

Silesia – issues of language and ethnicity in the long 16th century

Abstract:

The primary issue considered in this paper is the question to what extent Silesia in the long 16th century can be considered a region cohesive in the ethnical and linguistic context. Available research materials indicate deepening bilingual tendencies in the region, however the extent of each of the languages and ethnic groups are impossible to adequately assess due to constant changes in the demographical situation of Silesia, changes brought about by various factors, including economic and political. It is true that humanism formed an integrating factor, which led to the formation of local patriotism. Due to this phenomenon there came to be a belief in the existence of „Silesian Nation” as well as the need to look for a factor binding the population together, something extending beyond the *ius soli* principle. Seeing as both „the love of Motherland – Silesia” and the spreading of the idea of the Silesian Nation were both constructs of groups of humanists and scholars, the first important bridge with the symbolical culture was Latin, quickly replaced by the solidified German-language culture. It dominated lay culture at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century, paving the way for development in the following centuries.

Keywords:

ethnic structure, national minorities, cultural diversity, languages, multiculturalism

Introduction

A key focus of this paper is to determine to what extent Silesia in the 16th century may be regarded as a linguistically and ethnically coherent region. However, a crucial contradiction connected with the issue lies in the very question of the region’s ethnic structure between the 16th and 17th centuries, for both the contemporary perception of the notion of nation, as well as the meaning which we commonly attribute to this notion today, are connected with the processes of forming a nation-state starting from the second half of the 18th century.

The process of the formation of nations, perceived as the second stage of political modernity¹, came as a result of the process of the formation of states initiated in the 14th century, where authority was based not only on personal interrelationships, but first and foremost involved control over a definite territory and its inhabitants.

¹ Otto Dann, *Nation und Nationalismus in Deutschland 1770-1990*, München 1996, p. 13.

The latter model was designated with the Latin notion *natio*, introduced into the German language at the end of the 14th century, and referring, in fact, to shared origins. Up until the 17th century, this notion described a community developed on the foundations of common birthplace and living space (*patria*)². The contemporary distinction between nation and ethnic group (*etnia*)³ with specific features (language, tradition, auto-stereotypes etc.) permits diversity within the national context, but nonetheless it also requires one to consider the possible implication – somewhat crucial for Silesia – of Max Weber’s assertion that an ‘ethnically grounded sense of community is not yet a nation’⁴. This argument, which corresponds with the view that ‘linguistic differences do not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for the development of the sense of national community’⁵, is in fact a very accurate description of changes which took place in Silesia in the early modern period.

This issue is no less complex when viewed from a purely linguistic standpoint. What one must bear in mind is the dubious accuracy of the very notion of linguistic region – this is actually a purely theoretic notion, which designates only a supposed ideal state. For the purpose of the following study, we will define a linguistic region as a fairly geographically-confined space, which stands out against its neighbouring territories through its linguistic specificity manifesting itself either 1) in a unique homogeneity – as compared with other territories – of spoken language in relation to linguistically coherent or incoherent adjacent areas, or 2) as a linguistic incoherence compared with the linguistic coherence of neighbouring territories. When we approach this issue from a general perspective, what becomes evident is that while 16th-century Silesia (strongly influenced by Polish-German poly-lingualism and – in the southern part of the region – the Czech language used for official purposes), when juxtaposed with *Rzeczpospolita*, seems to be a clear example of the latter option, what

² *Nation*, [in:] *Duden. Das Herkunftswörterbuch. Etymologie der deutschen Sprache*, Mannheim-Leipzig-Wien-Zürich 2001 (digital version: CD-ROM).

³ It would be difficult to grasp the crucial semantic distinction between these two notions. What is surely helpful here is the operationalization of the word ‘nation’ in the context of historical-political science, and the word ‘ethnic group’ in the context of ethnology. An exhaustive presentation of numerous problems emerging in connection with these issues was delivered by, among others: R. Koselleck, who discussed the notions of ‘Volk’, ‘Nation’ and ‘Masse’ between 1450-1914 as follows: ‘Erstens handelt es sich um stets mehrdeutige Begriffe mit definierbaren Bedeutungskernen, aber selten randscharfen Bedeutungsfeldern.’ Reinhart Koselleck, *Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse*, [in:] *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Vol. 7: *Verw – Z*, eds Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, Stuttgart 2004, pp. 281-282. In line with the principle of *ius soli*, the word ‘nation’ was usually (though not always) placed by 16th-century Silesian writers alongside such characteristics like, for example, a shared living space and related simply to the whole of inhabitants of a given region.

⁴ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft*, Tübingen 1980, p. 528.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

we also notice is that the aforementioned specificity becomes, to a large extent, relative when compared with equally-multilingual Czech territories.

Multi-ethnicity

In one of the oldest descriptions of Silesia rendered in 1512 by Bartholomew Stein, the region is presented as being torn in two between the influences of German culture (villages and towns located on the left bank of the Odra river), and Polish culture (on the right bank of the river)⁶. The more densely forested and less cultivated half was dominated by the Poles. Uncouth, unresourceful and of poor intellectual culture, they reside in simple dwellings of wood and clay and their towns are meagre and rarely surrounded with fortifications. By contrast, the better and more developed part of Silesia is inhabited by the Germans who – thanks to their openness and diligence – reap profits from blooming trade and arts and live in houses of brick in beautiful and large fortified towns⁷. Hence, the Odra river not only outlined the sphere of linguistic influences, dividing the state between two ethnic groups (*nationes*), but also constituted a border between two different worlds and two different stages of cultural and civilizational advancement. A remarkable similarity between this description and the 19th-century (auto-) stereotypes concerning the two dominant nations of Silesia requires us to treat B. Stein's vision mostly as a kind of auto-stylization of the former immigrant community of German origin. For – and this was a rather obvious fact – while the Polish-speakers also resided at that time on the left bank of the Odra river⁸ (as evidenced by sermons delivered in Polish in Wrocław churches, numerous entries in documentation on inspections of the Wrocław Diocese⁹, the erection in 1590 of a 'Polish Church' of the Holy Trinity in Zielona Góra, records on the functioning in 1666 of a Polish school¹⁰, etc.), even the penetration of the right-bank section of Upper Silesia by Germanic culture is proven by the complaints of Poles over the Bytom and Racibórz courts conducting their proceedings in German, or the demands of counts of Henckel to be sent correspondence in German. Besides the aforementioned Poles and

⁶ Bartholomeum Stenum, *Descriptio Tocius Silesie et Civitatis Regie Vratislaviensis* (Bartholomew Steins Beschreibung von Schlesien und seiner Hauptstadt Breslau), [in:] *Scriptores Rerum Silesiacarum*, vol. 17, ed. Hermann Markgraf, Breslau 1902, p. 9.

⁷ Cf: Hans Heckel, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgange des Barock*, Breslau 1929, p. 95.

⁸ Cf: J. Kuczer, *Szlachta*, p. 36.

⁹ Wincenty Urban, *Materiały do dziejów polskości na Śląsku w wizytacjach diecezji wrocławskiej (do początków XVIII wieku)*, 'Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka', 14 (1959), No. 2, pp. 149-195.

¹⁰ Helmut Glück, *Deutsch als Fremdsprache in Europa vom Mittelalter bis zur Barockzeit*, Berlin-New York 2002, p. 372.

Germans – leaving minor ethnic groups aside – Silesia was also inhabited by Czechs, whose population was most numerous in the south, and by Jews, who – although less numerous – were crucially important for the region’s economy.

Despite the fact that it is relatively easy to estimate the total number of the population of Silesia between the 16th and 17th centuries¹¹, its ethnic structure is more difficult to describe. Firstly, multi-ethnicity characterized the region from the very outset of its existence; secondly, its residents were subject to strong (extra-)institutional forces of acculturation dominated by the German-speaking culture. As a result of both of these factors, the borders between individual groups were transient, and the region’s ethnic structure *per se* was impermanent. Consequently, the very notion of nationality, provided it is perceived in terms of durability and finiteness, is completely useless in reference to 16th- and 17th-century Silesia. A common practice of intermarriage between representatives of various groups (Karl Weinhold), upturns and downturns in the economy, epidemics, the slowdown of the colonization rate, the outflow of part of the residents from previously-settled areas, warfare, etc., resulted in unstable living conditions, which led to a situation when Silesia – in demographic terms – was *in statu nascendi*. The fluctuating-oscillatory dynamics of population processes prevents us from producing a description based on reliable quantitative data, and as such these dynamics should be rather conveyed by means of such notions as transgression, assimilation, integration, naturalization, enculturation and acculturation, cultural diffusion and migration, among others. All of these notions point to conditions of temporariness and transitivity, and even to a partial reversibility of individual phenomena, while at the same time a principal integrating avenue of changes in social life was maintained in Silesia – taking a long-term perspective (Fernand Braudel) – namely the impulse (dominant, characteristic to all Silesians and recurrent over the centuries) to build a German-speaking symbolic culture.

What seems to be a mistake in this context is the automatic association of the character of the German-speaking culture with German ‘nationality’, just as the topos of ‘German colonization’ is a historical oversimplification. In both cases, it is possible for one to distinguish the ideological benefits resulting from such oversimplifications. The

¹¹ Based on the population census of 1577, the total number of inhabitants of Silesia was estimated at ca. 1,252,445 people, 995,120 of which were inhabitants of rural areas. Consequently, the proportion of inhabitants of towns was 20.5%. Over half a million demographic losses brought by the Thirty Years’ War were made up by Silesia no earlier than the mid-18th century, when the region’s population again reached 1.5 million inhabitants (in 1742). The numeric data provided in this article is based on: W. Dziewulski, *Zaludnienie*, pp. 432, 488. W. Dziewulski’s calculations are also mentioned in this very volume in the article by Mateusz Goliński on the economic situation in Silesia in the early modern period.

mystification of – desired or undesired – coherence and unity, at first sight obscures an unfavourable (from the perspective of the region's coherence) ethnic diversity of settlers. Colonists from Western Europe who settled in medieval Silesia included Flemings, Walloons, Franks, Saxons, Bavarians, Thuringians and Austrians. In the contemporary social reality which was dominated by various dialects, they had little chance for successful communication. This brought an imperative of introducing in Silesia a common medium of oral communication, and eventually this role was assigned to the German language, which was a natural facilitator of interactions between various ethnic groups and linguistic influences, and in a longer perspective predetermined the specific character of the region. It is beyond any doubt that among the ethnic components which made up an amalgam of the notion of the 'German nationality', it was the German-speaking Silesians who played a crucial role. In contrast to Franks, Swabians, Frisians etc., whose identity was formed long before by a myriad of long-term historical processes, Silesians were a relatively young ethnic group, produced as a result of constant interpenetration and blending of national and cultural elements, but also through their exclusion and limitation. In this sense, a Silesian, an ethnic amalgam *per se*, constitutes an allegory of all types of integration processes. As the 'Germans' themselves had to begin by developing a medium of communication that was both efficient and understandable for everyone, and the medium itself became a foundation stone of culture which lies at the basis of Silesian identity, there is nothing surprising about the fact that not only the idea of creating a German-speaking literature (Martin Opitz), as well as calls to introduce linguistic norms (Fabian Franck) and make German a medium of high culture (and thus granting the German language the status of being a 'common good'), but also the establishment of an important link between the native language and cultural patriotism¹² (M. Opitz), all originated in Silesia in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The accuracy of the thesis on the necessity of breaking the habit of subconsciously identifying Silesian German-speaking culture with a purely German community is best illustrated by the early stage of its flourish (in the 16th century) in the period when the descendants of former colonists were withdrawing from the previously captured territories¹³. The 15th century had already seen a regression of the German community. This was particularly evident in Upper Silesia, where, as a consequence of a heightened social exchange with Poland, the process of re-Polonization

¹² Jürgen Brokoff, *Poesie und Grammatik. Der Anteil der Sprachgesellschaften an der Entwicklung der deutschen Literatur- und Poesiesprache in der ersten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] *Akten des XI. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Paris 2005*, Bern 2008, vol. 5, p. 229.

¹³ Cf. Colmar Grünhagen, *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 1: *Bis zum Eintritt der habsburgischen Herrschaft 1527*, Gotha 1884, pp. 391-395.

of the nobility took place; German tenants either deserted or were driven out of the localities they had settled in, or – as a result of a shift in the region’s ethnic proportions – they assimilated into the Polish-speaking community. In Opole, Czech gained dominance over German as the official language of the ducal chancellery, and kept strengthening this position throughout the entire 17th century. The growing bilingualism of Silesia was further consolidated by the 1570 decree of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II, which awarded equal importance to both languages (German and ‘Slavonic’) as the only languages used in courts and offices¹⁴, as well as prohibited any compulsion in this respect¹⁵. The Reformation, which further reinforced national communities, resulted in the fact that Polish came to be used in Silesia as a medium of artistic expression. Together with the aforementioned evidence for the revitalization of the Polish ethnic community, the Polish language constituted a strong impulse for creating a common culture, which, despite German dominance, consolidated Slavonic – and especially Polish – influences.

The contemporary need to introduce a distinction between various national communities and Silesia is illustrated by numerous historic examples. One of them is the letter by the Wrocław canon Stanislaus Sauer¹⁶, dated 3rd of May 1521, where the author differentiates ‘our (Silesian) nation’¹⁷ from the Germans. On the other hand, Anselmus Ephorinus of Mirsk – a Silesian humanist and doctor – protests in an official letter dated 9th of October 1531 against being pigeonholed by Erasmus of Rotterdam as a Pole (‘Anselmus Ephorinus, Silesius non Polonus’). The testimony of Jan Długosz (also known as Longinus) of 1466 is also telling, where he presents Silesians as a nation whose principal features are self-reliance and hostility towards Poland – despite their Polish origin and language¹⁸.

Meanwhile, the aforementioned early signs which proved the existence of regional identity – which appears to already be a consolidated and strongly integrating force at that time – present Silesia not merely as *Grenzland*, but draw attention to its unique culture. According to K. Weinhold, its essence lies in ‘the integration of the German and Slavonic nation’¹⁹, ‘the blending of Slavonic and German blood’²⁰, the strong influence of Slavonic languages on the Silesian dialect, and finally in a bold

¹⁴ Władysław Dziwulski, *Dzieje ludności polskiej na Śląsku Opolskim. Od czasów najdawniejszych do wiosny ludów*, Opole 1972, p. 42.

¹⁵ C. Grünhagen, *Geschichte*, vol. 1, pp. 391-396.

¹⁶ *Stanislaus Sauers Hirschberger Pfarrbuch von 1521*, ed. Hermann Hoffmann, Breslau 1939.

¹⁷ Quotation from: N. Conrads, *Schlesiens frühe Neuzeit*, p. 208.

¹⁸ *Jana Długosza kanonika krakowskiego Dziejów polskich ksiąg dwanaście*, translated by Karol Mecherzyński, vol. 5, book 2nd, pp. 422-423.

¹⁹ Karl Weinhold, *Über deutsche Dialektforschung. Die Laut- und Wortbildung und die Formen der schlesischen Mundart. Ein Versuch*, Wien 1853, p. 8.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

thesis critical of both dominant national groups, mentioning ‘the cross breeding [of Germans] with Poles’ (‘Wir kreuzten uns mit den Polen’)²¹. What is of equal importance here is the fact that Weinhold also emphasized the great value of this ethnic mixture, and it was to this mixture that he attributed a number of positive characteristics Silesians were known for. Weinhold’s views were repeated by Wilhelm Wachsmuth, who described ‘the German-Slavonic mixture’²² and ‘the combination of German and Slavic element’ (‘Verschmelzung des Deutschen und Slavischen’)²³ as typically Silesian characteristics.

We have scant knowledge of the course of the nation-forming processes in Silesia, and the reason of this fact is the highly mythologized approach which has dominated the scholarly perspective throughout recent centuries. The development of the aforementioned tendencies took place at an unequal pace. German communities, from the very beginning privileged by the ducal courts and the Church, consolidated much faster. This process was to a large extent facilitated by the fact that their members shared both a common language and goals – already determined at the stage of colonization. What took place in parallel to this process was the national conversion of the Piast dukes, who were increasingly associating themselves with the German nation and Silesia – as opposed to the lands of the Crown, which first and foremost influenced the nobility²⁴. The adaptation of Polish names to the German linguistic context resulted in the fact that their primary ethnic origin was gradually becoming untraceable, thereby eliminating the potential obstacle for the Poles to fully blend themselves with the German culture²⁵. Besides, the eagerness of the local nobility to populate their lands with German colonists proves that at the time the ethnic origin was not of such crucial importance, and the fundamental factor which spurred the integration of the European community until the mid-16th century was religion²⁶.

Along with the further progress of integration coupled with further consolidation of the group, there emerged a growing need to acculturate the Slavonic people

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

²² Wilhelm Wachsmuth, *Geschichte deutscher Nationalität*, vol. 3, Braunschweig 1862, p. 159.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 161.

²⁴ *Urkundensammlung zur Geschichte des Ursprungs der Städte und der Einführung und Verbreitung Deutscher Kolonisten und Rechte in Schlesien und der Ober-Lausitz*, eds Gustav Adolf Tzschoppe, Gustav Adolf Stenzel, Hamburg 1832, p. 3.

²⁵ Cf: W. Wachsmuth, *Geschichte*, vol. 3, p. 150; Tomasz Jurek, *Vom Rittertum zum Adel. Zur Herausbildung des Adelsstandes im mittelalterlichen Schlesien*, [in:] *Adel in Schlesien*. Vol. 1: *Herrschaft – Kultur – Selbstdarstellung*, eds Jan Harasimowicz, Matthias Weber, München 2010 (=Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, vol. 36), p. 74-76.

²⁶ *Die Grundlegung der modernen Welt. Spätmittelalters, Renaissance, Reformation*, eds Ruggiero Romano, Alberto Tenenti, Frankfurt/M. 2002 (=Fischer Weltgeschichte, vol. 12), p. 83.

to the German way of life. These needs were further gaining in force, all the more so that they were induced by the most influential of all agents: the possessors of political power (clergy, dukes, nobility), rulers of people's hearts and minds (clergy, dukes) and the so-called economic tycoons (municipal patricians, burghers and a wealthy peasantry). 'A key role [in the process of group formation] is always played by two sorts of factors [...]: for one thing, willingness to be part of the group, voluntary access to the group, identification with the group, loyalty towards its members and solidarity with its members; for another: fear, enslavement and compulsion'²⁷. The first group of factors may definitely be connected with the aforementioned dukes, nobility and wealthier burghers, who were the first ones to gain extensive profits from colonization and the generosity of the German law. 'Fear, enslavement and compulsion', also a strong force of assimilation affecting Slavonic people – mainly those of Polish origin – was experienced mainly by the members of lower social ranks: petty burghers and peasants. The mechanism of this forced acculturation, which – on the one hand – exposed the regional power relations, and on the other served as a tool of authority, was described by Frederick Pachaly, who perceived the phenomenon of social stigmatization as a stimulus for the integration of the Silesian community²⁸.

Due to this complex situation, every attempt to describe these processes evolves into a serious evaluative dilemma. Forced adaptation of large masses of people to the German culture, a process which raised serious moral scepticism²⁹, in a longer temporal perspective proved to be an integrating factor of an enormous force, and hence – from the regional perspective – a positive factor. Silesian identity as an amalgam of various influences, ideas and features, with its two predominant features (the German language and Slavonic characteristics of the anthropological profile of a typical resident of the region), could be developed only on the basis of the gradual blurring of the Polish, German and Czech national communities. Phenomena such as national conversions (national identifications) are characteristic for the borderland region³⁰ and closely related 'with the issue of foreignness'³¹. 'Each act of social affiliation' entails the need to determine one's identity, and the reverse is applicable too: 'no identity may be preserved without a sort of social affiliation'³².

²⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Narody i nacjonalizm*, 2nd edition, Warszawa 2009, p. 141.

²⁸ Friedrich Pachaly, *Ueber Schlesiens älteste Geschichte und Bewohner*, Breslau 1783, p. 36.

²⁹ Cf: Heinrich Grüger, *Die slawische Besiedlung und der Beginn der deutschen Kolonisation im Weichbilde Münsterberg*, 'Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte', 21, 1963, pp. 1–37.

³⁰ Antonina Kłoskowska, *Kultury narodowe u korzeni*, Warszawa 2005, p. 137.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

³² Peter L. Berger, *Zaproszenie do socjologii*, translated by Janusz Stawiński, Warszawa 1995, pp. 98–99.

Although Peter L. Berger's principle is an apt summary of the situation of the entire regional community, the issue is best illustrated by the experiences of Silesian Jews. The only economic activity Jews were permitted to perform by the contemporary law was trade and money exchange, which tied them with the ducal courts and towns. Having been frequently evicted from towns (i.e. 1402 – Głogów, 1447 – Legnica, 1457 – Jawor, 1468 – Nysa, 1492 – Kłodzko, 1505 – Oleśnica), in the periods of their increased persecution Jews either moved away to the suburbs, where they were sometimes better tolerated (Legnica) and where they intended to wait through the ordeal, or quickly returned to their homes in hope of a quick change of negative social attitudes towards them (a print house managed by Jewish religious community operated from 1535 in Oleśnica). A particularly painful, half-century-long period of the persecution of Jews which was launched at the outset of the 15th century was directly related to the person of John of Capistrano, a Franciscan preacher from Italy, who operated in Silesia between 1452 and 1455. The apogee of the Jewish ordeal was marked by an execution by fire in the Wrocław Salt Square (1453)³³ of 41 members of the Jewish community coupled with the confiscation of property and eviction of those members whose lives were spared. From that moment Silesian merchants, who were competing with their Jewish counterparts, launched a campaign for the introduction of a new law promoting the intolerance of Jews (*privilegium de non tolerandis Judaeis*) in the area of their towns. The first city to receive such a right from King Ladislaus the Posthumous – a strong supporter of the *pogrom* policy – was Wrocław (30th of January 1455) whose burghers were guaranteed freedom from Jewish presence 'forever and a day'³⁴. Similar legal acts were put into effect in 1457 in Świdnica, and in 1543 in Głubczyce.

This negative tendency was maintained between the 16th and the 17th centuries, when the Habsburgs – who were engaged in a conflict with the dukes (who were rather tolerant towards the Jews) – provided support to the towns where anti-Jewish policies were commonplace. The peak of this process was the 7th of April 1582 act of Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II – at the joint request of both states and princes – signing an order of eviction of the entire Jewish community (including women and children) from Silesia. The only concession made to the unwanted citizens was that they were granted permission to participate in street trading during the Silesian fairs. The reason for this was the growing importance of Silesian commercial contacts with Poland, whose further development was highly dependent on

³³ Cf. Friedrich Albert Zimmermann, *Geschichte und Verfassung der Juden im Herzogthum Schlesien*, Breslau 1791, p. 23.

³⁴ Ludwig Oelsner, *Schlesische Urkunden zur Geschichte der Juden im Mittelalter*, Wien 1864, p. 87.

the Jewish business activity. Hence, when in 1630 Jews were granted from the Holy Roman Emperor the right to settle in the suburbs, not only did the previously hostile Wrocław magistrate have nothing against it but also propagated their tolerance (in 1689 and 1699) in contrary to the policy of the royal tax office³⁵. The Jewish community was considerably strengthened in the second half of the 17th century, owing to the emperor's concession to populate Silesia with a large group of Polish Jews who were forced to flee their homeland in consequence of the Polish-Swedish War. Having initially taken refuge in the towns of Milicz, Nysa and Biała, they gradually began to spread across the entire region.

In the face of the clash between two ethnically different communities of Silesia, the integrating processes of culture formation (which included religious conversion and acculturation impulses) assumed a distinct place in the Polish and German national mythology. To justify its presence in the shared space, each side developed its own mode of historical narration and a unique type of stylization. The 'German side' adhered in this context to a peaceful legend of foundation. The crucial impact of such perspective on the identity and consciousness of this particular group of Silesians is best illustrated by Stein, according to whom the Germans were benefactors of the entire region which owed them almost everything: from the modern legal system to culture in its broadest sense. All of these virtues found appreciation among the local community, which is proven by them voluntarily showing the Germans their unanimous support³⁶. What may be paradoxically perceived as evidence for the fact that this myth is much more deeply rooted in German history is the difficulty (between the 16th and the 17th centuries) to maintain the division according to which the German-speaking citizens of Silesia (who occupied the region for generations) were perceived as part of the immigrant community, and the newly-introduced Silesian settlers – Poles and Czechs – as its indigenous inhabitants.

The myth (strongly promoted by German culture) of the peaceful foundation of Silesia – which, slightly modified, was also accepted by the majority of Silesian colonists – was much later juxtaposed with the adaptation of the native Polish myth of the Bulwark of Christianity (*antemurale Christianitatis*). The most impressive version of this myth can be found in Felix Koneczny's work *Dzieje Śląska*³⁷.

Linguistic relations

A frequently repeated mistake when studying Silesia is linking the territory of a particular ethnic group's residence with the territorial range of the language

³⁵ F.A. Zimmermann, *Geschichte*, p. 27.

³⁶ B. Stenum, *Descriptio*, p. 15.

³⁷ Felix Koneczny, *Dzieje Śląska*, Bytom 1897, p. 3.

attributed to this group. In a region characterized by a fundamental multi-ethnicity, where one cultural group is privileged over another by the institutions of power (as was the case in Silesia) the domination of this privileged group over fields that overlapped with the scope of this power was inevitable. Such conditions induce a strong bilingual impulse which stimulates the broadening of the area of knowledge of the privileged language beyond the borders of individual ethnic groups and lays the foundations for the development new national affiliations.

When viewed from the perspective of the strengthening of ways in which linguistic relations developed in Silesia, the examined period of the Habsburg reign may be placed in the context of the German writings of Caspar von Schwenckfeld (1524), and the works of M. Opitz 1617/1618 and 1624, who called for a programme to improve the quality of the German language and reform the German poetry. Schwenckfeld, in line with the ideas of the Reformation, launched a campaign to introduce the German language into the Silesian religious sphere. He openly opposed individuals who called for a ban on ‘conducting services and administering sacraments in German’³⁸. The writings of Opitz not only introduced a new approach to language in a socio-national context, but also, being widely available (especially in the Protestant parts of the Holy Roman Empire), gave rise to a fervent discussion among the members of intellectual elites on the issues of identity.

In order to answer the question on the integrating or disintegrating role of language in 16th-century Silesia, we first need to emphasize the region’s linguistic abundance. It comprised:

- 1) three chancellery languages (Latin, German and Czech),
- 2) four official languages (Latin, German, Czech and Polish),
- 3) five languages of oral communication (Latin, German, French (used by the aristocracy), Czech and Polish),
- 4) two levels of communication: a) official (five ‘literary’ languages) and b) everyday (groups of dialects: German and Polish).

This list shows that numerous languages which were actually used at the time fragmented the region in two ways: vertically (along the lines of ethnic divisions) and horizontally (in line with social stratification). This very polylinguism, defined here as the co-existence within a region of various languages whose function (official, chancellery or everyday language) remains the same regardless of the location within this region or a period of occurrence, was a highly disintegrating factor. This is confirmed by a number of preserved authentic statements of Silesian citizens of different nations, including Jeremiah Roter (*Klucz do Polskiego y Niemieckiego*

³⁸ Caspar Schwenckfeld, *Ermanung des Mißbrauchs etlicher fürnempsten Artickel des Evangelii*, Augsburg 1624, p. nlb [45]. The beginnings of the modern German language in Silesia are usually linked with the work *Geschichten der Stadt Breslau (1440-1479)* by Peter Eschenloer.

Języka, 1616), who encouraged his German-speaking Silesian compatriots to learn Polish, which was perceived by him not only as the ‘most necessary but also most useful’ language in the region. (In the 19th century his opinion was shared by John Gottlieb Schummel.)³⁹ A good example showing the possible benefits that could be derived from bilingualism is the story of Matthias Gutthäter-Dobracki (ca. 1626–1681) of Byczyna, a descendant of a German family of merchants that settled in Poland at the outset of the 15th century and who, only a hundred years later, were accepted as nobility⁴⁰. The evidence for their double national affiliation was Matthias’s father’s decision to extend his German surname by a Polish name. His son’s works owed their unique style – especially appreciated in the 17th century – to perfect writing skills related to the bilingualism of their authors. Among his greatest contributions is a Polish version of the dictionary *Orbis sensualium pictus* by Jan John Amos Comenius (1667). In his commentary, written in German, Gutthäter points to the significance of the Polish language, ‘which here [in Wrocław] needs to be respected more than other languages’⁴¹.

The aforementioned examples prove that Silesians’ first reflections on the polylingual character of the region appeared relatively early in history and were remarkably profound. The maintenance or development within the shared regional space of isolated, mono-lingual communities was perceived by them as a direct threat. Consequently, bilingualism – a medium of communication between various ethnic groups viewed as a cementing force – was unanimously considered to be a positive factor. Another probable option – also integrating but morally ambiguous – was the idea to introduce a monoculture in the entire territory of Silesia. However, due to the specific character of the contemporary power relations, this could be only manifested (despite the 15th-16th century decline) as a tendency towards the gradual dominance of the German language in the region.

Latin

The impact of Latin on the whole region of Silesia in the 16th century was of a twofold nature: from a region-wide perspective its force was integrating, while from a European-wide perspective it was unifying. Having brought together the members of local intellectual elites in the name of universal and supranational culture, Latin

³⁹ Schummel Johann Gottlieb, *Schummels Reise durch Schlesien im Julius und August 1791*, Breslau 1792, pp. 328-331.

⁴⁰ Urszula Gumuła, *Literatura polska na Śląsku w XVII w. Piotr Wacheniusz, Jan Malina, Maciej Gutthäter-Dobracki*, Katowice 1995, p. 91.

⁴¹ Johann Amos Comenius, *Orbis sensualium pictus*, Breßlau 1667, p. nlb.

served to deprive the region of its unique character. In Silesia, just like elsewhere, Latin was also a language of high culture and religion, and was used (except in a religious context), mainly in written form, but also – albeit more rarely – as a medium of oral communication. Silesia – and later other regions also – owed this particular feature to a pedagogical strategy adopted by Valentin Trozendorf, who obliged students of the Złotoryja gymnasium to communicate, both during and after lessons, in one language only: Latin. Latin's well-established position was further strengthened by a dense network of high quality Latin schools and humanistic gymnasiums. Firm evidence of Latin's dominance in Silesia is the proportion of documents written in Latin to those produced in German – the second most prominent language of the region – which in 1570 was 70% to 30%⁴². When we consider the contemporary strong position of humanism, this proportion was nothing unusual and proves – first and foremost – that the integration of Silesian and European culture was at the time, in fact, an ongoing process. The high level of local culture in the 16th century was commented by Philipp Melanchthon in his letter of 1538 to Heinrich Ribisch. Melanchthon presents the community of Silesians as part of the German nation (*gens in Germania*), which excels all others both in terms of the number of scholars and people of low social rank (*ex populo*) who managed to obtain an academic education. The theologian also recognizes the merits of artistic patronage of the Wrocław town councillors and an impressive number of talented Silesian poets and orators, who were praised even in remote Italy. These views do not diverge from the opinion on the level of Silesian culture which was expressed by a member of the Silesian elite Caspar Ursinus Velius: 'Oh Rome, golden Rome. You rejoice in the eternal spring, you abound in so many honourable and talented poets, but our Silesia, although it lies under the cold star of the North, is no less precious than you are'⁴³. A good illustration of the relation between the boom in the linguistic culture of Silesia and the policy of the Holy Roman Empire was the fact of awarding at least nine Silesian poets with the (at that time) very prestigious⁴⁴ title of *poeta laureatus caesareus*⁴⁵.

The cementing role of Latin, whose integrating force transcended the boundaries of nations and opposing denominations, was even further strengthened when the ideals of 'Silesian antiquity' – alive until as late as the 18th century – (Norbert

⁴² Stanisław Rospond, *Polszczyzna śląska*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1970, p. 38.

⁴³ Caspar Ursinus Velius, *Casparis Vrsini Velii E Germanis Silesii Poematvm Libri Qvinqve*, Basilea 1522, p. nlb. [133].

⁴⁴ Cf: Klaus Karrer, *Johannes Posthius. Verzeichnis der Briefe und Werke mit Regesten und Posthius-Biographie*, Wiesbaden 1993, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Albert Schirrmeyer, *Triumph des Dichters. Gekrönte Intellektuelle im 16. Jahrhundert. Dissertation*, Köln 2004.

Conrads) spread across the region, having been sparked off in 1503 when Sigismund Buchwald equated the name Wrocław (Breslau) with the name of the town of Budorgis, mentioned in the writings of Ptolemy. This was followed by a series of other astonishing ‘discoveries’. Scholars were pointing to the similarity between the name *Silesia* and ‘*Elisia*’ or, more specifically ‘*Elysium*’; and between the name Odra and the antique name ‘*Viadrus*’. Many localities gained refined, antiquated versions of names: Głucholazy became ‘*Civitas Capricollis*’ and Zielona Góra – ‘*Prasia Elysiorum*’ or ‘*Thalloris*’. The imaginary – hence artificial – creation of ‘*Silesia Patria*’ (Salomon Frenzel), communicated a vision, in which Silesia was everyone’s homeland. It was this vision which became the foundation of the first, common, humanistic form of patriotism, which was not restricted to a tight space of a narrowly defined region but ready to interact with the European community. Its founders – world-famous poets, philosophers and theologians representing all nations and religious denominations of Silesia – were brought together by the idea of Silesia as an ideal country, to the point where they were keen to enrich their own names with references to their home towns and shared homeland of Silesia (i.e.: Abrahamus Scultetus Grunbergensis Silesius, Christoph Pelargus Svidnicensis Silesius, Petrus Vachenius Strelicenus, Thomas Mawer Tribulensis Silesius and Nicolaus Reusnerus Leorinus Silesius). At times, they also demonstrated their ethnic affiliation (i.e. Caspar Ursinus Velius E Germanus Silesius), which, although being in line with humanistic ideals, somehow distracted the community-like character of the strongly varied region.

The integrating force of Latin transcended ethnic divisions and, at the same time (due to its hermetic character) divided the community vertically, according to social ranks. Having opened up the region towards Europe, Latin granted Silesians access to the family of highly cultured nations. However, due to the fact that high culture was restricted to a small group of representatives of the intellectual elite and clergy, it is highly doubtful whether the language itself or the culture it helped to develop could have had any significant impact on the general public.

National languages

The growing reluctance of scientific and literary circles towards national languages is characteristic for the majority of European countries; Silesia is no exception in this respect. The causes of this aversion were partially of an ideological nature (the increased popularity of antiquity), and partially of a pragmatic nature. Both Polish and German in their general, literary form were at the time only sprouting and

as such, they were not effective enough to be used by ambitious writers and speakers as adequate tools of expression. A crucial change in this respect and an immensely strong impulse towards the improvement of the situation was brought about by two factors: the wave of the Reformation, which swept rapidly over the entire region, and the formation of the modern Silesian state – induced by the Habsburg dynasty – along with its entourage: centralization and bureaucracy. ‘A modern state is focused on the areas of knowledge – formulated in a national language – which are crucial from the perspective of cameralism and etatism. [...] Furthermore, bureaucracy supports the development of the practical and utilitarian understanding of language’⁴⁶. The relationship between the interests of the state and language was aptly commented on by a Lusatian named Christian Gueintz: ‘the German language is necessary/for the maintenance of the German superiority’⁴⁷.

Polish

The benefits brought by the Reformation to the Polish language were also of a twofold nature. Direct benefits include the language being promoted to the status of a language of theology, scientific and artistic expression, the education of the clergy⁴⁸, and arousing growing interest from German-speaking Protestant circles. Even greater was the significance of the early signs of interest in the Polish language showed by Silesian Protestants, followed by the emergence of the first literary works in Polish. Paradoxically, the introduction of new religious denominations translated into the improvement of the situation of the Polish Catholic clergy, whose ranks – depleted as a result of frequent Catholic-to-Protestant conversions – were often enriched by imports of new forces from Poland.

The significance of the Reformation for the Silesian culture is well-illustrated by the writings of Polish and Reformed Protestants, who – contrary to less active Catholics – have made a considerable contribution to its development. All meaningful works of the period, with no exception whatsoever, were produced by these very circles. Next to the aforementioned J. Roter and his successor M. Gutthäter-Dobracki, both of whom made great contributions to the development of Silesian bilingualism, it is also worth mentioning a quasi-scientific work by Olbrycht Strumiński entitled *O sprawie, sypaniu, wymierzaniu i rybieniu stawów* (1573),

⁴⁶ Steffen Martus, *Sprachtheorien*, [in:] *Die Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Albert Meier, München 1999 (=Hanser Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur, vol. 2), pp. 143-144.

⁴⁷ Christian Gueintz, *Deutscher Sprachlehre Entwurf*, Köthen 1641, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Władysław Czaplński, *Wpływ reformacji i kontrreformacji na stosunki narodowościowe na Śląsku (XVI-XVII w.)*, ‘Przegląd Historyczny’, 40 (1949), pp. 151-152.

a unique work – in terms of content and literary style – by Valentine Rożdżeński entitled *Officina ferraria, abo huta y warstat z kuźniami szlachetnego dzieła żelaznego* (1612), and poetic polemics by Peter Wachenius. The fact that the output is limited to the eastern territories of the region points to the fact of the progressing isolation of both its parts – the predominantly Polish, more backward in terms of the economy, civilization and culture of Upper Silesia and well-developed, wealthy and scientifically- and culturally-strong Lower Silesia. The dark side of the Reformation was the deepening of the existing divisions, which led to ever-greater divisions between the Catholics and Protestants, not according to the criterion of nationality, but of economic status⁴⁹. The first group established themselves in impoverished, predominantly rural territories, with poorly developed cities, which were – especially in Upper Silesia – populated mainly by members of the Polish-speaking community. Wealthy and influential towns of Lower Silesia dominated by the German-speaking community were harmoniously and quickly brought to the side of the Reformation, whereas the majority of higher nobility and princes remained Catholic.

German

Despite their high quality, Polish literary works, produced in Silesia in relatively small numbers, could not compete with their German counterparts. At the outset of the 16th century, the latter featured Caspar von Schwenckfeld, whose works were addressed to a comparatively wide audience. His views were much less pervaded with politics than in the case of Opitz, and simultaneously much more pragmatic. A comprehensible native language was for him not merely an idealistic vision, but a medium of communication he strongly promoted as a vehicle for the consolidation of new religious practices⁵⁰ and gaining an authentic, conscious and profound religious experience: ‘Learn to sing German psalms [...] / so that you know what you are praying for / and how much [praying] is possible for your souls to bear / take heed of words / and use them in a comprehensible language’⁵¹.

Schwenckfeld was supported by Valentine Krautwald, formerly one of the leading Silesian humanists, who later became his closest ally in the fight for the new religiousness. It was their circle that produced the first Reformation catechism

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 148.

⁵⁰ Gabriela Wąs, *Kaspar von Schwenckfeld. Myśl i działalność do 1534 roku*, Wrocław 2005 (=Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, No. 2660, Historia 169), p. 125.

⁵¹ Caspar Schwenckfeld, *Eyn sendbrieff vnd erynnerüg des Erent festen Casper von Schwenckfelt an die Closter Jung frawen zur Nawenburgk*, Wittenberg 1524, p. 12.

Katechismus Lignicensis (1525). Works in German were being published by a whole array of excellent theologians, scholars and reformers such as Ambrosius Moibanus, Peter Riedemann, Lucas Pollio (author of *The Heidelberg Catechism*, 1563) Zacharias Ursinus, his pupil David Pareus and many others. Not surprisingly, these were predominantly religious works – especially religious songs. Their most renowned authors, whose fame spread even beyond Silesia, were A. Moibanus, Michael Weisse and John Heermann.

A particularly important role in the language-based processes of integration is played by the views presented by Opitz, relating to his early Latin treatise *Aristarchus sive de contemptu linguae Teutonice* (1617/1618) and the more mature poetics of *Buch von der deutschen Poeterey* (1624), which became the foundation of the new chapter in the history of German poetry. The principal theoretical assumptions developed by Opitz were probably modelled after the views of his Wrocław patron, Caspar Cunradi, a Silesian poet recognized by Emperor Rudolph II in 1601. In his earlier work, filled with lofty tones, the poet creates a parallel between his compatriots and their common predecessors, ‘courageous and undefeated Germans’ – the only ones to pluck up the courage to face the powerful Rome and whose language was to be particularly important, for example, in spurring them to battle. A central issue of Opitz’s anthropolinguistic approach was his intention to establish a connection between the attributes of language – as a vehicle of the ‘nation’s spirit’ – and features of the members of the ethnic group using this language. Hence, he calls the wide group of addressees (‘all obliging Germans’) of his work ‘to cluster together in order to defend our beautiful tongue’. The patriotic, nationalist tone of the work surfaces in expressions such as ‘German homeland’ and ‘our mother – Germany’⁵². In this respect, it would seem that the poet’s intention is to spur the integration – on a greater (albeit hazy) scale – of a German, not merely Silesian, nation.

It is worth mentioning here the ennoblement of the German language partly due to the efforts of Jakob Böhme. As ‘nature endowed every aspect of life [...] with its own language’⁵³, the issue of linguistic analysis was promoted to the leading position (‘Es ist das Feuer in der Natur der Sprache’)⁵⁴. The attempt to reconstruct ‘the language of Adam’, where the act of creation and words merged into one by

⁵² Cf: Martin Opitz, *Aristarchus sive de contemptu linguae Teutonice*, [in:] *idem: Aristarchus sive de contemptu linguae Teutonice und Buch von der deutschen Poeterey*, ed. Georg Witkowski, Leipzig 1888, pp. 117-118.

⁵³ Jacob Böhme, *De Signatura Rerum*, [in:] *idem, Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 6, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, Stuttgart 1957, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Idem, Clavis*, [in:] *idem, Sämtliche Schriften*, vol. 9, ed. Will-Erich Peuckert, Stuttgart 1956, p. 118.

divine *fiat*, was to raise humans to a higher level of consciousness – a result of the belief in the analogy between ‘the divine revelation and linguistic articulation’⁵⁵. Using German in this context had nothing to do with the national spirit. Nonetheless, it is easy to notice that perceiving German as the phenomenon of a direct divine derivation was – despite J. Böhm’s intentions – grossly exploited by generations of linguistic purists, patriots, and linguistic nationalists. The greatest blow for the mystic himself was the dispersion of languages, which – in line with the principles of linguistic and social equality – were rather expected to lead to social integration⁵⁶.

The establishment of linguistic norms vs. the issue of dialects

The centralization tendencies of the turn of the 17th century were also visible in the sphere of national languages. While – due to its isolation from Poland – Silesian-Polish was becoming increasingly archaic, thereby ossifying Polish literary language of the close of the 16th century on a supra-dialectic level, the German part of Silesia was establishing linguistic norms of the German language. This process took place in at least three spheres. The first one involves German literature, which was already of a high quality in the 16th century, especially in the case of its rich and varied poetry and broadly-understood religious writing. Local writers showed a general tendency to strip their language of any dialectical influences and focused on enriching it with supra-regional forms. As a result, the output of Silesian scholars, writers and poets (e.g. J. Heermann, M. Opitz, Z. Ursinus, J. Böhme, Peter Riedemann) gained international recognition. The second sphere involved Silesians’ strong and direct engagement in the introduction of supra-regional linguistic norms. Remarkable contributions in this area were made by F. Franck (Frangk), the first German orthographer whose work *Deutscher Sprach Art und Eigenschaft: Orthographia, gerecht buchstäbig Teutsch zuschreiben* (1531) was a pioneering systematic examination on the rules of German spelling. The third sphere was a large-scale, multi-level propaganda and lobbyist activity for the sake of German language which was focused on: a) evoking a change of the contemporary elites’ attitude towards the German language, b) creating nationwide linguistic norms, and c) increasing the presence of German in culture and scholarly discourse. For the region, this was not only a strong stimulating and integrating force, but also an inductor of modernization and pro-national (i.e. supra-regional) development. At this point we are dealing with yet another stage of integration of Silesia, when the region as *Kulturlandschaft*

⁵⁵ S. Martus, *Sprachtheorien*, p. 146.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

clearly aspires to find its place in the family of the German-speaking communities together with the community of scholars of the entire Germany ‘in hope that the introduction of linguistic norms would allow for the overcoming of religious and socio-political tensions and build national unity’⁵⁷.

As far as the average inhabitants – the majority of Silesian community – are concerned, they were only to some extent affected by these changes. Between the 16th and 17th centuries, oral communication in German-speaking territories was dominated by dialects which were also quickly catching on in Silesia. This was caused most importantly by the local residents becoming increasingly tied to their place of habitation, the halt of the colonization process, the merge of ethnic and national groups, as well as the progressive isolation of Upper Silesia from Poland. Dialects, which – unlike written language – serve as a tool of direct communication, are usually a strong integrating factor. In this respect, what was specific about Silesia was that the region lacked a single common Polish or German dialect. Instead, the Polish-German social amalgam developed a group of dialects⁵⁸ whose common function was to merge Slavic and German communities⁵⁹.

When summing up the discussion on the role of languages in Silesia in the long 16th century, it would be necessary to point to the multi-lingual character of the region and the clear-cut divisions between its Polish- and German-speaking territories. These divisions disintegrated the region, spurred the formation of stereotypical misconceptions and strengthened mutual aversion. Common institutions, the political influence of the common monarch, intra- and supra-regional economic relations, religious factors and the educational system (which in the 16th century already offered more or less formal Polish and German language classes)⁶⁰, etc., had two principal effects, i.e. they 1) stimulated the formation of double national affiliation in the context of Silesian culture, which expressed itself in the development of bilingualism, and 2) induced the process of the adoption of German cultural patterns. Both of these aspects proved to work as a strong cementing force. During the rule of the Habsburg dynasty, language-related issues assumed political importance and became entangled in the processes of state modernization⁶¹. The formulation of supra-regional linguistic norms – just as the concentration of power or legal unification – needs to be perceived as an expression of centralist tendencies. A language

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

⁵⁸ Cf: K. Weinhold, *Über deutsche Dialektforschung*, p. 19.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰ H. Glück, *Deutsch*, p. 372.

⁶¹ Cf: Pierre Bourdieu, *Was heißt sprechen? Zur Ökonomie des sprachlichen Tausches*, translated by Hella Beister, Wien 2005, p. 41.

of a modern state becomes an instrument of power, and plays a crucial role as a tool of top-down controlled social communication. Facilitating power, it also works as a mechanism of enslavement and segregation. Efforts towards the eradication of cultural pluralism⁶² through homogenization performed by means of common acculturation to the German spirit facilitated nation-forming processes in Silesia. This type of integration relates to a wider German-speaking national and cultural community and its principal purpose was first and foremost to streamline the throughput of the channels of power. Linguistic norms were principally directed to the representatives of power elites, the Church, culture and science, and involved a slow drift towards the idea of German statehood – however we understand it – which stood in contradiction to the openness of humanistic patriotism and contrasted with hermetic- and isolation-prone national patriotism (M. Opitz). The actual effectiveness of M. Opitz's activity needs to be approached from a wider temporal perspective. Only in the 17th century did the German language match Latin in terms of the number of literary works published; and it would outstrip its competitor only at the outset of the 18th century. All of the most prominent languages of Silesia consolidated the intensive development of local patriotism as the principal factor of regional integration of its citizens. Independently of the ethnic group (C. Schwenckfeld – 'land Schlesien', J. Roter – 'vnser Vaterlad Schlesien', S. Frenzel – 'Silesia Patria') all Silesian writers and intellectuals treated Silesia as their homeland, and felt that they were part of a community derived from a common root. Silesia in the 16th and the 17th centuries was a cultural melting pot, whose great dynamics of mixing and interrelation of various traditions, as well as the development and partial reversibility of processes, prevent us from drawing any final conclusions. They led to the crystallization of the Silesian community, not only as a collective subject residing in a certain territory, but, most of all, as an ethnic group with a unique culture, a separate *habitus* and features constituting a separate anthropological profile, as it was alleged from as early as the 16th century (i.e. by J. Cureus, P. Vulturinus, B. Stein among others).

Situation in Silesia seems to be rather paradoxical. For one thing, even in the 17th century, German language was not yet considered to be any kind of ethnic criterion⁶³, for another, also the 'principle of territorial assignment to nationality expressed in *ius soli* was never decisive in the ethnically mixed territories'⁶⁴. When

⁶² Cf. E. Gellner, *Narody*, p. 143.

⁶³ Michael Maurer, *Geschichte und gesellschaftliche Strukturen des 17. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] *Die Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Albert Meier, München 1999 (=Hanser Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur, vol. 2), p. 22.

⁶⁴ A. Kłosowska, *Kultury*, p. 140.

we extend this juxtaposition by political fragmentation of the region, mutual hostility of various ethnic groups and religious divisions, what we obtain is a substantial group of factors which disintegrated the region in the 16th and 17th century. Eventually, however, they did not take precedence. Integration was taking place through language and culture. The essence of this integration came to be the contamination of a far broader spectrum of Slavonic and Germanic ethnic groups than it could follow from the conventional reduction to the Polish-German antagonism. Silesians perceived lasting or development within the common sphere of isolating, monolingual areas as a threat. In this sense bilingualism, which constituted a platform for agreement for various ethnic groups and was therefore integrating, received an unequivocally positive evaluation. A real, similarly integrating, though morally problematic alternative was the building of monoculture in the entire territory of Silesia, which owing to the system of power relations could – despite the 15th and 16th century regression – manifest itself exclusively in the tendency towards the progressing transformation of Silesia into a German-speaking region. This does not violate the fundamental fact that Silesia was a joint project which was implemented on site⁶⁵, and not brought from outside by any of the nations. National affiliations together with the ultimately German-speaking culture of Silesia, whose intensive emergence took place from the 16th century and whose period of great flourish fell to the 17th century, speeded up the erosion of Polish culture in Lower Silesia, which was isolated from its homeland. There is nothing awkward about the focus on these newly introduced patterns, in the end ‘the human need to be part of an identifiable, long-lived community, which does not only last a single generation; and the need to be recognized and respected, and to feel pride and dignity, seems to be an integral part of our social nature’⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Cf. Aleksander Gieysztor, *Kultura śląska między IX a XIII wiekiem*, Katowice 1960, p. 25.

⁶⁶ Jerzy Jedlicki *Nacjonalizm, patriotyzm i inicjacja kulturowa*, ‘Znak’, 3 (1997), No. 502, p. 60.

