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Social structure and social groups in the processes of integration and disintegration of Silesia as a region (1918-1945)

Abstract:

A complete overview of cohesive and disruptive factors affecting the integrity of Silesia in the social context during the period 1918-1945 seems an impossible task, which can be explained by the multitude of events and issues occurring in this turbulent quarter of a century, as well as by the overlapping of various realms of identity. The regional perspective was present in all social groups during the period under examination; however, with the possible exception of the Upper Silesian proletariat, they were not its primary carriers. Social groups from lower classes were active mainly in their local areas, thus indirectly forming regional bonds. Silesia as a whole was relevant to the wealthier inhabitants of cities and industrial districts, whose mobility and education allowed them to overcome local limitations. Ownership and great wealth influenced several levels simultaneously, including the regional one. Landowners were, by comparison, a much more stable backbone of the region due to their traditions and attachment to the land.

The period which commenced with the end of the First World War and lasted until the end of the Second World War is characterized by substantial instability, which is clearly visible in the case of Silesia, even in the shifting of its borders. Severe ethnic conflicts, violent ideological and political disputes arising during this period divided the residents of the region to a degree previously unheard of, and two deep economic crises-both the post-war and the global one-not only exacerbated social tensions, but also violated the economic foundations of the previously existing social order. What should also be noted is the acceleration of the processes of globalization and modernization processes that were creating a mass culture society, and the pressure of the Nazi totality, which lead to the *Gleichschaltung* of the society[1]. The significance of the signalled events does not need to be proven; after

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[1] For more information on the history of the region during the years 1918-1945 see *Historia Śląska,* ed. Marek Czapliński, pp. 385-466; *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 3, ed. Josef Joachim Menzel, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 81-104; *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Schlesien*, ed. Norbert Conrads, Berlin 1994, pp. 616-653; *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, pp. 507-591; *Historia Górnego Śląska*, pp. 219-266; Dan Gawrecki a kol., *Dějiny českého Slezska 1740-2000*, Opava 2003, pp. 295-404;

all, the crucial character of the interwar period and both world wars determines their special position in historiography. In reference to the subject of this work, it should be noted that the density of the events that occurred and the phenomena surrounding them both distorts and obscures the perception of the region from the perspective of the social groups of that time. It seems impossible to fully and accurately present a balanced tally of the influential disintegrating and integrating factors for the Silesian region in social terms during the interwar period and the Second World War. That is caused by the multitude of issues that appeared during this violent quarter of a century and overlapping circles of different identities. The state and shape of current Silesian-related research by no means allows for a formulation of any final answers to the issues highlighted in the title of this article.

In the literature on Silesia during the period between 1918 and 1945 historians have given priority to the national, class or party issues over the question of regional identity, which was of rather modest interest to them. Moreover, these preferences are entirely understandable, as they highlight the factors which proved undoubtedly important for the dynamics of subsequent events. What should be remembered is that the undertaken research had for decades been incorporated into a fairly rigid political framework introduced after 1945. The Slavic hosts of the lands under discussion laid emphasis on the fight against the German element, which culminated in years of struggle with the Third Reich. What is more, in the countries dominated by the communists – in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic – it was required to concentrate on the position and struggle of the proletariat. The democratic transitions which started in 1989 removed the obligation to deal with labour or peasant movements, yet at the same time they did not result in comprehensive research of other communities and social groups of the region, which has determined the scale of the existing deficits. As a result, in the case of interwar Lower Silesia, there are practically no significant representations of social groups. In the case of Upper Silesia, although a number of works are available, a complete picture cannot be obtained from them, and in the case of older studies we encounter distortions concerning the history of the proletariat.

The identity of Silesia was undoubtedly constituted of the community identity of those that had inhabited the German, Polish and Czech Silesia during the first half of the 20th century. Regional consciousness stemmed from historical and cultural tradition as well as a political and administrative framework in much greater respect than from the social order itself. In practice this means that in the period being

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Województwo śląskie (1922-1939). Zarys monograficzny, ed. Franciszek Serafin, Katowice 1996; Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Górny Śląsk podczas drugiej wojny światowej*, Katowice 2006.

studied a regional perspective occurred in all social groups, yet the groups themselves were not its primary carrier. Moreover, the scale of regional references in particular groups developed differently, moving to the level of a narrower or wider local identity in peasant and working-class circles. We will follow the approach of Marek S. Szczepański, a well-known sociologist, in stating that a regional identity manifests itself through references to small – local – homelands *(Heimat)* in conflict with each other but – to the eye of an outside observer – coherent and integrated in the case of an external threat[2], then the aforementioned localization of particular social groups shall be considered as a region-building factor. Whether with one or the other, it is necessary to add that the aforementioned localisation was at times a dominant identification, which inhibited the development of an appropriate regional identity. Either way, both levels of spatial reference co-existed in interwar Silesia. The only issue which remains unresolved is their significance within each of the particular circles and social groups vulnerable to the fluctuation of national and political sentiments.

The differences in political and constitutional, ethnic and national, or social and economic considerations made the society of Silesia at that time function within Lower and Upper Silesian affairs. The growing fracture requires, therefore, a flexible understanding of the space of the region (or regions). What should be noted, after all, is the separate development of Lower and Upper Silesia, and within the latter – of the German, Polish and Czech parts. This study marginally discusses the western part of Czech Silesia with its capital in Opava (Troppau, Opawa), which started out in the context of a German political entity called the Sudetenland[3]. The Silesian and 'Sudeten' identities of the Sudeten Germans who were more prevalent in the area did not exclude one another, but adding a new vector of identification one which further blurs the perception of the attitudes of the local populace and requires further study. In the selection of social groups we have confined ourselves to a simplistic division into a plebeian populace of peasants and workers, the middle class (the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, including the clergy) and the great property owners and financiers (the gentry, the industrialists and the bankers). We are aware of the fact that the boundaries between these classes are blurred in the 20th century, however, we want

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[2] Marek S. Szczepański, *Od identyfikacji do tożsamości. Dynamika śląskiej tożsamości – prolegomena*, [in:] *Dynamika śląskiej tożsamości*, eds Janusz Janeczek, Marek S. Szczepański, Katowice 2006, pp. 19-27.

[3] For more on this subject see Piotr M. Majewski, *'Niemcy sudeccy' 1848-1948. Historia pewnego nacjonalizmu*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 161-428; Emil Franzel, *Sudetendeutsche Geschichte. Eine volkstümliche Darstellung*, Mannheim 1990, pp. 294-414; Wolfgang Braumandl, *Die Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik des Deutschen Reiches im Sudetenland 1938-1945*, Nürnberg 1985.

to provide a typical example – useful in generalizations and not a comprehensive description of the social structure.

Great property owners

The particular position of wealthy gentry and industrialists makes it difficult to determine their regional perspectives and collective impact on the cohesion of Silesia. The contacts and horizons of this elite environment undoubtedly often went beyond the 'narrow' frames of the province, which shall be considered as a disintegrating agent. What may be worth mentioning in the case of the aristocratic circles are the extensive family affinities and, until the Second World War, strong connections with the courts of Berlin or Vienna in the Prussian and Austrian parts of Silesia, respectively, and in the case of more significant industrialists, bankers or merchants – national and international financial and trade ties. The possibilities of less affluent families of gentry and manufacturers were much more limited in this regard, while not excluding similar aspirations. At the same time, what is particular is the fact that members of high society functioned simultaneously in a purely local dimension, although it is difficult to speak of real integration. They felt somewhat responsible for the communities living in the vicinity of their landed and industrial properties, particularly for their own employees and their families. This responsibility was reflected, among others, in the form of charitable activities and a significant number of foundations (not only religious ones). The activity in this field can be explained as being both pragmatic and prestige-related, and in the case of the highborn also because of the traditions of patronage and obligations stemming from the ethos of the state. The help provided was accompanied by an interest in the life of the local residents, which is proven, by participation in larger celebrations, honorary membership in local associations and support for their initiatives, among others. It facilitated the integration of local communities, providing it with a valuable patron and promoter. The indicated involvement of the gentry and financial elites could have also partially affected their own identification. An interesting example in this matter appears to be Countess Gabriela von Thun und Hohenstein of Kończyce Wielkie (Gross-Kuntschitz, Velké Kunčice) in Cieszyn Silesia (Czech: Těšínské Slezsko, Polish: Śląsk Cieszyński, German: Teschener Schlesien), who apparently liked to refer to herself as 'a local'[4].

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[4] Iwona Nowak, *Dama dworu na podcieszyńskich włościach. Hrabina Gabriela von Thun und Hohenstein (1872-1957) jako przedstawicielka elit Śląska Cieszyńskiego w pierwszej połowie XX wieku*, [in:] *Wieki stare i nowe: Ludzie i elity pogranicza*, eds Maciej Fic, Ryszard Kaczmarek, Katowice 2012, pp. 149-155.

The aforementioned multidimensional character of Silesian nobility existed in its general shape from the 19th century up until the Second World War[5]. However, the years of severe political and economic disruptions of the period under discussion resulted in some adjustments. The fall of Central-European monarchies and the elimination of state society relics deprived the Silesian nobility of their privileged position and stable ideological standing, while economic problems made them lose a part of their financial spending power[6]. On the local level, a drop in position and significance was noticeable to a lesser extent, because great gentry – despite the launching of agricultural reforms – still retained economic and intellectual influence. Even in these areas they were often confronted with competing political and national egalitarian slogans, although they still remained a point of reference at least for people with a traditional viewpoint. We do not have the benefits of comprehensive studies on the behaviour and views of the Silesian gentry from the interwar period, however, we venture to say that not only did they contribute to the support of local identity, but they also must have become more explicitly rooted in this stable microworld. They did not find their place in the new political reality, and therefore they withdrew from public service. Few exceptions, such as Count Michael von Matuschka and Count Peter Yorck von Wartenburg in the presidium of the province, do not undermine the clear trend which was occurring all over Germany[7]. It should be added that the new political circumstances divided Silesian landowners, which is clearly exemplified by their inconsistent attitude towards Hitler[8]. However, yet of even greater significance to the issue posed of an essentially German Silesian nobility is to the division of the region after the First World War.

At the beginning, it should be noted that at the time of the traditional political order's collapse, in 1918, the 'Austrian' and 'Prussian' gentry from Silesia – like other social groups – essentially did not proclaim slogans of a regional reunion, and at first, were focussed on Vienna or Berlin, respectively. The Polish – Czech dispute

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[5] Cf. Romuald M. Łuczyński, *Rezydencje magnackie w Kotlinie Jeleniogórskiej w XIX wieku*, Wrocław 2007, pp. 339-350; Wiesława Korzeniowska, *Ziemiaństwo na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*, Opole 1997, pp. 158-177, 190-203.

[6] Cf. Eckart Conze, *Adel und Moderne in Ostmitteleuropa*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*, vol. 1: *Herrschaft – Kultur – Selbstdarstellung*, eds Jan Harasimowicz, Matthias Weber, Oldenburg-München 2010, pp. 305-318.

[7] Cf. Iris von Hoyningen-Huene, *Adel in der Weimarer Republik. Die rechtlich-soziale Situation des reichsdeutschen Adels 1918-1933*, Limburg 1992, pp. 79, 236-240, 410.

[8] Ulrich Schmilewski, *Der schlesische Adel-Herkunft, Zusammensetzung und politisch-gesellschaftliche Rolle vom Mittelalter bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*, vol. 2: *Repertorium. Forschungsperspektiven – Quellenkunde – Bibliographie*, eds Joachim Bahlcke, Wojciech Mrozowicz, Oldenburg-München 2010, pp. 87-91.

over Cieszyn Silesia was extended with a favour being granted regarding the Polish or Czechoslovakian border projects, however, other political settlements had no real chance of establishing themselves there. Their own plans, including the desired unity of the frontier Karviná-Ostrava (Karvin, Karwina-Ostrau, Ostrawa) area, impelled local entrepreneurs, including the powerful Count Hans von Larisch-Mönnich, to choose the pro-Czech option[9]. The vast majority of great landowners from the Prussian part of Upper Silesia defended German *raison d'état* and German state possession, which probably stemmed mainly from their national character. There are, however, cases illustrating different calculated plans, which indicate a preference for the Upper Silesian framework. Count Hans Georg von Oppersdorff of Głogówek (Oberglogau, Horní Hlohov) spoke during the plebiscite of 1921 in favour of the Polish side, which was meant to maintain the unity of the eastern and western part of Upper Silesia[10]. Therefore, calculated moves and the self-interests of the gentry did not deprive them of a pro-regional orientation, even though reactions to the difficult conditions created after the Great War were various in character.

An extremely interesting case-though one still requiring deeper analysis on the regional level-seems to be that of Johann Heinrich XV von Hochberg's family, the Duke of Pless, whose assets included goods in Silesia (Książ, Fürstenstein) and Upper Silesia (Pszczyna, Pless). It is worth noting that he was a man with an established international position, which was confirmed by his marriages: first to an English aristocrat (Maria Theresa Cornwallis-West), and later to a Spanish aristocrat (Clothilde de Silva y Gonzales de Candamo). Apparently, his personal dream was to attain the title of Duke of Silesia, and at the end of 1918 he was also supposed to conduct informal talks on an international level regarding the Silesian region's being treated as a separate state body. Similar plans could have seemed realistic only at the moment of the collapse of German statehood and were quickly abandoned. The Duke began shortly to spur on the elites of Silesia assembled in Silesian Club *(Schlesischer Club)*, an exclusive club led by him*,* to strongly support German interests in a dispute over Upper Silesia. It is worth noticing that what comes into play in both cases is the Duke's regional identity, but also the need to maintain both warehouses of his goods within one country. Although the duke supported the separatist activities of the Upper Silesian Association *(Bund der Oberschlesier),* he probably perceived it in terms of an anti-Polish diversion.

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[9] Andrzej Stępniak, *Kwestia narodowa a społeczna na Śląsku Cieszyńskim pod koniec XIX i w początkach XX wieku (do 1920 roku)*, Katowice 1986, pp. 208-209, 254, 299, 330, 336, 340.

[10] Wojciech Lange, *W stronę Polski, czyli nie odwzajemnione uczucie hrabiego Oppersdorffa*, [in:] *Problemy narodowościowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX wieku*, eds Antoni Czubiński, Piotr Okulewicz, Tomasz Schramm, Poznań 2002, pp. 293-300.

During the struggle of the plebiscite and the Silesian Uprisings he explicitly supported the German side, and his son Johann Heinrich XVII led the German minority's key organization in the Polish Silesian Voivoidship *(Deutscher Volksbund für Polnisch-Schlesien)*. In the 1930s Jan Henryk XV fundamental shifted his attitude towards Poland and moved from the German of Książ to the Polish city of Pszczyna, which was undoubtedly influenced by his family troubles and financial problems, and probably also by his dislike of the Nazis. However, the conditional, aforementioned decisions, variations and other problems – including the commissioner's board and abolishing the *fideikomis* (the fee tail estate) of Pszczyna in 1937 – did not in the end, blur the authority which the Duke enjoyed on the local level. It is proven by the fact that about fifteen thousand residents from Pszczyna and its surroundings attended his funeral in 1938. We should also bear in mind the situation in 1923, when Wojciech Korfanty asked the Duke to lend him a carriage with the Hochberg coat of arms for the duration of the visit of the President of Poland to Upper Silesia, which was supposed to evoke positive associations among Upper Silesians. The myth of the good duke is still alive in this area[11].

Aristocratic families remained a clear point of reference for the community of Silesia, and that was because of multigenerational ties with the region and the territorial concentration of goods. The significant position of the Schaffgotsch family, after all, had been built up in the area of Jelenia Góra (Hirschberg, Jeleni Hora, Hiršberk) beginning in the 14th century, and a great part of the noble families had helped to create the history of Silesia for at least a hundred years. The compactness and size of the estates undoubtedly had an influence on the understanding of the region's space. For the record it should, therefore, be noted that in 1937 in German Silesia alone, the Duke of Ujazd (Ujest), Hohenlohe-Oehringen of Sławięcice (Slawentzitz) had 31,216 hectares of land at his disposal, Count Schaffgotsch of Cieplice owned 26,941 ha, the Duke of Racibórz Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst of Rudy (Rudy) – 30,218 ha, the Duke of Żagań, Talleyrand-Perigord – 23,004 ha, the Prussian duke from Kamieniec Ząbkowicki – 14,265 ha, Duke Hatzfeld of Żmigród – 15,941 ha, Prince Schoenaich-Carolath of Zabór (Fürsteneich) – 11,549 ha, the Duke of Pszczyna – 11,748 ha, and Count Maltzan of Milicz – 11,299 ha. In addition to these lands, Donnersmarck,

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[11] W. Korzeniowska, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-121, 184-188; Jerzy Polak, *Jan Henryk XV książę von Pless: życie i działalność (1861-1938)*, 'Materiały Muzeum Wnętrz Zabytkowych w Pszczynie', 6 (1990), pp. 129-156; *idem*, *Postawa wielkich właścicieli ziemskich na Górnym Śląsku wobec powstań śląskich na przykładzie księcia pszczyńskiego*, [in:] *Powstania śląskie i plebiscyt w procesie zrastania się Górnego Śląska z macierzą*, ed. Andrzej Brożek, Bytom 1993, pp. 383-390; Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Udział książąt pszczyńskich w życiu politycznym Prus i II Rzeszy Niemieckiej*, [in:] *Szlachta i ziemiaństwo polskie oraz niemieckie w Prusach i Niemczech w XVIII-XX*, ed. Włodzimierz Stępiński, Szczecin 1996, pp. 179-198.

Hohenlohe and Hochberg owned substantial landed estates in the part of Silesia which was later incorporated into Poland, whereas the latter owned the powerful *fideikomis* (the fee tail estate) of Pszczyna (42000 hectares) occupying nearly half of the district (*powiat*) of Pszczyna! A significant area of land fell also to other owners. Considerable national and dynastic estates, including those owned by Prince Friedrich Wilhelm von Hohenzollern, the heir to the throne, and Frederick Augustus, the former King of Saxony, who died in 1932 in Szczodre (Sibyllenort), partly lacked a regional context, but they had a local context. It is probable that a similar situation was that of the Lower Silesian estates of the non-Silesian dukes of Solms-Baruth and counts of Arnim-Muskau[12].

The interests of the landed gentry of Silesia were represented by Silesian chambers of agriculture *(Landwirtschaftskammer)* situated within administrative boundaries, and are thus of little use in diagnosing the regional identity of the social group under discussion[13]. The existence of such an identity seems to be proved by the fact that the representatives of the nobility of Silesia – deprived in 1945 of their regional anchor – were still active in regional associations such as the Silesian Nobility Association *(Vereinigung Schlesischer Adel),* the Association of Catholic Nobility of Silesia *(Vereinigung Katholischer Edelleute Schlesiens)* and the Silesian branch of the Evangelical Order of St John *(Schlesischer Zweig des evangelischen Johanniterordens)*[14]. Worth further notice is also the interwar political activity of Nikolaus Count von Ballestrem of Pławniowice (Plawniowitz), who led the then conservative Catholic Silesian nobility. For our discussion it is important that these circles spoke out against the division of Silesia and separated themselves from the Upper Silesian leaders of the Centre Party involved in the Upper Silesian province project[15]. This example seems to confirm the existence of a regional perspective in the circles of gentry and that they sustained a conceptual unity of Prussian Silesia[16]. What should thus be acknowledged in the period researched here is the presence of

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[12] Hans-Joachim Richter, *Die Entwicklung des Großgrundbesitzes in Schlesien seit 1891,* Breslau 1938, Franciszek Serafin, *Wieś na polskim Górnym Śląsku po 1922 roku*, [in:] *Górny Śląsk po podziale w 1922 roku: Co Polska, a co Niemcy dały mieszkańcom tej ziemi?*, eds Zbigniew Kapała, Wiesław Lesiuk, Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, vol. 1, Bytom 1997, pp. 58-73.

[13] See, among others, Alfred Reimann, *Die Organe der landwirtschaftlichen Verwaltung, die landwirtschaftlichen Vereine und Körperschaften Preussens, in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und ihren Beziehungen zur Entwicklung der Landwirtschaft*, Merseburg 1901, p. 34.

[14] U. Schmilewski, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

[15] Guido Hitze, *Nikolaus Graf Ballestrem 1900-1945*, [in:] *Schlesische Lebensbilder*, vol. 11, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Insignen 2012, pp. 531-547.

[16] That regional context should not be obscured by the examples of families oriented outside-for example, the family of Moltke from Krzyżowa (Jochen Thies, *Die Moltkes. Von Königgrätz nach Kreisau. Eine deutsche Familiengeschichte*, München-Zürich 2010), were practically only associated with the family seat in Silesia.

a crystallized regional identity of Silesian gentry, who persisted in their strong attachment to the land they owned. It shall be noted in passing that in comparison to other parts of Germany, they boasted the largest share of agricultural land in the region – 32.8% (compared with an average of 13.04% in Germany) and their representatives dominated among the largest German landowners[17], which obviously made Silesia stand out and certainly made its circles of gentry appreciated.

Great financiers, industrialists

The above-mentioned regional context of the Silesian gentry coincides in some part with the analogous issue concerning great industrialists. This convergence stems from a characteristic feature of Upper Silesian industry, namely its dependence on such aristocratic families as the Donnersmarcks, the Ballestrems and the Larisch family[18]. The commercial success brought about by industrialization also allowed the 'lesser' born to count on ennoblement, a well-known example of which was the promotion of Franz Winckler and Joanna Grycik (Gryzik), the heiress to the fortune of Karol Godula[19]. Obviously, the circles of Silesian capitalists were not limited to nobility alone. After all, the 19th century saw the creation of hundreds of private enterprises. Dominate among these were the large rolling stock factories of Linke-Hofmann-Werke in Wrocław, which grew by a merger in the interwar period to become a nationally dominate in the machine and metal industry. Because of fact, the headquarters of the company was transferred to Berlin[20].

At the time of our interest, the vast majority of large companies operating in Silesia did so in the form of joint-stock companies, which makes it difficult to understand the attitudes of the region's financial elite. The difficult years of the post-war crisis (until 1923), the consequences of Upper Silesia's division in 1922 and the

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[17] I. v. Hoyningen-Huene, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79, 122-127.
[18] Silesian magnates owed the promotion to circles of the most affluent Germans and profits from industry. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the rating of Prussian millionaires was as follows: Prince Henckel von Donnersmarck from Świerklaniec (Neudeck) (a fortune estimated at 254 million marks, and an income of 12.15 million marks a year) held the second position, Prince Hohenlohe-Oeringen from Sławięcice (respectively 154 and 6.5 million marks) – the fourth position, The Hochberg Duke of Pless (99 and 2.25 million marks) – the sixth position, and Earl Thiele-Winckler from Moszna (Moschen) (87 and 3.89 million marks) – the ninth position. – Rudolf Martin, *Nachtrag zu den 12 Provinzbänden des Jahrbuchs der Millionäre im Königreich Preußen. Die reichsten Millionäre im Königreich Preußen*, Berlin 1913, p. 2.
[19] Arkadiusz Kuzio-Podrucki, *Tiele-Wincklerowie. Arystokracja węgla i stali*, Bytom 2006; *idem, Die Tiele-Winckler. Eine Oberschlesische Kohle- und Stahlaristokratie*, Tarnowskie Góry-Kiel 2007; Irena Twardoch, *Z dziejów rodu Schaffgotschów*, Ruda Śląska 2008; eadem, *Geschichte des Geschlechts von Schaffgotsch*, Ruda Śląska 2011.
[20] Oswald Putze, W. Höck, *120 Jahre Linke-Hofmann-Busch. Salzgitter Watenstedt 1839-1959*, vol. 1: *Werke in Breslau, Bautzen und Werdau*, Braunschweig 1959, pp. 25-111.

customs war launched by Germany against Poland (from 1925), and finally the global economic crisis of the 1930s marked out adverse developmental lines, which resulted in the fall of a number of establishments and their takeover by capital from outside of Silesia. It must be mentioned because it further blurred the Silesian 'identity' of enterprises, thus contributing to the economic disintegration of the region. Some companies managed to avoid subordination to external centres, and even widened their own spheres of influence, as demonstrated by the example of the textile conglomerate Dierig-Werke AG from Bielawa (Langenbielau), but the overall trend was definitely negative and it intensified in the 1930s[21]. A specific situation developed in Upper Silesia, involved in a Polish-German-Czech conflict. The authorities of Poland and Czechoslovakia wanted to weaken the dominance of German entrepreneurs, so they were favourable to the inflow of French, Belgian or American capital, which was devoid of any regional context.

The German side tried to use their economic advantage to weaken Poland. For instance, it did not make use of the opportunity provided by the Treaty of Upper Silesia of extending, in 1925, the free circulation of goods within the boundaries of the plebiscite area, which was consistent with the Polish-German customs war and which created serious difficulties for the Upper Silesian industrial region divided by the border. Although the decisions were taken in Berlin, the national perception also influenced the actions of the German capitalists connected with the Polish Silesian Voivodeship. Their pro-German attitude and reluctance to operate within the Polish economy resulted, among others, in the transfer of investment to the German side, which took place at the expense of the 'Polish' plants[22]. It is mentioned here, because such measures led to the economic disintegration of Upper Silesia. The research of Franciszek Biały seems to indicate that the attitude of the German Upper Silesian industrialists towards Poland was also a result of the location of their plants. The capitalists who were generally functioning within Silesia sought *a modus vivendi* with the Polish authorities, and those who held the property on both sides of the border were uncompromising at times. During the Upper Silesian Uprisings the first group supported the idea of a separatist state of Upper Silesia. This group was headed up by Gustav Williger, Chairman of the Upper Silesian Union of Mining and Metallurgy Industrialists *(Oberschlesischer Berg- und Hüttenmännischer Verein)*.

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[21] Krzysztof Jeżowski, *Rozwój i rozmieszczenie przemysłu na Dolnym Śląsku w okresie kapitalizmu*, Wrocław 1961, pp. 186-191.

[22] Cf. Mieczysław Grzyb, *Narodowo-polityczne aspekty przemian stosunków własnościowych i kadrowych w górnośląskim przemyśle w latach 1922-1939*, Katowice 1978, pp. 43-46; *idem*, *Z problematyki organizacji i działalności górnośląskiego przemysłu ciężkiego w latach 1921-1923*, 'Prace Historyczne. Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach', 4 (1975), pp. 63-84.

The other group perceived this attitude as a betrayal of German interests. The differences that arose in this respect, including the unequivocal support of German industrial circles from the German Province of Upper Silesia for the customs war with Poland, which was detrimental to the interests of German companies in the Polish Silesian Voivodeship, led to the disintegration of this group[23]. While it is possible to speak about a regional perspective in this area, it was conditioned largely by economic, or national interests.

Taken as an example the *Giesche's Erben* conglomerate seated in Wrocław seems to indicate that any regional sentiments of the shareholders and executives had a limited impact on the direction of the company's development. In 1922 its Upper Silesian plants were located for the most part on the Polish side of the border, which was perceived as a serious difficulty. After complex legal transformations to the use of U.S. capital *(Silesian American Corporation)* the factories were left as financial security for the company, but the new investments were located within Germany: initially in Silesia and Westphalia and later in Brandenburg, where the strategic metallurgical complex had been created[24]. Economic performance, customs and transport tariffs usually determined the actions of industrial and financial circles. Industrialists indeed functioned within the industrial districts, thus promoting regional integration in the case of the districts contained within the borders of the region. Lack of such unity triggered the appearance of some disintegrating factors. These were visible in Cieszyn Silesia, where the German community wanted to keep their dominant economic and political position and maintain cooperation with the neighbouring industrialized surroundings of Biała (Galicia), Místek (Friedberg, Mistek; now: Frýdek-Místek) and Moravská Ostrava (Mährisch Ostrau) (Moravia). National and economic interests determined the choice of concept for the extended (!) region and efforts made to gain its independence. The idea of a Cieszyn state turned out at that time to be unrealistic; hence the Germans ultimately supported the side of Czechoslovakia. The German industrialists were convinced by the unity of the Moravian-Silesian mining and metallurgy district of Ostrava-Karvina and the significant economic potential of that country. The textile district of Bielsko and Biała (Biala, Bělá) was of lesser importance[25].

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[23] Franciszek Biały, *Górnośląski Związek Przemysłowców Górniczo-Hutniczych 1914-1932*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1967, pp. 128-131, 140-153, 204-205.

[24] Wilhelm Treue, *Georg von Giesche's Erben 1704-1964*, Hamburg 1964, pp. 81-113.

[25] Janusz Spyra, *Niemcy na Śląsku Cieszyńskim wobec Rady Narodowej Księstwa Cieszyńskiego i wydarzeń 1918-1920*, 'Pamiętnik Cieszyński', 8 (1994), pp. 55-76; Piotr Dobrowolski, *Ugrupowania i kierunki separatystyczne na Górnym Śląsku i w Cieszyńskiem w latach 1918-1939*, Warszawa-Kraków 1972, pp. 59-67, 72-73.

Interwar Silesia had professional associations of merchants and industrialists, but they more often divided into Upper and Lower Silesian ones (and smaller units), due to the differences in their development and economic profiles, as well as access to central aid measures. Although business associations and territorial chambers of industry and commerce reflected mainly the need for cooperation in the name of the interests of given groups, they still affected the cohesion of the region. The Chamber of Industry and Commerce of the Province of Upper Silesia *(Industrie- und Handelskammer für die Provinz Oberschlesien)* tried to be actively present in the contemporary economic, political and social life of Upper Silesia. It shall be noted that in a comprehensive monograph of the history of that chamber one will find recurring references concerning the region, while the references to Silesia as a whole have been practically omitted[26]. The circles of Silesian capitalists generally did not seek to consolidate in a regional dimension, but constituted themselves within a narrower spatial framework. What should be added to this is a clear localization of industrialists, particularly pronounced among the group of smaller entrepreneurs. This is evidenced by the significant activity of this group of people within the cities and industrial centres. Their factories, housing attached to factories and other investments affected the immediate space of these areas, indirectly becoming an integrating factor for the population. Industrialists-similar to the gentry-were therefore seen as a reference point, since the fate of the company often conditioned the well-being of the whole local community.

Groups of lower social standing

The socio-economic and socio-political crisis – resulting from the devastating nature of the First World War and eventually, also from the failure of the powers wielding Silesia before 1918 – resulted in a radicalization of the social and political moods of various inhabitants of the region. Revolutionary hardships, the fall of the Habsburgs and the Hohenzollerns, and finally the introduction of republics in Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland brought major political changes, but they did not lead to a fundamental reconstruction of the social system. Participation by the social democrats and the agrarian parties in the government formed at that time was appreciated by the lower parts of society, while at the same time revealing some moderation in their elites. The attitude of the Silesian proletariat in the first years

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[26] [Walter] Stoephasius, *Die Industrie- und Handelskammer für die Provinz Oberschlesien 1882-1932*, [in:] *Die Industrie- und Handelskammer für die Provinz Oberschlesien 1882-1932*, ed. [Walter] Stoephasius, Oppeln 1932, pp. 7-188.

after the Great War was affected both by the urgent need to find the means to live, as well as by a sense of real internal and external threats. The latter feeling consolidated the society around the idea of the nation and state, while also indirectly strengthening regional ties. The awareness of national or regional community yielded to rivalry when it came to meeting the needs for living conditions. The dramatic shortage of food created a conflict of interests among the residents of industrialized centres, which was evidenced, among other incidences, by the bloody riots of 1923 in Nowa Ruda (Neurode, Nová Ruda) provoked by a rumour that the *landrat* (district administrator) of Nowa Ruda supposedly sent some wagons with food to neighbouring Wałbrzych (Waldenburg, Valdenburk, Valbřich)[27]. The concurrent radicalization of social and political attitudes undoubtedly weakened the unity, but it was the case not only of local unity and not only on this part of the continent. Inadequate supplies, insufficient wages in an age of rampant inflation and difficulties in finding jobs and housing were creating bitterness and led to a series of strikes and disturbances in Silesian cities and among agglomerations of workers[28]. They developed on a local basis, including major industrial centres and districts. Analogous to the manufacturers, those industrial districts shaped the identity of the workers united by a common fate[29].

The primary factor which determined the industrial districts was economic cohesion. In the former Austrian area of Cieszyn (Teschen, Těšín), Silesia its historical boundaries blurred in the very place where industry developed at the junction of the regions; so it was in the textile region of Silesian Bielsk (Bielitz, Bílsko) and Galician Biała and in the coal and iron district of Ostrava-Karvina on the border of Silesia and Moravia, where after the Great War, the circles of German socialists came up with an idea to create the East-Silesian Republic of Workers *(Arbeiter-republik Ostschlesien)*[30]. Similar unity did not occur in the case of the previously German industrial region of Upper Silesia (Katowice (Kattowitz, Katovice)), the Austrian Cracow basin (Chrzanów (Krenau)) and the Russian Dąbrowa Górnicza

[27] Joseph Wittig, *Chronik der Stadt Neurode*, Neurode 1937, pp. 490-493.

[28] See eg Teresa Kulak, *Historia Wrocławia*, vol. 2: *Od twierdzy fryderycjańskiej do twierdzy hitle-rowskiej*, Wrocław 2001, pp. 281-286; *Dzierżoniów. Zarys monografii miasta,* ed. Stanisław Dąbrowski, Wrocław-Dzierżoniów 1998, pp. 168-171; *Wałbrzych. Zarys monografii miasta na tle regionu,* ed. Stanisław Michalkiewicz, Wrocław 1993, pp. 142-146; Franciszek Biały, *Z dziejów ruchu robotniczego na Dolnym Śląsku 1918-1923, Klasa robotnicza na Śląsku,* vol. 1, Opole 1975, pp. 153-200.

[29] The local range of social disruptions were also sustained in the following years, which is clearly expemplified by the city of Opole – Edward Mendel, *Stosunki społeczne i polityczne w Opolu w latach 1919-1933*, Warszawa-Wrocław 1975; *idem*, *Studia nad stosunkami społecznymi i politycznymi w Opolu w latach 1933-1939*, Opole 1988.

[30] J. Spyra, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

(Dombrowa) basin (Sosnowiec (Sosnowitz, Sosnovec)), whose economic profiles were indeed similar and which were located within interwar Poland, but they were separated administratively and, what is equally important, in terms of culture and civilisation[31]. What requires attention is another phenomenon occurring within Upper Silesia not yet divided by the border of 1922. A political – and to some extent also a national – radicalization of the working class circles of the Upper Silesian industrial district (Bytom (Beuthen), Gliwice (Gleiwitz, Hlivice), Katowice) in the period of revolutionary ferment (1918-1919) led the agricultural elites of the Upper Silesian district of Opole to comply strictly with the moderate authorities of Wrocław. Although ultimately the councils of workers and soldiers of the industrial district also recognized the sovereignty of the Central Council for the Province of Silesia in Wrocław *(Zentralrat für die Provinz Schlesien),* they still maintained large autonomy[32]. A similar radicalism and some separateness occurred at that time even in the case of the Wałbrzych mining basin in Lower Silesia, which seems to further confirm the fact that the regional perspective in the working class environment yielded to the perspective of a common fate.

Although workers' parties and revolutionary bodies were building regional structures, it is difficult to treat this as confirmation of the regional identity of the masses. As with other political parties, all subsequent organizational levels which were formed had to fit into the existing frameworks, including state and administrative frameworks. Due to political requirements, the aforementioned revolutionary Central Council for the Province of Silesia reached with its influence also to the southern ends of Greater Poland (not covered by the Greater Poland Uprising)[33]. It should generally be concluded that the people and the programme of political parties were the result of local, regional and national needs, opportunities and decisions. It is evident in the case of the Lower Silesian structures of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* – SPD) and the Communist Party of Germany *(Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands),* whose candidates for deputies were both people associated with Silesia and those sent from outside[34]. According to the memories of Immanuel Birnbaum, an editor of *Schlesische Volkswacht* – the press organ of the Silesian SPD district, who was born in East Prussia, the political line of that journal was dependent on the politically strategies at that

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[31] Eugeniusz Kopeć, *Południowo-zachodnie kresy Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939. Społeczne warunki integracji,* Katowice 1981, pp. 69-75, 84. This valuable study also appeared under a different title: *idem, 'My i oni' na polskim Śląsku (1918-1939),* Katowice 1986.

[32] Edmund Klein, *Rada Ludowa we Wrocławiu, Centralna Rada dla Prowincji Śląskiej,* Warszawa 1976, pp. 61-80.

[33] *Ibidem,* pp. 92-96.

[34] Helmut Neubach, *Parteien und Politiker in Schlesien,* Dortmund 1988, pp. 183-201.

time[35]. Obviously, this example cannot revoke regional references in the activities of the Silesian political parties; however, it forces greater care when interpreting them. What should at least be mentioned is the inconsistent policy of the communists, who were trapped between ideological internationalism, regional pragmatism, and often, also, national conflict. Their *strictly* Upper Silesian groups that developed after the First World War in the Upper Silesian industrial district turned out to be ephemeral, therefore in later years the only thing that worked there were the regional structures of the communist parties of Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland. The significant successes of the communists in Czechoslovak Cieszyn Silesia – and to a lesser extent also in the German Province of Upper Silesia – were supposed to be the result not only of the proletarian character of the area, but also of the avoidance of nationalist rhetoric. The communists were able to stand against the decision of the Czechoslovakian authorities about the administrative connection between Silesia and Moravia in 1928, which is understood both in light of the Silesian orientation of their political background, as well as because of a concern about the reduction in revenue in the representative bodies of the Moravian-Silesian region. In the Polish Province of Silesia the communist movement had not gained a similar meaning, but even there-despite this apparent weakness-it was difficult for its activists to break down the regional (historical) borders and establish closer cooperation with their colleagues from the neighbouring Dąbrowa Górnicza and Cracow basins[36].

The working class character of Upper Silesia, marked by a serious national conflict, shaped the unique political character of that province. The most trusted among the Polish voters were, after all, centre-leftist parties whose position in the political arena of the country was weaker, such as the Christian Democrats, the National Workers' Party, the Polish Socialist Party and later the Sanation's Christian National Union of Labour. The main political parties of Upper Silesia merged with the national party structures; nevertheless, they did not lose their clear regional context[37]. That autonomy, and in exceptional cases, separateness (e.g. secession of the

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[35] Wilhelm Matull, *Ostdeutschlands Arbeiterbewegung: Abriß ihrer Geschichte, Leistung und Opfer*, Würzburg 1973, pp. 75-82.

[36] Dan Gawrecki, *Śląsk Cieszyński w okresie międzywojennym (1918-1938)*, [in:] *Zarys dziejów Śląska Cieszyńskiego*, Ostrava-Praga 1992, pp. 89-91; *Dzieje robotnicze Śląska i Zagłębia Dąbrowskiego*, ed. Jan Walczak, Katowice 1986, pp. 93-219; *Dzieje ruchu robotniczego na Górnym Śląsku*, ed. Franciszek Hawranek, Opole 1982, pp. 87-89, 187-196.

[37] Cf Henryk Przybylski, *Życie polityczne jako czynnik integracji Górnego Śląska z Drugą Rzeczypospolitą*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce Górnego Śląska w drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, Bytom-Katowice 1995, pp. 136-148; Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Separatyzm górnośląskiej organizacji PPS w latach 1922-1928 (Refleksje i uwagi polemiczne)*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce...*, pp. 329-334; Sylwester Fertacz, *O niektórych odrębnościach życia politycznego w województwie śląskim*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce...*, pp. 335-338.

Silesian Socialist Party in 1928), was based on regional grounds, which, at least to some extent, was due to the social specifics of the province and the regional bonds among the workers prevailing in the area. Moreover, similar phenomena can be observed in the German Province of Upper Silesia, where workers' parties competed with the dominant Upper Silesian fraction of the Christian Democratic Centre Party (Catholic People's Party-*Katholische Volkspartei),* led by father Carl Ulitzka[38].

Social and national conflicts

A particular identity-related context evolved in a part of Upper Silesia which was marked by a vehement German-Polish dispute. The conflict was of a strong social nature, since the Polish-speaking population of workers and peasants prevailing in that region felt discriminated against by the Prussian (German) officials and at the same time-economically exploited by the German propertied classes[39]. A sense that the Polish-speaking inhabitants were double handicapped weakened the regional bond, and in practice narrowed it to their own group. Assigning the source of harm to the Germans and persuading Upper Silesians that their fate would change for the better in an idealized Poland determined the fact that the Polish-speaking plebeian population led by a small number of Polish intellectuals turned to the Polish movement. Arka Bożek, a well-known peasant activist of Upper Silesia, explained after many years: 'We were dreaming about a perfect Poland, a Poland of justice, a Poland without lords and serfs. It was supposed to be the home of truly free and equal people.'[40]. The Polish – German antagonism, growing in an atmosphere of a plebiscite struggle and the Silesian Uprisings, strengthened the national identity at the expense of the regional one. The classless solidarity proved not particularly attractive to proletarianized Upper Silesians because it did not change the social *status quo.* The advantage of Polish solidarity was that it did not include classes of a distinctly German character. Polish identity was growing out of a complex of grievances. Future governor Michał Grażyński estimated that the Polish movement in Silesia drew on both the national element-hatred for the Germans, as well as the social element-hatred for the manufacturer, the official and the landowner[41]. In such circumstances, the Association of Upper Silesia established at the end of 1918 only

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[38] Cf Guido Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873-1953) oder Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen*, Düsseldorf 2002.

[39] See Tadeusz Minczakiewicz, *Stosunki społeczne na Śląsku Opolskim w latach 1922-1933*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk 1976, p. 11.

[40] Arka Bożek, *Pamiętniki*, Warszawa 1957, p. 86.

[41] Tomasz Falęcki, *Regionalizm powstańców śląskich (do 1939 roku)*, [in:] *Regionalizm a separatyzm – historia i współczesność: Śląsk na tle innych obszarów*, ed. Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, Katowice 1995, pp. 49-50.

briefly broke through to the masses with the slogan of the regional state system, and then it became marginalized[42].

Love of the Upper Silesian land, the memory of the relative abundance and alleged coexistence of the residents in the mythologized era of Wilhelminian Germany, and finally the aversion to strangers from Poland strengthened the regional perception of the Upper Silesians who were disappointed with the changes that occurred after 1922, which is too quickly labelled as Silesian separatism. The vast group of workers and peasants from the Polish Silesian Voivodeship did not find the expected social promotion, which gave rise to a sense of resentment. Their situation was worsened by the years of deep economic crisis, when a simple yet predictable existence was replaced with uncertainty, unemployment and impoverishment[43]. Some of the disgruntled turned to German or separatist parties[44], others chose the programme of workers' parties. The latter should indeed be regarded as a sign of normalization, shifting a socially based dispute from the level of national confrontation to the level of class struggle. What collapsed in the interwar Poland was the myth of a Poland of justice which had previously moved the Upper Silesians so greatly[45]. In general, it shall be concluded that the social and economic tensions coupled with the national ones disintegrated the Silesian national community, and also indirectly disintegrated the region.

The Polish-speaking and plebeian by nature population of Upper Silesia defined the region somewhat through themselves, which is what Father Emil Szramek briefly commented on in 1934 saying that 'the Silesian man is the soul of Silesia'[46]. Arka Bożek, mentioned above, phrased it more in a peasant way when he wrote that 'we are the hosts [of our land]. For centuries we have grown out of it and we have been the masters of its treasures. And we alone are entitled to be in charge of this, which is our property'[47]. Merging the national factor with peasant tradition was characteristic of the Upper Silesian population and had no analogy in other Polish lands. The separateness of the Upper Silesians was proved not only by their actual

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[42] For more information on the separatist concepts of Upper Silesia see P. Dobrowolski, *op. cit.*

[43] Jan Walczak, *Położenie robotników w polskiej części Górnego Śląska 1922-1939*, [in:] *Górny Śląsk po podziale*, pp. 51-55.

[44] The disappointed group gave strength for example to Związek Obrony Górnoślązaków (*The Association for the Defence of Upper Silesians*) led by Jana Kustos, see Maciej Fic, *Jan Kustos (1893-1932). Separatysta czy autonomista?*, Katowice 2010.

[45] See, among others, Maria Wanatowicz, *Ludność napływowa na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1922-1939*, Katowice 1982, pp. 211, 276-282; Jan Walczak, *Formowanie się frontu walki klasowej na Górnym Śląsku i w Cieszyńskiem w warunkach niepodległości narodowej (okres II Rzeczypospolitej)*, [in:] *Z problemów integracji społeczno-politycznej na Górnym Śląsku przed II wojną światową*, ed. Władysław Zieliński, Katowice 1980, pp. 67-107.

[46] Emil Szramek, *Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny*, Katowice 1934, p. 6.

[47] A. Bożek, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

social differences, but also by their desire to remain in their own social circle, as pointed out in 1938 by sociologist Paweł Rybicki[48]. It can even be referred to as a form of isolationism stemming from overlapping territorial, social, religious and ethnic alienation[49]. The Germans, and later also the Poles, were associated with harm and a threat to the homely surroundings[50]. This explains the reluctance towards the Polish immigrants, who were supposedly taking jobs and promotion opportunities away from the Upper Silesians, and what is more, they brought different cultural patterns. Maria Wanda Wanatowicz has shown that except for the Polish intelligentsia, Polish migration to Upper Silesia was not particularly intense at that time, yet what mattered, in fact, was the public impression[51]. Plebeian Upper Silesia had contact with 'noble' Poland within the borders of the Silesian Voivodeship, which hindered integration on both sides. The elitism proper of the Polish intelligentsia, the lordly lifestyle of migrant personnel and their treatment of the Upper Silesians with suspicion and superiority created a barrier and suggested a simple division into local people and foreigners. The Polish immigrant intelligentsia substituted the German one, yet they could not understand the specifics of the region[52]. The social nature of the Upper Silesian community was thus upheld.

The people's character of the Silesian Uprisings (1919-1921) and the autonomous status of the Silesian Voivodeship, unique on a national scale, (1922-1939) reinforced the Upper Silesian self-identification. The low social standing inhabitants of Silesia were also ennobled by a standard of living which was higher than in other areas of the country, including a range of social benefits. The sense of pride and ennoblement were accompanied by a self-containment and aversion to Polish foreigners. These evident cultural differences divided the Upper Silesians from the Polish elites, and in the case of lateral relationships the key problem was professional and economic rivalry. Fear of the expected competition dictated, among others, the administrative closure of the Upper Silesian labour market in 1926. It should be noted that eventually almost all political currents of the region adopted an anti-immigrant stance[53]. The already present regional resentments took on renewed force, which is shown, among other cases, in the sharpening and spreading of the

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[48] Paweł Rybicki, *O badaniu socjograficznym Śląska*, Katowice 1938, pp. 35-36.
[49] See T. Falęcki, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.
[50] Marian Grzegorz Gerlich, *'Śląska krzywda' – przejaw zbiorowego poczucia poniżenia wśród górnośląskiej ludności rodzimej (okres międzywojenny)*, 'Etnografia Polska', 38 (1994), issue 1-2, pp. 5-23.
[51] M. Wanatowicz, *Ludność napływowa,* pp. 121-124.
[52] See Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, *Inteligencja na Śląsku w okresie międzywojennym*, Katowice 1986.
[53] M. Wanatowicz, *Ludność napływowa*, pp. 219-257.

gorol and *hanys* stereotypes. While the former one actually referred to newcomers from other Polish lands (originally from Galicia), the latter one was the quintessence of an Upper Silesian. The economic crisis further deepened the hostility of Silesian workers towards the generally unskilled immigrants, who were prepared to accept lower pay, were ready to be of service for superiors in work and thus were used as strike-breakers. What is more, the workers inflowing from the Polish agricultural regions came from another, by Upper Silesians acknowledged as underdeveloped circle of civilisation, hence in Silesia they were considered simple, which only deepened tensions in the region[54]. In general, the Upper Silesian plebeian community remained in a circle of pre-established behaviours and values. They were literate, but uneducated, poor yet hardworking, and their sense of dignity and self-esteem was rooted in employment. According to Eugeniusz Kopeć, a historian, physical work was a constitutive feature of regional affiliation[55]. How significant, in this context, is the statement of Father Jan Kapica, who welcomed the Polish Army entering Upper Silesia in 1922 with the words, 'We, Silesians, will learn from you, the Poles from other areas how to speak nicely, and you will learn from us how to work nicely'[56].

Ludwik Landau, well-versed in socio-economic issues wrote at that time that the essential features distinguishing the Polish part of Silesia from the rest of Poland were advanced industrialization, the resulting high proportion of the working population, and a low percentage of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry[57]. According to the census carried out in 1931, 54.6% of the population of Silesian Voivoidship were workers employed in mining and industry (with an average of 19.2% in Poland)[58]. The most strongly urbanized and industrialized area of interwar Poland (1.1% of the area and 4.4% of the population) held at the same time as much as 75% of its heavy industry! On the German and Czechoslovakian side the disparities were not so large, but still, even there a plebeian and workers' perception of the region was formed. This was conducive to maintaining an impression of a unified Upper Silesia divided by national borders, while blocking the all-Silesian identity of the Upper Silesians. Ethnically German and socially developed Lower Silesia

[54] Eugeniusz Kopeć, *Problemy stratyfikacji środowisk robotniczych w okresie wielkiego kryzysu (na przykładzie bielsko-bialskiego okręgu przemysłowego)*, [in:] *Wielki kryzys gospodarczy 1929-1933 na Śląsku i w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim oraz jego społeczne konsekwencje*, ed. Józef Chlebowczyk, Katowice 1974, pp. 117-131.

[55] E. Kopeć, *Południowo-zachodnie kresy*, pp. 38-41.

[56] Quoted after Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, *Górny Śląsk pomostem pomiędzy Polską 'A' i Polską 'B' (Rola Górnego Śląska w procesie integracji gospodarczej Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce*, p. 85.

[57] Ludwik Landau, *Wybór pism*, Warszawa 1957, p. 180.

[58] Franciszek Serafin, *Stosunki demograficzne i społeczne*, [in:] *Województwo śląskie*, pp. 90-94.

was far less interesting to them. On the Lower Silesian side, a similar constraint seems to be absent, since the social and economic heterogeneity of Lower Silesia facilitated the acceptance of sub-regional differences. Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the well-established position of the middle class and intelligentsia, sharing their Silesian identity with groups that held a lower position in the social hierarchy. Finally, it should be noted that the administrative distinction of the Province of Upper Silesia encountered resistance from the authorities of Lower Silesia and the acceptance of the Upper Silesians, who felt their own otherness. It is accurately defined on a linguistic or ethnic level, however, it is at the same time forgotten that it was linked to the social situation of the region[59]. It shall, therefore, be repeated that the plebeian character of a significant part of the Upper Silesian community contributed to the disintegration of Silesia.

Villages' and small towns' citizens: local identity

Plebeian groups essentially functioned at the local level, absorbing national and state messages promoted by state institutions and elites. The regional format was the intermediate level, and took the form of a wider local identity. There are two thorough representations of workers and rural communities in interwar Silesia which make it possible to penetrate into the fabric of society and politics. It is significant that what is found both in a sociological description of the Murcki (Emanuelssegen) settlement located near the mine (now a district of Katowice), and in a reconstruction of life in a Jarnołtówek (Arnoldsdorf, Arnoltovice) village in the mountains of Opava are basically exclusive references to these settlements. Their inhabitants seem to operate in the narrow space of local affairs and relationships, which overlapped with distant echoes of political and national conflicts. As shown by Julius Graw, revolution, economic crises and Nazi pressure were not able to break the conservative community of Jarnołtówek, which, according to tradition, was led by a Catholic priest. A unifying factor for the people was church and school, and that common poverty was alleviated through village solidarity. The external world reached Jarnołtówek through the district authorities from the city of Nysa (Neisse, Nisa). Hardly any children went to school in the city and the peasant-workers who worked in the nearby factories did not mean that they could gain entry into the circles of workers. A small flow of tourists, seasonal work trips and pilgrimages to Silesian

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[59] Stanisław Ossowski, *Zagadnienia więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej na Śląsku Opolskim*, [in:] *idem*, *Dzieła*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1967, pp. 294-295.

cult centres did not challenge the local character of the community whose regional dimension has been ignored by the author[60].

The main message of the study of Józef Chałasiński, who discussed relations in the village factory is very similar. In Murcki (Emanuelssegen) he found an incumbent community of workers linked by place of employment, and to a large extent related by family ties and proud of their roots[61]. The aforementioned study explored Polish-German antagonism; however, the author did not overlook the related, awakened sense of regional distinctiveness shaped by the proletarian ethos of Upper Silesia. He wrote eloquently that 'An Upper Silesian feels like a worker, but the worker it is not just any: it is a first-rate worker'[62]. Nevertheless, the residents functioned essentially within the same colony and mine which organized their world. What is also worth mentioning are their strong attachment to the land and their persistent attachment to Silesian folk culture, which transferred the rural behavioural patterns, established by centuries to industrial housing[63].

The working population of Upper Silesia retained their fear of the outside world that they had brought with them from their villages[64], which definitely inhibited the progress of regional identification. Moreover, in times of crisis and struggle for employment, any 'stranger' could be a threat, even though he came from a neighbouring village. Such an attitude led to an isolation in the sources of strike outbreaks, because the workers did not evince greater solidarity[65]. Much depended, of course, on the seriousness of the problems and the relationships that developed. Under normal circumstances, the attention of the peasant and workers' communities' members concentrated on local issues, hence they cared more about the problems of the *gmina* (commune) or the parish than about the cases of a trans-local character[66]. Shortly after the Second World War, a sociologist, Stanisław Ossowski

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[60] Julius Graw, *Arnoldsdorf / Kreis Neisse: Untersuchungen zur Sozialstruktur und Mentalität einer oberschlesischen Dorfgemeinschaft 1920-1950*, Cloppenburg 1996.

[61] Józef Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej 'Kopalnia' na Górnym Śląsku. Studium socjologiczne*, Warszawa 1935, pp. 14-15 et seq.

[62] *Ibidem*, p. 100.

[63] Tomasz Nawrocki, *Trwanie i zmiana lokalnej społeczności górniczej na Górnym Śląsku na przykładzie Murcek*, Katowice 2006, p. 76, pp. 81-82, 109-110, 137-139.

[64] Piotr Madajczyk, *Obcość jako wyznacznik powstawania i funkcjonowania granic etniczno-narodowych na Górnym Śląsku*, [in:] *Górny Śląsk wyobrażony: wokół mitów, symboli i bohaterów dyskursów narodowych*, eds Juliane Haubold-Stolle, Bernard Linek, Opole-Marburg 2005, pp. 109-110.

[65] M. Wanatowicz, *Ludność napływowa,* p. 282; Jan Walczak, *Formowanie się frontu walki klasowej na Górnym Śląsku i w Cieszyńskiem w warunkach niepodległości narodowej (okres II Rzeczypospolitej)*, [in:] *Z problemów integracji społeczno-politycznej na Górnym Śląsku przed II wojną światową*, ed. Władysław Zieliński, Katowice 1980, pp. 67-107.

[66] Cf E. Kopeć, *Południowo-zachodnie kresy*, p. 64.

consciously assessed that Poles from the village of Giełczyn[67] in Opole Silesia belonged primarily to a 'close and substantial' community of ' local people' connected by ties of tradition and coexistence[68]. Perhaps it appeared similar in the villages inhabited by the Germans. A belief expressed in the literature that the Silesian village was a real mainstay of regional tradition[69], is not necessarily false. That tradition is still being built from local components. Moreover, the isolation was undermined by the aforementioned instability and, finally, by progressive modernization. One of its elements was the strong development of the cooperative movement, agricultural farmers' circles and peasant associations[70].

The strong local and sub-regional identification of rural and small-town communities generated substantial production of books and periodicals of that kind in the interwar period. It is enough to recall the then fashionable calendars (including the one issued in Międzylesie (Mittelwalde, Mezilesí) from 1911 to 1942 entitled 'Guda Obend!'[71]), which cherished a love of the homeland, its history, culture and nature. The publishing houses – similar to regional museums and associations – appeared in even greater numbers already before the First World War, but the disturbances and threats that occurred after that also contributed to a distribution of folk and local content. This grassroots need to express affection for a small homeland permeated in German circles with an intellectual movement for the protection of the transient cultural and natural heritage *(Heimatschutz),* with a bourgeois taste for sightseeing and tourism, and a national need to prove the German character of the surrounding area threatened by the territorial claims of Poland and Czechoslovakia[72]. What is pertinent to our discussion is the local identity of those simple people, concentrated on the land close to their heart and steadfast in the conviction of its

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[67] Giełczyn is the fictitious name made by Stanisław Ossowski for a real community to disguise its identity.

[68] S. Ossowski, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

[69] Jan Walczak, *Wokół etniczno-kulturowej tożsamości Górnego Śląska (Uwagi polemiczne i dyskusyjne)*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce*, pp. 327-328.

[70] *Historia chłopów śląskich*, ed. Stefan Inglot, Warszawa 1979, pp. 294-298, 313-317, 330-335.

[71] For example, the editors of the Kłodzko calendar wrote in the first yearbook that it was created for the beloved earldom of Kłodzko – for the homeland *(Heimat).* It suggested that the recipient of the journal should feel homely *(heimlich)* thanks to it, as long as the recipient has the true heart of a resident of Kłodzko and has love for the native land (*Heimaterde*), see 'Guda Obend! Glatzer Volkskalender für das Jahr 1911', Glatz 1911, p. 27.

[72] Cf. Ulrike Frede, *'Unvergessene Heimat' Schlesien. Eine exemplarische Untersuchung des ostdeutschen Heimatbuches als Medium und Quelle spezifischer Erinnerungskultur*, Marburg 2004, pp. 31-42. What is more, the recalled study proves the duration of the affiliation of the German residents to the homeland lost after 1945 (*verlorene Heimat*) and about the need for describing those lands. Suffice it to say that in the case of the land of Kłodzko, Ząbkowice and Wałbrzych (about 10% of the area of Lower Silesia), after the Second World War there was prepared in a *Landsmanshaft* at least 164 publications *(Heimatbücher),* of which most were dedicated to villages.

value. Similar circumstances also explain the popularity of the local press[73]. It should be added that the all-Silesian regional magazines, including 'Wir Schlesier' and 'Schlesische Heimat', were directed at the more demanding urban and intellectual circles, whose perspective was much broader.

Bigger towns' and cities' inhabitants: between local and regional identity

It is difficult to expect industrial workers to represent a specific regional horizon when most of them – unless we count the migration – had rarely left their place of residence and work. Paid holiday leaves affected the mobility to a rather limited extent, judging from the fact that close to 68% of employees in the large factories of Berlin declared in 1933 that they had never (!) seen them as an opportunity to leave Berlin[74]. Silesian workers travelled little, as evidenced by a modest-compared with neighbouring Saxony and the Czech Republic – development of working-class tourist groups (*Touristenverein 'Naturfreunde'*) and a negligible participation of these circles in promoting skiing, a holiday activity which was very popular in the interwar period[75]. Some change was caused by the activity of *Kraft durch Freude*, a Nazi organization promoting mass recreation. Still, its potential regional dimension was dominated by the national political context, so characteristic of the Third Reich. Tourism and winter sports developed mainly in bourgeois circles, and their example was followed also by the lower social classes, especially near the Sudetenland. The distance from the tourist areas was important because time and financial constraints allowed the non-affluent part of the society to travel only locally. In these circumstances, departure on a religious pilgrimage to regional sanctuaries was an important exception and gave rise to a regional context. This was at least the case of Góra Św. Anny (St. Anna's Berg), which was a point of reference (and direct meeting!) for the Upper Silesians. It was the 'holy mountain of Upper Silesia' where 'its heart was beating'[76].

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[73] Tomasz Przerwa, *Nieodzowność 'obcego' w małomiasteczkowej prasie dolnośląskiej pierwszej połowy XX w.?*, [in:] *Prasa regionalna jako źródło do badań historycznych okresu XIX i XX wieku*, eds Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Grzegorz Strauchold, Tomasz Ślepowroński, Wrocław 2011, pp. 55-67.

[74] Timothy W. Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich: Arbeitsklasse und Volksgemeinschaft*, Opladen 1977, pp. 183-185.

[75] Tomasz Przerwa, *Miedzy lękiem i zachwytem. Sporty zimowe w śląskich Sudetach i ich znaczenie dla regionu (do 1945 r.)*, Wrocław 2012, pp. 113-140.

[76] For example Max Czerwensky, *Schlesien in weiter Ferne: Erinnerungen eines vertriebenen Priesters an seine Heimat*, Dülmen 2007, pp. 46-52, 58; Andrzej Hanich, *Góra Świętej Anny – centrum pielgrzymkowe Śląska Opolskiego 1945-1999. Studium historyczno-pastoralne*, Opole 1999, pp. 27, 31, 78-99, 104-132.

In the case of residents of large urban centres, the Silesian vision of the region was, apparently, the strongest, but what is greatly missing to deepen this thesis are papers describing the life of the Silesian bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia in the interwar period. We can only base our assumptions on individual accounts and general historical surveys. The regional perspective of these layers was conditioned by their increased mobility, job mobility natural for this group and the already mentioned fascination with tourist trips. There is no way to ignore their better education and the sense of responsibility they felt for the less developed surroundings. That trans-local perspective gave urban residents a broader sense of being at home, and resulted from their greater opportunities and wider horizons. It should be added that the pro-regional attitude of the middle class was particularly important here, because this class was a societal leader both in a cultural and intellectual respect. Although the political and economic instability of the 1920s and 1930s weakened the economic position of the middle class, at the time it was bringing them closer to the lower classes and facilitated the spreading of their ideas about the region.

Among the intelligensia, the Silesian perspective was a typical phenomenon, which seems to be proven by the many Silesian scientific associations which sprung up in the German Wrocław back in the 19th century and were still active after the Great War. What is more, the interwar period saw the appearance of new structures, including the Historical Committee on Silesia (*Historische Kommission für Schlesien*) and the Silesian Geographical Society (*Schlesische Gesellschaft für Erdkunde*). On the Czech and Polish side there were indeed competing organizations, but they were devoid of academic background. Wrocław remained the only Silesian university and polytechnic centre. In assessing the profile of various regional associations, what remains is the general uncertainty as to the extent to which they grew from a regional orientation, and the extent to which they served national purposes. It is well illustrated by the effort of the Germans involved in promoting 'tribal culture' (*Stammeskultur*). They appealed to a unification concept involving the divided Silesia and the all-Silesian identity, but in fact they wanted to unite Sudeten Germandom with the region of neighbouring Germany. In this quite offensive project the historical borders of Silesia were crossed, at the same time building a Silesian perspective. Silesian Culture Weeks were organized (*Schlesische Kulturwoche*), and the periodical 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch für die deutsche Kulturarbeit im gesamtschlesischen Raum' was issued. German Upper Silesian elites, including the people surrounding Karl Schodrok and his 'Der Oberschlesier', were searching for their own form of regionalism, similar to the administrative authorities, who, in collaboration

with the opinion-shaping circles intensified the promotion of Silesia and Silesianess[77].

More can probably be said only about the native Upper Silesian intelligentsia, relatively small in number, but highly bound to the region. Its most typical group was the Catholic clergy, who enjoyed considerable authority, trust and the respect of the Upper Silesians. The priests were becoming the natural leaders of the commoners, who were deprived of other elites. They understood the problems of the commoners, supported them in word and deed. They were both priests and devoted defenders, involved in protecting Silesian tradition and social ties[78]. This fusion of the Catholics with their spiritual leaders was responsible for the power of the Catholic Church in Upper Silesia and the success of the Christian Democratic parties which represented it. Indeed, religion played a special role in the life of the Upper Silesians. Much of the Upper Silesian priests descended from the commoners (33% of the priests of the diocese of Katowice had peasant roots, and 25% of them were of working-class descent)[79]. Their family homes provided them with a keen sense of regional community, which they sought to protect and nurture. Assuming German or Polish nationality usually did not deprive them of the understanding of the needs of the faithful of the opposing nationality. In the name of regional tradition and Catholic values they were also ready to act against those fellow countrymen who did not adapt to the local community and who transferred foreign cultural patterns and a secular worldview to Upper Silesia. The Upper Silesian clergy were not enemies of immigrants, but-like most Upper Silesians-felt that the immigrants should respect what constituted a Silesian. The Catholic clergy was a group which united or even constructed Upper Silesia. Their commitment on regional grounds is symbolised by priest Carl Ulitzka, who played a part in the administrative separation of the German Province of Upper Silesia[80].

In 1922 Poland inherited, in Upper Silesia, a small group of Polish secular intelligentsia. The congress of the Silesian Academic Association in 1919 was attended by

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77   Tobias Weger, *Zwischen alldeutschen Phantasien und sudetendeutschen Anschlussplänen – die 'gesamtschlesische' Idee der 1920er und 1930er Jahre*, [in:] *Schlesien als literarische Provinz. Literatur zwischen Regionalismus und Universalismus*, eds Marek Adamski, Wojciech Kunicki, Leipzig 2008, pp. 91-101; Eduard Mühle, *Obraz historii i polityka historyczna. O historiograficznej konstrukcji „ogólnośląskiego obszaru plemiennego” i jego politycznej instrumentalizacji*, [in:] *Górny Śląsk wyobrażony*, pp. 55-77; Wojciech Kunicki, *Śląsk. Rzeczywistości wyobrażone*, [in:] *Śląsk. Rzeczywistości wyobrażone*, ed. Wojciech Kunicki, Poznań 2009, pp. 51-57; Teresa Kulak, *Propaganda antypolska dolnośląskich władz prowincjonalnych w latach 1922-1933*, Wrocław 1981, pp. 81-87.

78   E. Kopeć, *Południowo-zachodnie*, pp. 61, 109-110, 127-129.

79   Henryk Olszar, *Kościół katolicki na Górnym Śląsku w życiu Kościoła w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Rola i miejsce*, pp. 129-132.

80   G. Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka*, pp. 491-559.

only 110 people, most of whom were priests. The shortage of Polish staff made it necessary to bring educated Poles from other parts of the country, to the Silesian Voivoidship which in itself should be considered a region-disintegrating action. District-related frictions within the Polish intelligentsia in this area not only divided that group, but also affected the attitudes of the whole community. The differences in the ethos – including the 'noble – szlachta' arrogance of the newcomers – was offensive to the Upper Silesian intelligentsia who had grown in the egalitarian atmosphere of Upper Silesia and felt a strong sense of regional ties connecting them with the proletarian community. They focused their attention mainly on local issues and manifested patriotism in this very narrow form, which was visible, among other things, in the defence of the Silesians and the values which they had created. Considerably little attention was given by the Upper Silesians to higher education and a several-year-long period of Polish rule decided that the national Upper Silesian intelligentsia was growing at a slow pace and, what is more, suffered heavy losses during the Second World War[81]. The aforementioned alienation of the immigrant intelligentsia was not only characteristic of the Polish. During the war the German invaders brought experienced executives from Germany (including German Silesia) into the region of Katowice, and who – according to the research of Ryszard Kaczmarek – felt alienated there, or else were overcome with the task of fitting the residents into the national and political objectives of the Third Reich[82]. Where their activity was successful, it weakened regional orientation, where it was not accepted, the Upper Silesians strengthened within their own identification.

Among the German inhabitants of Silesia Hitler gained the support of all social groups; nevertheless, the participation of the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia in the leading circles of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) seems to prove their special position in the Nazi movement[83]. The question of how these groups influenced the shaping of regional Nazi governments remains open. The Third Reich was characterized by far-reaching unification and centralization, which has prevented a correct reading of the regional components of social behaviour. The fact is that the Nazis initially appreciated the concept of regional unity *(Gau Schlesien),* but during the war they

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[81] M. W. Wanatowicz, *Inteligencja*, pp. 8, 26, 56, 84-94, eadem, *Inteligencja w województwie śląskim 1922-1939*, [in:] *Losy inteligencji śląskiej w latach 1939-1945*, ed. Zbigniew Kapała, vol. 1, Bytom 2001, pp. 7-21.

[82] Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Inteligencja niemiecka na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1939-1945*, [in:] *Losy inteligencji śląskiej,* pp. 44-61; *idem, Pod rządami gauleiterów. Elity i instytucje władzy w rejencji katowickiej w latach 1939-1945*, Katowice 1998, pp. 197-211.

[83] See Tomasz Kruszewski, *Partia narodowosocjalistyczna na Śląsku w latach 1933-1945. Organizacja i działalność,* Wrocław 1995; *idem, Struktura organizacyjna i społeczno-zawodowa NSDAP w powiecie dzierżoniowskim w latach 1933-1945*, Wrocław 1992, pp. 149-170.

divided it into a Lower Silesian part *(Gau Niederschlesien)* and an Upper Silesian one *(Gau Oberschlesien)* which combined the adjacent Silesian and non-Silesian industrial districts into the Forge of the Third Reich. What comes to light here is the realm of political decisions.What should be emphasized once more is the primacy of nationalist attitudes, which created pressure in Germany to erase the Slavic heritage of Silesia, including Polish and Czech geographic names. A similar pressure directed once more against the Germans occurred also in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The attitude of society – including local communities – to these activities requires research, yet it can already be noted that not everybody accepted it[84].

In the years 1939-1945 the attention of the residents of Silesia was occupied primarily with the war efforts that sharpened national and political orientation. The war losses and forced migration weakened the social dimension of the region, which was strongly evident at the end of the war[85]. Social and regional issues clearly yielded under the pressure of important basic problems. Against this background, a more lenient treatment of the Polish-speaking Upper Silesians by the German occupiers created significant deviation. The vast majority of them were incorporated by the Nazis into the German national community *(Deutsche Volksliste),* which was created with a view to maintaining the working-class group which they needed. It created a sort of stability because it protected the local community against evictions. The social characteristic of this area weakened the disintegrating impact of the war, which, however, was more and more clearly visible. Prisoners of war and forced labourers replaced the men mobilized for the army and for work in other areas. This percentage exceeded even 50% of the crew in the selected factories[86].

Migrations

The complicated economic, political and national situation of interwar Silesia fostered migration, which highly depleted the community of the region and partly disturbed their social cohesion. Given the scale of the problems compared to the period before the First World War, Silesian emigration to the west *(Ostflucht)* should

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[84] See, among others, Karol Fiedor, *Walka z nazewnictwem polskim na Śląsku w okresie hitlerowskim (1933-1939)*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1966; Bernard Linek, *Zmiany nazw na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX w.*, [in:] *Nazwa dokumentem przeszłości regionu*, eds Joanna Nowosielska-Sobel, Grzegorz Strauchold, Wojciech Kucharski, Wrocław 2010, pp. 123-134.

[85] This can be illustrated by example of the noble families, see Arkadiusz Kuzio-Podrucki, *Śląski koniec arystokracji*, [in:] *Rodzina na Śląsku 1939-1945: dezintegracja, migracja, codzienność*, eds Adriana Dawid, Antoni Maziarz, Opole-Warszawa 2012, pp. 12-22.

[86] Cf. R. Kaczmarek, *Górny Śląsk*, pp. 131-215, 312-330; *Położenie ludności w rejencji katowickiej w latach 1939-1945*, ed. Wacław Długoborski, Poznań 1983, pp. XLII, XLIV-XLV.

be seen as moderate. One of the major factors hindering the depopulation of Silesia was sought in an unusual attachment of the inhabitants to their homeland[87]. The balance of migration movements in the area of German Silesia was, however, negative. In the years 1910-1925 36.9 thousand residents disappeared, in the years 1925-1933 115.2 thousand, and from 1933 to 1939 – including Hlučín Region (Czech: Hlučínsko, German: Hultschiner Ländchen, Polish: Kraik Hulczyński) – 161.3 thousand[88]. With the exception of some cities, such as Głogów (Glogau, Hlohov) (+11.8%), Jelenia Góra (+11.7%) and Świdnica (Schweidnitz, Svídnice) (+9.3%), from 1933 to 1939 most of the region recorded losses, which included both agricultural districts (*Kreise*, *powiats*), such as the district of Kluczbork (Kreuzburg) (-9%), Grodków (Grottkau) (-8.5%) and Strzelin (Strehlen) (-8.2%), as well as crisis-stricken industrial centres, such as Zabrze (Hindenburg) (-9.8%), Racibórz (Ratibor, Ratiboř) (-9.4%) and Wałbrzych (-7.7%)[89]. The balance of Upper Silesia was particularly unfavourable, because already before that – with the exception of the industrial district – a significant decrease in population had been reported there[90]. The backward agricultural regions provided up to 20 thousand seasonal workers leaving the region in search of work[91]. The war interrupted this natural migration and the resettlements – including those performed within the dislocation of German industry threatened by allied air raids – had no significant meaning for the subject of this work. Still, similar to the presence of forced labourers and prisoners of war, they interfered with the social space of Silesia[92].

Within the region major shifts of population occurred[93], which were of both an economic and political nature. What should be mentioned are escapes from Upper Silesia during the plebiscite fighting, during the uprisings and after the division of the area in 1922. Polish and German Silesians were mostly looking for support in the Polish Silesian Voivoidship or in the German Opole Regency (*Regierungsbezierk Oppeln*), respectively[94]. Similar social space only partially alleviated their

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[87] Andrzej Brożek, *Problematyka narodowościowa Ostfluchtu na Śląsku*, Wrocław 1969, p. 29; Adam Hrebenda, *Górnośląska klasa robotnicza w latach międzywojennych 1922-1939*, Warszawa-Katowice-Kraków 1979, p. 89.

[88] Andrzej Brożek, *Ostflucht na Śląsku*, Katowice 1966, p. 44.

[89] *Statistik des Deutschen Reichs,* vol. 552, issue 1: *Stand, Entwicklung und Siedlungsweise der Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reichs,* Berlin 1943, pp. 52-59.

[90] A. Brożek, *Ostflucht,* pp. 62-64.

[91] Karol Fiedor, *Polscy robotnicy rolni na Śląsku pod panowaniem niemieckim na tle wychodźstwa do Rzeszy 1918-1932*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1968, pp. 42-43, 67-68.

[92] See, among others, Alfred Konieczny, *Śląsk a wojna powietrzna lat 1940-1944, W*rocław 1998, pp. 35-55; *idem, Rozmiary zatrudnienia zagranicznych robotników przymusowych i jeńców wojennych w gospodarce Dolnego Śląska w latach II wojny światowej*, Opole 1968.

[93] A. Bożek, *Ostflucht*, pp. 119-120.

[94] A. Brożek, *Problematyka narodowościowa*, pp. 24-25, 96.

longing for their lost local community. Similar problems and emotions can also be found in the case of other communities divided by the new frontier (Cieszyn Silesia and 'Hlučín Region'), which favoured revisionist moods and was used for political purposes. German expansion in 1938 and 1939 brought another wave of escapes, expulsions and deportations, which resulted in further disorder. What is more, under Nazi rule, the Jewish community, which previously co-created the community of the region, especially in cities, was removed[95]. The above-mentioned events included every social group, with a more profiled outflow of population from the rural areas to urban and industrial agglomerations *(Landflucht).* It resulted in a depopulation of the agricultural and peripheral areas where a significant loss of population was registered[96]. It seemed especially dangerous to the Germans; the Polish-German borderland, a region which they defined as 'an area without a nation' *(Raum ohne Volk).* An expression such as this shows the exaggerated propaganda, nevertheless, the district of Namysłów (Namslau) was said to have lost 44% of its residents between 1871 and 1925[97].

The peasantry felt deeply rooted on their familial sides and – despite poverty – they usually left their land only when it was absolutely necessary. A conservative commitment to the property of their fathers and no will to change the existing situation was observed even in the areas struck by a structural crisis. This affected, among others, mountain areas, where the enclaves of hand-weaving were sustained up to the 1930s. At the same time it was a matter of not only simply reconciling with fate, but also of a belonging for a sustained period of time to a familiar and fixed micro-world. While even this hermetic pattern of behaviour was partially affected, it nevertheless remained present. Add to this that *Landflucht,* the bonding of villages and towns with larger centres, was halted because of the great economic crisis of the early 1930s. What was even observed was the return of the people deprived of sources of income in their homeland. The mixing of the region's population within the migration movements certainly intensified. In general, therefore, it may be concluded that the highly unstable interwar period and the changes of wartime must have strengthened the erosion of the traditional isolation of local communities or else expanded local identity, which might have facilitated regional identification.

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[95] For more on the Silesian Jews see Bernhard Brilling, *Die jüdische Gemeinde Mittelschlesiens. Entstehung und Geschichte*, Stuttgart 1973; Leszek Ziątkowski, *Dzieje Żydów we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 2000, pp. 94-112; Wojciech Jaworski, *Ludność żydowska w województwie śląskim w latach 1922-1939*, Katowice 1997; Jan Dvořák, *Židé v Opavském Slezsku 1918-1945*, Opava 2009. Because of the advanced assimilation – basically within the circle of the German community – it is difficult to speak about people of Jewish origin as of a separate social group.

[96] T. Minczakiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-52.

[97] K. Fiedor, *op. cit.,* p. 44.

Conclusions

What should be noted in summary of the situation on interwar Silesia is the fact that the groups located lower in the social hierarchy played a smaller role in the construction of Silesia. They were active primarily on a local basis and in this indirect way they developed a regional bond. Silesia was understood in a wider sense by wealthier residents of cities and industrial centres, whose overall mobility and education allowed them to go beyond the local horizons of the peasant and small-town population. The circles of the great estate owners operated simultaneously on several levels, including the regional. The gentry were a much more stable carrier of the region, as they were more closely tied to tradition and land than the industrialists. The representatives of the great landed property were at the same time a point of reference for the rest of the population. It should be noted that the peasant and noble conservatism favoured maintaining the historical boundaries of the region, which in the case of the workers and the capitalists blurred, especially when they had to operate within the borderland industrial districts (Cieszyn Silesia). On the whole, industrialization did not violate the regional identity, but it changed its range. The proletarian character of Upper Silesia, including the Polish Silesian Voivodeship contributed, after all, to a separation of the Upper Silesian identity. From the perspective of Wrocław, the plebeian character of Upper Silesians proved destructive to the unity of Silesia, from the perspective of Katowice or Opole its meaning was entirely different.

Social tensions, which were natural during the crisis, can definitely be considered as a disintegrating factor for the region, but – as far as we ignore the fact of Silesian Uprisings – they were not very dangerous in Silesia. After all, the background of the tragic Polish-German conflict over Upper Silesia, even though it stemmed from the social impairment of the Upper Silesians, was far more complex. The Polish-Czechoslovak dispute over Cieszyn Silesia was influenced by social issues to a far lesser extent because the two national groups generally did not differ in their social structures. The activity of class labour or peasant parties fitted into the existing regional framework, and sometimes extended to the nearest neighbourhood. Not only did they not undermine the social perceptions of the region, but even strengthened them. It should generally be emphasized that it is impossible to clearly identify the impact of social groups on the regional context for the discussed time span. Those groups showed an internal vertical and horizontal heterogeneity, and their attitudes were determined by individual attachment to the nation, the state, the party or religion. Deep civilisation changes on the one hand, and flourishing

nationalism on the other hand, impaired the existing regional identity, which was losing its importance or else took on a national shade. Nevertheless, the issues addressed in this text provide a chance for a new perspective on the complex reality of interwar Silesia. It also makes it possible to notice that the reflection on the Silesian social groups is still incomplete and in the case of Lower Silesia, virtually absent.