clear that a well-organized German minority used the regulations of the Silesian Parliament to defend

¹⁴¹ A. Drogoń, *Sprawy szkolnictwa na forum I Sejmu Śląskiego (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 2, Katowice 1999 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 1735), pp. 159-178. Similarly, *idem*, *O celibacie nauczycielek w województwie śląskim. Kartka z dziejów regulacji prawnej szkolnictwa*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 4, Katowice 2003 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 2031), especially p. 121 et seq., which presents the anti-Polish activities of German schools. It also presents another problem, that is yielding to the pressure of the Catholic Church which tried to mould public education into the form of religious education (the key policy was to compel teachers to live in celibacy, as marriage terminated their employment). For more on the latter act see also J. Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska*, p. 170.

¹⁴² A. Drogoń, *Sprawa reformy rolnej w I Sejmie Śląskim (1922-1929)*, 'Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne', 54 (2002), issue 1, pp. 387-398.

¹⁴³ A. Drogoń, *Polityka rolna Sejmu Śląskiego. Podmioty realizujące reformę rolną w autonomicznym województwie śląskim*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 3, pp. 161-174.

¹⁴⁴ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 107 et seq.

¹⁴⁵ See J. Ciągwa, *Geneza regulacji prawnej interpelacji poselskich w Sejmie Śląskim*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 2 (10), Katowice 2009 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No 2704), pp. 101-126.

their interests, although they did not formally oppose the Polish state¹⁴⁶. It should be remembered that the number of those interpellations (11) accounted for a small percentage of all interpellations, which mainly came from the Polish political parties¹⁴⁷.

In various circles of the German minority there was a strong tendency to conduct anti-Polish activities which, from the point of view of the former unity of the province, could in theory be regarded as positive. Such unity, however, was not worth recovering when the German Empire was ruled by anti-Polish forces, which in a wider scale were dangerous for the whole of Europe. Even if German sovereignty over the whole of Upper Silesia had been restored, sooner or later it would have been divided into two parts (see the above-described policy of the Third Reich). The peak of anti-Polish activities led by various German groups was reached in the period of the Third Reich, a regime which many representatives of the German minority identified themselves with. Anti-Polish tendencies had been growing since 1933, when Adolf Hitler came to power¹⁴⁸. The peak of this trend were the actions of the National Socialist German Workers' Movement in the late 1930s which wanted and tried to tear Silesia from Poland and connect it to the Third Reich¹⁴⁹. Those actions were undertaken upon the expiry of the Geneva Convention, which had been signed for fifteen years. Thanks to counter-intelligence activity, the National Socialists' conspiracy had successfully been detected.

¹⁴⁶ J. Ciągwa, *Interpelacje niemieckie w I Sejmie Śląskim (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 7, Katowice 2005 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No 2357), pp. 104-129.

¹⁴⁷ J. Ciągwa, *Prawo interpelacji w praktyce I Sejmu Śląskiego (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 2, pp. 135-158. Most of the interpellations came from the National Workers' Party, see *idem*, *Interpelacje Klubu Narodowej Partii Robotniczej w I Sejmie Śląskim (od 10 października 1922 roku do 12 lutego 1929 roku)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 1 (9), Katowice 2008 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, No 2571), pp. 91-130 and from the Polish Socialist Party, see *idem*, *Interpelacje poselskie Klubu Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w I Sejmie Śląskim (1922-1929)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 4 (12), Katowice 2011 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 2868), pp. 135-186. These movers also dominated in the short-lived second term of the Silesian Parliament which was dissolved by President Ignacy Mościcki in the turbulent 1930 of 'Brest' elections and struggle with the opposition, see *idem*, *Interpelacje poselskie w Sejmie Śląskim II kadencji (11 maja 1930 r.-26 września 1930 r.)*, [in:] *Z dziejów prawa*, vol. 8, Katowice 2006 (=Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego nr 2455), pp. 121-152. On German education see also Matthias Kneipp, *Die deutsche Sprache in Oberschlesien. Untersuchungen zur politischen Rolle der deutschen Sprache als Minderheitssprache in den Jahren 1921-1998*, Dortmund 1999, pp. 75-115.

¹⁴⁸ A. Drogoń, *Chadecja na śląskim pograniczu*, pp. 585-587.

¹⁴⁹ See T. Kruszewski, *Likwidacja Narodowosocjalistycznego Niemieckiego Ruchu Robotniczego (NSDAB) w województwie śląskim w 1936 r.*, AUWr., No 1283, SnFiZH, vol. 16, 1993, pp. 203-222.

The stance of Czechoslovak authorities towards a former Province of Silesia and Austrian Silesia

In the Province of Silesia the area that was inhabited predominantly by the Czechs was the southern part of the district of Racibórz (the so-called Hlučín – Hultschin, Hulczyn – Region). However, in the national consciousness of the Czechs, widespread efforts to recover these parts of Silesia, which had been ethnically tied to the Habsburg lands inhabited by the Czech population, began to take place as early as during the First World War, along with the revival of the Czechoslovak state¹⁵⁰. At the time of gaining independence, the young state put forward territorial claims towards Silesia, a move which can be put down to feelings of patriotic elation. Moreover, certain scholars suggested obtaining territories where they believed the spoken dialect was Czech¹⁵¹. Czechoslovakia put forward a territorial request, which appeared later in Versailles, in which it demanded being granted Hlučín Region, which was eventually accepted by the Treaty of Versailles (Article 83). The fight for this territory triggered a response from the Germans side, but the Polish side too had dreamed of acquiring the whole district of Racibórz in the period of the Silesian uprisings¹⁵². The Czech population living in German Silesia undertook actions similar to those which took place in Polish Upper Silesia in 1918, as well as in Austrian Cieszyn Silesia (Czech: Těšínské Slezsko, Polish: Śląsk Cieszyński, German: Teschener Schlesien) where a conflict with the Poles was beginning to take shape. Czech ideas of joining Czechoslovakia also included Kłodzko (Glatz, Kladsko) or even the district of Wałbrzych (Waldenburg, Valdenburk, Valbrich). However, the claims that are most relevant for this discussion are those related to Hlučín Region and Cieszyn Silesia¹⁵³. Just like the Poles, the Czech activists agitated for the connection of these areas to the emerging Czechoslovakia. The authorities of that country were soon confronted with unrealistic popular demands to connect a considerable area of Upper Silesia to Pszczyna (Pless) and Rybnik (Rybnik) to Czechoslovakia. The authorities instead decided on more realistic and minimalist programmes, being careful to not escalate their claims in Versailles¹⁵⁴. Germany's fears concerning the Czech claims for the Kłodzko Valley were so high that even military intervention was expected. Troops gathered on both sides of the

¹⁵⁰ Jaroslav Valenta, *Górny Śląsk w czeskiej myśli politycznej do 1918 roku*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 53 et seq.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 61 et seq.

¹⁵² D. Gawrecki, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918-1921.*, p. 85 et seq.

¹⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

border in an area that threatened to become a hotbed of conflict¹⁵⁵. However, a higher chance of military conflict was that of Hlučín Region which was supposed to be given away by Germany to Czechoslovakia. The largest landowner in the region, Prince von Lichnovsky, in a conversation with a representative of the United Kingdom suggested that there was a need for a plebiscite¹⁵⁶. German separatists had not yet begun to put forward demands following the inclusion of the area into Czechoslovakia¹⁵⁷.

By managing to exert influence on the decisions taken at Versailles, Czech nationalists and Czechoslovak authorities were able to contribute to the territorial collapse of the Province of Silesia. Even though Czech gains were small in comparison to the losses to Poland, they were still painful for German nationalists¹⁵⁸. From the moment the loss of the Hlučín Region was confirmed, it was widely regarded as one of the most unacceptable and grievous acts in the programmes of German nationalists until its return to German hands in 1938.

The fiercest clash, however, was over Cieszyn Silesia, which was inhabited by both Poles and Czechs¹⁵⁹. In Cieszyn Silesia both nations pursued a policy of *fait accompli*. As early as 19th October 1918, the National Council of Cieszyn Silesia was established in Cieszyn. Slightly later, on 30th October, it passed a resolution to include that area into the reborn Poland. The Czechs conducted similar activities. They formed *Zemský Národní Výbor pro Slezsko* and also wanted to seize the largest possible part of the Duchy for themselves. The first to act were the Poles who, on the night of 1st to 2nd November 1918, hung Polish flags in Cieszyn (Teschen, Těšín). Soon after that, from 2nd to 5th November, both sides agreed on a provisional boundary line¹⁶⁰. For the Czechs, that division was strictly temporary. It was more favourable for the Polish side because it meant that almost all Cieszyn Silesia remained within Poland (excluding the district of Frydek). On 23rd January 1919, the Czechs took advantage of Poland's fight for Lwów (Lemberg, Lwów) and attacked Cieszyn Silesia, seizing most of the area. A new demarcation line was drawn, this time favourable for the Czechs¹⁶¹. In February 1919, both sides presented their visions for the border, which contained conflicting territorial claims¹⁶². Diplomats of both countries fiercely fought for the area known as Austrian Silesia, and the politicians of the Entente preferred to reach

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ *Historia Górnego Śląska*, pp. 226-227.

¹⁶⁰ Bogusław Cybulski, *Rada Narodowa Księstwa Cieszyńskiego (1918-1920)*, Opole 1980, pp. 38,39, 43-48.

¹⁶¹ M. Czaplński, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *op. cit.*, pp. 350-351.

¹⁶² D. Gawrecki, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918-1921*, p. 101.

the decision by a plebiscite. The initial decision in this matter was made by the Conference of Ambassadors of the League of Nations on 4th June 1919. On the other hand, the Treaty of Versailles rejected the idea of an analogous plebiscite in the Hlučín Region which was proposed by the British¹⁶³. Subsequently, Poland and Czechoslovakia conducted further negotiations in Cracow (Krakau, Kraków) on establishing the border, but they ended in failure (21st-29th July, 1919). What is more, a delimitation committee was created, which included delegates from the superpowers (Britain, France, Italy and Japan) and Czech and Polish delegates Col. J. Špaček and Dr. J. Rostek, respectively. Both sides, however, were not open to an amicable solution to the conflict¹⁶⁴. The conflict was joined by the Allied Powers and on 27th September 1919 they decided to launch a plebiscite to resolve the conflict¹⁶⁵. Power was taken over by the Plebiscite Commission, which was aimed at limiting hostilities on both sides of the conflict¹⁶⁶.

An armed struggle, as well as an international situation unfavourable to Poland (the Polish–Soviet War) led Poland at a conference in Spa to give up the plebiscite, and the border line reached by the Czechs left many Poles in the part of Cieszyn Silesia known in Poland as Zaolzie¹⁶⁷. In the first half of 1920, the Polish–Czech conflict began to grow. It could no longer be solved by any of the states and a mediation of victorious powers was necessary. Decisions made at the conference in Spa on 28th July 1920 ended the period of uncertainty in Cieszyn Silesia¹⁶⁸. The bodies of the would-be plebiscite, the International Plebiscite Commission and the prefects appointed by it along with the Central Committee of the Plebiscite, ceased to exist¹⁶⁹. The difficult situation that Poland found itself in at the time of the Bolshevik invasion was exploited by the Czechs to obtain the largest possible part of Cieszyn Silesia¹⁷⁰. The final result of the division of the disputed area was a delimitation of the border between Poland and Czechoslovakia which took place when the two sides signed the relevant protocols on 10th August 1920. The Delimitation Commission

¹⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 90.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁵ B. Cybulski, *Prefekt dla wschodniej części Śląska Cieszyńskiego (lutycz-sierpień 1920)*, AUWr., No. 516, Prawo, 91, 1980, p. 121; *idem*, *Rada Narodowa*, pp. 178-181.

¹⁶⁶ *Idem*, *Rada Narodowa*, p. 200 *et seq.*

¹⁶⁷ D. Gawrecki, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918-1921*, pp. 102-104. See also M. Czapliński, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *op. cit.*, pp. 351-352.

¹⁶⁸ M. Czapliński, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

¹⁶⁹ B. Cybulski, *Komisarz Rządowy i Tymczasowa Komisja Rządowa Śląska Cieszyńskiego (1920-1922)*, AUWr., No. 583, *Prawo* 103, 1982, p. 123 *et seq.* The world powers were aware that the Commission itself could not cope with the enormity of the tasks and therefore the office of prefects was established, see B. Cybulski, *Prefekt*, p. 125 *et seq.* See also *idem*, *Rada Narodowa*, pp. 181-183.

¹⁷⁰ Demarcation lines from 1918-1920 are shown on a map by B. Cybulski, *Rada Narodowa*, p. 38 (colour map), also *idem*, *Prefekt*, p. 124.

proposed the course of the border line, which persisted until 1938. However, a conflict over the people appointed by the government in Warsaw to form a permanent Polish administration in Cieszyn Silesia was immediately ignited on the Polish side of the border¹⁷¹. Fights over the powers of administrative bodies continued until 1922.

In this way, the state authorities of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and Polish and Czech nationalists standing behind them, contributed to the disintegration of Silesia. Each competed with one another. This manifested in actions to get the southern part of the German Silesia, both sides trying to win as much as possible for themselves, and in Austrian Silesia fratricidal clashes for its acquisition began.

The status of the Church and its impact on the territorial unity of Silesia in 1918-1945

The political disintegration of Silesia after the First World War had a direct impact on the organization of the Catholic Church. The events that had led to the formation of a new Church organization in Silesia after the First World War involved the Vatican authorities, who had to take a stand on the Polish–German issue. The Polish side feared the counteractions of the German authorities in Vatican. Eventually, German actions had been successfully stopped by the establishment of the position of high church commissioner were fulfilled by Achilles Ratti, nuncio in Warsaw (later the Pope Pius XI)¹⁷².

Establishment of the Silesian Voivodeship was particularly negatively perceived by the Cardinal and Bishop of Wrocław, Adolf Bertram¹⁷³. This negative attitude had already manifested in the beginnings of the reborn Polish Republic¹⁷⁴. He expounded his views on 15th December 1919 to the deputy, J. Wierusz-Kowalski. He claimed that the structure created by Cardinal Ratti was unnecessary, because he – as the territorial head of the Church in Silesia – was responsible for the overall organization of the Church. On the other hand, he could not completely oust the high church commissioner appointed by Pope Benedict XV. However, the actions of Cardinal Bertram sought to undermine A. Ratti's influence¹⁷⁵. Ultimately, the victory

¹⁷¹ B. Cybulski, *Komisarz Rządowy*, p. 126 *et seq.*

¹⁷² Jan Kopiec, Jerzy Myszor, *Główne problemy działalności Kościoła katolickiego na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1918-1925*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 roku*, p. 108.

¹⁷³ A biography of cardinal Adolf Bertram was presented by bishop Ferdinand Piontek, *Adolf Bertram*, [in:] *Schlesische Priesterbilder*, vol. 5, ed. Joseph Gottschalk, Aalen/Württ. 1967, pp. 15-22.

¹⁷⁴ When a delegation of Polish Catholics asked him to support their national needs in the Church, he answered 'Please, do not forget that I am a German bishop', quoted in B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

belonged to Bertram because the Vatican's statement explained that the powers of the High Commissioner did not violate the jurisdiction of the cardinal of Wrocław.

Bertram feared the pro-Polish attitude of the high commissioner at the upcoming plebiscite in Upper Silesia. It was also the time that the cardinal's views, clearly hostile to the division of Silesia, were revealed. It is worth recalling his regulation issued on 21st November 1920, in consultation with the nunciature in Munich, where, under threat of suspension, he forbade priests from conducting any plebiscite-related activity¹⁷⁶. This particularly applied to non-diocesan priests, and while local priests needed the consent of parish priests from undertaking such actions. The decision was well-received by the parish priests in Upper Silesia, as 75 per cent of them were of German nationality. This was particularly detrimental to the Polish side because the Poles in Silesia were not as well educated as the Germans. Polish authorities spoke fiercely against it, and there were even calls to sever diplomatic relations with the Vatican in parliament¹⁷⁷. However, at the congress of the clergy in Bytom (Beuthen) on 30th November 1920, 91 priests proposed a resolution calling for a repeal of the regulation¹⁷⁸. A. Ratti spoke passionately against it, which in turn led to a German retaliation and his dismissal from the position of a high commissioner¹⁷⁹. However, on 21st December 1920, the new commissioner, Jan Baptista Ogno, repealed Bertram's ordinance. From then on the commissioner, and not the cardinal, could give his consent to priests on this matter¹⁸⁰.

Cardinal Bertram also undertook measures to prevent changes in the organization of the Church in Silesia. He was clearly opposed to any division of the church's organizational structure, and he refused to establish any church administration independent from him in Upper Silesia¹⁸¹. He also tried to save himself with half measures, including offering his support to the administrative authorities who had deluded themselves that persuading Poles to stay in the German Reich was possible. An example of such an action was his summoning Fr. Jan Kapica, a Polish priest active in the plebiscite action, and appointing him as the episcopal delegate for the district of Upper Silesia the day after the division of Silesia by the Ambassadors of the League of Nations, that is on 21st October 1921¹⁸². This appointment had not been consulted

¹⁷⁶ B. Reiner, *op.cit.*, pp. 126-127; Jerzy Myszor, *Historia diecezji katowickiej*, Katowice 1999, p. 25.

¹⁷⁷ B. Reiner, *op.cit.*, p. 128. Fierce protests were also noted in the Polish press in Silesia, *ibidem*, p. 127.

¹⁷⁸ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 87.

¹⁷⁹ J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁸⁰ B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁸¹ J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-115.

¹⁸² A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, pp. 87-88; J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; J. Myszor, *Historia diecezji*, pp. 17-18. According to the latter work, Cardinal Bertram allowed the existence of the Polish bishopric of Katowice. It also presents a list of deaneries and parishes that were included within the area of the representation.

with anyone and the Polish authorities feared that Upper Silesia would be still dependent on the bishop from abroad. Although Cardinal Bertram appointed Father Kapica himself, he did not trust him and subjected him to control from the Vicariate General in Wrocław¹⁸³.

Upon learning of these moves, the Poles started instigating proceedings in the Vatican which led to the establishment of an independent Church administration in Polish Upper Silesia. In February 1922, the Poles revealed their plan to establish such an administration. The German side understood the implications of this action and German priests slowly began to realize that Polish Church administration would be established¹⁸⁴. Bertram could no longer count on the Vatican, where on 6th February 1922, A. Ratti was elected Pope. This openly pro-Polish Pope did not give any support to the cardinal of Wrocław¹⁸⁵. Thus, the Polish action ended successfully, as on 7th November 1922, the Holy See appointed a Silesian religious of Salesian Society, August Hlond as the superior of the Apostolic Administration of Upper Silesia¹⁸⁶. In one of his first orders on 16th January 1923, August Hlond made Polish an official language in his area of influence¹⁸⁷. In the beginning of his tenure A. Hlond adopted a cautious approach, not wanting to inflame the already tense relations with Cardinal Bertram¹⁸⁸.

The next step in strengthening support for disintegration of former united Silesia was signing a concordat with the Vatican on 10th February 1925, which can be categorized as a Polish success. The concordat recognized the entire Polish state as the jurisdiction of the Polish church organization. Of particular importance was Article 9 of the concordat, which provided that the area of the Polish state could not fall within the jurisdiction of a bishop located outside Poland. This marked the final defeat of Cardinal Bertram in his efforts to retain jurisdiction in the Silesian Voivodeship¹⁸⁹.

Prior to the signing of the concordat, the state authorities in Warsaw made major efforts to establish a separate diocese in the Silesian Voivodeship. Some Polish Church

¹⁸³ J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 117. J. Myszor describes numerous conflicts between Polish and German priests in the parishes, see J. Myszor, *Historia diecezji*, p. 19-20. Those conflicts intensified in 1922, see *ibidem*, p. 30 *et seq.*

¹⁸⁵ The first half of 1922 saw an increase in Polish efforts to separate the Polish Church administration from subordination to the Archdiocese of Wrocław, see *ibidem*, p. 23 *et seq.* This triggered strong protests from Cardinal Bertram, see *ibidem*, pp. 32-34.

¹⁸⁶ The pope achieved this by the decree of the pastoral congregation *Sanctissimus Dominus noster*; see B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 133 *et seq.* Because of it the jurisdiction of Cardinal Bertram over the Polish part of Upper Silesia was repealed. It was a matter of the so-called German Silesia, because that Wrocław jurisdiction over Austrian Silesia lasted until 1925, when the concordat entered into force.

¹⁸⁷ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 88.

¹⁸⁸ J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁸⁹ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 89.

units also agreed that this diocese should fall under the control of an existing archdiocese in Poland (the main idea was Kraków)¹⁹⁰. The projected borders of the new Diocese of Katowice included the Vicariate General of Cieszyn¹⁹¹.

The most important result of the concordat in this field was the bull of Pius XI *Vixdum Poloniae unitas* of 28th October 1925 which stabilized the Polish Church organization in Upper Silesia through the creation of the Diocese of Katowice¹⁹². Its provisions were expanded upon by the Executive Decree of the nuncio of 11th November 1925. Those documents subordinated the newly created diocese to the Archdiocese of Kraków. The area of the Diocese of Katowice covered the whole area of the Silesian Voivodeship, that is both the area of the former German Silesia and Austrian Silesia. Finally, the latter was included on 18th November 1925 into the Diocese of Kraków and the following deaneries were created in the area: Bielsko (Bielitz), Cieszyn, Skoczów (Skotschau) and Strumień (Schwarzwasser). The final closure of these trends was the ground-breaking event of the construction of a cathedral in Katowice (5th June 1927)¹⁹³. The construction of the cathedral received the support of the Silesian Sejm, which decided to redeem the public loan borrowed by the Church on its construction¹⁹⁴. This example illustrates a broader problem of the frequent support of the authorities of the Silesian Voivodeship given to different Church issues in the voivodeship. These included various forms of support for Church schools and religious education in public schools, and the construction of the Silesian Higher Theological Seminary in Cracow¹⁹⁵. In 1938, after the annexation of Zaolzie, the Diocese of Katowice was also extended to this area¹⁹⁶.

It is also worth mentioning the attitude of the Lutheran Church, of which the majority of the faithful were of German nationality¹⁹⁷. Analogous divisions developed, as the faithful of Polish nationality and Protestant clergy identifying with Poland led to a split in the Church and the establishment of a Polish Church administration with Bishop Julius Bursche at the head of it¹⁹⁸.

Current literature seeks to objectively portray the attitude of Cardinal Bertram in the interwar period, but the interwar Polish press in the Silesian Voivodeship vociferously attacked him for various clashes between German and Polish priests.

¹⁹⁰ J. Kopiec, J. Myszor, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

¹⁹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 120.

¹⁹² B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 135 *et seq.* Cf J. Myszor, *Historia diecezji*, pp. 41-44.

¹⁹³ A. Drogoń, *Autonomia województwa śląskiego*, p. 89.

¹⁹⁴ A. Drogoń, *Stosunek klubu parlamentarnego Chrześcijańskiej Demokracji w Sejmie Śląskim do polityki wyznaniowej*, p. 103.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 101-106.

¹⁹⁶ J. Myszor, *Historia diecezji*, p. 238 *et seq.*

¹⁹⁷ B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 137 *et seq.*

¹⁹⁸ R. Pastucha, *op. cit.*, p. 125 *et seq.*

The conflict escalated as early as in 1926 in connection with the pamphlet *Prawda o męczeństwie niemieckich katolików w Polsce* (The Truth on the Martyrdom of German Catholics in Poland), which was of a clearly biased nature¹⁹⁹. Anti-Polish actions in German Silesia were inflamed after Adolf Hitler came to power, climaxing just before the outbreak of the Second World War. On 27th June 1939 Cardinal Bertram suspended Polish worship in churches in Opole Silesia. This clearly suited *Gauleiter* Josef Wagner, who now received the support of the Church for his anti-Polish activities. The administrative powers were enthusiastic about the activities of the archbishop of Wrocław²⁰⁰. After the outbreak of the Second World War, Cardinal Bertram supported the unification policy of the German authorities by appointing plenipotentiaries and then *Bischöfliches Amt* in Katowice²⁰¹. This was connected with plans to abolish the Diocese of Katowice²⁰². After the outbreak of the Second World War, all organizations run by Polish Catholics were suspended by Bertram²⁰³. On 2nd March 1940 *Bischöfliches Amt*, acting on his behalf, announced ‘Anregungen zur Jugendseelsorge’, which also suspended German Catholic organizations. New ones were supposed to be aligned with Nazi organizations in the Third Reich and act on the orders of 1936 and 1938. In the totalitarian regime of the Third Reich there was no place for anything that had not been established by the Reich²⁰⁴.

Opinions on the actions of Cardinal Bertram are divided. The dominating trend in German literature is to view his activities as a way of implementing the guidelines of Pius XII which were sent to the cardinal on 6th March 1939 in his role as president of the German Episcopal Conference²⁰⁵. It has been noted that in his letter of 22nd July 1938 to the Gestapo in Berlin he sought to provide prisoners of concentration camps with religious services, and after the outbreak of the war he intervened on behalf of two imprisoned Polish bishops-Bishop Michał Kozal from Włocławek and Auxiliary Bishop Władysław Goral from Lublin²⁰⁶.

The biggest dispute concerns, however, Cardinal Bertram’s views on the organization of the Church in Polish Upper Silesia. When the embassy of the Third Reich

¹⁹⁹ B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 167 *et seq.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

²⁰¹ J. Myszor, *Historia diecezji*, p. 294 *et seq.*

²⁰² *Ibidem*, p. 299 *et seq.*

²⁰³ For more information on this subject see *ibidem*, pp. 342-345.

²⁰⁴ B. Reiner, *op. cit.*, p. 169. Bertram was summoned by orders of the head of the German civil administration, Gauleiter Fritz Bracht on 2nd October 1939 which abolished secular organizations of the Polish Germans.

²⁰⁵ Emil Brzoska, *Ein Tedeum für Kardinal Bertram: Adolf Bertram Vorsitzender der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz im Bündnis mit dem Heiligen Stuhl während des Kirchenkampfes 1933-1935*, Köln 1981, p.26. which contains a famous quote: ‘save what you can save’.

²⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 29.

issued to the Holy See a note on 29th of August 1941 calling for the establishment of German bishops in Poland and in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the response of the Holy See on 18th January 1942 was, at the request of Bertram, negative. In reply to this the secretary of state, Cardinal Maglione, reminded Hitler that on the basis of the decree of 13th September 1941, trade and religious associations should be free. On 15th March 1943, Nuncio Orsenigo, supported by Cardinal Bertram, issued a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the persecution of the Church in Poland²⁰⁷. The Cardinal also undertook measures to help Silesian Jews²⁰⁸. However, in the case of the Diocese of Katowice, even Fr. Emil Brzoska, whose attitude to Bertram was definitely positive, made note of the dispute over jurisdiction between the cardinal and Bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski²⁰⁹.

These issues are still disputed by German and Polish scholars today. Perhaps the best example of this is the polemics in which Adalbert Kurzeja and Jerzy Myszor were involved in 1996²¹⁰. During the Second World War Bertram saw a chance to recover the lost part of his archdiocese – bishopric of Katowice – and was looking for support from Nuncio Orsenigo. This policy was clearly opposed by Bishop Stanisław Adamski. To strengthen his position in the Katowice diocese, Bertram was looking behind Adamski's back for a candidate for the German vicar general in Katowice²¹¹. This is where the greatest disagreement between Kurzeja and Myszor appears concerning the intentions of Cardinal Bertram. Kurzeja believes that Bertram rightly called for the creation of a German vicar general so that he would more effectively try to help Catholics in the Diocese of Katowice²¹². The scholars argue, in particular, about the letter to Nuncio Orsenigo of 9th December 1939 in which the cardinal asked the nuncio to take over the administration of the Diocese of Katowice²¹³. The cardinal refuted accusations that he wanted to take over the administration of the diocese of Katowice and did not want to act wilfully without the mandate of the papacy and the German episcopate. Unfortunately, even if his intentions were positive, Bertram's letter coincided with similar demands which were sent to Orsenigo by the Reich

²⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

²⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 32 *et seq.* Here Father Emil Brzoska presents critical reasoning towards the sharp criticism of what the author (Protestant historian Klaus Scholder) believed to be half-measure actions of Bertram, see *ibidem*, p. 43 *et seq.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 48.

²¹⁰ Adalbert Kurzeja, *Kardinal Adolf Bertram und das Bistum Kattowitz 1939-1945*, 'Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch', 12 (1996), p. 107 *et seq.*, i J. Myszor, *Stellungnahme zum Beitrag Adalbert Kurzeja*, 'Oberschlesisches Jahrbuch', 12 (1996), p. 121 *et seq.*

²¹¹ A. Kurzeja, *Kardinal Adolf Bertram...*, p. 108.

²¹² *Ibidem*, p. 109.

²¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 110. The content of the letter is displayed in an annex, see p. 118.

Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs (RMKA), which caused a huge blunder²¹⁴. Both authors clearly have a different judgement of the letter, as well as the following one of 24th December 1939 which Bertram addressed to Adamski. The first scholar believes that this was due to Bertram's concerns about Catholicism, while the other one says that these actions had selfish motives, supported by Germanization-related aspirations²¹⁵. Interestingly, Bertram defended Polish sermons during church services, and it was reproached to him that on 27th June 1939 (see above) he forbade the celebration of the mass in Polish. Kurzeja attacks the image of Bertram as a 'devourer of Poland' and a 'Germanizer'²¹⁶. In response, J. Myszor claims that there is a clear correlation between the letters of Bertram and the RMKA, which he further connects with the fact of the appointment two weeks later, on 8th January 1940, of German priest Franz Strzyz as a vicar general. He also recalls the expulsion on 28th February 1941 of bishops Adamski and Bieniek from the diocese²¹⁷. He cites further facts in support of his argument such as the plans for the merger of the Diocese of Katowice with the Archdiocese of Wrocław announced on 29th March 1941 and the official support of this initiative on 20th May 1941 by *Gauleiter* Bracht. Apparently, the fact that puts Bertram in a bad light is a letter to the Nunciature in Berlin written by the Foreign Ministry on 25th May 1941 concerning the permanent dismissal of bishop Adamski from the diocese and hence expressing a wish that the government of the Reich wanted to give the Diocese of Katowice to Bertram. However, the Holy See did not respond to this letter²¹⁸. Myszor notes that the management of the diocese by a bishop other than the diocese bishop was contrary to canon law and constituted a 're-germanization' policy pursued by Bertram. This is evidenced by the abolition of Caritas and other Church organizations²¹⁹.

The stance of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) towards the postulate of the unity of Silesia and its failed attempt at restoring unity during the Second World War (1939-1945)

The National Socialists were one of the few groups that had never come to terms with the division of Silesia. In the early years of the Weimar Republic their

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 111. The jurisdiction of Zaolzie, included into the Silesian Voivodship in 1938, was a similar case as Bertram wanted to take it over also, see p. 112.

²¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

²¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 115.

²¹⁷ J. Myszor, *Stellungnahme*, p. 122.

²¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

²¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 127. He also gives a personal example of his relative, Józef Ryszka, who was ordained as a priest in 1941 by Cardinal Bertram, appropriating the jurisdiction of Bishop Adamski.

importance was largely insignificant. However, the Great Depression of the 1930s enabled the party to become a significant player on the Silesian political arena. When Hitler took power, the area of German Silesia included one NSDAP party district (*Gau Schlesien*) created on 15th March 1925. *Gau Schlesien* was led by Helmut Brückner, holding the rank of *Gauleiter*. He belonged to the so-called ‘left’ wing of the party, proclaiming radical ideas which soon began to disturb the Führer. For a while, however, Brückner’s career progressed quickly. After *Machtübernahme* Hitler entrusted him with the position of the *Oberpräsident* of the Province of Lower Silesia and at the same time the duties of the *Oberpräsident* of the Province of Upper Silesia (25th March 1933). On 2nd August 1933 he received an official nomination to the latter function²²⁰. Thus, for the first time since 1919 one person directed the whole state administration in the area of German Silesia. But then Hitler, in order to eliminate the influence of the ‘left’ wing, decided to remove one of its proponents from the position of *Gauleiter* of Silesia in early December 1934 (the official statement in this case was announced on 25th December)²²¹. Since 1933, the administrative cooperation of both Silesian provinces had intensified, but until 1938, they each retained their distinct characters. It was only in 1938 when the two provinces were combined and the entire region of Silesia came under a single administrative structure once again²²².

In formal terms, *Machtübernahme* did not result in any significant political changes. Both provinces of Silesia formed a single district of the NSDAP. The Province of Lower Silesia still consisted in 1933-1945 of two *Regierungsbezirke* (governmental districts), and the Province of Upper Silesia in 1939 was limited to one. At the level of governmental districts the NSDAP did not appoint its own officers for administrative positions. But on higher level, the same Party official was nominated for both posts of *Oberpräsident* and *Gauleiter*. In that way a Party member became the head of the highest administrative territorial unit of Prussia. The nomination of Brückner to *Oberpräsident* for both Silesian provinces meant introducing the party control over administrative structures without interfering with lower level officers. According to the ‘principle of chieftainship’, the primacy of the Party leadership was thus extended into the area of state administration. The National Socialists began to exert a direct influence on the administrative policy of

²²⁰ See footnote 79.

²²¹ Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu (further: APWr.), Wydział Samorządowy Prowincji Śląskiej (Provinzialverwaltung Schlesien – PVS), sign. 803, after fol. 451 containing the issue of a newspaper *Nationalsozialistische Beamtenzeitung* no. 17 of the 19th of August, 1934, fol. 663, 664 *Gauleiter*’s article.

²²² PGS, 1938, p. 29, *Gesetz über die Gebietsbereinigungen in den östlichen preußischen Provinzen vom 21. März 1938*, § 1 acts 1 and 2.

the state. This way of directly linking the Party and state was expressed in the Act of 2nd December 1933. The *Gauleiter*, in his role as *Oberpräsident*, made sure that the administrative apparatus realized all the goals that the NSDAP recognized as a priority. This was not a simple accumulation of tasks, but the Party dictating terms to the state²²³.

A mass influx of new members between 1929 and 1932 had led to the development of the organizational structure of NSDAP. At the head of *Gau Schlesien* was Hellmuth Brückner, who, alongside his associates, created a leadership circle (*Gauleitung*). Lower Silesia (encompassing two *Regierungsbezirke* of Wrocław and Legnica) consisted of *Bezirke* (districts) subordinated to a *Gauleiter*, each of which covered several administrative districts (*Kreise, powiats*). For the Upper Silesia province there was created an intermediary Party administrative unit, so called *Untergau* (sub-district)-headed by *Untergauleiter* Josef Joachim Adamczyk²²⁴. This last element, however, shows that even the Nazis had to, to some extent, take into account the division of Silesia into two territorial units. In 1930, the territorial organizations of the Nazi Party were present in more than 300 villages of Silesia.

The territorial structure of the NSDAP in Silesia subordinated to the *Gauleiter* was subject to manifold changes in 1925-1945, and was not stabilized until 1935. Its final form comprised of the complete elimination of party structures parallel to the level of *Regierungsbezirke*. This took place in 1935 with the abolition of *Untergaue*. In this situation, the heads of the NSDAP in *powiats/Kreise* (*Kreisleiters*) were directly subject to the *Gauleiter*. The organizational structure of the Party in *Kampfzeit* (before 1933) was only just beginning to develop and for this reason it was not stable. A characteristic feature of this period was the existence of different Party administrative levels and posts between the level of the *Gauleiter* and that of *Kreisleiter*. Until 1931, in the case of the Province of Lower Silesia between a *Gauleiter* and a *Keisleiter* was active a leader of a *Bezirke*, the latter comprising of a number of districts (*powiats*)²²⁵. These *Bezirke* in Upper Silesia were not subject to the *Gauleiter* directly but indirectly through *Untergau*. The establishment of the *Untergaue* in Lower Silesia was completed in 1931. Since then, there were three *Untergaue* in Silesia, the areas of which overlapped with *Regierungsbezirke*. *Regierungsbezirk* of Legnica created a sub-district of Lower Silesia (*Untergau Niederschlesien*),

²²³ Cf Edward Jędrzejewski, *Hitlerowska koncepcja administracji publicznej 1933-1945. Studium polityczno-prawne*, Wrocław 1974, p. 101 *et seq.*; Karol Jonca, *Polityka narodowościowa III Rzeszy na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1933-1940*, Katowice 1970, especially chapter IV.

²²⁴ Franciszek Biały, *Ruch narodowosocjalistyczny w prowincjach śląskich. Początki-postępy-przejęcie władzy*, Wrocław 1987, p. 149 *et seq.*

²²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 147 *et seq.*

Regierungsbezirk of Wrocław – a sub-district of Middle Silesia (*Untergau Mittelschlesien*), and *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole – a sub-district of Upper Silesia (*Untergau Oberschlesien*). The creation of a single structure of *Untergaue* in 1931 was associated with the final removal of the *Bezirke*.

The division of territories into *Untergaue* was abolished at the beginning of 1935 by the Führer. Such an idea was submitted to Hitler by Josef Wagner, a new *Gauleiter* of Silesia (who was also a *Gauleiter* of South Westphalia)²²⁶. He seized power after Brückner was removed from the party on the ‘Night of the Long Knives’. The office of *Untergauleiter* was replaced with Deputy *Gauleiter* (*stellvertretende Gauleiter*); Hitler entrusted this function to Fritz Bracht. The Deputy *Gauleiter* was responsible for particularly important cases in Upper Silesia. In practice, due to the fact that Wagner was a *Gauleiter* in two districts, Bracht often represented the interests of Lower Silesia also. Bracht’s role increased in 1936 upon the appointment of Wagner as a Reich commissioner for price control in the office of the representative for the Four-Year Plan. Commissioner Wagner permanently officiated in Berlin. Abolishing the *Untergaue* was to provide Wagner with control over a centralized administration that covered both Silesian provinces. In order for the party to retain control at the abolished level of *Untergaue*, the presidents of *Regierungsbezirke* were accompanied by NSDAP inspectors, who provided opinions on their actions.

It is also important to remember *Gauleiter* Wagner’s territorial reforms. Under his rule a significant transformation of government took place. Through the Prussian Act of 21st March 1938, both provinces of Silesia were merged into one Province of Silesia with the capital in Wrocław. The same law dissolved the province of the Frontier March of Posen–West Prussia (Posen Grenzmark – Westpreußen) and its parts were incorporated into the new Province of Silesia²²⁷.

The *Gauleiter*’s powers were in practice much broader, as they were supplemented with other state powers which resulted from their accumulating the functions of *Oberpräsidenten* in both provinces of Silesia²²⁸. However, appointing *Gauleiters* as effective *Oberpräsidenten* of the provinces was a problem in one of Germany’s most powerful states, Prussia. This issue concerned those *Gauleiters* whose districts overlapped with territorial units. An example of this was Silesia and East Prussia. No rule concerning the organizational structure was introduced in this respect, since the districts were able to develop their own rules. As they coincided

²²⁶ K. Höffkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-39 and 367-371.

²²⁷ PGS, Jg. 1938, p. 29, *Gesetz über die Gebietsbereinigungen in den östlichen preußischen Provinzen. Vom 21. März 1938.*

²²⁸ On the joining of party and state functions for the benefit of *Gauleiters* see Peter Hüttenberger, *Die Gauleiter. Studie zum Wandel des Machtgefüges in der NSDAP*, Stuttgart 1969, p. 75 *et seq.*

with the governmental administrative division during the *'Kampfzeit'*, this was used after 30th January 1933 when those *Gauleiters* were appointed as *Oberpräsidenten*. If the areas of the districts and provinces did not overlap, their *Gauleiters* were not appointed *Oberpräsidenten*²²⁹. Entrusting *Gauleiters* with the office of *Oberpräsident* in some of the Prussian provinces, as well as the office of Reich Governor (*Reichsstatthalter*) beyond Prussia, was essential for the state. The *Gauleiters*, who by virtue of their positions in the Party apparatus played a dominant role in matters of the NSDAP in their districts, were thus equipped with the powers of government. According to the 'principle of chieftainship', the rulership of the NSDAP was extended to the area of state administration.

The *Gauleiter's* duties as an *Oberpräsident* were based largely on existing legislation. This legal status was simply given an interpretation that was consistent with the policy of the Nazi party. To paraphrase Hegel, it can be said that the concept of the law changed. The new idea was to be served by the 'old' rules. The act of transferring the offices of *Oberpräsidenten* to *Gauleiters* raised, however, a number of issues about responsibilities and hierarchical relations. Being a district leader, a *Gauleiter* reported directly to the Führer, but as an *Oberpräsident* he was subordinate, depending on the particular case, to individual ministers of the Reich. In addition, the presidents of *Regierungsbezirke* were ranked lower than a *Gauleiter*, but only because of his position as an *Oberpräsident*. The Act on rebuilding the Reich of 30th January 1934 and the second executive order of 27th November 1934 maintained the subordination of *Gauleiters* as *Oberpräsidenten* in professional matters to the ministers of the Reich²³⁰. This gave rise to various conflicts, as Brückner, and then Wagner, often ignored this structure and appealed directly to Hitler. This led to protests by the Minister of the Interior, Wilhelm Frick, to whom *Oberpräsidenten* were subordinated in matters of state law. The whole situation undermined – according to Frick – the authority of the state and therefore he ordered that the presidents of *Regierungsbezirke* should contact government bodies directly, thereby omitting the *Oberpräsidenten* (they were only supposed to send them copies of their correspondence)²³¹. In this way, a system limiting the impact of *Gauleiters* on actual administrative structures had been formed. Frick's policy was in conflict with the Act of 2nd December 1933 that provided that *Gauleiters* would have a real impact on the administrative bodies.

²²⁹ Cf Peter Diehl-Thiele, *Partei und Staat im Dritten Reich, Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von NSDAP und allgemeiner Staatsverwaltung*, München 1969, pp. 115-116, which exemplify such districts and provinces.

²³⁰ *RGBl. I*, Jg. 1934, p. 75, *Gesetz über den Neuaufbau des Reichs vom 30. Januar 1934*; *ibidem*, p. 1190, *Zweite Ausführungsverordnung über den Neuaufbau des Reichs vom 27. November 1934*. Cf also P. Diehl-Thiele, *op.cit.*, p. 125 *et seq.*

²³¹ P. Diehl-Thiele, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

This elimination elicited the protests of *Gauleiters*, who demanded respect for their rights as *Oberpräsidenten*.

In 1942 the Führer announced that the presidents of *Regierungsbezirke* were not allowed to contact the authorities of the Reich without *Gauleiters/Oberpräsidenten*. With that decision, a process that would lead to the complete degradation of the state apparatus began. The apparatus was, from that moment on, to serve the Party only and no decisions could be made without its consent. In this situation, there was no room for Frick and he had no choice but to leave. His successor was Himmler, appointed by Hitler on 24th August 1943. This was symbolic in nature and meant the total submission of state structures to Party purposes. The process started in 1933 and after nearly 10 years it finished with the total subordination of the state authorities to Party structures.

Anti-Polish acts committed by the Nazi Party after the outbreak of the Second World War resulted in the development of a situation which had arisen in Silesia in 1919. This time, the Nazis regained all territorial losses from the First World War. Earlier, at the Munich Conference (1938) when Czechoslovakia lost the Sudeten district, they had re-connected the Hlučín Region to the district of Racibórz. Their expansion, however, went further, because after the outbreak of the Second World War they incorporated into the Third Reich not only the Polish part of Upper Silesia, but also the areas lying further to the east, that is the western patches of Polish Voivodeships of Cracow and Kielce, yet without Kielce and Cracow. Wagner did not advocate such a long extension of the Province of Silesia to the east; he saw only the need to recover the territories lost after the First World War. He believed that after defeating Poland, the Silesian Voivodeship (*Polnisch Oberschlesien*) should be connected to the German region of Silesia. He did not, however, advocate the idea promoted by the head of the party's office, Martin Bormann, who suggested further extending Silesia eastwards by taking the districts (*powiats*) from the Voivodeships of Kraków and Kielce. He believed that those areas were inhabited by too many Polish residents, which could cause difficulties for Germanization. According to Wagner, it would be better to first 'clean' the area of 'racially alien elements' and then incorporate them into the Reich. Hitler, however, sided with Bormann and made unsatisfactory decisions for both Wagner and his deputy, Fritz Bracht, who was responsible for Upper Silesia. However, the concept of 'Great Silesia' advocated by Wagner and Bracht was not, in a geographical sense, far apart from the ideas of the leadership of the party.

The Second World War thus saw the implementation of the concept of 'Great Silesia', which was, however, not supposed to be restricted to regaining the areas of

Silesia lost in 1918. The aim was to not only take *Ost-Oberschlesien* away from Poland, but further expansion of the province to the east. Changes were introduced by a decree of the Führer and the Reich chancellor of 8th October 1939 on the division and administration of the eastern regions²³². The Province of Silesia included the current Silesian Voivodeship with all districts (*powiats*), and also the districts (*powiats*) of industrial character of Kielce and Cracow voivodeships further to the west²³³. Most of those territories seized from Poland created the fourth *Regierungsbezirk* within the Province of Silesia-the district of Katowice (only a small part of the territory entered the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole)²³⁴. Territorial changes were also made between the *Regierungsbezirke* of Opole and Katowice, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (the connection of Czech and Polish Ostrava in order to create Great Ostrava and include it in the district of Upper Silesia)²³⁵.

Ultimately, however, when after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 the National Socialists reversed the division of Silesia formed after the First World War, they maintained a unified Province of Silesia for only a short time. This was due to the fact that they were not able to implement their policies satisfactorily across such a vast area. The political situation forced them to restore the division of Silesia into two units when on the basis of the Prussian Act of 20th December 1940, effective from 1st March 1941, Silesia was again divided into two provinces²³⁶. The shape of the Province of Lower Silesia was analogous to that of 1919-1938, while the Province of Upper Silesia consisted, beside the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole also the newly created *Regierungsbezirk* of Katowice. The latter consisted largely of the area of the Silesian Voivodeship seized from Poland, and was extended by several districts (*powiats*) from the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole and western districts (*Kreise, powiats*) from the Voivodeships of Kielce and Kraków. The capital of the Province of Silesia in 1938-1940 was Wrocław, which, in 1919-1938 and 1940-1945 also, the capital of the Province of Lower Silesia. The capital of the Province of Upper Silesia was Opole in 1919-1938 and Katowice in 1940-1945. The area of *Gau Schlesien* comprised the area of the two provinces. In 1941 it was divided into two new districts (*Gau Nieder- and Oberschlesien*). In the district of Upper Silesia (*Gau Oberschlesien*)

²³² RGBl. I, Jg. 1939, p. 2042, *Erllass des Führers und Reichskanzlers über die Gliederung und Verwaltung der Ostgebiete. Vom 8. Oktober 1939.*

²³³ Cf. Kazimierz Orzechowski, *Terytorialne podziały na Śląsku*, part 6: *Wiek XIX i XX*, 'Kwartalnik Opolski', 18 (1972), issue 3, pp. 5-22; T. Kruszewski, *Zmiany podziału terytorialnego na Śląsku w okresie Trzeciej Rzeszy (1933-1945)*, AUWr. No 2136, *SnFiZH*, vol. 22, 1999, pp. 427-438.

²³⁴ E. Jędrzejewski, *Hitlerowska*, pp. 225 and 226, *idem*, *O niemieckiej administracji na terenach włączonych do rejencji opolskiej w latach 1939-1945*, 'Studia Śląskie', 16 (1969), p. 54 *et seq.*

²³⁵ *Verordnungsblatt der NSDAP, Gau Oberschlesien*, Folge 14-15/41, *Anordnung* Nr. 32.

²³⁶ *PGS*, Jg. 1941, p. 1, *Gesetz über die Bildung der Provinzen Oberschlesien und Niederschlesien. Vom 20. Dezember 1940.*

the *Gauleiter* was Fritz Bracht. In the district of Lower Silesia (*Gau Niederschlesien*) the position of *Gauleiter* was given to Karl Hanke²³⁷.

Josef Wagner proved to be a faithful executor of Hitler's policy in the 1930s. He was a supporter of the policy of Germanization, the aim of which was to remove all traces of Polish culture. Wagner's actions connected with the removal of 'Slavic-sounding' names of towns and other geographic objects were particularly infamous. Subsequently, the *Gauleiter* instigated the Germanization of surnames in both provinces of Silesia²³⁸. Such endeavours were supported by the Institute of Eastern Europe which indirectly, through its research activities, contributed to the consolidation of anti-Polish tendencies, which ultimately allowed the National Socialists to restore the temporary unity of Silesia during the Second World War²³⁹.

The presented comments were aimed to show basic trends in the administrative development of Silesia under the rule of the 'brownshirt sowers of death'. Hitler's rise to power did not mean significant changes in the regulations, but in practice it led to their being interpreted completely differently.

Summary

For the disintegration of the idea of the unity of Silesia, a decisive moment was the second half of the 19th century which saw the rise of the concept of nationalism, and thus the idea of nation-states. The implementation of this idea in the case of Silesia, inhabited by subjects of three nations, two of which were just building their own states, could only mean the collapse of the uniform administrative structure which had been present within the Second German Reich. The catalyst for implementing these ideas was the First World War, which brought to life the Polish Republic and the Republic of Czechoslovakia, while ruining the Second German Reich. The nascent Weimar Republic did not have sufficient authority to maintain the unity of the Province of Silesia.

²³⁷ For profiles of Hanke and Bracht see T. Kruszewski, *Partia*, p. 67 and 68; K. Höffkes, *op. cit.*, pp. 34 and 35 and 120-124, Cf also Karol Jonca, Alfred Konieczny, *Portret ostatniego gauleitera*, 'Odra', 3 (1963), issue 5, pp. 5-12.

²³⁸ Karol Fiedor, *Bund Deutscher Osten w systemie antypolskiej propagandy*, Warszawa-Wrocław 1977, p. 263 *et seq.* T. Kruszewski, *Udział instancji NSDAP na Śląsku w akcji zmiany nazwisk*, AUWr. no. 1715, *SnFiZH*, vol. XVIII, 1995, pp. 221-234.

²³⁹ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Das Osteuropa-Institut in Breslau 1930-1940. Wissenschaft, Propaganda und nationale Feindbilder in der Arbeit eines interdisziplinären Zentrums der Osteuropaforschung in Deutschland*, [in:] *Zwischen Konfrontation und Kompromiss. Oldenburger Symposium: 'Interethnische Beziehungen im Ostmitteleuropa als historiographisches Problem der 1930er/1940er Jahre*, ed. Michael Garleff, München 1995, p. 54 *et seq.*, especially p. 62 and further.

Maintaining the unity of Silesia was impossible in the existing historical conditions that went back to the 18th century, when, as a result of the three Silesian wars, it came under Prussian rule. The Austrian emperors of the Habsburg dynasty managed to retain only Cieszyn Silesia and Opava Silesia (Czech: Opavské Slezsko, German: Troppauer Schlesien, Polish: Śląsk Opawski), while the rest of the area of Silesia found itself under the rule of the Prussian Hohenzollern dynasty. Silesia was still inhabited by a population of Slavic origin, but their national consciousness was only just beginning to rise; on the other hand, from the Frederician times and ultimately after the ‘Spring of Nations’ (1848), assimilation trends also intensified. This is evident in the progressive disappearance of the use of the Polish language, especially in Lower Silesia. When Polish national consciousness began to grow, it may have had its biggest impact in Upper Silesia, which lay closer to the Russian and Austrian partitions of Poland. The scope of the Polish language as a native language was quite limited in the *Regierungsbezirk* of Wrocław. The existence of the Polish population, however, was noticed during the conference at Versailles, where it was arbitrarily decided that the border areas of Lower Silesia, where the process of Germanization was not completed, were to become part of the reborn Poland. This concerned single communes (*gminy*) attached to the districts (*powiats*, *Kreise*) of Kępno (Kempen) and Ostrów, whereas the district (*powiat*, *Kreis*) of Namysłów (Namslau) took part in the Upper Silesian plebiscite in 1921. The world powers which met at the peace conference also decided to connect the southern end of the district (*powiat*, *Kreis*) of Racibórz (the Hlučín Region) to Czechoslovakia. Thus, after the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles the uniform Province of Silesia completely disintegrated, and the consequences of this event are still evident to this day. The year 1945 brought a further transformation, but the essence of the division into two separate territorial units in Lower and Upper Silesia (and, from 1950, into three), resembles *a rebours* the situation of 1922–1939. Lower Silesia still forms a separate unit, and Upper Silesia is formed by two units. Today almost the entire area of Silesia is located within Poland, although the former Province of Silesia lies in three countries. The former Saxon part, which following the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 and 1825, was attached to Prussia, and most of the part that lies behind the Lusatian Neisse still belongs to Germany. The northern part of Lower Silesia is scattered over the Lubusz Voivodeship (the districts (*powiats*, *Kreise*) of Zielona Góra (Grünberg) and Żagań (Sagan), which is the most serious violation of the unity of Silesia, as it was excluded outside the administrative area of the former uniform province. The rest of Silesia is divided today into three voivodeships: Lower Silesia, Opole and Silesia, which gives rise to a confusion in terminology. It is

worth remembering that in 1998 there were plans to create a single Upper Silesian Voivodeship, but the awareness of the population of this part of Silesia prevented such a legal solution. Nowadays in Upper Silesia pro-Polish views, pro-German views and autonomous concepts created in the interwar period collide.

It is the epoch discussed in this text that has led to the current division of Silesia into three territorial units²⁴⁰. Also, the vague terminology of these three new administrative units stems from this epoch. The former Province of Lower Silesia is continued in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship, the former Province of Upper Silesia (in the Weimar Republic limited to the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole) is now partially continued in the Opole Voivodeship, and finally the last part is still called the Silesian Voivodeship. The latter name is now unfortunate, repeated after the interwar period, and not very sensible. This is due to combining both parts of the former Prussian Silesia and a part of Cieszyn Silesia. Repeating the traditional name, when today the entire region of Silesia and not just a part lies within Poland, causes pointless disputes between Katowice and Wrocław over which of these cities is the capital of Silesia.

The period from 1918 to 1922 was a time of major upheaval that eventually ruined the territorial unity of Silesia. German authorities quite quickly realized that the new states of Poland and Czechoslovakia would come up with territorial claims against the former Province of Silesia. Upper Silesia substantially differed from Lower Silesia; the distinctions between them were based on different grounds. Therefore, the administrative authorities faced not only external conflict with the new neighbours of the Reich in the east and south, but also an internal conflict between the *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole and others. It dawned on the authorities in Berlin and Wrocław that the resistance against Upper Silesian demands may lead the inhabitants of Upper Silesia to turn their back on Germany and encourage them to opt for Poland and Czechoslovakia. Polish–German conflicts were accompanied by a Polish–Czechoslovak conflict over Cieszyn Silesia. Therefore, following the policy of lesser evil, the German authorities themselves broke the territorial unity of Silesia and agreed to the creation of two provinces. They hoped that this would attract hesitating residents, some of whom supported autonomy or even wanted to create a new state or a new land in Germany. It must be remembered that Catholicism dominated in Upper Silesia, which was perceived with suspicion by the Protestant Lower Silesia. What finally resolved this issue was a sense of national affiliation. Those Catholic activists who, like Wojciech Korfanty, were close to the Polish culture led to the emergence of the Silesian Voivodeship, and those who favoured

²⁴⁰ The post-war period in Poland would also see the separation of the northern powiats of Lower Silesia and their connection to the newly created Zielona Góra Voivodeship.

Germany, like Carl Ulitzka and Hans Lukaschek, fought for the widest possible autonomy for the Province of Upper Silesia. This struggle has shown the importance of self-awareness; ethnicity did not matter, only a sense of affiliation to Germany was what counted.

What resulted was constitutional, political and social conflict. From the point of view of the administrative authorities, a permanent conflict that penetrated into those three territorial units began from the beginning of the Weimar Republic. The authorities of the Province of Lower Silesia were hostile to the existence of both the Province of Upper Silesia and the Silesian Voivodeship. They viewed matters from a global perspective, and were supported in that by the Institute of Eastern Europe. Silesian authorities reluctantly agreed to the division of the shared property of the former single province, in which they were supported by statutory regulations which gave to the Province of Upper Silesia only 20% of that property. They delayed the distribution of wealth as long as they could; in some cases it took as long as 1933, when *Machtübernahme* came. The Christian Democrats in Upper Silesia had a different policy: they made the division stronger, strengthened independent institutions and called for full autonomy. The authorities of the Silesian Voivodeship pursued a similar policy, as they fought against the government in Warsaw in order to gain the widest possible autonomy. Polish regulations on autonomy were at this time really in force, whereas German regulations on autonomy in the Province of Upper Silesia were contested by the authorities in Berlin, although the Upper Silesian Christian Democrats tried to enforce them until 1933.

Such political ideas ended in Poland with the May Coup in 1926, but even this is not comparable to Germany in 1933. Only in a totalitarian regime like that was there was no room for any local government. The National Socialists were one of only a few political forces which in their organization in 1918-1933 did not take into account the division of Silesia. They also had the possibility of restoring the unity of Silesia. The first move was to combine the offices of *Oberpräsidenten* of both Silesian provinces, and then to merge the two provinces in 1938. The next move was to broaden the province by the patches of the former Frontier March of Posen–West Prussia and seizing Hlučín Region from Czechoslovakia. Unification trends were dominant after the outbreak of the Second World War. Apparently, the division of the years 1918-1922 was finally broken. The Silesian Voivodeship was attached to the province and it created a *Regierungsbezirk* of Katowice. Nazi planners, however, went further by incorporating a significant proportion of now fully Polish areas of the western *powiats* of Kielce and Kraków and the Czech part of to the Province of Silesia. This success lasted until the end of 1940 when, due to

technical reasons, they discovered that they were not able to manage such a huge province from Wrocław and from 1st January 1941 Silesia was again divided into two provinces. This situation lasted until 1945 when Silesia, like the rest of the Third Reich, turned into *Trümmerfeld*. The history of Polish Silesia began, which meant a return to the 14th century. However, this was in a new form of the national state, in which there was no room for the German minority.

Relevant to this is the question how the authorities saw the former unity of Silesia. Political trends seem to indicate a significant division of opinions on this issue. If we were to search for somebody else in interwar Silesia strive to maintain its unity and in the long term saw the possibility of its return, we would find the government of Lower Silesia. They never came to terms with the fall of the Province of Silesia; at its division they wanted to keep as many unseparated institutions from the uniform province as possible. The political situation, however, until the fall of the Weimar Republic, never again provided them with a chance to participate in the restoration of the unity of Silesia. Upper Silesia – because of its individuality – was in a different position. In elections, Catholics living there gave a political mandate to the forces interested in the destruction of the idea of a unified Silesia. The local population was not ethnically uniform and, therefore, the new provincial government defending its identity was not able to stop it from further disintegration, and thus the German, Polish and Czechoslovakian Upper Silesia was born. If the democratic system had lasted intact, then no authorities in the former uniform Silesia would break its disintegration. Thanks to the existence of the Third Reich, the restoration of the unity of Silesia became a fact. It was an attempt to overcome the political legacy of the years 1918–1922. The National Socialists by 1939 had done a lot to strengthen the freshly created unity of Silesia within its German part.

The year 1939 saw the restoration of the unity of all of Silesia but in a specific form: the authorities of the Third Reich not only united Silesia within borders of 1918, but they overcome the results of the 18th-century divisions by uniting Prussian Silesia with the former Austrian part. They went even further, reaching for the Polish and Czechoslovak lands nearest Silesia. Those were not, however, lasting trends, because Germany lost the Second World War. What proved to be decisive were the years 1918–1922 and the defeat of Germany in the Second World War. The effect of the activities of local authorities between 1918 and 1945 is the erasing the possibility to restore the idea of the unity of the region of from social awareness in Silesia. There are two regions and regionalisms in Poland – Lower and Upper Silesia – and a smaller, Czech region in the south of the area.



Map 1. Silesia between World Wars (1922-1939) (Dariusz Przybytek)

