

Separateness and National Identity – the Case of Upper Silesia in Interwar Poland

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Abstract

My dissertation examines the problem of the Upper Silesian identity in Interwar Period. From a historical perspective it applies elements of selected theories of nationalism and identity. As primary sources I use newspapers, archival materials, books and brochures.

In the thesis I distinguish *separateness* from political *separatism* and I focus my interest on some manifestations of the former phenomenon. I confront problem of the Upper Silesian specificity with its legal and social preconditions of political autonomy, minority rights, modernization, and role of the Catholic Church. I reconstruct also some Polish Interwar discourses about the Silesianness. On the basis of the investigation of the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians I maintain that Silesian separateness became perceived and started to define itself in the opposition to the existing national states' frames as a project against Polish and German nationalisms, only when it turned out that important elements of Upper Silesian identity have been rejected or depreciated by them.

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Introduction

“The Silesian people were sorely disappointed. [...] Hence, there were only the lords that have changed [in Silesia after 1922]: those from Berlin left, but these from Warszawa-Kraków came here.”¹ This bitter sentence was the opinion of an Upper Silesian, who just a few years after a part of his homeland was attached to Poland in 1922, found Silesia’s position in Poland unjust and problematic and Silesians themselves left not-understood by strangers.

That attitude in the historical scholarship about Silesia used to be labelled as *separatism*: *Separatism* was understood there usually as complaint about exploitation and a disregard from the centre(s), consequently connected with the demand of a respect for regional differences and aimed at the unifying politics of the nation state. This is the attitude we can find in the modern history of many European borderland provinces with a strong regional identity: Bavaria in Germany, Brittany in France etc. There was almost always some group dissatisfied with and significantly ill-disposed towards the state their region happened to belong to. However, those particular sentences, which were quoted above, have not been shouted during some political meeting or electoral rally of any Silesian separatist or revisionist organisation supported by some *hostile German money* in the interwar or present-day Poland. The opinion was noted by

1 „Tutaj na Śląsku zmienili się tylko panowie – odeszli ci z Berlina, ale za to przyszli ci z Warszawy-Krakowa.”.Arka Bożek, *Pamiętniki* (Memoirs), Katowice: Śląsk, 1957, pp. 81-82.. All the translations from Polish or German into English if the name of a translator is not mentioned are done by me. The text in original is quoted in the footnote. In case of quotation from the sources I leave always that version of spelling which was used in the source

the Silesian Pole, Arka Bożek (1899-1954), who was an important member of the Polish Military Organisation (POW) and later Union of the Poles in Germany; who participated in the Polish Silesian Uprisings and during the Second World War became one of the twenty MPs of the National Council of the Polish Republic (Rada Narodowa Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) – the Polish substitute for s parliament on exile in London. Finally, for five years after 1945 Brożek occupied a position of a fig leaf as the only one non-communist Silesian Voivodeship vice-governor in the communist Poland, assuming that he has to work for Poland even in spite of its non-democratic government. Nobody therefore could accuse him of any kind of disloyalty to the Polish state or any negative feelings towards it. However even he revealed his disappointment with the situation of the Upper Silesians in Poland. What were his motivations to do it?

The question becomes more striking when you take into account that Arka Bożek wrote his complaint about the situation in the Polish Silesian Voivodeship, which was the only really autonomous region in the whole interwar Central Europe. Silesian Voivodeship in Poland even during the authoritarian regime of Józef Piłsudski after 1926 had its own semi-constitution, parliament, treasury, local law etc. Despite the whole national policy of the Polish government, Silesians had at least legal and institutional framework to defend their specificity. What was therefore different or even unique in the Upper Silesia that made possible this strange coexistence of non-national principle of regional identity with the intensified pressure of a national principle? Or maybe that phenomenon happens also in other borderlands and outstanding cases that usually put theories of nationalism into a trouble? If the latter is a justifiable assumption, that we shall give some thought to the question for how long and under

what kind of conditions could we observe these phenomena in the “era of the nationalism”?² To find possible and justifiable answer to these historical research problems I will focus in my thesis on the idea of *separateness* as an important but complex component of the whole identity question, especially visible on the ethnic and cultural mixed areas of borderland. I will be preoccupied here with the issues of some meaningful components of culture that can constitute specificity of the identity, with some discourses about the identity in the Upper Silesian historical context and, last but not least, with a social, political and cultural background which might work as an “accelerator” on “inhibitor” for the development of a “separate” identity (if I may use this chemical metaphor here).

By *separateness* in this case I understand putting a strong emphasis on Upper Silesia’s differences from the others, especially from Poles from the rest of Poland (former Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland) and from Germans other than Upper Silesian Germans and, moreover, assigning some level of political significance to these differences. Advocating for separateness usually resulted in demanding some political consequences of the very fact of the different identity of the Silesians. Furthermore, separateness from other members of a nation means at the same time existence of some community between all Silesians despite their one or other ethnicity/nationality. That attitude did not automatically imply a strong judgement about the existence of any *Silesian nation* or even such ethnicity. On the one hand, it could have been easily connected with other forms of political and national loyalties, like in the cited Arka Brożek case who was convinced that Silesians are just a part of Polish people.³ On the other it

² Robert C. Binkley called time before 1939 “era of nationalism”. See: R. C. Binkley, *The Era of Nationalism and the Modern Age* (Part III of Chapter I) in: idem, *A Sense of History: Europe Since Napoleon*, accessed on 5 May, 2009 from <http://www.wallandbinkley.com/rcb/book/ch01s03.html>

³ See: A. Brożek, op. cit., p. 22.

might have result in political projects about constructing local realities according to some non-national rules (like the project of the *Freistaat Oberschlesien* which existed in the 1918 – 1921 period).⁴ That is why I insist on using the term *separateness* instead of *separatism*.⁵ *Separatism* – the notion quite often used in the literature to describe some Silesian political movements – has strong political connotation and meaning (close to the term *irredentism*) suggesting almost by definition relatively high level of disloyalty to the national state.⁶ I will clarify that for the biggest part of the modern history such a disloyalty was not necessarily present in the idea of Silesian *separateness* and even if it was sometimes noticeable, it never became a key point for it. So rather in this “soft”, non-irredentist sense *separateness* seems to be one of the crucial components or features of the Silesian identity in the interwar Poland. That is why as an equivalent for the *separateness* I will also use sometimes the terms Silesian *specificity* which may be probably even more neutral.

To demonstrate this I will use some of the most interesting cases of that kind of *separateness* in the Polish early-20th-century history. I will investigate how specificity of Silesia was formulated by the Polish authorities and some Silesian intellectuals as well as the ordinary man. Finally I will focus on a relatively small but vivid movement of the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians [Związek Obrony Górnoszlązaków, ZOG] which existed in Polish autonomous Silesian Voivodeship in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s. ZOG and its

⁴ Described more detailed here in Chapter II: *Upper Silesia before 1922: Separateness of identity and Separatism that failed*. See also: Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, „Autonomie und Separatismusbestrebungen in Oberschlesien 1918-1922“ *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung* 48, No. 1 (1999): 1-49.

⁵ Concept of the *separateness*, its connections with the ethnicity and identity problems as well as its difference from the term *separatism* is described further in Chapter I: *Theories of nationalism facing with Upper Silesian identity*.

⁶ See for example the main Polish monograph of Upper Silesian “separatist movements”: Piotr Dobrowolski, *Ugrupowania i kierunki separatystyczne na Górnym Śląsku i w Cieszyńskim w latach 1918-1939* (Separatism Groups and Trends in Upper Silesia and in the Teschenland, 1918-39), Warszawa-Kraków: PWN, 1972.

leader Jan Kustos (1893-1932) in the relatively short course of their activity managed to pass through an interesting evolution of attitudes and ideas: starting from a part of Polish national movement in Silesia (close to National Democrats, *Endecja* of Roman Dmowski) and finishing at the point of ethnic and political separateness. In that movement are focused, like in a lens, all the most important dilemmas of Silesian identity in the 20th century. Union of Defence of Upper Silesians was traditionally qualified both in the Polish and German historical literature as a *separatist* group and – what follows – criticized and stigmatized.⁷ It is only recent English, German and also Polish literature of that topic which tries now to find more distanced perspective to the Silesian *separatism* or sometimes even sympathize with it a little⁸ or even too much.⁹ However, most of the historians' works focus rather on the period before 1922 when national states were yet not finally established in Silesia and therefore plenty of ideas and plans concerning possible Silesia statehood(s) could emerge at that time. Thus the period 1922-39 in Upper Silesian history is yet not that much investigated from perspective of the studies on identity or nationalism studies, although it can serve as an example how regional identifications can (or cannot) re-define itself/themselves within a frame of a national state. For that reasons it

⁷ See: Georg Doose, *Die separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1922)*, Wiesbaden 1987; A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie und...*; P. Dobrowolski, *Ugrupowania i kierunki...*; Maria W. Wanatowicz (ed.), *Regionalizm a separatyzm – historia i współczesność: Śląsk na tle innych obszarów* (Regionalism and Separatism – the History and the Present Day: Silesia in comparison to other territories), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1995.

⁸ See: Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of the National and Ethnic Groups, 1848-1918*, West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006.

See especially a brand new study on the mediating position of the Silesian Catholic Church between the two confrontational national movements before 1922: James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, Ann Arbor: University of the Michigan Press, 2008; Idem, *Industrial Piety: The Puzzling Resilience of Religious Practise in Upper Silesia*, in: Michael Geyer and Lucian Hölscher, *Die Gegenwart Gottes in der modernen Gesellschaft: Transzendenz und religiöse Vergemeinschaftung in Deutschland*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006, pp. 144-176.

⁹ See: Dariusz Jerczyński, *Orędownicy niepodległości Śląska* (The Champions of the Independence of Silesia), Zabrze: Śląska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 2005; Idem, *Śląski ruch narodowy* (Silesian National Movement), Zabrze, Śląska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 2006.

is also certainly significantly promising area for historical research.

In the thesis I argue that Upper Silesian *separateness* as a strong and unambiguous idea within a Silesian identity with its ethnic and political meanings developed mostly as the interpretation of those regional differences in the language, culture, social and national conditions, historical memory and traditions which could not find place in the frames of the Polish and German nationalism. In other words: Silesian separateness became perceived and started to define itself (in the opposition to the existing national states' frames) as a project against Polish and German nationalisms, only when it turned out that important elements of Upper Silesian identity have been rejected or depreciated by the nationalisms that before had tried to incorporate them.

To fulfil my task properly I decided, however, that the story of one particular political group (Union of Defence of Upper Silesians) and its attitude towards Silesianness can only be meaningful if it is presented as one of the different discourses struggling with the issue of Silesian identification at the same period of history (let's call it *vertical dimension* of the story to be told here). On the other hand I shall also indicate some actual and significant parallels with other interesting European examples of different forms of *separateness* like the cases of Slovakia, Transylvania, Croatia, Eastern Prussia, Eastern Galicia etc. (*horizontal dimension*). However, both my "latitudes" and "longitudes" here are winding around the whole story in order to deepen and contextualize it properly when it seems to be useful, justifiable, interesting or striking. Therefore, there is no separate comparative chapter here, but the comparative background and the idea that Upper Silesia did not obviously exist in a historic vacuum should accompany the Reader through out the whole story (understood here both as the plot and the analysis of my thesis).

The first chapter of my dissertation discusses few theoretical concepts crucial for my work: identity, national identification, cultural assimilation, separateness etc. It also provides the Reader with a brief review of a few works crucial in my field of research. The second chapter deals with general overview of the identity question in that South-East Part of the German *Reich* before 1922. In its first part I focus mostly not on the development of Polish and German nationalisms and their (dis)connection with the already existing Silesian identity but I rather emphasise the “neither/nor” option of the deliberate or accidental national indifference among some of Upper Silesians. Such phenomenon was in my opinion an important precondition for the development of further Silesian *separateness*. Second part of that chapter is dedicated mostly to the years just after the First World War in Silesia (1918-22), when the new political and social order was stormily formulated in the German-Polish clash and in the presence of international military missions. I describe the identification dilemma during the plebiscite in 1921 which was supposed to decide about the political future of Silesia. That period laid the cornerstone for the whole Silesian interwar reality: dividing finally land, tram lines, people and their minds between Germany and Poland. I stress especially the idea of the *Freistaat Oberschlesien* which was later a point of reference for the further events and opinions. Concept of the Upper Silesia Republic was probably the most consequent form of expression of the Upper Silesian *separateness* in the language of political and ethnic separatism. Third chapter draws a picture of the finally divided Upper Silesia focusing mostly on its Eastern, Polish part. My goal there is to indicate how Polish Second Republic attempted to define and to “govern” Silesianness within its national ideology by framing their problem with Silesian *separateness* into a national discourse and looking for proper a way to achieve in

Silesia “fully-developed national consciousness”.¹⁰ In the same chapter I describe also how Silesians themselves reacted to or against that policy.

The last chapter is devoted to the story of the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians [ZOG] itself: in its first part focusing rather on the political attitudes and political actors that formed the fate of ZOG and in the second another on the reconstruction of ZOG’s general attitude towards Silesianness and its separateness. I present their dilemmas of the identification: what does it actually mean to be a Silesian and how you can be simultaneously a member of one nation and at the same time have much in common with your homeland’s compatriots despite their national belonging? Or maybe once you finally have to cut Gordian knot and desperately choose one option or another?

The core source to find answers to those questions in regard to the last chapter is here “The Voice of Upper Silesia” (“Głos Górnego Śląska”), newspaper edited between 1922 and 1932 in Katowice. It was a periodic of Jan Kustos and the ZOG, in which all ideas of the Silesian *separateness* (as well as other political or social opinions) were expressed and explained in the broadest form. In order to write about “vertical dimension” of Silesianness in the third chapter I focused my interest on some texts (books, articles, brochures, movies) which had presented some interpretations of that identity (especially works of Józef Chałasiński, Emil Szramek or Gustaw Morcinek).¹¹ As somehow auxiliary, yet still fruitful sources I used also

¹⁰ Here I partially follow the approach presented in the study on East-Prussia by Robert Traba. See: R. Traba, *Wschodniopruskość: Tożsamość regionalna i narodowa w kulturze Niemiec* (Eastprussianness: Regional and national identity in the German culture), Olsztyn: Borussia, 2007.

¹¹ Józef Chałasinski, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej "Kopalnia" na Górnym Śląsku: Studium Socjologiczne* (Polish-German Antagonism in the Industrial Settlement „Mine” in Upper Silesia: Sociological Study), Warszawa: Sp. Akc. Dom Książki Polskiej, 1935; Gustaw Morcinek, *Śląsk: Z serii „Cuda Polski”* (Silesia: „Miracles of Poland” series), Warszawa, 1933; Emil Szramek, *Górny Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny* (Upper Silesia as a Sociological Issue), Katowice: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku, 1934.

some archival materials from State Archive in Katowice: Acts of the City Council of Katowice Acts of Regional Court and Acts of the Silesian Voivodeship Office in Katowice.

My thesis tries not to follow one strict methodological approach (which may lead to narrowing the perspective and – consequently – limiting the outcomes), but combine the methodological approaches of intellectual history (close-reading strategies in the third and fourth chapter) with rather descriptive approach in the second chapter. I refer to concepts and methods of nationalism studies theories and some debates on the identity (notions of an ethnic nationalism and political nationalism, borderland identity, ideas of the complex national identity and its subjective components) to find an explanatory description for the development of different national projects on the borderlands, their failures and successes, which could be suitable for the case which is examined here. Also some historical and sociological concepts of the cultural valence (assimilation) and national identity matrix (idea proposed by Polish sociologist Antonina Kłoskowska)¹² especially on borderland must not be omitted in order to examine the phenomenon of identity smoothness. Finally, to find proper explanations and conceptualization for the ebb and flow of Upper Silesian *separateness*¹³ I partially take also into account elements of European, German and Polish political and social history in the first half of the 20th. Overall however, my thesis is probably everything but a piece of political history. All these elements should allow me to find a proper context and the explanation for dilemmas of the Upper Silesian identity and its separateness.

¹² Antonina Kłoskowska, *The National Cultures on the Grass-Root Level*, Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2001.

¹³ That was for example perspective of T. Hunt Tooley who analyzed the period 1918-22 in Upper Silesia mostly from the point of view of German political history and history of the international relations, devoting attention especially to the Upper Silesian plebiscite. See: T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

Chapter I:

Theories of nationalism facing with Upper Silesian identity

1. Identity and national identity

None of discussions on the human condition in history and especially on nationalism can commence without a consideration about identity and its historical, social and psychological components. Leszek Kołakowski in his short but dense essay “On Collective Identity” put a question of primary importance for history: how a being of a group of beings “can retain its identity over time, regardless the changes it undergoes”.¹⁴ Kołakowski – what seems to be significant – understands group identity through the individual one and enlists five components that are crucial for understanding what individual as well as group identity is and how it can endure passing time. These components are: “I” meaning the same as *substance* (Herder’s “Volksgeist” for a group/nation), *memory* (historical memory), *anticipation* (orientation toward the future), *body* (territory or some natural particularities) and *identifiable beginning* (“exordium temporis”). It is worth noticing that “national” or “group” are used by Kołakowski interchangeably: the nation seems to be for him the most clear and evident example of a group. In the case of a group/national identity, *memory* (orientation to the past), and *anticipation* (orientation to the future) are for the philosopher of crucial importance and,

¹⁴ Leszek Kołakowski, *On Collective Identity*, in: *My Correct Views on Everything*. South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005, p. 205.

moreover, have a primacy before the historical reality (meaning here the course of events in the past that is reconstructed and presented by some critical historian). Real existence of a group/nation in the past is less important than conviction about such existence in the group memory. “It is worth adding that what decides whether a nation is the same nation now as it was at any point in the past it is the nation’s present collective consciousness.”¹⁵ Therefore it does not make any serious difference, whether a nation has long and heroic past or has just invented it. Kołakowski admits also that not all these features are necessary to constitute a group/nation identity (it is obviously not “a check-list” for a group identity), but most of them are always present.

Generally, such a point of view on group identity is taken for granted by most of the theories of nationalism and nationality. What is debatable and is being debated by the scholars is usually the question of constructional or rather essential nature of the elements of national identity; question of their roots and origins etc. These are debates mostly on the *substance*, *memory* and *identifiable beginning* (if we use terminology of Kołakowski): “are nations real or imagined?”¹⁶, “was a nation or nationalism the first?”, “how old are nations?” and “do nations have navels?” (as Ernest Gellner nicely put it)¹⁷ and what are these navels for?

However, what almost always used to stand behind that discussion between *modernists* and *primordialists* was the shared conviction that national identity is the crucial form of a group consciousness that man can possess, at least in the 20th century, together on the other hand with

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 210: So consequently we should also agree (a little bit in a postmodern style of thinking) that only if Czechs from 19th century were sure that they were the same nation as the Hussites, such an “ethnic” continuity exists in spite of all Josef Pekař’s arguments against that thesis. The same refers to Slovaks from 20th century and the Great Moravia “Slovak” State eleven hundred years before. See: Maciej Janowski, *Three historians*, in: *Central European University History Department Yearbook 2001-2002*, Budapest: CEU, 2002, pp. 199-232.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York: Verso, 2006 [1983].

¹⁷ Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, London: London: Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 1997.

the assumption about non-alternative path of the nationalization of the people.¹⁸ It is somehow a teleological approach when from a perspective of an established modern national community you observe how people achieved “proper” level of identification with that community – passed from “Peasants into Frenchmen”, as Eugen Weber entitled his work on French 19th-century nationalization.¹⁹ For *modernists* it was at the same time strong Gellnerian way of thinking, connecting nationalism with the modernization processes (or, precisely, “unequal modernization”)²⁰ and linking national consciousness with the modern identity. In this sense being modern meant to have a national identity.²¹ That perspective presents also nationalism as the process and the power that works “from above”: an individual is just a passive object of some objective processes affected his life by imposing something on him: forcing him to declare participation/membership to one of nation-states or to die for a nation or to kill his neighbour for the same reason.

2. Peripheries of Europe and peripheries of the theory

That scheme of “classic” nationalism theories, although it possesses a great scholarly as well as explanatory value providing food for thought, results with some troubles of falsification

¹⁸ Tomasz Kamusella uses here the term *ennationalization* defined by him as “making a given population into a nation and a given territory into a nation/nation-state.” In my opinion, however, the notion of *nationalization* is already sufficiently functional. See: Tomasz. Kamusella, “Ethnic Cleansing in Silesia 1950-89 and the Ennationalizing Policies of Poland and Germany” *Patterns of Prejudice* 33, No. 2 (1999): 51-73.

¹⁹ See: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

²⁰ E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, pp. 59-60.

²¹ With some level of uncertainty I would say that even a non-modernist theoretician of nationalism to some extent would agree with that statement: The fact that national identity – according to him – emerged and existed also in the pre-modern periods of history does not have to exclude automatically opinion on the fundamental role of nationalism in the last one-two centuries. Even Adrian Hastings has admitted that: “If nationalism became theoretically central to the western political thinking in nineteenth century, it existed as a powerful reality in *some* places long before that” [emphasis-MJ]. Adrian Hastings, *The construction of nationhood: ethnicity, religion, and nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 4.

when it is being applied to some historical reality or factors that were not included into it. One of them is obviously religion and its role processes of building national identity. That is why after *cultural turn* of Benedict Anderson in the studies on nationalism one can speak now also about *religious turn*.²² After noticing the role of a state and its institutions, schooling system, intellectuals, folk culture and vernacular came the time for a religion.

Another is the problem of all kinds of borderlands, especially in the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe if we agree to use all these terms which are as fluid as borders there. There the things get complicated especially from the national perspective, because usually you cannot establish clear-cut between different groups on the borderland and even the criteria of the division are mixed or unclear. Macedonia and its Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian and Macedonian framing within the national discourses may be a good example of that. Borderlands are neglecting established identity borders. You can find there national identities contending one with another and different levels of regional, local or universal feelings of belonging. Moreover, for scholars it is not always clear what should be defined as national consciousness, what is yet considered as ethnic or regional. There the straight way of nationalization from ethnicity to nationality ceases to work. Such untypical cases as Pyrenean Serdanya region²³ or as a lot of Central European *Rurytianas* show clearly limitation of such theories. At the same time, however, outstanding cases can broaden the perspective and the field of possible answers. “People in the provinces, we have been usefully reminded, have appropriated the national cause for their own purposes, contesting and reshaping what it meant

²² See for example: Antony Smith, *Chosen People: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003; A. Hastings, op. cit.

²³ See: Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

to be French or German or Spanish.”²⁴ Historians and social scientists started to see that usually nationalization was not just a passive reluctant acceptance of some identity given from above, but had strong interactive component. For the people from borderlands the movement between different cycles of identities seems to be something natural. Consequently the awareness of the differences and distinctions between possible group identifications is usually higher among people from there than one could expect. That is the sense, in which I would agree with Sahlins’ sentence that “frontier regions are privileged sites for the articulation of national distinctions.”²⁵

To clarify how such interplays between national and other kinds of consciousness can happen a historian has at least a few theoretical tools. One of them is division between the *little* fatherland (homeland, *mała ojczyzna*) and the *ideological* fatherland (*ojczyzna ideologiczna*) proposed by a Polish sociologist Stanisław Ossowski.²⁶ A nation (and/or nation-state) in this sense serves as the ideological fatherland, whereas a region or a local community is basically a *little* one. That dichotomy – it seems probably quite clear – has much in common with the old Ferdinand Tönnies pair: *Gemeinschaft – Gesellschaft* (*community* and *society*),²⁷ although – it should be mentioned – Ossowski’s division can be understood either as the contradiction between *community* and ideology-based *society*, or rather as the hierarchy of the two complementary group identities: “lower” and “higher” one. Probably both answers are somehow justifiable, but they can lead to different methodological as well as ideological consequences.

²⁴ James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*. Ann Harbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008, p. 5.

²⁵ P. Sahlins, op. cit., 271.

²⁶ See: Stanisław Ossowski, *O Ojczyźnie i Narodzie* (On the Fatherland and the Nation). Warszawa: PWN, 1984.

²⁷ See: Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

The former interpretation (two homelands as a contradiction) gives priority and sympathy to the homeland as to the place where a man can really feel “at home” and is not shaken there by any ideology of some constructed social beings. It is worth mentioning here that the concept of the *small* fatherland was based and entrenched empirically on Ossowski’s fieldwork that he conducted in the Opole part of Upper Silesia after 1945, so just after that land ceased to be a part of Germany.²⁸ So the parallel between the *small* fatherland and German *Heimat* (with its roots in the word *Heim*) looks almost self evident.²⁹ Over-interpreting Ossowski a bit, one can say that dedication to the small homeland is the natural and self-sufficient foundation of group identity.

The latter interpretation goes on contrary: the *Heimat* identity is only really the *small* one and a “proper” (“big”) fatherland is a natural complementation and fulfillment for it. Accordingly: sense of the *small* one is meaningful only with a connection to the *ideological* fatherland. Obviously *Vaterland* identity can be mediated by and through *Heimat* identity, it can be even reshaped a bit, but nevertheless there is no contradiction between them, but rather coherence. In my opinion intention of Ossowski was rather closer to that hierarchical meaning of the two homelands. The *mała ojczyzna* especially in Polish can be a part of the language and discourse of nationalism, and it easily can “smell of nationalism.”³⁰ That is why I am using this term quite cautiously and rarely. The problem with Upper Silesia was of different nature than just the question about relationship between two levels or types of national identity.

²⁸ S. Ossowski, *Zagadnienia więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej*, in: idem, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie...*, pp. 81-134.

²⁹ That is why I will interchangeably use these German equivalents: *Heimat* and *Vaterland*.

³⁰ Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*, Ithaca and London: Cornell Univeristy Press, 2008, p. 8.

Another interesting theoretical contribution of the Polish contemporary sociology of the nation which I find useful especially in my field of research is the “matrix” of the relationship “between national self-identification and cultural valence (assimilation)” proposed by Antonina Kłoskowska.³¹ Kłoskowska noticed that individuals, especially on the borderland, can possess more than one assimilated culture and at the same time more than one national identity. They can also present uncertain or cosmopolitan identity or – sometimes feel at home in more than two cultures or in any of them. All this combined together can provide an interesting heuristic tool for the research on the identity:

Table 1. Cultural valence and national identification.

National identification	Cultural valence (assimilation)			
	<u>Univalence</u>	<u>Bivalence</u>	<u>Ambivalence</u>	<u>Polyvalence</u>
<u>Integral</u>			*	
<u>Dual</u>	*			
<u>Uncertain</u>				
<u>Cosmopolitan</u>	*			

* = “probably empty categories”

Source: A. Kłoskowska, *The National Cultures...*, p. 118.

In my opinion some Upper Silesian will well suit to this “matrix” somewhere in the “Bivalence” or “Polivalence” column with all their combinations. However, the concept of Kłoskowska brings for me two problems which show the limitation of its usage. First, (since Kłoskowska based her idea mostly on the empirical qualitative research on the personal sources), that it can be successfully applied to the cases of individuals, but it should not be used

³¹ Antonina Kłoskowska, *The National Cultures on the Grass-Root Level*. Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2001. pp. 102-122.

for a collective identity or at least used very cautiously. Second problem, that the matrix does not include identification(s) other than national, consequently excluding their meaning or putting them all into category “uncertain”. I would argue that sometimes such “uncertainty” could be very certain person’s attitude.

3. Upper Silesian identity or/and nationalism

According to my point of view typologies of Ossowski or Kłoskowska, although handy and functional, do not solve the whole problem, especially with regard to Upper Silesian case. The modern nationalization did not run there as smoothly as it should according to classic Gellnerian point of view, but on the other hand also some “Eastern European backwardness” approaches are not suitable to that strange place on Earth. As one American historian recently noticed:

Upper Silesians’ persisted national ambivalence and national indifference is something of an embarrassment for such a [Gellnerian] model. Industrialized since the early nineteenth century, with almost universal literacy, and long familiar with the mass political mobilization and association culture of the Wilhelmine Germany, the region could not easily be loomed in with such rural, isolated areas as Polesie in eastern interwar Poland, where “political immaturity” has been credited with leading peasants to eschew national labels and declare themselves simply “local” as late as the 1920s.³²

Upper Silesia therefore presents an embarrassing and strange combination of the “Western” industrial modernity with the “Eastern” resistance to nationalism and reluctance to self-identity in national terms. This is probably not the only such a case in Europe (comparable for instance to Austrian Germans situation before 1918), but yet it definitely needs some more

³² J. Bjork, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

sensitive approach than those of traditional national frames of historiography and traditional studies on nationalism as well. Silesian scholar from Opole Tomasz Kamusella who applied the Miroslav Hroch's "ABC" scheme³³ to the development of nationalism in Silesia between 1948 and 1918 may serve as the example for the latte approach of studies on nationalism and ethnicity.³⁴ I agree with almost all conclusions of his broad study on the ethnicities and I am thankful for his discoveries that are a breakthrough in the field history of nationalisms in Silesia. However, I am not quite sure about his strict "schematic" understanding of the concept of Hroch. Pushing some Silesian political movements into the teleological frames of phases-division – what Kamusella did – and wondering, whether and when they went from a *grey zone* A/B to a B phase seems to me slightly artificial and non-historical approach.³⁵ There is something non-linear and more amorphous with the Silesianness behind the Silesian weak (after all) nationalism in comparison to the others. Obviously, I am not denying here that something like "Silesian nationalism" existed both in Austrian and in Prussian Silesia especially just after the First World War. I just believe that possible explanation for the historical movements which underlined the Silesian specificity (better than mechanical implementation of the Hroch scheme) lies in the specific features of Silesian group consciousness

³³ See: Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among Smaller European Nations*. Cambridge, London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 22-30.

³⁴ Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of the National and Ethnic Groups, 1848-1918*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006.

³⁵ "The Szlonzokian nationalism dashed from phase A to phase B in 1918/19. It attempted to cross the threshold of phase C in the 1919 but the lack of international recognition for this national cause, combined with the division of the Szlonzakian homeland, made this movement retreat into the gray zone between phases A and B after 1921." Ibidem, p. 275.

These two features are: *weakness* and *separateness*. Weakness not in the sense which identity is the most visible, the most underlined, the most every-day or the most “essential” and “self-evident” one. In my understanding weakness applies to the mobilization’s power of the group identity. In the name of the *strong* identity people can be mobilized to do something heroic, courageous and extraordinary. Only for the strong identity can you devote your life: including even *pro patria mori*. In the name of the *weak* one nobody would do it, no matter how much that identity can be normally stressed and underlined. In other words: you can devote whole your life for Germany and its eastern boarder but you will not do it just for Upper Silesia unless you consciously. This is obviously a rough heuristic division that first of all should be always taken historically and in a historical context.³⁶ Moreover, I possess no answer why some group identities become *strong* and some remain *weak*. However I think that the history of the Upper Silesian identity (as well as Slovakian, Transylvanian, Macedonian, Kashubian etc.) can be also told as a story of some attempts (successful or not) to create a *strong* identity from a *weak* one.

4. Why *separateness* not separatism

From the perspective of group identity approach and non-deterministic theories of nationalism (or maybe it is better to say: theories open to the historical reality of the “second-hand Europe”)³⁷, it seems quite clear, why I try to avoid the term separatism. *Separateness* is

³⁶ Like in the really source-based study of James Bjork whose approach the “national indifference” of Upper Silesian Catholicism before 1922 convinces me more than just a thesis about nationalism that failed because of “the lack of international recognition”. See: J. Bjork, op. cit.

³⁷ Notion invented by Yaroslav Hrytsak. See: Yaroslav Hrytsak, *The borders of Europe - seen from the outside*, in: „Eurozine“ Bodermaking. Accessed on 10 March, 2009 form: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2005-01-10-hrytsak-en.html>

one of the features of the identity and its complicated context, whereas separatism has mostly strong political connotation.

In respect of “separateness” I would repeat after Florian Znaniecki that there are the value systems (of some of their parts) of group identities that are separate.³⁸ It means that in case of “separateness” I rather follow the sociological and anthropological approach in the understanding of the history, than that one of the political science for which separatism is:

[T]he character, act, principle or practice designed by its adherents to withdraw completely from a centralized nation-state and set up a new national government. Those dissidents and activists who demand separatism call for complete independence and withdrawal from the national body of which they have once been a part. (...) They reject autonomy or semi-autonomy as weak halfway measures. They are adamant – the bullet, not the ballot.³⁹

I insist in my thesis that the phenomena distinctive for the interwar Silesian Voivodeship (1922-39) are in general far from that description. Even among the group which is usually called “separatists” (the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians, ZOG) there is no bullet in use, no rejection of the autonomy and practically no calling for independence. There is a discourse on the Silesian “separateness”, otherness or specificity and their consequences; there is a demand for preserving and even strengthening the autonomy, but I could not find anything more. If the attempts to create Upper Silesian Free State after the First World War might be

³⁸ “Human object is experienced by human subject as an alien always then and only then if a social contact that takes place between them is based on the separate value systems” („Przedmiot ludzki doświadczany jest przez podmiot ludzki jako obcy zawsze wtedy i tylko wtedy, gdy zachodzi między nimi styczność społeczna na podłożu rozdzielnych układów wartości”). Florian Znaniecki, *Współczesne Narody* (Contemporary Nations), Warszawa: PWN, 1990, p 300.

³⁹ *Separatism*, in: L. L. Synder, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, Chicago and London: St James Press, p. 364.

called “separatism” (meaning: actions to separate Silesia from Germany and Poland), I could not call in the same way even the most “Silesian” voices and actions that took place after 1922.

In this respect I am in a way consciously separating myself from the previous research tradition. In the only one existing Polish monograph of the Silesian separatism(s) written in the early 1970s by political scientist Piotr Dobrowolski, the author put into one category three different Silesian political movements operating in the first decades of the 20th century; (1) the idea of the *Freistaat Oberslesien* from 1918-22 with all Swiss, humanistic and catholic roots for it (I mention that in the second chapter here), (2) the ethnic movement of the multiethnic Austrian Teschen Silesia that started in 1907 and after 1918 found itself existing as a typical orphan of Black-Yellow Flag Monarchy, and (3) the Jan Kustos’ ZOG from the interwar Polish Silesia that is described in the fourth chapter of my thesis. Although all these groups have something in common (all referred strongly to the Silesian identity), it is for me quite dubious to put them into the same basket. One cannot see important continuity in time between them and their attitudes are of significantly different nature. Moreover, Dobrowolski’s work, although based on wide archival research, contains some value judgments that are unfortunately typical for the time and context, in which the book was written. Also some his arguments and statements are rather mistaken, for example about German inspiration and financial support for the “separatists” in Silesia (both in Prussian and in Austrian part).⁴⁰ Needless to say, that my interpretation of the sources – especially in regard to the sense of the term “separatism”, does not follow the approach of Dobrowolski.

⁴⁰ See: Piotr Dobrowolski, *Ugrupowania i kierunki separatystyczne na Górnym Śląsku i w Cieszyńskim w latach 1918-1939* (Separatist Groups and Trends in Upper Silesia and in the Teschenland, 1918-39), Warszawa-Kraków: PWN, 1972. To see about German financing in Upper Silesia during the plebiscite period: T. H. Tooley, op. cit., pp. 57-74, 88-99.

Chapter II:

Upper Silesia before 1922:

Separateness of identity and Separatism that failed

What is an Upper Silesian? Is he a German, a Pole, a Prussian, simply an Upper Silesian, or simply a Catholic or, perhaps, even just an abstract human being?⁴¹

[Jan Kapica, 1906]

1. Prehistory of separateness

From the 14th century Silesia belonged to the Bohemian Lands and thanks to that it became a part of the Holy Roman Empire which from 1526 was under control of Habsburg dynasty. In the 18th century, Frederick the Great, insubordinate vassal of the Emperor and the Empress, conquered and successfully defended his conquest of the vast majority of that country. Only some southern scraps of Upper Silesia around Teschen (Cieszyn) and Troppau (Opawa) remained under the rule of the Vienna King of Jerusalem who, despite of that (or maybe because of that), was addressed among others as the *Herzog von Ober- und Niederschlesien* until 1918. The rest became a share of the Prussian kingdom and Prussian kings could add to their titles the *Souveräner und oberster Herzog von Schlesien wie auch der Grafschaft Glatz*.

⁴¹ Jan Kapica, „Zur Lage in Oberschlesien,” *Schlesische Volkszeitung*, nos. 36 and 38 (1906), quoted in Emil Szramek, „Ks. Jan Kapica. Życiorys a zarazem fragment z Historji Górnego Śląska,” *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 3 (1930): 31.

Silesia was divided into Lower Silesia, a more urbanized western country that was populated in majority with Lutherans and Upper Silesia: rural, relatively backward, eastern and mostly Catholic. However it was the latter that from late 18th century faced the industrial revolution: first the coal mines, zinc- or iron-mills were established there bringing their all social and spatial consequences. New network of settlements and cities linked by the first railway lines grew through the 19th century together with the Upper Silesian industrial working-class, Upper Silesian Prussian *Bürgertum* and other outcomes of modernization with probably one exception: in modern and modernized Upper Silesia there was no effective secularization.

Upper Silesia, from 1816 the *Regierungsbezirk Oppeln*, was in the administrative hierarchy a part of the Silesian Province of Prussia. The overwhelming majority of its inhabitants were Slaves, whose tongue was usually called by outsiders *Wasserpölnisch* (in Silesian itself there was practically no term that could be used for self-description).⁴² Therefore, in the elementary school system, which was established already by Frederick the Great in 1763 but really developed after the decree from 1819 about compulsory education for all Prussian children from the age of six, it was Polish that usually served as a language of teaching.⁴³ German was the language of cities and industry: the language of technical skills, higher administration and higher education (although before 1863 there were even two Polish *Gymnasia*). Polish was a popular language of workers, peasants, parish priests and lower clerks, used in church service or by primary-school teachers who at the same time were often the

⁴² Historians are not sure what the roots of that term are. According to Joachim Bahlcke it was the name given in the 17th century by people living in the lower reaches of the Odra River to the language of the rafts men from Upper Silesia. See: Joachim Bahlcke and Joachim Rogall (et al.), *Schlesien und die Schlesier*, München: Langen Müller, 2000, p. 135.

⁴³ Andrzej Chwalba, *Historia Polski 1795-1918* (History of Poland 1795-1918), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001, p. 180.

church organists. Upper Silesia was inhabited mostly by the Catholic *Wasserpölnisch*-speakers who could read and – usually – write in Polish and were at the same time loyal Prussians, proud of their participation in the glorious victories of Königgrätz and Sedan. For Prussia they were, as the Iron Chancellor complimented them, the „always true Upper Silesians”.⁴⁴

In this chapter I examine how these Upper Silesians ceased to be “always true” and started to be more dubious and problematic both for their state and for nationalisms which wanted to attract them. I present the nature of that Silesian separateness focusing on its religious dimension and using Slovakian case as a comparative background. Finally, I indicate the most important paths and ideas of the Upper Silesian nationalism after the First World War, before this land was divided between two nation states and identification of inhabitants had also to face that division.

2. Separateness in between two nationalisms (before 1914)

Upper Silesia became a field of national problem together with the *Kulturkampf* which brought there both compulsory (and almost exclusively) German language in elementary schooling and the clash between the Prussian State and the Catholic Church. If we assume that modern nationalism starts with the linguistic turn in the state policy of imposing the monopoly of the national language and with the state control over the school system, we can say that modern German nationalism commenced in Upper Silesia in 1872. That situation brought about reaction and resistance of the Catholic Church which since then kept all the time some level of critical distance to the Prussian State and its *Hakatist* policy. The Catholicism was a form of identification that united both Polish and German Catholics in Silesia. For next 30 years the

⁴⁴ Otto von Bismarck, *Gesammelte Werke*, Berlin: Otto Stolberg, 1929, vol. 11, p. 242, quoted in: J. Bjork, *Neither German...*, p. 22.

most popular Polish newspaper that possessed almost a monopole among all newspapers and that defended people's rights to Polish schools, culture, etc. was entitled just *Katolik* (*A Catholic*). Consequently, there were usually local pastors or lay Catholic intellectuals connected with the Catholic *Zentrumspartei* who played the roles of political and spiritual leaders. One of them, Father Jan Kapica (1866-1930), a popular preacher, Catholic activist and one of the emblematic figures for that group, described that period in such a way:

[I]t was pure joy to be a priest, a Catholic, a Centrist in Upper Silesia, where the people stood unified against the enemy like an unconquerable phalanx. The priest was the born leader, the people formed an incomparably loyal army; German and Pole, they were brothers. The battle song rang: I am a Catholic and I want to remain Catholic!⁴⁵

That position of the leader of the “army” in which “German and Pole were brothers” demanded obviously harmonious balance between Polishness and Germanness inside the Upper Silesian and Catholic identity. An average Upper Silesian in the last 50 years before the First World War was more less bilingual, although his mother tongue was usually spoken Slavic “Silesian” (*Wasserpölnisch*), whereas his expertise in written German and sometimes also in written Polish (which was possible thanks to the religious instructions conducted in that language even after 1872) was often limited only to several spheres of life. However, for the Catholic Silesian leaders, a perfect bilingualism and cultural bivalence were notions which they consciously cultivated. Norbert Bontzek/Bonczyk (1837-1893), a Pastor of the Virgin Mary Church in Beuthen, where majority of parishioners was already German-speaking, who wrote

⁴⁵ „Früher, da war es eine helle Freude Priester, Katholik, Zentrumsmann in Oberschlesien zu sein, wo das Volk einig und geschlossen wie eine unüberwindliche Phalanx dem Feinde gegenüber stand. Der Priester war der Geborene Führer, das Volk war ein unvergleichlich treues Heer: deutsch und polnisch, das waren Brüder. Der Schlachtgesang lautete: Ich bin katolisch, ich will katolisch sein!” Jan Kapica, *Kazania – Mowy – Odezwy* (Homilies – Speeches – Appeals), ed. Emil Szramek, Katowice: Kółko Homielityczne Kapłanów Diecezji Katowickiej, 1933, p. 189 (translated in J. Bjork, op. cit, p. 25).

the most popular Polish-Silesian poems (*Stary Kościół Miechowski, Góra Chełmska* – significantly influenced by Mickiewicz’s style), on the *Katholikentag* 1888 expressed that position openly: “A person with two languages stands firmly, because not on one leg, but on two. *Bilingues sumus, sed concordēs.*”⁴⁶ But even at that time when the Beuthen *Pharrer* formulated his catchphrase, it was not so easy to stand in that position and belong equally to two cultures and divide own identity accordingly. Double group identification or position between both of groups had to be accepted by the rest of these groups. Such a position not always could meet with acceptance of the compatriots, what voiced another priest, Josef Gregor from Tworkau, who at the peak of the *Kulturkampf* in 1880 wrote a popular poem for the melody of the *Dąbrowski Mazurka*:

Our beloved Silesia for a long time
Was without any defence
Neglected by the Fellow People, [Swoi]
Despised by the Strangers [Obcy].⁴⁷

On the one hand, this hymn is some allusion to Polish identity, while on the other it expressed also a deep feeling of being rejected by both the Fellow People (Poles?) and Strangers (Germans?). In my opinion, such sense of rejection became one of the most important reasons for majority of forms of modern Upper Silesian separateness.

Confessional group identity and national indifference lasted in Upper Silesia as long as it was possible, for a long time even simultaneously with German and Polish nationalisms. In

⁴⁶ „Człowiek o dwu językach pewniej stoi, bo nie na jednej lecz na dwu nogach. [...] *Bilingues sumus, sed concordēs.*” Norbert Bonczyk on *Katolikentag* in Beuthen in 1888; quoted in: Emil Szramek, *Górny Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny* (Upper Silesia as an Sociological Issue), Katowice: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku, 1934, p. 18.

⁴⁷ „Długo Śląsk nasz ukochany, | Bez wszelkiej obrony, | Został od swych zaniedbany, | Od obcych wzgardzony.” Quoted in: *ibidem*, title page.

the blink of an eye, one can classify that phenomenon as a reminiscence of some „archaic” attitude of peasants that wanted to be just „local” or „[the subjects] of Lord XY”, which for various historical reasons remained in the backward and God-forgotten corner of the *Reich*, combined with still existing Early-Modern confessional and provincial identification (*Landespatriotismus*). It might be partly the truth however in my opinion the picture is much more complex. As James Bjork argues convincingly in his book on Upper Silesian Catholicism, such position in between nationalisms and keeping distance from both of them, was for the Silesian Catholic elites a deliberate and intended strategy. „In this deadlock [between Polish and German nationalism], it was a different kind of identification – religion – that provided both the ideological framework and the social space for Upper Silesia to navigate between German and Polish orientations.”⁴⁸ Moreover, I would add, the tools used to promote and spread that attitude were *par excellence* modern as well: popular press, mass political organizations, wide network of Church associations etc.

Regarding that issue of “modernity”, one should also bear in mind that German and Polish nationalism did not “came” in Silesia as into a virgin land with illiterate “locals”, but from the very beginning had to face with, in a way, at least half-modernized society. In the Upper Silesia the modernity preceded nationalizations. Before 1872, a few generations of Upper Silesians went to the Prussian Polish-language schools, so they already could read newspapers, announcements, instructions, etc., although not in the national language of the state in which they lived. Due to the fact that more and more Silesian people worked in the industry, more and more of them possessed some technical skills and experienced migration from

⁴⁸ J. Bjork, op.cit., p. 18.

a village to an industrial settlement or a town.⁴⁹ Male half of Silesians was also proud of the service in Prussian Army, but even if it had imposed some identification on them, it could have made them feel more Prussians yet, after all, Prussianness was not a national identity. Upper Silesian separateness in the German *Kaiserreich* was grounded partially on the *longe durée* local and regional self-identification, affected by the scope of many complicated historical conditions. After all, however, without modern and intentional usage and re-definition of that “ancient” Upper Silesianness, it would not preserve too long.

“The Catholic priest must be impartial in the national war!”⁵⁰, advised Father Kapica. From the perspective of a pastor who had in his parish two nationalisms competing over the souls of his “tranquil” parishioners (which were also attracted by the “godless socialism” or “Masonic liberalism”) to calm both sides by putting the Catholic identity over the national and underlining its Upper Silesian dimension seemed to be the only reasonable solution. A parishioner could be a German, a Pole, none of them or just a Silesian. It does not matter. According to Kapica, he should be a pious Catholic and, with no doubt, a loyal citizen. The only thing he was not expected to be was the “national Pole” or “national German”. Kapica stated that position clearly:

We declare ourselves as opponents of Germanization as well as of the Great-Polishness⁵¹ [*Grosspolonismus*; emphasis-MJ]. However, by Germanization we do not

⁴⁹ According to the research of Lawrence Schofer almost 85 per cent of industrial workers in the Upper Silesian Industrial Region came from other rural parts of the *Regiernugsbezirk Oppeln*. See: L. Schofer, *The Formation of a Modern Labor Force: Upper Silesia 1865-1914*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

⁵⁰ „Die katolische Priester muss in dem nationalen Kampfe unparteiisch sein!” J. Kapica, op. cit., p. 194.

⁵¹ Term „Great-Polish” referred to a Polish national movement of the *Endecja (Wszepocholski)* and its nationalistic agitation. At the same time that term could refer to Greater-Poland (*Wielkopolska, Wielkopolski*), where Polish modern nationalism (*Wszepocholski*) usually came from, so that coincidence of meanings was even useful. Among Upper Silesians term „Great-Pole” (*Wielki Polok*) was attributed often with pejoration to a local Silesian Polish national activist.

understand teaching the German language or participation in the cultural work [Kulturarbeit] with Germans. We condemn all special laws against the Polish people, in particular we condemn conditions and regulations which exclude Poles from the school, especially from the religious instruction or made impossible any cultivation of the mother tongue.⁵²

Thus Father Ludwig Skowronek (1859-1934) persuaded at the beginning of the 20th century his parish people from Bogutschütz near Kattowitz that parents ought to teach their children not only German, but also literary Polish. Skowronek was the same person, who twenty years later, when his parish became part of Poland, asked his bishop for retirement (because of “ill health and fatigue”) and lived out his days in Ziegenhals resort in German Silesia. Skowronek was also the editor and publisher of the twin prayer books *Weg zum Himmel* and *Droga do nieba* which became Upper Silesian *bestsellers* for the next fifty years.⁵³

I shall admit that somewhat I have a liking for that attitude of Catholic elites in the Wilhelmine Silesia. The policy of bilingualism, peaceful coexistence and free development of national identities by education, not by confrontation sounds today, after all dark experiences of the national clashes and cleansings in the 20th century, as a bright, humanistic exception. On the other hand, in my opinion, in this particular time of *fin-de-siècle* Wilhelmine Germany, that strategy had to bring some side-effects contrary to the intentions, although their authors meant well. The Polish nationalism could develop on the foundations of mass Polish literacy and mass public activity, on which Catholic elites insisted so much. By educational or professional

⁵² „Bekennen wir uns als Gegner Germanisation, wie des Grosspolonismus. Unter Germanisation verstehen wir jedoch nicht die Erlernung der deutschen Sprache, oder die gemeinsame Beteiligung mit den Deutschen an der Kulturarbeit. Wie verurteilen alle Ausnahmgeseetze gegen das polnische Volk, namentlich verurteilen wir Zustände und Verhältnisse, welche die polnische Sprache aus der Schule, insbesondere aus dem Religionsunterricht, ausschliessen und jede Pflege der Mutterschprache unmöglich machen.” J. Kapica, op. cit., p. 193.

⁵³ Ibidem, pp. 122, 263; Mieczysław Pater (ed.), *Słownik Biograficzny Katolickiego Duchowieństwa Śląskiego XIX i XX wieku* (Biography Dictionary of the Catholic Silesian Clergy), Katowice: Księgania Świętego Jacka, 1996, p. 227-228.

assimilation to the German state and civilization which was unintentionally implied by the ideas of the *Zentrum*, an Upper Silesian was becoming a part of German culture and, in consequence, of German nation which was actually the main goal of German nationalism. The long-range outcomes of the Catholic indifferent policy turned out to be mutually contradictory: it was more and more difficult to be equally loyal to Germanness and Polishness in their radicalized forms. In other words, those who built national reconciliation on the basis of the Silesian Catholic identity and mutual national respect willy-nilly created the preconditions for dissolution of their own world. Important Kapica's assumption from 1906 that "the Great-Pole is not identical with Pole"⁵⁴ (which may allow us understand clearly his policy) could have been true in some other possible worlds, but in the world that finished in the trenches of the First World War and re-started here in Silesia with Polish-German clash, such a sentence was less and less truthful.

My intention here is also far from drawing an idyllic picture of a tranquil Catholic community of parish people with neither national nor social clashes, nor aversion towards others (and there were only others who came with their nationalisms and antagonisms that destroyed peaceful life). On the one hand that political Catholicism had sometimes its own aggressive, anti-Semitic or just parochial face, while on the other, Polish and German nationalisms in Silesia had their own roots, support and own dynamism too. It would be also a mistake to discern in this Upper Silesian face of Catholicism some kind of Upper Silesian nationalism. Even though Upper Silesianness itself was strongly highlighted and emphasized, even if somebody demanded „Silesia for Silesians” (*Schlagwort* for the first time expressed in the Centre Polish-language newspaper “Kuryer Górnoszląski” in 1893)⁵⁵, there was always

⁵⁴ "Grosspole ist nicht identisch mit Pole!" Ibidem, p. 193.

⁵⁵ Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, „Autonomie und Separatismusbestrebungen in Oberschlesien 1918-1922,“ *Zeitschrift*

another (social, religious, economic, Polish..., etc.) sense that stood behind it than the idea of the Upper Silesian nation. This moderate attitude towards two competing nationalisms combined with the religious universalism and strong *Landesparitismus*⁵⁶ did not result in (or equate with) creation of another nationalism. At least in Silesian case it did not happen before 1918.⁵⁷

3. Silesia and Slovakia – asymmetrical comparison

Before 1918, the situation of Prussian *Regierungsbezirk Oppeln* was to some extent surprisingly similar to that in Slovakia. Both lands were parts of bigger non-Slavic political entity, both were populated mostly with Catholic Slavic-speaking population of peasants (in the Silesian case also industrial workers), whereas the cities were mostly *Germanized* or *Magyarized*, i.e. inhabited by bourgeoisie and low-middle class assimilated to the state language and its national culture. Both the German *Kaiserreich* and the Hungarian Kingdom conducted a rather strict policy of nationalization of their Slavic citizens by means of public education and other forms of state pressure, but not consequently all the time. Before 1918, that policy was however only partially successful, moreover, it even caused counter-reactions: the formation of political representations of the Slovak or Polish nationality-based oppositions. Also thanks to the emergence of the phenomenon of mass politics at the beginning of the 20th century both in Slovakia and Upper Silesia those opposition movements won for the first time

für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung 48, No. 1 (1999): 3.

⁵⁶ This is in a way a bit similar to the Hungarian “transylvaniam.” See: Gábor Lagzi, *Czy Węgry mają swoje Kresy Wschodnie?* (Does Hungary have its own Eastern Edges?), in: *Dziedzictwo Kresów: Nasze Wspólne Dziedzictwo?* (ed.) Jacek Pulchra, Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2006.

⁵⁷ Because of a different context and significance I lay aside Silesian nationalism of Józef Koźdon that emerged in 1906 in the Austrian Silesia with its loyal pro-Habsburg face, anti-Galician and anti-Czech nationalism attitude. Even in Autumn 1918 Koźdon said: “We are loyal to Austria till the end, but if Silesia comes to another fatherland [sic!-MJ] we will not be against.” See: P. Dobrowolski, op. cit., pp. 44 passim.

the parliamentary elections and managed to send their representatives to the parliaments. Four members of the Slovak National Party were elected to the Hungarian Parliament⁵⁸ in 1901 and two leaders of the Upper Silesian branch of Polish National Democracy in *Reichstag* in 1903. One of the Silesian MPs was Wojciech Korfanty (1873-1939) who from that time nearly embodied the Polish national movement in Silesia.

I would however assume that before 1914 the majority of Upper Silesians and Slovaks, in spite of their relative reluctance towards national policy of their states and some resistance against it, were still quite loyal to their then states and authorities rather than willing to unite with their ethnic “brothers” (Czechs or Poles) or to establish their own ethnic-based political organization. Some level of a national conflict could exist parallel to a generally non-violent coexistence of two nationalities within a one state.⁵⁹ Different historical paths of similar ethnic units, between Slovakia and Bohemian Lands and between Upper Silesia and Poland, played there still quite important role. As I emphasized, the religious and historical identity remained for the majority of Silesians and Slovaks more important than the ethnic one. In 1913 Polish journalist from Posen, in a way a representative and personification of the “Great-Polishness”, described Prelate Jan Kapica (who six years later supported Polish option in the Polish-German struggle) as “a character of a Silesian Prussian who speaks Polish and is saturated with separatism”.⁶⁰ In that respect, “separatism” meant most probably Kapica’s disagreement with

⁵⁸ Owen V. Johnson, *Slovakia 1918-1938: Education and the Making of a Nation*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 45.

⁵⁹ In that sense the situation may be compared a bit with the German-Czech conflict within the Habsburg Empire before 1914. See: Otto Urban, *Czech Society 1848-1918*, in: M. Teich, *Bohemia in History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 198-214.

⁶⁰ „Typ Śląskiego Prusaka mówiącego po polsku i do głębi przesiąkniętego separatyzmem.” Quoted in: Maria W. Wanatowicz, *Między regionalizmem a separatyzmem śląskim*, in: eadem (ed.), *Regionalizm a separatyzm – historia i współczesność: Śląsk na tle innych obszarów*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1995, p. 14.

the fundamental statement of Polish nationalism of *Endecja* about “national unity” and subordination of all “ethnic Poles” to the national principle. Only in the autumn of 1918 Slovak Catholic leader Rev. Andrej Hlinka could seriously said: “[the Slovaks’] thousand-year-old wedlock with Hungary has not succeeded; we must divorce them”.⁶¹ Wojciech Korfanty, who became in 1914 for a short time a high official in German office of war propaganda (Central Office for Foreign Services, Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst), formulated the idea of such a Polish-German “divorce” in his speech in *Reichstag* only on October 25, 1918.⁶²

On the other hand, I would be however quite cautious about that list of Slovakian-Upper Silesian similarities since one should also take into account some differences that, after all, made the Upper Silesian case specific. The modernization processes in Upper Silesia and Slovakia took two different paths and had different rates. Slovakia was a relatively poor mountainous rural land, whereas Upper Silesia, especially its Eastern part, was before 1914 a highly industrialized and urbanized country. Also the literacy level was much higher than in the Slavic population of Hungary. Unlike with Slovaks, the problem with Silesians was not that the modern national consciousness was not available for them since they did not achieve preconditions for it.

However, it was the Slovakian language that was codified in the 19th century as a separate form Czech language and was used in publications, prayer books, etc., whereas the mother tongue of Upper Silesian was usually defined as a group of Polish dialects⁶³ and, thus the literary Polish was used in Polish Silesian press, books but also in sermons, religious

⁶¹ Dorothea El Mallakh, *The Slovak Autonomy Movement 1935-39*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, p. 27

⁶² Marian Orzechowski, *Wojciech Korfanty. Biografia polityczna*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1975, pp. 135-146.

⁶³ With the exception of Jan Baudouin de Courtney who maintained that Silesian is a different language from Polish. See: J. Baudouin de Courtney, *Szkice Językoznawcze* (Linguistic Sketches), Warszawa: P. Laskiewicz i Ska, 1904.

education etc. The Slovak activists published books in Slovak whereas the Upper Silesian activists published books both in German as well as in Polish. The usage of Polish language in public sphere (especially, as I indicated, in case of the Catholic Church) was not necessarily connected with the Polish national option. However, in general, Polish or German national consciousness was already quite common among Upper Silesian people, although it did not dominate the others. According to James Bjork between 1903 and 1914 about 40 to 60 per cent of Silesians voted for national (German or Polish) parties while the rest opted for “non-national” political views of the Centre party, social democracy, etc.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, strong Czechoslovak identity was shared by relatively small group of Slovaks, mostly Lutherans, even though the feeling of brotherhood between Czechs and Slovaks was probably similar to that between Poles (especially those from Great Poland) and Silesians. After all, however, before 1914 modern Slovak nationalism had really existed, whereas in Prussian Upper Silesia nobody probably seriously thought about any modern Upper Silesian nationalism.

4. Upper Silesian “war of dwarfs” (1918-21)

The First World War has changed everything. All empires collapsed, new states emerged and people had to find their places in one of them. These few years after the railway-carriage Armistice in Compiegne in November 1918 were probably also the time when Upper Silesia had its day in history in terms of international interest, richness of events, ideas, personalities, etc. Here I will not even attempt to describe them with the level of attention and details which it certainly deserves⁶⁵ as my aim is only to look for possible explanation for the

⁶⁴ J. Bjork , op. cit., pp. 172-173.

⁶⁵ That work was done by other scholars. For literature in English see: J. Bjork, *Neither German...*, pp. 174 passim; Gregory F. Campbell, „The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919-1922” *The Journal of Modern History* 42,

rise and fall of Silesian nationalism with its separatist political agenda and its roots in Silesian separateness.

The peace treaty of Versailles signed in June 1919 decided that the inhabitants of the territory of the *Regierungsbezirk Oppeln* (without its western and south-western parts) will decide in a plebiscite about its future statehood. The plebiscite, in a way a natural consequence of the national self-determination principle, was a solution proposed to solve dilemmas about such ethnic grey zones where crossed different economic and political interests: from Schleswig to Kärnten and Sopron. However, Upper Silesia was the biggest and the most populated territory among areas where plebiscites took places. Therefore it was at the same time the biggest challenge for the Allies. In order to prevent escalation of Polish-German conflict they established some international control under the Plebiscite Territory. In January 1920 Silesia became neutralized territory governed by the *Commission Interalliée de Gouvernement et de Plébiscite de Haute Silésie* with up to 10 000 French, Italian and British soldiers that came there to keep order and peace.⁶⁶ Both Polish and German side built structures of their Plebiscite Committees and organized their own networks of support organization and propaganda machines. Before 20 March 1921, when the voting finally took place, Silesians were attracted in a plenty of ways to vote for one of the sides. It is worth noticing that in this propagandist fight both sides used both languages (what happened practically in every plebiscite area)⁶⁷ and both referred often to social and economic issues. In

No. 3 (1970): 361-385; Tomasz Kamusella, *The dynamics of the policies of ethnic cleansing in Silesia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Prague: Research Support Scheme, 2000, pp. 279-302; T. H. Tooley, *National Identity...*; Idem, „German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919-1921” *Central European History* 21, No. 1 (1988): 56-98.

⁶⁶ G. F. Campbell, op. cit., p. 370.

⁶⁷ See illustrations in: Sarah Wambaugh (ed.) , *Plebiscites since the world war: with a collection of official documents*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933.

the plebiscite propaganda, both countries were presented as states of welfare and social order, in which Silesian worker and peasant would have proper and peaceful conditions to live. Moreover, the plebiscite campaigns used obviously some populist arguments: Polish leader Wojciech Korfanty during electoral rallies promised that every poor family will get a cow when Upper Silesia will join Poland. Both sides used religious arguments; both made use of the Silesian tongue in their propaganda and rallies; both referred to elements of “Silesian value system”: tough hard-work and diligence, religiousness, family spirit, attachment to the locality, etc.⁶⁸

On 20 March 1921 every Upper Silesian over 21 could put into a ballot box one out of two voting cards: either “Niemcy-Deutschland” or “Polska-Polen”. Unlike in Eastern Prussia there was no card “Górny Śląsk-Oberschlesien” replacing a card “Germany.” The plebiscite, in spite of all nationalistic rhetoric and arguments used in the Polish-German clash, forced Upper Silesian to choose between two states, what, at least for some people, did not equate with the strong national identification. The results were more satisfactory for Germany although it was rather a Pyrrhic victory: German option was chosen more often in 844 of 1524 communes (60 per cent of all voters)⁶⁹, especially in the big cities and in the Western part of the Plebiscite Area. On the other hand, Polish defeat looks even more striking when one compares plebiscite results with the data of the last Census in Silesia before 1914. In 1910 in Upper Silesia 53 per cent of people declared their language as Polish, and next 4 per cent declared both German and Polish. German was chosen only by 40 per cent of Upper Silesians.⁷⁰ It is estimated that up to

⁶⁸ It will be worth studying how such “typical Silesian value system” was in a way for the first time really codified exactly by the plebiscite propaganda.

⁶⁹ G. F. Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

⁷⁰ The census territory included also Western parts of Opole Regency which was almost exclusively German and

25 per cent of Polish (Silesian) speakers opted for Germany.⁷¹ Somehow ironically true was the sentence of Rev. Paul Nieborowski who convinced Silesians to vote for Germany in 1920: “Polish-speaking population of Upper Silesia expressed many times that they wish to live in a Catholic way [po katolicku], speak Polish and stay in the German fatherland.”⁷²

	Number of people	Percentage
Germany	707 605	59.6%
Poland	479 359	40.4%
Invalidated	3 882	
Together	1 190 846	100 %
Attendance		97 %

Source: *Encyklopedia Powstań Śląskich*, Opole, Instytut Śląski, 1982, pp. 685-704.

The *Commission Interalliée* wanted to divide the territory according to these results but their first proposition (leaving the ‘industrial triangle’ for Germany) did not meet the acceptance of Polish side, which in May 1921 decided to trigger the military uprising off in order to show its force and determination. For two months Upper Silesia became an arena for the Polish-German local war. After the truce called at the beginning of July 1921, the League of Nations decided to propose another project of division which was finally accepted in October 1921 and realised in June 1922. Before that happened, however, Silesia for about three years was a land-in-between: no longer a part of the old Empire, not yet fully incorporated into new states. In that respect its fate was similar to the cases of Rhineland, Fiume/Rjeka,

which did not participate in the Plebiscite. See: M. Czapliński (ed.), *Historia Śląska...*, p. 285.

⁷¹ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, p. 6.

⁷² “Polsko mówiąca ludność Górnego Śląska życzy sobie, jak wyraziła bardzo często, żyć po katlicku, mówić po polsku i zostać przy ojczyźnie niemieckiej.” Paul Nieborowski, *Górny Śląsk: Dobra rada księdza katolickiego o głosowaniu*, Wrocław: Śląska Gazeta Ludowa [1920], p. 61.

Hungarian/Yugoslavian Baranya, Memel/Klaipeda territory, “Central Lithuania” with Vilnius, etc.

Such uncertain position in-between created possibilities for the emergence of new, enterprising political plans and ideas which would probably never occurred otherwise. Moreover, some of these ideas had quite consistent and logical structure and managed to gain some public support and international recognition as they seemed not to be as illusory as we usually tend to judge them. Among them there is also a political and intellectual movement that proposed creation of the Free Upper Silesian State.

5. Separatism and nationalism

We know that first concepts to create a political unit out of the Prussian Upper Silesia were born already in the November 1918 when Berlin became a theatre of the revolution and socialist government took power in Germany. At that time a Catholic lawyer from Loslau Ewald Latacz (1885-1953), a high-school teacher Jan Reginek (1879-1941) and his brother Thomas (1887-1974), who was a Catholic priest, drew up a separatist plan of the *Freistaat Oberschlesien*. All of them belonged to the local Catholic elites: people of Slavic origins, but who grew up in German culture (often combined with the Polish culture as well) who at the same time felt somehow discriminated and not fully integrated into the Prussian state. None of them was keen on socialistic government or a communist revolution.

Upper Silesian separatists established organization called the League of Upper Silesians (*Związek Górnoślązaków-Bund der Oberschlesier*; ZG-BdO) with bilingual newspaper “Bund-Związek.” Jan Reginek spent four years of his life studying in Switzerland during the First World War and that Swiss experience probably influenced his political views and inspired some

of their concepts. According to them, the *Freistaat Oberschlesien* should have been a neutral state control of the League of Nations with two (or even three in case Czech Silesia would be included) equally recognized official languages, bilingual schools and offices, governed by the president together with a bicameral parliament and rich thanks to its industrial production.⁷³ Besides the protection of the League of Nation, the Upper Silesia should have been linked with all its neighbour countries by the trade treaties in order to keep its peaceful existence. The plan covered also erection of the Upper Silesian University and Technical University and even the cities where these universities should have been built as well as the colours of the flag of the Upper Silesian Republic (black-white-yellow) were already chosen.⁷⁴

For German politicians such openly separatist ideas expressed in 1918 and 1919 were a real threat and they were defined as a high treason: Ewald Latacz was arrested for a few months in 1919 while Jan Reginek had to escape with a Polish passport to Paris. Even before the Allies began to occupy Silesia, the ZG-BdO could re-start its activity and propagate its political solution for the Upper Silesian Question. Despite its popularity among Upper Silesians, the League of Upper Silesians never had an occasion to fulfil its goals. The scale of its popularity is still a debatable issue. Some historians estimate the number of ZG-BdO members at 300-500 thousands of people in 200 local organizations⁷⁵ what sounds unbelievable even from a common-sense point of view since in the whole plebiscite there were less than 1.2 million of eligible voters. Moreover, if we agreed with that estimation it would automatically raise a question why such popular and strong movement failed. Estimation

⁷³ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, pp. 7-11.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

⁷⁵ See: Dariusz Jerczyński, *Śląski ruch narodowy* (Silesian National Movement), Zabrze: Śląska Oficyna Wydawnicza, 2006; T. Kamusella, *Silesia...*, p. 297.

indicating 80-100 thousand members, which is still quite enormous number of people, seems to be more reasonable.⁷⁶ I would agree with the conclusion of James Bjork, that “it is difficult to know exactly how separatists slogans were received by ordinary Upper Silesians, since the idea was never put into a vote or never made the subject of a petition campaign, but impressionistic reports suggest that the idea of secession – or at least far reaching autonomy – resonated among many inhabitants.”⁷⁷ Moreover, for a short time, the separatist propositions got some international interest and sympathy expressed by Karel Kramař and some other Czechoslovak officials as well as by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George.⁷⁸ For a short period of time (at the end of 1918 and beginning of 1919) also the Upper Silesian Centre Party opted for the independent republic, but soon it decided that a state (*Land*) separated from Prussia but integrated with the Weimar Republic would be better and more realistic solution.⁷⁹ That hesitation and fluid border between autonomy or a *Land* within Germany and an independent state could be probably one of the reasons why the Upper Silesian independence movement did not succeed in reaching its goals and mobilizing people. For an average Upper Silesian all concepts proposed by Poles, Germans and “separatists” were very similar: Polish promise of autonomy and German of the *Land Oberschlesien* did not differentiate that much especially in the language of propaganda. The idea of the *Freistaat* was in a way partly integrated into plans of the two competing nationalism and by that fact somehow neutralized and “galvanized”.

⁷⁶ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, p. 16.

⁷⁷ J. Bjork, *Neither German...*, p. 203.

⁷⁸ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, p. 12.

⁷⁹ Marek Cygański, *Chrześcijańska Partia Ludowa (Centrum) i jej przywódca ks. Karl Ulitzka wobec polskiego ruchu narodowyzwolenczego na Górnym Śląsku w latach powstań śląskich i plebiscytu 1919-1921* (“Christian Peoples' Party and its leader Rev. Karl Ulitzka in the face of Polish national-liberation movement in Upper Silesia in the period of the Silesian Uprisings and the Plebiscite”), in: *Nad Odrą, Olzą i Bierawką podczas III postania śląskiego*, (ed.) Z. Kapała and W. Ryżewski, Bytom: Muzeum Górnośląskie, 1995, pp. 83-100.

In spite of its political hesitation, ZG-BdO possessed however a clear understanding of the Silesian identity. Who were the Upper Silesians according to the League of Upper Silesians? They were a nation, but a nation of a specific kind: based on mixed ethnicities, languages but still united: Silesians are “separate own blood’s united people” (*eigenbluetigen Einheistvolkes slavo-germanischer Blut*).⁸⁰ From that point of view, such internal variety was not a problem, on contrary: it was a virtue which could be lost in the mononational-states.⁸¹ Upper Silesian nation existed somehow in Hegelian dialectical contradiction in terms: German thesis and Polish antithesis make together Silesian synthesis. What used to be a weakness of identification or just a national indifference became then already for the first time a fully expressed „strong” identity. Even just a few days before the plebiscite Ewald Latacz wrote:

Like Americans, we [Upper Silesians] are a mixed nation, but a young, strong nation that is eager to live and the language differences should not divide us. [...] From the very beginning of the history our fatherland was an apple of discord between Germany and Poland. Our history is the history of bondage and futile attempts to become free. Our bondage started in the year 999 with subjugation of Upper Silesia by Poland. [...] The Versailles peace treaty gave a new life to the idea of the independence of Upper Silesia.⁸²

Upper Silesian separatism and nationalism, if we agree to call like that the ideas of Latacz and Regineks Brother, were on the one hand a political plan and strategy influenced by

⁸⁰ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, p. 12.

⁸¹ A. Schmidt-Rösler, *Autonomie...*, pp. 10-11.

⁸² „Jesteśmy narodem mieszanym, jak Amerykanie, ale narodem młodym, silnym, rwącym się do życia, a różnice językowe odziedziczone po przodkach nie powinny nas rozdzielać. [...] Już od zarania dziejów pisanych ojczyzna nasza stanowiła kość niezgody pomiędzy Polską a Niemcami. Dzieje nasze to dzieje wiekowej niewoli i daremnych wysiłków do oswobodzenia się. Niewola nasza zaczęła się w roku 999 przez ujarzmienie Górnego Śląska przez Polskę. [...] Wersalski traktat pokojowy powołał myśl samodzielności Górnego Śląska do nowego życia. Ewald Latacz, „Dla wolnego, niepodzielnego Górnego Śląska.” *Bund-Związek*, No. 11, 13 March 1921.

diverse factors and born in a short period of time as a pragmatic solution of the urgent problems and dilemmas of Upper Silesia. One can find in it some form of “civic nationalism”, based on the sense of a territorial community above ethnicities of its inhabitants. Separatism that resulted also from the remembrances of previous “Prussian oppression” and the threat of Berlin radical socialism became weaken when these factors became less important. On the other hand, however, there is already a clear understanding of what are Upper Silesians in the ethnic categories and a trial to construct their national identity, “living territory of the nation”⁸³, national group memory and history about thousand-year-old oppression – archetypes which were typical for various young nationalisms in Europe (Slovak, Ukrainian). “Civic” and “ethnic” elements of the definition of nationalism are inseparably mixed together. Silesian "nationalism resists neat parsing into types with clearly contrasting empirical and moral profiles.”⁸⁴ In the eyes of Silesian nationalists, Upper Silesians were not a nation in spite of their variety and complexity, but exactly because of it. That idea of the dialectical unity of the people appeared also in the interwar Polish Silesia, although in different contexts and with a different meaning, and it became a problem that Polish authorities had to square up.

⁸³ “Who wants to cut up our country into pieces, is thinking how to murder us economically in order to inherit something from us. But we want to live!” (“Kto chce kraj nasz poćwiartować, ten myśli o tym, aby nas gospodarczo zamordować, w zamiarze odziedziczenia czegoś po nas. Ale my żyć chcemy”) Latacz, „Górnoślązacy!! Górny Śląsk zostaje niepodzielny” (Upper Silesians!! Upper Silesia remains undivided), *Bund-Zwizek*, No. 13, 27 March 1921.

⁸⁴ Rogers Brubaker, “Civic” and “Ethnic” Nationalism, in: idem, *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 146.

Chapter III:

Framing Upper Silesian “separateness” within the Polish state

In Silesia you cannot do things by halves. You must devote yourself to it totally or abandon.⁸⁵

[Roman Lutman, 1937]

In spite of the recent increase in minority complaints it remains true that, however great may be the desire of those on either side of the frontier to belong to the other state, the mass of the German and Polish inhabitants of both sides, if let alone, would not be preoccupied with any change of sovereignty.⁸⁶

[Sarah Wambough on Upper Silesia, 1933]

1. Division

After three years of the uncertainty about the lot of Prussian Upper Silesia on 20 October, 1921 Council of Ambassadors of the League of Nations decided to divide it between Germany and Poland. The latter obtained 29 per cent of that land on the east and south-east corner populated by 46 per cent of inhabitants with the majority of industrial plants: nine steel-

⁸⁵ Roman Lutman (1897-1973) was Polish historian and politician: born in Lwów, after 1922 he was one of the key figures in Polish cultural policy in Silesia: he became first director of the Silesian Library in Katowice and of the Silesian Institute founded by in 1934 by the Silesian Governor Michał Grażyński. After 1945 – like many other Silesian *Sanacja* politician – he became a part of the new regime. „Na Śląsku nie można pracować połowicznie. Musi się mu w całości poświęcić albo go porzucić.” Roman Lutman, „Oblicze Śląska” (The Face of Silesia), *Strażnica Zachodnia: Kwartalnik Polskiego Związku Zachodniego* 17, No. 1 (1937): 34.

⁸⁶ Sarah Wambaugh (ed.). *Plebiscites since the world war: with a collection of official documents*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933, p. 270.

mills out of fourteen; sixty-three coal mines out of eighty-two etc.⁸⁷ The whole Upper Silesian Industrial Region (Oberschlesische Industriebezirk) was cut in half by the newly established border. Places like Gleiwitz, Hindenburg/Zabrze, Beuthen remained German, whereas Kattowitz, Königs-Hütte or Myslowitz became Polish, despite the fact that in the Plebiscite in March 1921 the majority of their citizens voted for Germany. The borderline went through the living organism of that densely populated and urbanized area crossing altogether seven tram lines, nine narrow-gauge railway lines and fifteen normal-gauge railway lines.⁸⁸ Going through passport control in a tram or a local train was an every-day experience and in two cases tram line was a transit one, going from Poland to Poland through Germany (and vice versa), although without stopping.

However there were also more serious consequences of the border than just complications in public transport. Industrial concerns that had owned the property in a few places in Silesia had to be divided into Polish and German parts. Moreover, the bulk of people decided that the result of the Allies' verdict in Silesia is not acceptable for them in terms of their own places' statehood and consequently arrived at a decision about moving to another part of Silesia. It is estimated that after 1921 in the 1920s circa one hundred thirty thousand people (more-less voluntarily) changed their place of a living because of the border; majority of them (85 to 100 thousand) wanted to live rather in Germany than in Poland.⁸⁹

Actual and real division of Upper Silesia took place in June 1922, when the Allied armies of the *Commission Interalliée de Gouvernement et de Plébiscite de Haute Silésie* left that

⁸⁷ Marek Czaplinski (ed.), *Historia Śląska...*, p. 256.

⁸⁸ Dawid Smolorz (ed.), *Grenzgänger: Erzählte Zeiten, Menschen, Orte/Na granicy: Rzecz o czasach, ludziach i miejscach*, Gliwice: Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, 2008, p. 73.

⁸⁹ S. Wambaugh, op.cit., p. 265.

land. As T. Hunt Tooley put it nicely: “In June the Allied forces finally withdrew, leaving behind them two Upper Silesias where they had found one”.⁹⁰ Finally the German *Reichswehr* on the one side and the Polish Army on another step by step could enter their own parts. Those entrances – on both sides – took places with due ceremony: triumphal gates (for the soldiers to pass over them) were built in almost every town or bigger village, local and regional leaders organized ceremonies, signed special official acts of the “unity with the Fatherland”. Obviously the Catholic thanksgiving service was unavoidable part of them as well both in Poland and Germany.⁹¹ In the German part all of that rituals underlined the Silesians’ faithfulness and dedication to the Fatherland, whereas in the Polish it was the “return after 700-year captivity” that was the *Leitmotiv* of ceremonies. The Polish Act of Commemoration of the incorporation signed on 16 July 1922 in Kattowitz (at that time already Katowice) said:

Peace Treaty [...] signed in Versailles on the 28th of June 1928, based on the sacred principle of the self-determination of nations, in the Article 88 decided to appeal to the Population of Upper Silesia in order to stipulate and discover its will as regards statehood belonging. This document was prepared by the participants of the ceremony in commemoration of the celebration of the embrace of that land which according to the voiced will of people unify again with the Mother Country [z Macierzą; emphasis-MJ].⁹²

⁹⁰ T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 258.

⁹¹ See: [n.a.], 1922, *Polish Army Entering Upper Silesia.*, Archiwum Wytwórni Filmów Dokumentalnych, 1:57-2:38. In Katowice it was famous Prelate Jan Kapica, in Ratibor – Prelate Carl Ulitzka. Both of them previously had some episode of involvement with the Upper Silesian separatism, but in 1922 both of them already took Polish or German side.

⁹² “Traktat pokoju [...] podpisany w Wersalu w dniu 28 czerwca 1919 r. oparty na uświęconej zasadzie samostanowienia narodów, postanowił w Artykule 88 odwołać się do ludności Górnego Śląskacelem stwierdzenia jej woli co do przynależności państwowej. [...] Ku upamiętnieniu uroczystości objęcia tych ziem, które w myśl wyrażonej woli ludności łączą się z powrotem z Macierzą dokument niniejszy sporządzony został przez uczetników uroczystości.” *Act of Commemoration of the Incorporation Silesia to Poland*, Katowice, 16 June 1922, (reproduction owned by the author).

Such ceremonies on the Polish side had therefore two messages. First, to show that Polish statehood was the outcome of the Silesians' agency together with the international agreements. Second message to underline that this is actually return of one of the Motherland's children home. Both of these *topoi* remained crucial for the Polish national discourse in Silesia until 1939.

In this chapter using partly close-reading strategies, partly descriptive analysis of events and some comparative background I examine the attitude of the Polish state to the Upper Silesians and their group identifications regarding the most important issues of autonomy, minority rights, ethnicity and modernization, national conflict and national fluctuation. I also indicate how those state actions were understood, adapted and reshaped by Silesians themselves: how their "separateness" was used as well as self-reflected.

2. Legal framework: political autonomy

In the Polish Silesian Voivodeship with Katowice as its capital city, just after the entrance of the Polish Army, the new autonomous law called the *Organic Statute of Silesian Voivodeship* was introduced. That law which two years before on 15 July, 1920 was passed by the Polish parliament warranted a broad autonomy for "Silesian Voivodeship which will include all Silesian territory that will be award to Poland either from Cieszyn Silesia or under the 88th article of the Versailles Treaty with Germany".⁹³ So at that time (in 1920) that act concerned territory which did not belong to the Polish state (apart from small part of Austrian Teschen Silesia) and there was no guarantee that it would. In that sense *Organic Statute* before

⁹³*Ustawa Konstytucyjna z 15 lipca 1920 r. zawierająca Statut Organiczny Województwa Śląskiego* (Dz. U. z 1920 r. Nr 73, poz. 497) [Constitutional Law from 15th July 1920 including the Organic Statute of Silesian Voivodeship]. <http://www.law.uj.edu.pl/users/khpp/fontesu/1920.htm>

1922 was a constitution of a non-existing political unit. In this respect historians agree that this Polish *Organic Statute* was also a propagandist response to the Prussian *Landtag* decision from the 19 October, 1919 which changed the administrative position of Upper Silesia from *Regierungsbezirk* to *Provinz* (Province of Prussia) so giving it broader self-government than it used to have.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the Silesian Voivodeship was the only one territory in the Central Europe that possessed real relative independence from the central power⁹⁵ which lasted through the whole interwar period until the Nazi annulled it officially on 8 October, 1939 and united with the *Reich*.

According to the *Organic Statute* Silesian Voivodeship had its own Legislative – the Silesian Parliament (Sejm Śląski) and its Executive – the Governor (Wojewoda Śląski) and Voivodeship Council (Rada Wojewódzka) with the Governor's Deputy and five other members. The Governor and his deputy were nominated by the Polish central authorities, whereas rest of the members of the Voivodeship Council were elected by the Silesian Parliament. Only foreign policy, duty policy, military policy and jurisdiction issues were legally restricted for the Polish central government. The rest of the fields of political activity were within the competence of Silesian Sejm: economic policy, language policy, educational policy, energy policy, religious policy, municipal policy etc. Another important attribute of Silesian autonomy was the Silesian Treasury (Skarb Śląski) and strictly defined share of money that should stay in the Silesian Treasury and that should go to the State Treasury. *Organic Statute* ensured even that:

⁹⁴ Kazimierz Popiołek, *Śląskie dzieje* (Silesian History), Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976, p. 357.

⁹⁵ Unless we count the tiny Åland Islands, with their 16 municipalities, that also in 1920/21 became an autonomous part of Finland and two Polish Autonomous Districts - so-called *Polrainons* which existed in Soviet Union in 1920s. To my view both of those cases should be analysed in their very specific context. Upper Silesia was not an island and Poland was not Soviet Union.

Civil servants in the Silesian Voivodeship should generally come from Silesian Voivodeship. While filling posts in public administration on the territory of Silesian Voivodeship in case of equal qualifications the priority should be given to officials coming from the territory of Silesian Voivodeship.⁹⁶

Later especially that paragraph became a bone of contention between defenders of the Silesian separateness and their opponents who underlined that experienced officials from other parts of Poland are necessary in Silesia, where the number of domestic Polish servants is insufficient. Such a feeling of antipathy among Upper Silesians towards the new coming civil servants, teachers, and policemen (usually) from Galicia or from Kingdom of Poland became one of the hot topics in the Silesian Voivodeship. It was constantly used by Polish opposition and German minority to criticize Polish authority. People outside Silesia (especially from Galicia) were called by Silesians *Gorols* – designation than in Silesian has a negative meaning (Another, Alien, Strangers). One of the popular church-fair songs from the interwar Polish Silesia said:

Two *Gorols* came to Silesia, both on one bike.

First they carved toy-horses, and now both are “great” officials.⁹⁷

Poorly educated official-*Gorol* in Silesia who does not understand that country and looks down on Silesians became a key figure in the Silesian popular imagination and a *topos* used in the political discourse. Obviously, behind the cultural difference that really existed between

⁹⁶ „Urzednicy państwowi, urzedujący w Województwie Śląskiem, powinni w zasadzie pochodzić z Województwa Śląskiego. Przy obsadzaniu urzędów administracji państwowej na obszarze Województwa Śląskiego mają przy równych kwalifikacjach pierwszeństwo urzednicy, pochodzący w Województwa Śląskiego.” *Statut Organiczny...*, Art. 33a:

⁹⁷ „Na Śląsk przyjechali Gorole, we dwóch na jednym kole. | Najpierw strugali koniki, a terazki wielkie urzedniki.” Unfortunately, I could not find the exact author and place of publishing of that popular-song. However – according to the memoirs of elderly Upper Silesians – it was already well-known in the 1930s.

Silesians and non-Silesians (language, clothes, customs etc.), such anti-*Gorol* discourse had also some populist, ideological and political meaning.⁹⁸ In “Polonia”, the newspaper of Wojciech Korfanty who strongly opposed Polish *Sanacja* Governor Michał Grażyński (1890-1965), some anti-*Gorol* and the same time anti-*Sanacja* verses were written by editors who also came from Galicia (like Stanisław Stopicki, born in Wadowice secretary of Korfanty).⁹⁹ Those politicians who were into power found plenty of justifications and excuses for not obeying the law about priority of Silesians officials, whereas the opposition strongly criticized them for that policy.

Nevertheless, the feeling that *Gorols* tend to dominate in the Polish Silesia was quite vivid among Silesians. Even Józef Chałasiński, who cannot be accused of political Silesian populism, noted words of one local Polish Silesian activist:

Silesia is treated as a colony. Officials are all strangers; there is no contact between the people and the clerks. Teachers are also mostly strangers; their attitude towards Silesia is external. Those who come here consider us half-Polish. If [you are] an Upper Silesian then [you will] not [go] to the office. And we want to have our people in offices and schools. We want to have a place for our talented men. The worst are those from Little Poland [Małopolska]. When one of them comes then he soon will bring in the whole family and distribute jobs among them. They propagate different way of living, fondness of café and cabaret, and [by that] they destroy our family life.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Strangely enough, there is no serious historical estimation on the real number of clerks and teachers that came in Silesia after 1922 and its proportion in relation to the general number of officials. We actually do not know how many *Gorols* took positions in the Silesian Voivodeship. Therefore is hard to argue to which extend that discourse was based on reality and how far it was just a superficial populism.

⁹⁹ „Oj, łakome tłuste kąski | Te posadki górnośląskie, | Dalej więc na łów! | Precz Ociepka, Malik, Śmieja, | Bo tu będzie Galileja – | Austryjacki huf”. E. Szramek, *Górny Śląsk...*, p. 44; Edward Długajczyk, *Sanacja Śląska 1926-39: Zarys dziejów politycznych* (Silesian *Sanacja*: Overview of the Political History). Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1983, p. 210.

¹⁰⁰ „Śląsk traktuje się jakgdyby kolonję. – mówi miejscowy działacz polski. Urzędnicy wszystko obcy, brak zupełnie kontaktu między ludem, a urzędnikami; nauczycielstwo też przeważnie obce, stosunek do Śląska jest zewnętrzny. Ci co tu przyjadą, uważają nas za pół-Polaków. Górnoślązak – to już nie do urzędu. A my chcemy

That is why in 1939 Arka Bożek – Polish Silesian Leftist and Populist – wrote with a bitter satisfaction and disappointment commenting on Polish officials’ evacuation from the Silesian Voivodeship in the last days before 1 September, 1939: “Scrutinize, how they are running away. How they are leaving us! They came with a small suitcase, but they are escaping with fully loaded lorries.”¹⁰¹

The *Gorols*-clerk problem had an important place in the public discourse on Silesian autonomy, although the autonomy definitely was not limited only to it. In general, legally speaking autonomy of the Silesian Voivodeship was quite broad, especially within the Republic of Poland which, according to its *March Constitution* form 1921, was rather strongly centralized and unitary state following the French pattern of the Third Republic. It is quite significant that the *March Constitution* did not mention the *Organic Statute* a single time. While passing the *Organic Statute* in the Polish Sejm in 1920 one of the deputies noticed:

Let us compare this competences with that, which is given to the Provincial Parliament by the Prussian law. What may turn out? That what we give is at least fifty times more than what the Prussian law gives.¹⁰²

mieć swoich na urzędach i w szkole. Chcemy miejsca dla naszych uzdolnionych ludzi. – Najgorsi z przybyszów są Małopolanie. Jak jeden przyjdzie, to za sobą całą rodzinę sprowadzi i posadami obdziela. Wnoszą ze sobą inny sposób życia, zamiłowanie do kawiarni i kabaretu i rozbijają nasze rodzinne życie na Śląsku.” Józef Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej "Kopalnia" na Górnym Śląsku: Studium Socjologiczne* (Polish-German Antagonism in the Industrial Settlement „Mine” in Upper Silesia: Sociological Study). Warszawa: Sp. Akc. Dom Książki Polskiej, 1935, p. 102.

¹⁰¹“Przypatrzcie się jak uciekają. Jak nas zostawiają! Z walizeczką na Śląsk przyjechali a uciekają z wyładowanymi do ostatnich granic autami ciężarowymi”. A. Brożek, *Pamiętniki...*, p. 199.

¹⁰² “Porównajmy tę kompetencję z tą, jaką nadaje Sejmowi prowincjonalnemu śląska ustawa pruska. Cóż się okazuje? Że to, co my dajemy, jest co najmniej 50 razy więcej niż to, co daje ustawa pruska”. *Sprawozdanie sten. ze 164 posiedzenia Sejmu Ustawodawczego, 15 VII 1920, łam CLXIV/14*, quoted after: Józef Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska (1922-1939)* (Silesian Autonomy 1922-1939), in: *Podział Śląka w 1922 roku; okoliczności i następstwa*, ed. Andrzej Brożek, Teresa Kulak. Wrocław: PAN, 1996, p. 165.

However in practice Silesian political separateness from Polish state did not go that far how it was theoretically possible according to Silesian “constitution”: *The Official Language Act* of the Silesian Voivodeship already in 1923 (so just one year after the Silesian Voivodeship joined Poland) established Polish as the almost unexceptional language despite the voices of objection from strong German minority. Almost all Polish educational reforms (including *Jędrzejewicz reforms* from 1932) or electoral laws, including the anti-democratic one from 1935, were accepted by the Silesian Sejm.¹⁰³ The sphere that was really separated and different from Polish central policy was the economics: from 1926 only citizens of Silesian Voivodeship could work there: the labour market was closed for outsiders.¹⁰⁴ Despite the political option that possessed the power in Katowice Silesian authority lead very intensive economic policy, especially in the public investment or housing policy.

That nature of that moderate self-imposed practice of autonomy seems to be quite interesting phenomenon to explain. The *Organic Statute*, unlike the Slovak law about autonomy from November 1938, had no preamble, no ideological justification for the autonomy; it was just a relatively short dry legal text. The authors of the law avoided making any reference to ethnic or historical issues. The same happened with the *Law about common Voivodeships’ self-government, especially for Lwów, Tarnopol nad Stanisławów Voivodeships*¹⁰⁵ that was passed by Polish Sejm in September 1922, but due to reluctance of the Polish authorities never actually came into being. That law was designed to solve the problem of the former Eastern Galicia and Ukrainians living there by establishing three Regional Assemblies (Sejmiki Wojewódzkie) each

¹⁰³ Although with some exceptions: in Silesia in 1920s and 1930s only unmarried women could be a school-teacher. See: Franciszek Serafin (ed.), *Województwo Śląskie* (Silesian Voivodeship), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1996 (Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach nr 1555), p. 176.

¹⁰⁴ M. W. Wanatowicz, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁰⁵ *Ustawa o zasadach powszechnego samorządu wojewódzkiego, a w szczególności województwa lwowskiego, tarnopolskiego i stanisławowskiego z dnia 26 września 1922 roku* (Dz. Ust, RP 1922, nr 90, poz. 829)

with Polish and “Ruthenian” Chamber (even the name “Ukrainian” was absolutely absent in the text). The scope of competences of those Assemblies and their Executives was somehow similar to that in the Polish Silesia: education, religion, building policy, budgeting etc. Nowhere, however, in the text of the *Law about Voivodeships’ self-government...* was said anything about ethnic (or any other) reason for such a law: neither about political demands of Ukrainians nor about the *Small Versailles Treaty*. In my view for Polish authorities such self-government or autonomy laws had to have only purely political (non-ideological, non-national) meaning that is basing on historical-institutional categories. All that designed in order not to treat nationalities as subject of the public law.

Moreover, despite even that legal approach and thanks to the fact that the Silesian Governor was chosen by Polish Prime Minister and nominated by the President, it was quite natural that Governor's function was always in the hands of somebody, for whom Silesian autonomy was a tool in imposing Polish policy, even by means of regional autonomy. From 1926 till 1939 that position was held by *Sanacja’s* politician Michał Grażyński, who was not very much keen on the autonomy. Before 1926 he was even a believer in fast and immediate integration within the Mother Country (Macierz), but after 1926 he used his power that was given to him as a Governor to strengthen his own political position, not strengthening at the same time the Silesian autonomy. There was a popular saying among Polish politicians in 1930s that Silesian Voivodeship (Województwo Śląskie) has a broad autonomy, but its Governor (Wojewoda Śląski) has much broader one.¹⁰⁶ Grażyński (himself a *Gorol* from town Gdów in Western Galicia, left-wing *Sanacja* politician) firmly rejected any idea of the Silesian “separateness”, struggling with the Silesian Sejm and trying to subordinate it, nonetheless at the

¹⁰⁶ M. W. Wanatowicz, op. cit., 20.

same time he managed to gather around himself a important group of Polish Silesian politicians (Karol Grzesik, Adam Kocur, Stanisław Ligoń, Józef Londzin). With only a little of exaggeration the Grażyński's position in Silesia could be compared to the situation in which Ivan Dérer or even Edvard Beneš (so: the biggest centralists) would become the prime minister of the government of the autonomous Slovakia in the Czechoslovak state. We can find another comparable example in history of the autonomous Croatia within the Kingdom of Hungary in the Dualist Period after Hungarian-Croatian Compromise (1868-1918). Even though in Croatia, unlike in the case of Silesian Governor and Sejm, the Ban was responsible before the Diet (Sabor) and thus legally speaking the Croatian autonomy was even broader than in the interwar Silesia, Hungarian authorities managed to control the parliamentary elections and thus have the pro-Hungarian Ban like Károly Khuen-Héderváry (between 1883 and 1903) and use the autonomous institutions in the interest of Magyarisation.¹⁰⁷ Political autonomy did not spell cultural autonomy. In my view autonomous Silesian Voivodeship, especially under the *Sanacja* regime, had surprisingly small support for Silesian “separateness” in terms of group identity. That slightly paradoxical statement will become more convincing when we look for a moment on another Upper Silesia, that one with no legal autonomy.

3. Silesia without autonomy

In the German part of Upper Silesia autonomy was never applied. On 3 September, 1922 in order to fulfil the previously given promises, Berlin authorities held a referendum in which Silesians decided about the legal form of their land: either it become a state (Land) within the German Republic or it remain the Province of Prussia with some self-government in

¹⁰⁷ Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904-1928*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000, pp.13-23.

regard of investments, schooling, religion policy etc. Vast majority of voters (517.760 to 50.389) opted for being a Prussian Province, mostly because of the standpoint of the Katholische Volkspartei (KVP; regional autonomous branch of the Catholic *Zentrumspartei*) and its charismatic leader Rev. Carl Ulitzka.¹⁰⁸ KVP, although previously supported ideas about Upper Silesian state (either independent or as a Land of Germany), after the final division of Silesia did not want to lose the position and influence in the Prussian *Landtag*. KVP that represented socially oriented and republican Catholicism, in the *Provinz Oberschlesien* until 1933 enjoyed real non-threatened popularity and power and Prelate Ulitzka (1873-1953), deputy to the *Reichstag*, parish priest in the Ratibor-Altdorf next to the Polish border, was even called “the uncrowned king of Upper Silesia”.¹⁰⁹ Even in the election to the *Reichstag* in 1930 KVP got 35 per cent of votes, Communists (KPD) 16.6 and NSDAP only 9.5 per cent.¹¹⁰ At the same time number of votes for Polish parties diminished gradually but constantly throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.¹¹¹

When Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, that *mild* Catholic policy, somehow a German continuation and reminiscence of that Catholic policy of national indifference before 1918, was obviously finished and uprooted. In 1938 Upper Silesia was again united with Lower Silesia and degraded from *Provinz* to *Regierungsbezirk* whereas Father Ulitzka himself – among other things for opposing the Nazi and conducting Church services also in Polish – was

¹⁰⁸ T. H. Tooley, op. cit., p. 261.

¹⁰⁹ Guido Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873-1953) oder Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen* Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2002, p. 417.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 507.

¹¹¹ Jan Goczoł, *Przynależność narodowa a język na Górnym Śląsku*, in: „Wach auf, mein Herz, und denke”: *Zur Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen Schlesien und Berlin-Brandenburg von 1740 bis heute* / “Przebudź się serce moje i pomyśl”: *Przyczynek do historii stosunków między Śląskiem a Berlinem-Brandenburgią od 1740 roku do dziś*, Berlin and Opole: Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski, 1995, pp. 96-104.

expelled from his parish and forced to live in Berlin.¹¹² German Upper Silesia from a Catholic land in 1920s with its relatively tolerant and mild nationalization policy (Germans that spoke Polish assimilated step by step to the German culture), in 1930s became yet another Nazi “bastion of the Germanness”. At that time racial Nazi ideology presented significantly different attitude to the assimilation policy complaining about “mixing of the blood and race with more rotten Polish element”.¹¹³ From that (racist) point of view it would be better to keep the Polish minority existing but isolated from others:

If in Upper Silesia the Polish minority would still really exist, in order to protect Germanness one should claim its preservation and seclusion. Unfortunately, it is already too late and now in our position we have to take into account that there is no other choice as to allow *Wasserpöckel* to melt in the German nation.¹¹⁴

However, before 1933 German politicians in Oppeln wanted to make Upper Silesians loyal German citizens and convince them of the German culture even if they were of Slavic origins. In this sense their goals were almost the same as aims of the Polish authorities in Katowice, although tools and arguments were not always the same. German authorities could make a use of the privileged position of the German culture as the high one in Silesia. For an Upper Silesian in the Weimar Republic (and even before) social and professional promotion went almost always through German culture (*cultural univalence*) and usually led to integral

¹¹² G. Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka...*, p. 651.

¹¹³ „Gdyby na Górnym Śląsku rzeczywiście istniała jeszcze mniejszość polska, należałoby dla ochrony niemieckiej domagać się jej utrzymania i odosobnienia. Niestety jest już za późno, a w takim położeniu, z którym trzeba się liczyć, nie pozostaje nic innego, jak pozwolić Wasseropłakom na rozplynięcie się w narodzie niemieckim”. Helmut Nicolai, *Oberschlesien im Ringer der Volker*, Oppeln: Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur, 1930, quoted in: Emil Szramek, *Górny Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny* (Upper Silesia as a Sociological Issue). Katowice: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku, 1934, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

(German) or at least uncertain (German and Slavic-Upper Silesian) national identification.¹¹⁵ Upper Silesian specificity – unless understood as inconsistent with Germanness – before 1933 was friendly tolerated if not supported. However on the Polish side of the borderline relationship between the cultures, the identities and the policy of the authorities created different combination. One of the factors that had an impact on it was the international protection of national minorities.

4. Legal framework in use: minority rights

Despite the difference in the legal status of Polish and German part of Silesia within their states, in both of them the Upper Silesian Geneva Convention from 15 May, 1922 regulated the issue of the minority rights (Polish in Germany and German in Poland).¹¹⁶ That Convention can be treated as one the later elements of the minority protection system established by the League of Nation in the Central and Southern Europe in order to ensure rights for minority groups in the new-emerged “unsteady and uncertain” nation-states. Such treaties were either signed bilaterally between the League and the country (like in case of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia or Polish *Small Treaty of Versailles* from 1919) or between two countries under control and acceptance of the *Entente* (like the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 or the Upper Silesian Convention). The aim of the system was to create legal and institutional framework that could (at least) temporary exist above the level of particular nation-state’s legislation and policy and protect potentially underprivileged groups.

¹¹⁵Antonina Kłoskowska, *The National Cultures on the Grass-Root Level*. Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2001, pp. 102 passim.

¹¹⁶ See: Stanisław Komar (ed.), *Górnośląska Konwencja Genewska między Polską a Niemcami z 15 maja 1922 r./Die Genfer Konvention über Oberschlesien, 15 Mai 1922* (Geneva Convention about Upper Silesia, 15 May 1922), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Urzędu Wojewódzkiego, 1937.

Upper Silesian Convention that was in force for fifteen years between 1922 and 1937 guaranteed minority schooling system, protection of the cultural and political life of minorities, protection for the minority enterprises from the nationalization, but also described in detail plenty of minor economic issues.¹¹⁷ Two international institutions of the League of Nations: Mixed Commission in Katowice and Arbitrary Tribunal in Beuthen were established to dissolve conflict issues between Poland and Germany regarding minorities. It should be noticed that during the negotiation of that Convention some members of Polish representation (roughly speaking those of that previous Catholic bilingual option, connected mostly with Adam Napieralski) opted for the bilingual (*utraquistic*) school in whole Upper Silesia rather than for separated education for the minorities.¹¹⁸ Bilingualism was for them a positive value not only as something functional for the borderland community, but also as a tool for the soft Polonization of indifferent Silesians, by giving them a “bridge” from the German to the Polish culture and some time to pass that bridge. In some sense that idea was comparable to policy of Ulitzka's KVP in the German Silesia: still the goal was “developed” national consciousness and feeling of belonging to the national culture, nonetheless both of them should be reached gradually and possibly painlessly for people and their identity.

Finally in the result of the negotiation that bilingual option was rejected and the minority schools’ option was chosen and accepted by the Geneva Convention. For the next fifteen years minority schools were probably the most controversial issue and conflict area between Poland and Germany. Polish authority tried to limit German schools as much as possible and Germans in the Eastern Silesia strongly opposed that and often appealed to the

¹¹⁷See: Stanisław Rogowski, *Komisja mieszana dla Górnego Śląska 1922-1937* (Mixed Commission for Upper Silesia 1922-1937), Opole: Instytut Śląski, 1977, pp. 16-18.

¹¹⁸Emil Szramek, „Wspomnienie o ś.p. Adamie Napieralskim”, *Zeszyty Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 2 (1929): 238.

Arbitrary Tribunal or other institutions of the League of Nations. On the other hand such a coexistence of the two alternative schooling systems became the opportunity for the Upper Silesians' free choice of the national belongingness. By subscribing children to Polish or to German school, by belonging to the Polish or German associations, choirs, sport clubs, banks etc. Silesians could situate themselves on the battlefield between two competitive nationalisms. Sometimes that was not necessarily either-or position, which was obviously even more problematic for the Polish authorities than strong option for the German national identity. Sociologist Józef Chałasiński who in the early 1930s conducted anthropological research in one of the Silesian towns that he called "Mine" ("Kopalnia"; in reality it was Murcki settlement near Katowice) complained that some people from Mine, usually lower officials dependent both on their German employer and local Polish authorities, send one child to the Polish school and another to the German.¹¹⁹ In another case a Polish official noted that:

Worker wanted to take a revenge on the Polish authorities, when Polish court sentenced him, so he sent a child to the minority [German-MJ] school. But when by oversight he was dismissed from the German company, he again took his child to the Polish school.¹²⁰

That minority schooling Polish-German was apple of discord between Germans and Poles in the Silesian Voivodeship through out the whole interwar period. League of Nations had to send some language experts in order to examine children that were sent to minority schools if

¹¹⁹ Józef Chałasiński, *Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie fabrycznej "Kopalnia" na Górnym Śląsku: Studium Socjologiczne* (Polish-German Antagonism in the Industrial Settlement „Mine” in Upper Silesia: Sociological Study), Warszawa: Sp. Akc. Dom Książki Polskiej, 1935, p. 84.

¹²⁰ „Robotnik skazany przez sąd polski, chcąc zemścić się na władzach polskich, zgłosił dziecko do szkoły mniejszościowej, kiedy zaś przez przeoczenie został zwolniony z pracy w przedsiębiorstwie niemieckim, przeniósł znowu dziecko do szkoły polskiej”. *Uwagi Wydziału Oświecenia Publicznego Śląskiego Urzędu Wojewódzkiego nad Skargą Rządu Niemieckiego wniesioną do Stałego Trybunału Sprawiedliwości w Hadze*, quoted after: Stanisław Mauserberg, *Szkolnictwo Powszechne dla Mniejszości Narodowych w Polsce w latach 1918-39* (Common Schooling for the National Minorities in Poland, 1918-39). Wrocław: Ossolineum-PAN, 1968, p. 132.

they knew German language enough. Those children who failed that exam were taken by the Polish authorities back to the Polish school. Only between 1927 and 1928 in the best known case of the examinations conducted by one Swiss councillor Walter Maurer participated altogether 1686 children, half of whom (811) did not pass it because of the insufficient ability to use German language.¹²¹ However, in many cases parents of the children (often supported by German Minority organizations) opposed those decisions and referred to another supreme courts, including the Permanent Court of International Justice in Hague. It is worthy to notice that similar struggles about schooling between authorities and parents took place for example in the late Habsburg Moravia: parents of one nationality by underlining their rights to choose a school for their children opposed decisions taken by commissions and institutions working on behalf of their own nationality.¹²² Since after 1918 the pressure on having and manifesting national identity was definitely stronger than before, in interwar Silesia things could go even one step further. To justify one's decision about a school for children, one could even declare some national identity. "Parents of the children that were not admitted to the German schools, appealed against those decisions to the Supreme Administrative Tribunal by justifying it with their German sense of national belonging, which alter all none is allowed to check."¹²³

That phenomenon was highly problematic for the Polish authorities in Katowice, which before 1937 could not stop Silesians from opting for the German school as much as they wanted. For authorities it was an obstacle for the proper adjustment of Upper Silesians to the

¹²¹ S. Mauserberg, op. cit., pp. 134-137; S. Rogowski, pp. 60-61.

¹²² Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008.

¹²³ „Rodzice uczniów nie przyjętych do szkół niemieckich z powodu słabej znajomości języka niemieckiego skarżyli się niejednokrotnie do Najwyższego Trybunału Administracyjnego, uzasadniając swoją spotawę niemieckim poczuciem narodowym, którego przecież sprawdzić nie wolno.” S. Mauserberg, *Szkolnictwo powszechne...*, p. 136.

Polish State. Consequently it would have been better not to have such a minority right protection. Józef Chałasiński expressed that opinion lucidly:

International protection of the minorities in Silesia does not facilitate adjustment of the Polish-German population, but quite the opposite it magnified conflicts, deepened the antagonism and postponed its solution. It decreases the economic authority of the state and of the town; whereas for the minority it created an illusion of being stronger and more important than it is actually possible.¹²⁴

Therefore, on one hand, German minority school system and Polish state school system existing in parallel forced people into clear-cut national categories: if you send your children to Polish school you are Polish, if to the minority school – German. That situation reminds a little bit of nowadays Transylvania with the Hungarian-language school system existing next to Romanian schooling.¹²⁵ By a decision where your child should learn you willy-nilly took part in the formation and reproduction of the national division. “Since the school shapes opportunity structures and contact probabilities [...], this world is to considerable extent self-reproducing”.¹²⁶ On the other hand, Silesians were sometimes smart enough to omit traps of such a national division and they rather tried to make some use of them in their normal life. In other words: in Upper Silesia in 1920s and 1930s decision about sending children to school was a declaration for one or another national identification, but for people themselves it quite often had other, non-national pragmatic sense which might be even more important than the national declaration. All these “problematic” cases of Polish-speakers in a German school, siblings

¹²⁴ “Międzynarodowa ochrona mniejszości na Śląsku nie ułatwia przystosowania się ludności polsko-niemieckiej [do polskości – MJ], lecz przeciwnie spotęgowała konflikty, pogłębiła antagonizm i odsunęła jego rozwiązanie. Obniżyła bowiem autorytet gospodarczy kraju i gospodarzy miejscowości, a dla mniejszości stworzyła pozory znaczenia i siły większej, niż faktycznie posiadają i zdobyć sobie potafią.” J. Chałasiński, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

¹²⁵ See: Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 26-27.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

attending two different national schools etc. shows that legal framework of the Geneva Convention gave not only rights for the national minorities but also some useful tools for Silesians who wanted to negotiate their identification between the two nationalisms. Paradoxically, it was rather the Geneva Convention about minorities than the *Organic Statute* about autonomy that gave possibilities to strengthen Silesian “separateness” among Upper Silesians in Poland.

5. Janus-headed Polishness

Minority rights and schooling question was an important part of the broader Polish policy in the Silesian Authorities in Katowice – also because of the autonomy and Geneva Convention – found themselves in a different position than Polish administration elsewhere. Like in the Eastern Borderlands of Poland (Kresy Wschodnie) they had to face national minorities' issue and took the role of promoters of the Polishness and Polish national identification. However, in the Eastern Poland it could be done through Polish culture presented as the dominating high culture that can attract members of the other national groups, whereas here, in the so called Western Borderlands (Kresy Zachodnie), Polish culture was usually a popular culture and had to face another high culture – the German one. And in the Silesian Voivodeship – especially thanks to its unique legal status – that German culture was more difficult to erase and subordinate than in other parts of the former Prussian part of the Polish Republic.

So what could be seen in the Silesian Voivodeship according to the Polish side was a struggle between German and Polish identity of an Upper Silesian who by his ethnic roots was definitely and objectively Polish, but because of the separation from Poland through ages

and the pressure of Germanization he his truthful identity was lost. Governor Michał Grażyński expressed that view putting it in a nutshell:

The Silesian people through many ages were almost totally cut off from the contact with the rest of the Polish nation. With time even the tradition of the Piast princes and reminiscences of the time of knights waned on that land, so much so that even in the folk song did not remain its trace. The single visible sign of the Polishness was there the language of the local people [emphasis-MJ]: beautiful, closed in archaic forms.¹²⁷

Therefore situation in Silesia in the eyes of Polish politicians (especially from the local branch of *Sanacja*) was perceived as “Polish-German antagonism”, which took the form of the “reevaluation of the two cultures”: replacing the German with the Polish.¹²⁸ The latter idea was somehow a justification for the Polish authorities in Silesia which treated their work as a mission on behalf on the state and the nation. Needless to say that German clerks and teachers in the *Regierungsbezirk Oppeln* before 1918 acted with the similar motivation of the *Kulturträger*: to civilized and modernized German Eastern Borderlands (Ostmark).¹²⁹ After 1922 task defined by the state institutions in Katowice was also quite clear: to present Polish culture in the most attractive way, displacing and driving out the German one, in order to attract

¹²⁷ “Lud Śląski był przez wiele wieków odcięty niemal od wszelkiej łączności z resztą narodu polskiego. Na ziemi tej zaginęła z czasem tradycja książąt piastowskich i wspomnienia rycerskich czasów tak dalece, że nawet w pieśni ludowej nie zachował się jej ślad. Jedynym widocznym znakiem polskości na tym terenie był piękny, zamknięty w archaicznych formach język tutejszego ludu.” Michał Grażyński, *Walka o Śląsk: fragmenty wspomnień sierpień 1920 czerwiec 1921* (Fight for Silesia: Pieces of Memoirs) in: *O wolność Śląska: w dziesięciolecie III powstania 1921. 2/3. V. 1931: Pamiętnik wydany przez Komitet Uroczystości* (For Freedom of Silesia: on the 10th Anniversary of the 3rd Uprising 1921. 2nd/3rd of May. 1931: Journal Edited by the Committee of Celebrations), Katowice: Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski, 1931, p. 7.

¹²⁸ „Przewartościowanie dwóch kultur.” *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 3 (1930): 338.

¹²⁹ German or Polish official means here obviously also an ethnic Upper Silesian – it was rather occupational than ethnic ethos. See for example: Richard Holtze, *Miasto Katowice. Studium kulturowo-historyczne* (The City of Katowice. A Cultural-Historical Study), transl. I. T. Sławińska, Katowice: Muzeum Miasta Katowic, 2005 [1871]; Hugo Solger, *Der Kreis Beuthen in Oberschlesien mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der durch Bergbau Hüttenbetrieb in ihm herforgerufenen eigenthümlichern Arbeiter- und Gemeinde-Verhältnisse*, Breslau, 1860.

Upper Silesians and to strengthen their Polish national identity and attachment to the Polish state.

That Janus-headed nature of the official version of Polishness (with its ancient and modern faces) struggling with the position of the German culture was expressed clearly by a local Polish Silesian writer Gustaw Morcinek (1891-1963; born in the Austrian *Teschener Kammer*, not in Prussia), who in the 1932 wrote an illustrated guide-book about Silesia to the authorities' order.¹³⁰ Morcinek in his poetic style presented general vision of that country:

Silesia is a remarkable land and remarkable are its inhabitants. On the one hand antiquated Polish forms in her wooden churches, in her Old Polish speech, legends, tradition, song, dances and art; all hallowed by the memory of past ages, rooted in the soil [emphasis-MJ], indissoluble from it, and beautiful as the earth itself.¹³¹

These common places of the antique ethnicity, tradition and memory may be treated as a typical, usual face of the ethnic nationalism expressed in a typical language although in a oversensitive form.¹³² But only the second part of the same paragraph together with the first gives the full and right sense about what is Upper Silesia about:

¹³⁰ That book was a part of the series called "Miracles of Poland" (Cuda Polski), where each Polish region was described by some well-known Polish writer. It is worth to notice that Morcinek book was almost immediately translated into English. See: Gustaw Morcinek, *Silesia*, preface by Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, transl. Z. M. Arend, Poznań: R. Wegner, [1932]; idem, *Śląsk* (Silesia). Preface by Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskie (R. Wegner), [1933].

¹³¹ G. Morcinek, *Silesia...*, p. 106.

¹³² In Polish original it also sounds beautifully in its Young Polish „Modernist” style: “Przedziwną ziemią jest Śląsk i przedziwny jest człowiek, co na niej mieszka. Z jednej strony zakrzepła polskość w swej archaicznej formie kościołów drewnianych, w starpolskiej mowie, legendach, podaniach, pieśniach, tańcach i sztuce, wszystko owiane wspomnieniem minionych wieków, wrosnięte w ziemię do ostatka, nierozdzielone z nią i piękne jak piękna jest sama ziemia; z drugiej strony spiętrzony i zestokrotniony rytm pracy mięśni ludzkich i stalowych, potworne kotłownisko, spieniony war wytężonego życia, jego zawrotne gorączkowe tempo, zawzięta walka o kęs czarnego, skąpego chleba, dymy, czeluście hut rzygających pożarami, przewłóczona ziemia do głębi, rozorana i jakoby przez Boga zapomniana, dymiące hałdy i czarne zbiorowiska fabryk, kopalń, kominów i szarego pogłowia ludzkiego, rude koszarowe domy obok magnackich i książęcych pałaców [...] – to wszystko treść ziemi śląskiej i treść jej człowieka.” Idem, *Śląsk...*, pp. 179-180.

On the other the piled-up manifold rhythm of work of human and steel muscles, a monstrous witches' cauldron, the foaming flood of intensified life, its giddy, feverish tempo, the relentless struggle for a niggardly piece of black bread, clouds of smoke, the maws of furnaces vomiting conflagrations, the earth turned inside out to its depths, ploughed up and God-forgotten, smoking cinder-mounds and black congregations of factories, mines and chimneys, and a shabby mass of human heads, dreary barrack-like tenements side by side with the palaces of princes and magnates – all this is the meaning of Silesian earth and Silesian humanity.¹³³

Morcinek was deeply fascinated with that “feverish tempo” of the modern countenance of Silesia, but at the same time he obviously rejected the German understanding of Upper Silesian modernity. The most difficult task from the Polish perspective was to present that modern world is closely-connected with the Polishness. Polishness at that time had to be no longer archaic, but energetic, developed, attractive and strong. In other words, Polish nationalism in order to nationalize Upper Silesians had to convince them that the Polish state equates with the modern development. Moreover, to emphasise that Polish development is better than the former from the time of German rule which had brought only “the relentless struggle for a niggardly piece of black bread” or “black congregations of factories”? According to that vision is only Poland that allowed Silesians to participate in the benefits of modernity. Silesian reader of Morcinek could easily grasp the message, to whom he should be thankful for the civilisation development of his land and his own successes. It was not by accident that the photography of the Governor Grażyński was situated exactly between such verses:

Just within a few years Silesian land, man, their souls and hearts were totally transformed. From the Beskidy Mountains to Lubliniec run new black roads, new

¹³³ Idem, *Silesia...*, p. 106.

churches met sky full of smoke, new schools-palaces swarmed with children, new bridges and viaduct in Beskidy (the biggest viaduct among all Polish viaducts) were built, new detached houses and tenement houses filled up with hubbub, new districts for workers became inhabited with agile, industrious and foresighted people. A Silesian, who used to know only the rush of the physical work, now is in a hurry of learning, he educates himself and his children. [...] There is arising a new type of Polish citizen: right through democratic and with a discerning democratized culture.¹³⁴

Somehow symbolic combination of these two faces of Polishness was the building of the Silesian Museum that had been building in Katowice in 1930s: almost finished in 1939 it was dismantled soon after the Nazi set foot there. The Museum had very modern architectural form and plenty of technical innovations inside, but it was dedicated primarily for the ethnographic collection that was dedicated to present those “antiquated Polish forms”.

6. Inside the antagonism

To fulfil intentions about presenting those two inseparable faces of Polishness in Silesia, Polish elites had to face another problem following the strong position of the German culture and relatively weak starting point for the Polish one. In Upper Silesia there was almost no “objective” clear-cut division between the Polishness and Germanness. Conscious Catholic policy of the national indifference in the 19th century together with the *longe durée* factors

¹³⁴ “W ciągu niewielu lat przestoczyła się ziemia śląska i jej człowiek, ich dusza i serce. Od Beskidów aż po Lubliniec porozbiegały się nowe czarne drogi, powynosiły się pod zadymione niebo nowe kościoły, zaroily nowe szkoły-palace mnogim ludkiem dziecięcym, powstały nowe mosty i wiadukt w Beskidach, największy ze wszystkich wiaduktów polskich, wypełniły gwarem nowe domki i kamienice, zaludniły się nowe dzielnice robotnicze, wartkie a ruchliwe, skrzętne i zapobiegliwe. [...] Ślązak co dotychczas znał tylko pośpiech w pracy fizycznej, śpieszy się teraz w zdobywaniu nauki dla siebie i swoich dzieci, kształci się, mozoli nad książkami w ławach szkolnych i czytelnich, przyswaja z uporem i zawziętością wszystką wiedzę współczesną, wyłania ze swojego społeczeństwa coraz liczniejsze kadry inteligencji, umiejacej ustosunkować się do życia nie według książki uczonej, lecz według wymogów szarego dnia roboczego a twórczego. Powstaje nowy typ obywatela polskiego nawskroś demokratycznego o zdemokratyzowanej kulturze światłej.” G. Morcinek, *Śląsk...*, pp. 14-15.

made Silesian case more difficult for nationalism than other regions. Józef Chałasiński one again expressed in openly:

Polish-German antagonism in the settlement would develop absolutely different if there was really exact borderline between the Germanness and the Polishness; in other words: if Poles and Germans formed the social groups that are clearly demarcated regarding religion, language, customs and culture; if there was no doubt, who is a German and who is a Pole.¹³⁵

To some extent situation in Upper Silesia was like all situations when a nation-state faced mixed ethnic territory, where it had to compete with another nation-state. Nonetheless, in Silesia particularly the problem was very little about mixed ethnicity (since in the Polish eyes Silesia was ethnically Polish). What could be seen in the Silesian Voivodeship according to the Polish side in the 1920s and 1930s was a clash between German and Polish national identification which was a consequence of the “cultural bivalence” or “ambivalence”¹³⁶ of many of the Upper Silesians and their particular, regional feeling of belonging. Silesians – according to that – are Polish by ethnicity but Germanized through ages they partly lost their *Polish souls*. Consequently Polish task is now to (re)incorporate them within the Polish culture, nation and state in order to regain their right identity. “Polish-German antagonism [...] is connected with looking for the appropriate place for a Silesian in Poland”.¹³⁷ Polish

¹³⁵“Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie kształtowałby się zupełnie inaczej, gdyby pomiędzy „polskością”, a „niemieckością” istniała faktycznie wyraźna granica, inaczej mówiąc, gdyby Niemcy i Polacy stanowili grupy społecznie wyraźnie rozgraniczone pod względem religijnym, językowym, obyczajowym i kulturalnym; gdyby nie było wątpliwości, co do tego, kto jest Polakiem, a kto Niemcem. [...] Strefa antagonizmu, to strefa sporna, strefa wartości, które leżą na pograniczu grup narodowych i w stosunku do których żadna z tych grup nie ustaliła swej przewagi”. J. Chałasiński, op. cit., p. 83.

¹³⁶ I am using here again the concept of Antonina Kłoskowska. See: Eadem, *The National Cultures...*, pp. 118 ff.

¹³⁷“Antagonizm polsko-niemiecki w osadzie wiąże się więc z szukaniem należnego Ślązakowi miejsca w Polsce” [emphasis in original-MJ]. J. Chałasiński, op.cit., p. 101.

nationalism in Silesia in a way took a position of the “peasant nationalism” in a conflict with the “high culture” nationalism: firstly by claiming the “de-nationalised” local population as its own, and secondly by insisting on the promotion of its own national high culture.¹³⁸

Assumption about Polish-German antagonism grounded on the Upper Silesian cultural bivalence and uncertain national identification led Chałasiński to interesting conclusion. On the one hand he noticed again the strong regional ties:

People on the both sides of the political borderline feel close to one another especially in Silesia, where the present political boundary is very recent. Silesians on the both sides feel themselves closer to each other than people for the central parts of Germany or Poland.

However on the other there is the specific nature of the national rivalry on the borderland:

All expansionistic national actions are focused especially on the borderland and the whole national group demands from the borderland more active and expansionistic national feeling than from the inhabitants of the central parts [of the state]. National expansion is on the borderland everybody's duty [underlined in original-MJ].¹³⁹

That last sentence could be a justification and explanation for the consistent national principle in the policy of Polish authorities. Michał Grażyński may be again the best speaker for that position. According to him Silesia is a field of the tough “national work” (to recall the formula well-known in the Polish nationalism tradition of *Endecja*). Because of the German

¹³⁸ See: Józef Chlebowczyk, *On Small Nations in Europe*. Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1988.

¹³⁹ “Z jednej strony ludność po obydwu stronach politycznej granicy czuje się sobie bliscy, zwłaszcza na Górnym Śląsku, gdzie obecna granica polsko-niemiecka jest niedawna. Ślązacy po obydwu stronach czują się sobie znacznie bliżsi, niż mieszkańcy centralnych części Niemiec a Polski. Z drugiej strony właśnie na pograniczu ześrodkowują się ekspansywne dążenia narodowo-państwowe i cała grupa narodowa wymaga od pogranicza bardziej aktywnego i ekspansywnego poczucia narodowego niż od mieszkańców centralnych części. [...] *Ekspansja narodowa jest na pograniczu obowiązkiem każdego.*” J. Chałasiński, op. cit., p. 78.

threat Polish culture and nationality has to be better and stronger in Silesia than among “the rest of the Polish nation.” Silesian cultural contribution framed in the Polish nationalism is only valuable when it is truthfully national:

I have an ambition that Silesia will contribute as soon as possible its already existing assists to the general oeuvre of achievements of the Polish culture and that the Silesian contribution will be a creative element, so as so the rest of the Polish nation would look on us, here in Silesia, not only as tough workers of mines and steel mills, but also as the huge reservoir of the national and cultural forces [underline-MJ].¹⁴⁰

On the other hand Chałasiński's conclusion is similar to that which one can grasp today from Peter Sahlins book on the Pyrenean borderland.¹⁴¹ Contemporary sociologists and historians generally agree that the thesis of Chałasiński about existing and long-lasting traditional antagonism between the Germanness and Polishness in the interwar Silesia was generally incorrect or at least it exaggerated the rivalry between regional and local elites divided between these two nationalities.¹⁴² What we can actually observe was something opposite: average people tired to remain their reluctant position towards clear national identifications and not to build antagonism on the national principle. Moreover, exactly because of their cultural (am)bivalence (Polish and German) they could sometimes make a usage of that national competition, like in the case of schooling.

¹⁴⁰ Ja mam ambicję [...] by [Śląsk] jak najrychlej do ogólnego dorobku kultury polskiej wniósł wszystkie istniejące już walory swej kultury, by i w tym zakresie był elementem twórczym, by na nas, tu na Śląsku reszta polskiego narodu patrzyła nie tylko jako na twarde pracowników hut i kopalń, ale i wielki rezerwuar sił narodowych i kulturalnych..” Michał Grażyński quoted in: Roman Lutman, “Życie kulturalne Śląska w latach 1926-1936” (Cultural Life of Silesia, 1926-36), *Zaranie Śląskie* 13, No. 3 (1936): 150.

¹⁴¹ P. Sahlins, op. cit., pp. 110 passim.

¹⁴² Tomnasz Nawrocki, „Powrót do osady ‚Kopalnia’ na Górnym Śląsku: Śladami Józefa Chałasińskiego” (Come Back to the Settlement ‚Mine’ in Upper Silesia: Following Józef Chałasiński’s Tracks). *Dwumiesięcznik Kulturalny ‚Opcje’* 37, No. 2 (2001): 30.

Obviously there were antagonisms in the Silesian Voivodeship and they could often have a national sense. In the archival files of the Regional Court in Katowice from the early 1930s (so at the same time when Chałasiński did his research in Kopalnia/Mine) I found more than 40 legal cases that were called either “Anti-Nation act” or “Anti-State act” and even one “anti-*Sanacja* act” (sic!).¹⁴³ All of them presented in a way national antagonism and reflected on national identification of Silsiesans. However even just a brief overview on them tells about character of these antagonisms and the sense in which Upper Silesians used national identity in practice:

In August 1933 Jan Mika, a steel-mill worker from Katowice-Dab accused his colleague and neighbour Robert Schygulla that at 4 A.M. Schygulla said to him: “A Polish pig. One Polish pig already went away, and with you, Polish pig, I’ll be also ready, [be]cause Hitler will be here soon” calling him also: “Polish bum, Polish rascal!”¹⁴⁴ Normally such an incident would have been treated as a small personal-offence case, but that one could have been classified as an anti-national act and, consequently, possible harassment was much more serious. In that case the accused admitted that when they both were drunk he insulted Mika, yet he had not used words: “Polish Pig” or “Polish bum” but he only called him: “Duperstein”, which is not an insult against the Polish nation.¹⁴⁵ Schygulla also explained extensively his national attitude:

¹⁴³ *Czyn antysanacyjny* (Anti-*Sanacja* act) 1228, Sąd Okręgowy w Katowicach (Regional Court in Katowice; SO Kat), Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach (State Archive in Katowice; AP Kat).

¹⁴⁴ “Polska świnia, jedna polska świnia już się wyniosła”, a z tobą polska świnio będę już gotowy, bo Hitler będzie tu hnet “ and “Polski chacharze, polski lumpie.” . *Czyn antynarodowy* (Anti-Nation act) 1234, SO Kat, AP Kat, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴⁵ Rather minor abuse in Silesian: Polish-German contamination which is absolutely untranslatable to any other language. *Czyn antynarodowy* (Anti-Nation act) 1234, SO Kat, AP Kat, p. 7.

I was known as well as my parents as good Poles objecting constant intrigues of the German bosses in the steel-mill. Against me was brought an action about the eviction and Jan Mika participates in this accusation as the informer groundlessly and only in revenge, because I have never spoken about the Polish Nation as it says in the act of accusation. He [Mika] is aggressively accusing me [Schygulla] – the unemployed father of the five children – and he [Mika] himself who is a ‘November Pole’¹⁴⁶ wants in this way make a good impression on his superiors.¹⁴⁷

Finally Schygulla was acquitted of the crime of the “anti-Nation act”. However in another case a young lady Magorzata Lubosowa was sentenced for two weeks in prison for the “anti-State act” because she said “Pierońska Polska” (what literally means: “Thunderous Poland”)¹⁴⁸ to a border policeman on the Polish-German border when on 22 December, 1933 she was coming back to Poland from Christmas shopping in Beuthen and the policeman wanted her to pay a duty on some things that she carried.¹⁴⁹ From nowadays perspective these and most of other cases have nature of a tragicomedy: how understanding of the nation and crimes about nation and state contaminated with the every-day life practices and how near is from a silly quarrel to the contempt of the nation or the state. However, these legal tragicomedies show again that Upper Silesians could make a usage of the national overlapping and national

¹⁴⁶ „November Pole” (Novemberpolack) – contemptuous name for a young-date convert Pole. That name came from the communal elections in November 1919 when Polish candidates got the majority of votes. November Pole was obviously contrasted with the proper and truthful Pole.

¹⁴⁷ “Znany byłem, jak również moi rodzice jako dobrzy Polacy, sprzeciwiający się ustawicznemu intrygą niemieckim zwierzchnikom [sic!-MJ] tejże huty. Przeciwko mnie wystosowano skargę o eksmisję i świadek Mika Jan góruje przeciwko mnie li tylko z zemsty w oskarżeniu niniejszym jako donosiciel i to bez podstawnie, albowiem ja osobiście nigdy w podobny sposób nie wyraziłem się przeciwko Narodu Polskiemu jak w akcie oskrajania. Tenże zaś występuje przeciwko mnie jako bezrobotnego (ojca pięciorga dzieci) agresywnie, a sam będąc Polakiem listopadowym usiłuje w ten sposób wyrobić sobie przed jego zwierzchnikami dobrą opinię (jak to się zazwyczaj u tych również Polaków praktykuje).” *Czyn antynarodowy* (Anti-Nation act) 1234, SO Kat, AP Kat, pp. 7-9.

¹⁴⁸ The word “Pieron” (Thunder) is the most popular swear-word in the Silesian, but also relatively weak one.

¹⁴⁹ *Czyn antypaństwowy* (Anti-State act) 1328, SO Kat, AP Kat, pp. 1-20.

competition also for their “small”, private, particular (even evil) purposes like denouncing the neighbour.¹⁵⁰ In this respect people from borderlands are also somehow privileged.

7. Separateness reflected: Upper Silesian corner

Upper Silesian separateness was not only defined by outsiders and state representatives who wanted to frame it somehow in the national discourse and its problems; it was not only unreflectively implied by the Upper Silesians in their every-day strategies of making use of nationalism(s) as well. Silesia with its strange position and identity (strange in comparison to the dominating national discourse identity) was also the object of in-deepen interwar self-reflection of some Upper Silesians themselves. Probably the best known and at the same time outstanding example of that was book of Catholic Prelate Emil Szramek (1887-1942) from Katowice published in 1934 and entitled *Upper Silesia as a Sociological Question (Górny Śląsk jako problem socjologiczny)*. I consciously devote this sub-chapter only to that publication considering it the most significant interpretation of the Silesian identity which at the same time shows the limits of framing the “separateness” within existing national identities.

Szramek himself was definitely an outstanding figure in the interwar Silesian Voivodeship with, however, quite typical biography of an Upper Silesian priest and at the same time Polish intellectual in Silesia:¹⁵¹ born in a village Tworkau near Ratibor in a peasant family went to study theology at the University in Breslau (Wrocław), were he could master his

¹⁵⁰ Among more-less 40 cases the majority can be treated as personal-offend cases, often defined as the anti-Nation by the over-zealous officials or cunning accusers for their particular reasons. Only a few cases to my opinion had really something in common with a political treason. Final results of the legal proceedings depended however mostly on a solicitor’s performance.

¹⁵¹ This short biographic sketch is based mostly on: Rudolf Brom and Józef Śliwiok (ed.), *Błogosławiony ksiądz Emil Szramek a współczesność* (Blessed Rev. Emil Szramek and the Contemporaray Life), Katowice: Wszechnica Górnośląskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2004; Damian Zimoń, *Ks. Emil Szramek jako duszpastrz*. Accessed 5 May, 2009 from: <http://www.slonsk.de/Slonsk/Apssc/pozycje/KsiadzEmilSzramek.htm>

literally Polish. After he entered the priesthood for four years he was a vicar under Rev. Jan Kapica in Tichau and from his superior he inherited somehow that Catholic national tolerance and “clerical autonomism”,¹⁵² although after all Szramek – like Kapica – also decided to take Polish side in the national conflict after 1918. Before that in 1916 he wrote his Doctoral Dissertation in history entitled *Das Kollegiatstift zum heiligen Kreuz in Oppeln*. In the interwar Polish Silesia he became one of the most important and productive intellectuals in Upper Silesia: pastor in the downtown parish of Marry Church in Katowice, historian, head of the “Society of the Friends of Studies in Silesia” and editor of its Yearbook. Reconciled to some extent with the *Sanacja* regime of Governor Grażyński he could still preserved his quite independent position as an intellectual and as a priest, conducting Church services in Polish and German through out the whole 1920s and 1930s.

Emil Szramek is therefore a clear example of a person that feels perfectly at home both in Polish and German culture, who possess deep sense of belonging to the universal (Catholic) community, shows strong Upper Silesian identification (he often used Silesian tongue in his homilies or referred to „Upper Silesian values” of diligence, piety and religiousness) and last but not least he consciously declares himself as Polish and he is absolutely loyal to Polish authorities. From that complex starting point of Szramek personal identification we can better understand his concept of Upper Silesia. First he defined half-spatially, half-metaphorically the position of that land:

Upper Silesian from the geographical perspective is some kind of a corner and for many ages it shares the fortune of the all corners, that is: you trip over it and hit at it. And

¹⁵² T. H. Tooley, op. cit., p. 265.

every hit and pressure causes a motion, either outside, so the change of a position, or inside which is generating a heat. And that heat either ties up or bursts.”¹⁵³

According to the Katowice priest Upper Silesian specificity originates from its specific geographical position and its non-geographic consequences. “Corner”, however, in his understanding does not have to be understood as identical with the term “borderland”, as most of his commentators would say today.¹⁵⁴ For Szramek that corner had its own distinguished set of features despite of the fact that two (or more) nationalities can compete there and that they are choosing national identity. That competition however is not happening between two groups, two real beings, but it goes on the level of a person:

Polish *spirit of the nation* [*duch narodu*] and German *Volksseele* are the abstract terms that exist only within some groups of people. [...] Also so-called ‘national conscience’ is an abstract term. Family, national, patriotic – and always – religious conscience manifests itself more or less perfectly only in the individuals.¹⁵⁵

Apart from some possible noticeable influence of the early Christian personalism on Szramek thought, one can probably see here his pastoral and political experience that – similarly to the priests before 1922 – shaped very much his opinion about identity. It is worth noticing that such

¹⁵³ “Śląsk stanowi pod względem geograficznym rodzaj narożnika i od wieków dzieli los wszystkich narożników, że się mianowicie o nie zawadza i w nie uderza. Każde zaś zderzenie i ciśnienie powoduje ruch, bądźto zewnętrzny, czyli zmianę położenia, bądźto wewnętrzny, wytwarzający ciepło, które albo wiąże albo rozsadza.” E. Szramek, *Górny Śląsk...*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ See for example: Marek S. Szczepański, *Regionalizm Górnośląski: między plemiennością a systemem globalnym* (Upper Silesian Regionalism: Between Tribalism and the Global System), Katowice, 1997. Accessed on 22 May, 2009 from <http://live.us.edu.pl/files/pliki/konferencje/1997/socjologia/tekst/trib.html>
Paradoxally, M. S. Szczepański is the vice-chancellor of the Emil Szramek College of Management and Social Sciences in Tychy (Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania i Nauk Społecznych im. ks. Emila Szramka).

¹⁵⁵ „Polski ‘duch narodu’ jak i niemiecka ‘Volksseele’ są pojęciami oderwanymi, które konkretnie istnieją tylko w pewnych grupach jednostek. [...] Tak samo pojęciem oderwanem jest t. zw. sumienie narodu. Tylko w jednostkach przejawia się mniej lub więcej doskonale sumienie familijne, narodowej, patriotyczne – a zawsze religijne.” Ibidem, p. 8

personal, in a way free-will approach to the national identity seems to be one of a few voices that went on contrary to the dominating collective understandings of national identity in interwar period. Szramek was obviously convinced that *spirit of the nation* exists and he still believed in the ethnic Polish roots of Silesia, but he at the same time accepted processes of the national *absorption* of Upper Silesian even if it was an absorption to the Germanness (although he was rather not eager to that process). *Absorption* is a natural process and it depends after all on a person's will, on contrary to the outside pressure that wants to impose some identity on a person, what he called the process of *derivation*.¹⁵⁶

Such personal approach combined with the conviction about the reality of national identities in Silesia and Szramek's awareness about the historical reality of that land and his understanding of the *absorption* and *derivation* leads his interpretation into a little bit puzzled position. On one hand his attempt is to create a sociological analytical description of the phenomenon of "Upper Silesian Question": distanced, objective and with clearly defined terms. On the other he is voicing and advocating his own identity: he is convinced Pole, but at the same time he wants to preserve Silesian "separateness" and supra-national bonds and to justify those Silesians who are convinced Germans. Among Poles in Katowice in 1935 he argued that "like H₂O can be referred as *Wasser* or *woda* but it is the same substance, that both *Ślązak* and *Schlesier* denote the same person".¹⁵⁷ For the bivalent logic of Polish or German nationalism such sentence is internally contradictory, but it is at the same time not yet a clear manifesto of the Silesian nationalism. What therefore Szramek does to solve that dilemma, is to combine all the problems in one metaphor:

¹⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁷ "Jak o H₂O możemy powiedzieć *woda* bądź *Wasser*, lecz będzie to cały czas ta sama substancja, tak też zarówno słowa *Ślązak* jak i *Schlesier* odnoszą się do tej samej jednostki." "O naturze Ślązaka", *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 5 (1936): 283.

The Silesian is in a way divided into three floors. On the ground floor he has race(ness), on the first floor nationality and on the second – (intellectual) culture. Because of the reasons that are independent from the individual there is often a quarrel on its ground and first floor going on. So for the calmness in the house a householder, who lives on the second floor, throws out one of the tenants from the ground and the first floor and since that time he has to do only with the another one. In order to spare his children similar dilemma he conceals that former argument in house and he never mentions it.¹⁵⁸

I would assume that we can read Szramek idea historically as his reflection on what has happened in Upper Silesia during his lifetime. If my interpretation is a justified solution, than from the perspective of Silesian *separateness* conclusion may be pessimistic: even though *Ślązak* and *Schlesier* denote the same person with one soul, that three-floor house of his or her soul sooner or later had to have either Polish or German tenants. Separateness will disappear. In one thing Szramek was probably mistaken – the memory of the former arguments in a house usually recurs even if old tenants are no longer there (although this is rather Freudian interpretation with a householder from the second floor understood as Superego). Problems of the Union of the Defence of Upper Silesians and personal dilemmas of its leader Jan Kustos, which are described in the next chapter, are clear example that such eviction never run painlessly.

¹⁵⁸ “Ślązak jest podzielony poniekąd na parter i dwa piętra. Na parterze ma rasowość, na pierwszym piętrze narodowość, a na drugim piętrze kulturę umysłową. Z powodów od jednostki niezależnych jest często kłótnia na jej parterze i na pierwszym piętrze; dla spokoju w domu wyrzuca mieszkający na drugim piętrze gospodarz wyrzuca po jednym z lokatorów parteru i pierwszego piętra i odtąd ma już tylko z jednym do czynienia. By swoim dzieciom zaoszczędzić podobnej rozterki, tai przed nimi dawną kłótnię w domu i o niej nic już nie wspomina.” Ibidem, pp. 19-20.

Chapter IV:

To Defend Upper Silesians' separateness

The Union of Defense of Upper Silesians [ZOG], founded by Mr. Kustos, had a clearly separatist character. The Union strove to maintain the autonomy of Silesia within the Polish State, [emphasis-MJ] to defend Silesian interest combating invasion of the incoming officials [*element urzędniczy*]. It strove to create bilingual schools in Silesia and to replace with them the minority schools.¹⁵⁹

[Józef Chałasiński, 1935]

1. Roots of the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians

Silesian Voivodeship in the 1920s was the arena of vigorous, vivid, impulsive and sometimes even violent political life. Polish parties were in a natural competition with themselves apart from the Polish–German rivalry. The Polish internal political disputes could have been even fiercer due to some personal animosities, ideological differences and different visions of Silesia and its Polishness. Conflict between the *Sanacja* and its opponents had in Katowice, and consequently in other towns and communes of the Polish Silesia, its own emanation in the personal clash between Polish Silesian leader Wojciech Korfanty and Governor Michał Grażyński. Moreover, there was yet another axis of conflict between local Silesian elites and newcomers from other parts from Poland. All that took place in the society

¹⁵⁹ „Wyraźnie separatystyczny charakter posiadała ZOG założony przez p. Kustosa. Związek dążył do utrzymania autonomji Śląska w ramach Państwa Polskiego, do obrony interesów śląskich, zwalczając inwazję napływowego elementu urzędniczego [...], dążył do stworzenia szkół utrakwistycznych na Śląsku i zastąpienia nimi szkół mniejszości.” J. Chałasiński, *Antagonizm...*, p. 103.

which was intensely politicized and politically active due to recent involvement in the plebiscite and in the uprisings.

From among wide range of Polish political groups one deserves here a special interest because of its understanding of Silesian separateness and due to significant shift and evolution of that understanding. Between 1922 and 1932, in the Silesian Voivodeship existed a political party called at the beginning the Union of Upper Silesians-Poles [Związek Górnoślązaków-Polaków] and from 1925, the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians [Związek Obrony Górnoślązaków; ZOG]. That grouping was lead by the young charismatic journalist and politician Jan Kustos (1893-1932). Most of its activity was based on the newspaper that was edited and published by Kustos, called “The Voice of Upper Silesia” [“Głos Górnego Śląska”; “GGŚI”], which was a core source for this chapter. ZOG and Kustos himself are a borderline and to some extent tragic example of the dilemmas of Upper Silesians in the interwar Poland. My aim in this chapter is neither to describe the whole political activity of ZOG, nor to reconstruct its organizational structure and membership. Instead of that, I would like to present and explain the way in which it tried to situate the Upper Silesian identity within the Polish political reality and national ideology. In my view, only the feeling of being somehow alienated from Polish national community created a demand for strengthening and underlining so openly one’s own Silesianness. Last but not least, I show that especially in that case the difference between the “separateness” and “separatism” is of primary importance and a historian should demarcate these two attitudes, because both their roots and political consequences are radically different.

The story about Union of Defence of Upper Silesians and its newspaper, although it can express attitudes shared by many people, is to a large extent a story of one person – Jan Kustos.

He gave his face for both “The Voice” and ZOG formulating their political programme. Kustos was born in the village Syrynia near Ratibor in a comfortably well-of peasant family of strong Polish national identification.¹⁶⁰ His career started in a way similar to Korfanty’s: a Gymnasium in Upper Silesia and then philosophical studies at the University in Breslau. In 1919 he moved, however, to Poznań to study at the newly established Polish university. Probably his stay and studies in Poznań strengthened and radicalized his Polish national attitude. Great Poland was at that time a bastion of Polish nationalism of the *Endecja*. Roman Dmowski, together with Maria Skłodowska-Curie, was in 1922 the first holder of an honorary doctorate of the Poznań University.¹⁶¹ During his studies there Kustos published first articles and brochures proving the Polishness of his homeland. In one of them, he demanded Polish schools in Upper Silesia (both primary and high schools) and tried to convince the Upper Silesian parents to teach their children proper Polish literary language.¹⁶² He mentioned in his text the battle of Grunwald, the battle of Vienna, the Constitution of the 3rd of May and few other events from the history of “our nation” which were – according to him – Polish “services for the world culture and for the strengthening of the religion of Christ.”¹⁶³ At that time, Kustos was strongly convinced that “Upper Silesia is a Polish land and an Upper Silesian is the same

¹⁶⁰ As Stanisław Ossowski noticed active Polishness in the rural part of Silesia between Ratibor and Oppeln was a privilege of the independent and comfortably well-of peasantry (called “Polish kings”/“Polskie króle”), which was not economically dependent from the state. “Polish patriotism in Gielczyn had a luxurious character” (“Polski patriotyzm w Gielczynie miał charakter luksusowy”). S. Ossowski, *Zagadnienia więzi...*, p. 100.

¹⁶¹ *Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu – Doktoraty honoris causa*. Accessed on 30 May, 2009 from <http://www.amu.edu.pl/dzialalnosc/o-uam/doktoraty-honoris-causa>

¹⁶² Kustos, J[an]. *Jak nas uczono w szkołach (na Górnym Śląsku)? Rozprawa*. (How we were thought at schools (in Upper Silesia)? A thesis.). Racibórz: Zakład Wydawnictw Katolickich Reinharda Meyera, 1919.

¹⁶³ „zasługi około kultury świata i wzmacniania religii Chrystusa”. Ibidem, pp. 6-9.

Pole as his brother from behind the Prussian cordon”¹⁶⁴ (from the former Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland). It was a *credo* of an average Polish nationalist.

When Kustos at the beginning of 1922 came back to the Upper Silesia, his activity focused first and foremost on the newspaper that he established, “The Voice of Upper Silesia”. Kustos became its chef editor and publisher (the latter position he shared with his wife for some time). For the next ten years it was the newspaper that gathered Kustos supporters and members of all organizations which he established and ran: the Union of Defence of Upper Silesians and less numerous trade unions (the Trade Union of Upper Silesians) or other ephemeral political groups, like party called Silesian Christian Democratic-Progressive Party [Śląskie Chrześcijańskie Stronnictwo Demokratyczno-Postępowe] that never really started to function. At the beginning in 1922 and 1923 “Głos” was published three times a week, then two times and from 1928 it became a weekly. Circulation of the “The Voice” usually oscillated around 1500 copies while the most popular Polish and German newspapers in Polish Silesia had a circulation eight to ten times bigger,¹⁶⁵ although from time to time locally popularity of “The Voice” raised to a surprisingly high number of copies.¹⁶⁶ Therefore all opinions presented in this periodical had a limited influence on Upper Silesians. As we know, apart from the local election in 1926 when ZOG got some significant popularity in many communes, it was addressed mostly to lower clerks, railway workers and lower officials, policemen, craftsmen, etc.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ „Górny Śląsk to ziemia polska, [a] Górnoślązak, to Polak taki jak jego brak z za kordonu pruskiego.” Ibidem, page of introduction.

¹⁶⁵ *Nakład Czasopism (Circulation of Newspapers)* 629, Urząd Wojewódzki Śląski (UWŚl), APKat., p. 12 passim.

¹⁶⁶ In November 1925 the circulation of „Voice” reached 250 copies in Rybnik, 250 copies in Żory (town had at that time less than 5000 inhabitants) and 100 copies in Knurów. P. Doborowski, *Ugrupowania...*, p. 135.

¹⁶⁷ P. Doborowski, *Ugrupowania...*, pp. 137-138.

If one would like to find the most general description for the political attitude of “Głos”, the one that seems the most adequate would be “to be against”. Through the whole ten years Kustos consequently disliked politicians that were actually in power. At the beginning of 1922 Kustos criticized Germans (who were yet formally in power in some places in Silesia) as well as the first Polish governor of Silesian Voivodeship Józef Rymer. After Rymer’s sudden death in December 1922, his followers on the position of Governor were also on the receiving end of his criticism. For some time there was only one surprising exception in case of... Governor Michał Grażyński. Kustos disliked any form of socialism (including Piłsudski’s “socialism”) and socialists, especially Józef Biniszkiewicz, a Silesian leader of the Polish Socialist Party. He had also a bad opinion about Wincenty Witos; after the May Coup he criticised any form of *coup d’etat*.¹⁶⁸ Even though he was a law-abiding Catholic and often referred to religion in his political language, he was not keen on the fact that two Bishops of Katowice were not native Silesians.¹⁶⁹ He could also criticize Prelate Emil Szramek, at that time responsible for the construction of a cathedral, accusing him of the thriftlessness and collaboration with Jewish entrepreneurs.¹⁷⁰ To illustrate that generally critical attitude I can quote one article, which was published in “Głos” before the elections to the Silesian Sejm in 1930. The article was entitled “Who one should not vote for?” [“Na kogo nie należy głosować?”] and enlisted almost all political parties providing also some comments:

Korfanty – he is leading the Upper Silesian people by the nose;

Biniszkiewicz – a list of a socialist, enemy of the Catholic Church;

¹⁶⁸ *Cui bono, czyli dla czyjego dobra?*, GGŚI, No. 27, 26-28 May 1926.

¹⁶⁹ *Novum Habemus Episcoporum*, GGŚI, No. 37, 17-23 September 1930.

¹⁷⁰ *Przy budowie katedry*, GGŚI, Nos. 4-5, 24-31 January 1929.

Sanacja – they claim that “no parliaments but the dictatorship should rule Poland and Silesia, and on that list there are also evangelicals;

List no. 12 – this is actually the list of the national democrats, the biggest Polish chauvinists who want to cut down, if not to abolish, the Silesian autonomy;

National Workers’ Party (NPR) – you could eventually vote for it, if there were some candidates which have workers’ interest at heart.¹⁷¹

2. Polish nationalism of the Upper Silesians

Surprisingly enough, at the beginning of the activity of “Voice” in 1922 its political option was clearly declared: it was a local emanation of the Polish *Endecja* nationalism. Its reader could find there a series of articles dedicated to the biography of Roman Dmowski¹⁷² or a headline “Poland exploited by Germans”¹⁷³ or notes entitled “Let’s stop speaking in German!” complaining about the fact that even workers in Katowice speak German instead of Polish.¹⁷⁴ Just two-three weeks after the capital city of Silesian Voivodeship became Polish, one could read in the pages of “The Voice” that:

Already enough days have passed after the incorporation of the part of Upper Silesia to Poland, which was paid with the sacrifices and blood of the Polish nation. However streets and conditions in our city still look as if the city was under the Prussian rule [*pod zaborem pruskim*]. The city streets are called still “Wilhelmplatz”, “Friedrichplatz”,

¹⁷¹ „Korfanty – wodzi ludność górnośląską za nos; Biniszkievicz – lista socjality, wroga kościoła Katolickiego; Sanacja – głosi, że „nie sejmy, ale dyktatura winna Polską i Śląskiem rządzić”, a na liście tej stoją i ewangelicy; Lista nr 12 – jest to faktycznie lista narodowych demokratów, największych szowinistów polskich, zdążających do okrojenia, jeśli nie do zniesienia autonomji śląskiej; NPR – możnaby ewentualnie głos oddać, gdyby na niej stali zastępcy, którem dobro robotnika na sercu leży.” *Na kogo nie należy głosować?*, GGŚl, No. 19, 23-28 May 1930.

¹⁷² GGŚl, Nos. 33-37, 6-20 May 1922.

¹⁷³ *Wyzysk Polski przez Niemców*, GGŚl, No. 6, 1 February 1922.

¹⁷⁴ *Przestańmy mówić po niemiecku!*, GGŚl, No. 1, 2 January 1923.

“Bismarckstrasse” and on the public establishments and shops there are still inscriptions in German. [...] Did Polish nation sacrifice itself and shed its blood for that?¹⁷⁵

Polish authorities were criticised in this article for too gentle policy in regard to reminiscences of Germanness in Silesia. Moreover, the author suggested a solution which would have been better:

For example in Czerniowce after the entrance of the Romanian Army in January 1919 all German names of streets and squares, German inscriptions on cafés and shops were changed within 24 hours without calling anybody; all hostile elements: the profiteers preoccupied with usury were thrown away behind the border of the Romanian State.¹⁷⁶

In the parliamentary election in November 1922 “The Voice” strongly supported the *Endecja* and advised the reader: “if you want to have in Poland no strikes, no communists, no Jews who are rife, if you want to have law and order – vote for list no. 8.”¹⁷⁷ Few months before the election, when Wojciech Korfanty, supported by Polish right-wing parties, could have become a Polish prime minister, the newspaper published a series of articles supporting his candidature which were entitled for example “We are still going into precipice... Mr. Korfanty is saving a situation.”¹⁷⁸ Kustos himself wrote a doggerel-poem “Vivat,

¹⁷⁵ „Już dosyć dni upłynęło od przyłączenia części Górnego Śląska do Polski, okupionego ofiarami i krwią narodu polskiego, a wygląd i stosunki w naszym mieście przedstawiają się, jak gdyby to miasto nadal pozostawało pod zaborem pruskim. Ulice miasta nadal noszą nazwy „Wilhelmsplatz”, „Friedrichplatz”, „Bismarckstrasse”, a na publicznych lokalach i na sklepach widnieją dotychczas niemieckie napisy. [...] Czy na to naród polski poniósł ofiary i przelał krew?” *Nadużywanie polskiej tolerancji*, GGŚl, No. 50, 5 July 1922.

¹⁷⁶ „Tak np. w Czerniowcach po wkroczeniu wojska rumuńskiego do miasta w styczniu 1919 r. wszystkie niemieckie nazwy ulic i placów, niemieckie napisy na kawiarniach i sklepach zmieniono bez wzywania w przeciągu 24 godzin, wrogie elementa: lichwiarzy i paskarzy wyrzucono za granicę Państwa rumuńskiego.” *Ibidem*, GGŚl, No. 50, 5 July 1922.

¹⁷⁷ „[Jeśli] chcesz, żeby w Polsce nie było strejków, komunistów, nie panoszył się żyd, rządziło prawo, mieć ład i porządek w Polsce - lista nr 8.” GGŚl, No. 89, 12 November 1922.

¹⁷⁸ *Idziemy dalej w przepaść... p. Korfant ratuje sytuację*, GGŚl, No. 54, 29 July 1922.

Korfanty!”¹⁷⁹ Consequently, “The Voice” addressed Józef Piłsudski as *Józio* (a diminutive used in respect to young children) and the article about his visit in Silesia was entitled “*Józio* in Upper Silesia.”¹⁸⁰ When six weeks after Piłsudski’s visitation the Silesian Voivodeship was visited also by Józef Haller, one of the right-wing heroes, “Głos” announced that “General Haller arrives in Upper Silesia.”¹⁸¹

In the early 1920s you could find one more especially outspoken element of the nationalistic agenda of “Voice” which was the anti-Semitism. The newspaper declared itself openly against Jews and it criticised their migration to Upper Silesia. It used typical anti-Judaic references to the Talmud and “Talmudic mentality”, it even published some pieces from *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*¹⁸² or articles explaining „why Jews are leading the way in the subversive organizations.”¹⁸³ Although Kustos advised not to „bit Jew”, but „fight with Jew”, especially in the social and economical life,¹⁸⁴ some voices in his newspaper by evoking anti-Jewish hatred could indirectly urge readers rather to choose the former option:

Almost everywhere in Poland they are numerous: these dirty, grim figures, dark- or red-bearded with swaying side locks and crooked or shallow noses, who are dressed with caftans or hats. [...] Jews [żydki] are scrambling out of their dark holes like rats with their huddled, timid posture and eyes shining from the profits’ desire. Always greedy, always dissatisfied! You will never see a ray of happiness on their grim faces.¹⁸⁵

179 „Gdy nawa państwa jest na pełnym morzu, | Gdy sam jej sternik jest już na bezdrożu, | Nam nie pomogą nic te dyletanty | Wiwat Korfanty!” *Wiwat Korfanty*, GGŚI, No. 57, 29 July 1922. Two years later „Głos” will call Korfanty: a parvenu, a yarn-spinner etc. and address him as *Wojtek*. See: *Jaśne Weilmożny Pan Minister Korfanty blaguje i chciałby omamić ludność górnośląską kratoflami od Niemców*, GGŚI, No. 82, 11-14 October 1924.

180 *Józio na Górnym Śląsku*, GGŚI, No. 65, 26 September 1922.

181 *General Haller przybywa na Górny Śląsk*, GGŚI, No. 78, 9 October 1922.

182 *Protokoły mędrców syjonu*, GGŚI, Nos. 2-6, 5-17 January 1924.

183 *Czemu żydzi przodują w organizacjach wywrotowych?*, GGŚI, No. 29, 22 April 1922.

184 *Żydzi w Polsce*, GGŚI, No. 6, 1 January 1922.

185 „Nieomal wszędzie w Polsce ich pełno tych brudnych, ponurych postaci, z czerniami lub rudemi, kiwającymi

It is hard to judge to what extent such anti-Semitic attitude was still some piece of old-fashioned clerical, folk anti-Judaism, how much it was yet economical anti-Semitism of the „old” professors’ *Endecja*, or whether it could be already the „new” racial anti-Semitism. Besides the usage of popular old anti-Jewish notions which were even before partly present among Upper Silesians (although, to my view, less than elsewhere in Poland), I would underline here two reasons which may explain that anti-Semitic face of ZOG. The first one is the popular dislike for strangers and outsiders whom poor Jews from Poland could perfectly represent in Silesia. Before 1922 there was only a small Jewish community in Upper Silesia and most of its members lived in the cities and was fully assimilated and integrated into the German *Bürgertum*. The second reason is that the strong anti-Semitic mood and language present among Poznań *Endecja* could influence Kustos during his studies strengthening thus his „inherited” Silesian reluctance towards strangers and that is the Jews. Both these explanations seem to be closely knitted one with another.

3. Nationalistic genesis of the Silesian „separatism”

By now, the picture of political attitudes of Kustos and his circle looks quite clearly and unambiguously. However, when one adds to it another features and colours, it may lose its self-evidence. Kustos from the beginning of his political activity in Katowice was called „a separatist.”¹⁸⁶ Indeed, the rhetoric of „Voice” was addressed against the newcomers in Silesia who occupied the positions which were left by German clerks after the division. The

się brodami lub pejsami, płytkimi lub krzywymi nosami, ubranych w kaftany lub czapki. [...] Tu żydki wylązą jak szczury w skurzonej, bojaźliwej postawie z błyszczącymi od chęci zysku oczyma ze swych ciemnych nór, tam posuwają się szybko przez ulice. Wiecznie chciwi, niezadowoleni! Nigdy nie oświecili promień serdecznego uśmiechu ich ponurych twarzy.” *Żydostwo polskie*, GGŚI, No. 49, 2 July 1922.

¹⁸⁶ See: „Cygon Górnosląski” [1922]

newspaper complained that Upper Silesians were not admitted into office positions. It claimed that Silesians were in that respect discriminated by Polish authorities. „It is rumoured in Silesia that if you do not have a high-school diploma [*matura*], then there is no position for an Upper Silesian because you do not have qualifications, but if you possess the diploma then you also will not get a position, because there is overcrowding [in the office].”¹⁸⁷ That reluctance towards strangers (the *Gorols*)¹⁸⁸ who occupied Silesian positions was the most often raised question in the pages of „Voice” (soon after, as we know, also by other political parties in Silesia). ZOG based its rhetoric on the same feeling of discrimination and being despised which was shared by many of Upper Silesians. „People [who are] brought here from Poland do not know conditions and the psychology of the Polish people from here and they brushed them off.”¹⁸⁹ Cultural differences between the officials from Galicia and the locals were used in constructing the position of the biggest defender of Upper Silesians’ rights and the biggest opponent of the newcomers. Thus it was somehow funny for me to read an advertisement of a man from Oświęcim (former Galicia) who looked for a job in the Silesian Voivodeship in the same newspaper which wanted to defence Silesians against the strangers from Galicia:

A 38 year old man married, energetic, well-acquainted with the customs clearance, 14-year office-work experience, a sufficient command of German language, will take up right away a position of a custom officer, as a store man or in the office with a proper permanent remuneration.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ „A przecież idzie fama po G. Śląsku, że o ile się nie ma mautrę, to dla Górnoślązaka niema posady, bo nie ma kwalifikacyj, a jeżeli się ją posiada, to też nie otrzyma posady, bo jest przepelnione.” GGŚI, No 14, 1 March 1922.

¹⁸⁸ Even if – it is worth noticing – you can hardly ever find the name *Gorol* in the pages of the Kustos newspaper.

¹⁸⁹ „Do tego przyszło, że ludzie sprowadzeni tutaj z Polski, nie znają tutaj stosunków oraz psychologii ludu polskiego, traktowali ludność tutejszą po macoszemu.” *Przyczyny niezadowolenia wśród Polaków na Śląsku*, GGŚI, No. 24/25, 8 April 1922.

¹⁹⁰ „Mężczyzna lat 38, żonaty energiczny, obznajomiony, bardzo dobrze z odprawą celną i kolejową, z 14-letnią praktyką biurową, władający dostatecznie językiem niemieckim, obejmie zaraz posadę: deklarenta cłowego,

However, apart from such unexpected inconsistency, the idea of defending the Upper Silesians against the Poles from other parts of Poland had a strong ideological reason which was the feeling of cultural superiority of the former Prussian share of the Second Republic: superiority of Prussian Poles over the „Galician” Poles and over the Poles from the Kingdom of Poland. Such reason was clearly formulated in the Poznań context by the *Endecja* as a justification for its demand of special position of the Great Poland in the Polish state. That demand was justified exactly by the higher level of development in comparison to former Russian or Austrian Part. I would not call such conduct *separatism* but rather some form of regionalism (or „separatism” in quotation marks) which in that case was strongly linked with a „normal” ethno-nationalism. Almost every supporter of *Endecja* from Poznań Region was in a way a „separatists” because of his conviction about his own superiority. Such combination was nothing surprisingly new in Europe: it was also a feature of some Romanians from Transylvania (like Romul Boilă) who in the Greater Romania found themselves culturally superior to the rest of their nation (more modernized and more advanced in the *cultural work*) and at the same time discriminated by the unification policy of the central government.¹⁹¹ To my view, the „separatism” of Jan Kustos and his supporters in the early 1920s was exactly of that kind. In a way such political regionalism („separatism”) was imported by Kustos from Great Poland together with the modern Polish nationalism. Kustos explained to his readers that:

Contrary to the claim of leftists, in Poznań Region there is no separatism for separatism itself. However there is deeply rooted mistrust of other regions [*dzielnice*] due to

magazyniera lub biorową za odpowiedniem stałym w nagrodzeniem. Łaskawe zgłoszenia: Karol Wojwoda, Oświęcim, Dworzec.” *Ogłoszenie*, GGŚI, No. 50, 5 July 1922.

¹⁹¹ See: Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: regionalism, nation building, & ethnic struggle, 1918-1930*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995, pp. 129-187.

conditions there. If these regions had some positive (and not negative) values to offer and share with Poznań, the Poznanians would be the first unificators. Meanwhile [these regions] have nothing [to offer]...¹⁹²

For ZOG therefore, Upper Silesia, unlike Great Poland, thanks to the autonomy got an opportunity and possibility to protect its own „positive values” and civilization superiority. Integration within the Polish State should be a careful and long-lasting process. In this demand formulated in the early 1920s there was (almost) nothing about any kind of Upper Silesian ethnic separateness or identity which was distinguishable. When „The Voice” commented on the Vilnius case in 1922 (elections in the Central Lithuania), it used it as an opportunity to criticize Piłsudski and present own view on the centralization of the Second Republic of Poland:

The case of Vilnius proves something different than the fact that the Polish state is centralized. Would now somebody say that we are „separatists”, when we firmly demand retaining autonomy for Upper Silesia just because of the purely social and cultural reasons [emphasis-MJ], whereas Mr. Governor of the State requests the autonomy for Vilnius for clearly personal purposes.¹⁹³

In most of the cases when “Głos” opposed any contravention or an attempt to contravene the *Organic Statute*, especially the paragraph about Silesians’ priority in the recruitment, is cited exactly those reasons: Silesians’ cultural superiority and their legitimate demand for proper

¹⁹² „Wbrew twierdzeniu lewicowców w Poznańskim niema separatyzmu dla separatyzmu. Natomiast panuje tutaj głęboko zakorzeniona nieufność do innych dzielnic za względu na stosunki w nich panujące. Gdyby te dzielnice miały do wymiany i przeniesienia na grunt poznański jakieś wartości dodatnie, a nie same ujemne, Poznańczycy byłiby pierwszymi unifikatorami. Tymczasem tak nie jest...” *Ku przestrodze*, GGŚI, No. 31, 29 April 1922.

¹⁹³ „[F]akt z Wilnem świadczy o czemś innym jak o scentralizowaniu państwa polskiego, a potem niech jeszcze kto mówi, że jesteśmy „separatystami”, jeżeli z powodów czysto społecznych i kulturalnych domagamy się stanowczo zatrzymania autonomji dla Górnego Śląska, zaś p. Naczelnik Państwa żąda dla celów czysto osobistych autonomii dla Wilna.” *Wilno*, GGŚI, No. 17, 11 March 1922.

positions which was legally guaranteed by the Polish Sejm in the *Organic Statute*. The time for emphasising another motivation and reasons for the preservation of Silesian autonomy came only in the mid 1920s after a few years of disconnection with the Poznań *Endecja* circle.

4. Silesian identity and/or Polish identity

In 1922, “The Voice” asked in one of the articles “is the Upper Silesian Polish?”¹⁹⁴ The answer was: yes, he is. He preserved the “ancient language of Rej and Kochanowski, which you cannot hear in other regions of Poland” together with the “ancient Polish carols and songs.” In addition, the “Upper Silesian has practically shown that he is and wants to be Polish when he three times took up arms and sealed his Polishness with blood.”¹⁹⁵ However the inhabitant of Silesia is not only a Pole or even, as we know, a better Pole, but he is also a special kind of Pole and because of that he deserves a special treatment.

That Silesian specificity was a positively valued feature of ZOG and its preservation became the goal for the Kustos movement. That is why he did not welcome with open arms *The Official Language Act* from 1923, which established Polish as the almost unexceptional language of the public life in the Eastern Silesia. According to his opinion Polish language should be introduced gradually in order to give some time so that the people could adjust to the new situation:

¹⁹⁴ *Czy Górnślązak jest Polakiem?*, GGŚI, No. 74, 23 September 1922.

¹⁹⁵ „...zachowanie prastarego języka Reja i Kochanowskiego tutaj na Górnym Śląsku, którego to języka nie słyszy się w innych dzielnicach zupełnie; następnie zachowanie tutaj prastarych kolęd i pieśni Polskich. [...] Górnślązak prątnie pokazała, że jest i chce być Polakiem, chwyciwszy aż trzy razy za broń i to krwią pieczętując swoją polskość” *Ibidem*, GGŚI, No. 74, 23 September 1922.

Therefore you should not be a chauvinist, but give others time and possibility to learn that language (just as the Germans did with the German language) and only after introduce it, not the other way round.¹⁹⁶

This reference to the German example is worth noticing. “Głos” often cited German policy and their deeds, also quite often with some sense of admiration. However, all of them had rather some stimulating role in regards of national or economical policy: if Germans are capable to do something, why we, Poles in Upper Silesia, cannot do the same? Kustos had chosen consciously the Polish national identification as a young student who felt equally at home in German and Polish culture and after that he consequently had to re-confirm his own choice.

In the 1920s Jan Kustos often underlined his mutual loyalty to the Polishness and Silesianness and did not contradict them. His increasing disappointment with Polish nationalization policy in Silesia, with officials and teachers from Galicia who could not understand Silesian specificity, etc., was explained in various ways, yet still within the framework of Polishness. “The Voice” on 3 May 1925 made a parallel between the Polish May Constitution and the *Organic Statute*: “As Poland on the 3rd of May 1791 grated freedom for all estates, as on the 15th of June 1920 [when the *Organic Statute* was passed-MJ] granted rights for us.”¹⁹⁷ Polish teachers from Galicia are not criticized because of their Polishness, but due to their immorality. Kustos, inspired probably by the lecture of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* by Oswald Spengler, made a parallel between Upper Silesia and the “culture” on the one hand and between Galicia and the “civilization” on the other:

¹⁹⁶ Dlatego nie należy być szowinistą, lecz dać drugim czas i możliwość dokładnego nauczania się tego języka (jak to robili Niemcy [sic!-MJ] z językiem niemieckim) a potem go zaprowadzać, a nie inaczej. *Kwestia języka urzędowego na Polskim Górnym Śląsku*, GGŚI, No. 5, 17 January 1923.

¹⁹⁷ „Jak nadała Polska 3-maja 1791 r. wolność wszechstanom, tak w dniu 15-go lipca 1920 r. dała Polska prawa nam.” *W rocznicę konstytucji 3-go Maja 1791 r.*, GGŚI, No. 35, 5 May 1925.

The outcome of the real culture is godliness, piety, morality! Whereas the outcomes of the civilization are: religious indifference, immorality, nonsensical modernism. Upper Silesia [is] not yet civilized, but the people [is] peaceful, moral, and pious thus cultural. Galicia, and everything that stand behind it, can still be proud of its “civilization.”¹⁹⁸

After a few years of his activity in Katowice Kustos had to use different intellectual tools and concepts in order to enhance and defend the Upper Silesian specificity and at the same time to remain loyal to Polish State and Polish identity. In 1926 and 1927 he wrote a few open letters about the Silesian autonomy to Governor Grażyński – critical, but extremely polite (especially when one compares them to the aggressive rhetoric of the articles about other adherents of Kustos). In these letters one can read between the lines the growing desperation of their author:

What you, Mr. Governor, call “separatism” is nothing else but the aspiration and ideological fight for these rights which the Polish Government had guaranteed to the local people in the *Organic Statute* and in the *Geneva Convention*. [...] What you call “separatism” is nothing else, but a healthy reflex of the society which thought, thinks and will be thinking that the guaranteed rights ought to be preserved.¹⁹⁹

Articles in “The Voice” and actions of ZOG in the late 1920s were a mixture of disappointment, claims, sense of rejection, stillborn plans and ambitions. The language of the

¹⁹⁸ „Wynikiem prawdziwej kultury jest bogobożność, religijność, moralność! Wynikiem cywilizacji natomiast jest indyferentyzm religijny, niemoralność, skłonny do wszelkiej niedorzeczności modernizm. Górny Śląsk jeszcze nie wiele cywilizowany! za to lud spokojny, moralny, religijny, a więc kulturalny. Galicia i co za nią stoi niech się dalej szczyci cywilizacją.” *Kultura czy cywilizacja?*, GGŚI, No. 40, 14-16 July 1926.

¹⁹⁹ „Otóż co Pan, Panie Wojewodo, nazywa separatyzmem, nie jest niczem innym jak dążeniem i walką ideową o te prawa, które Rząd Polski ludności tubylczej zagwarantował w Statucie Organicznym i Konwencji Genewskiej. [...] To co Pan nazywa separatyzmem, jest niczem innym, jak zdrowym odruchem społeczeństwa, które sądziło, sądzi i sądzić będzie, że prawa raz zagwarantowane winny być dotrzymane.” *Separatyzm należy wyplenić!?!*, GGŚI, No. 36, 8-10 May 1927.

texts in “Głos” became surprisingly less anti-Semitic, more often one can find there pacifistic voices. On Christmas 1928 Kustos presented his vision of proper peaceful Polish politics:

Loud yells of the hyper-patriots should break off. All demagogues should cease to incite one nation against another. It is necessary for the Polish State to sign the trade treaties, especially with Russia [sic!-MJ] and Germany. In addition, we shall also finish once and for all the argument with Lithuania about Wilno. We should give the rights to the national minorities inside the state which they fully deserve. Poland as a state should not provide our neighbours with conjectures that it wants the aggravation of the international relationships. Spending huge amounts of money on the army must evoke an impression that Poland is not going to preserved peace.²⁰⁰

That surprising shift of political attitudes seems uneasy to explain. Few years before, “The Voice” would have never published such a confession. I would say that it was the feeling of rejection that put ZOG into the under-privileged position of the minority group. Their Polishness was rejected, at least according to their own views. In the open letter to the President Ignacy Mościcki Kustos quoted (or wrote himself) a poem: *We were going to you, Poland!* One of its verses said: “Our Brother replaced a German, [...] and he destroys our Polish dream in the Silesian hearts, he destroys the Fatherland inside of them.”²⁰¹ At the end of 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, “The Voice” formulated for the first time its idea of the “Upper Silesian

²⁰⁰ Zamilknąć powinny głośne krzyki i hasła hiperpatriotów. Ustać powinny podżegania ze strony demagogów jednego narodu przeciwko drugiemu. Dla Państwa Polskiego koniecznym będzie, żeby zawrzeć traktaty handlowe, szczególnie z Rosją [sic!-MJ] i Niemcami. Również należy jak na zawsze zakończyć spór z Litwą o Wilno. Mniejszościom narodowym wewnątrz państwa należy dać te prawa, które im przysługują. [...] Polska ale, pozatem jako państwo, winna dążyć równocześnie do tego, żeby jak najmniej dała powodu u naszych sąsiadów, że dąży do zaostżenia sytuacji międzynarodowej. Wydawania olbrzymich sum na wojsko musi wywołać za granicą wrażenie, że i Polska nie zamierza utrzymać stałego stanu pokojowego.” *O pokój na ziemi*, GGŚI, No. 52, 21-29 December 1929.

²⁰¹ „A zaś najgorszą sercom tym! | Śląskim zadaje bliznę | Że niszczy w nich – nasz polski sen. | Że krzywdzą w nich Ojczyznę.” *List otwarty do Pana Prezydenta Ignacego Mościckiego*, GGŚI, No. 18, 6 May 1931.

nationality” and “folk minority” [*mniejszość ludowa*].²⁰² That was the solution for the Gordian knot of their mutually contradictory Polish-Silesian identity.

At the end of 1920s and until his sudden death in 1932 Kustos claimed that Upper Silesians in Poland are in the same position as Slovaks in the Czechoslovakia, Catalonians in Spain, the Flemish people in Belgium and Ukrainians (sic!) in Poland and Russia. He used the term “folk minority” (“mniejszość ludowa”), never the “national minority”. However, in the pages of “Głos” in 1931 or 1932 one could read one or two articles calling “for the Silesian Nation and Silesian Nationality” [capital “N” in original-MJ].²⁰³ Definition and borderline between these terms was fluid and unclear. As a representative of minority, Kustos could also appeal to the League of Nations citing the regulation of the *Geneva Convention*.²⁰⁴ Yet he all the time stressed his loyalty to Poland in spite of verbal attacks on him as well as of assaults and batteries. After one of those violent incidents which took place two months before his death, he published a dramatic announcement:

I declare that next time I will administer justice on my own. I will ask for a right to carry a gun. [...] If I do not get it, I declare that I will appeal to [the League of Nations and the World Court in Hague]. But if even there they do not do me justice, then I will join the *Volksbund*, I will remove my children from the Polish school. After that I will become somebody whom I am not, but you are depicting me like that.²⁰⁵

²⁰² *Ludności Górnos Śląska! Pokaż, że żyjesz i że żyć chcesz!*, GGŚI, No. 8, 20-26 February 1929.

²⁰³ *O Naród śląski i Narodowość [sic!-MJ] śląską*, GGŚI, No 20, 20 May 1932.

²⁰⁴ *Przełomowy czyn w życiu Górnos Ślązaków*, GGŚI, No. 44, 30 October- 5 November 1929.

²⁰⁵ „Oświadczam, że za przyszły napad wymierzę sobie sprawiedliwość sam. Poproszę o prawo do noszenia broni. [...] Jeżeli go nie dostanę to oświadczam, że zwrócę się do [Trybunału w Hadze i Ligii Narodów]. A jeżeli tam dostanę sprawiedliwości, to wstąpię do Volksbundu, odmelduję dzieci z polskiej szkoły, będę potem tym, za którego wy mnie obecnie robicie, czym nie jestem.” *Ku uwadze opinii publicznej całego świata*, GGŚI, No. 21, 27 May 1932.

When Kustos died in July 1932 his newspaper immediately ceased to exist and his political circle disintegrated soon after. The *Sanacja* journal “Western Poland” (“Polska Zachodnia”) wrote instead of obituary that “Jan Kustos dragged a curse of his spiritual hermaphroditism [sic!-MJ] instilled by the education and the policy of Germanization. He was aware that he was not a German but he could not get rid of the German influences. Therefore he promoted the slogan about the “Upper Silesianness.”²⁰⁶

Paradoxically, this nationalistic value judgement of “Polska Zachodnia” subconsciously contained some possible deeper interpretation and explanation for the identity dilemma of Jan Kustos. If we for a moment get rid of that pejorative understanding of the cultural (am)bivalence, we may see that in the Kustos case it really became a grass-root level for his final Upper Silesian self-identification. However it did not happen before the specificity of Upper Silesian bivalence, which he understood as a positive value and distinctive feature of the group identity, became in his eyes slighted and rejected. What is labelled as the “spiritual hermaphroditism” from the perspective of nationalism, from the perspective of the “spiritual hermaphrodite” who lived in the borderland could finally become a strong, distinctive and highlighted attribute of his/her own identity.

²⁰⁶ Zgon Jana Kustosa, „Polska Zachodnia”, No. 211, 30 July 1932, quoted in: Edward Długajczyk, *Sanacja Śląska 1926-39: Zarys dziejów politycznych* (Silesian *Sanacja*: Overview of the Political History), Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1983, p. 231.

Conclusion

Arka Bożek, quoted here few times, even during the Communism was one of commemorated Polish Upper Silesians: there were Brożek streets, squares etc. Unlike Bożek, Jan Kustos was obviously totally absent in the Polish public sphere and even if he was sometimes recalled by local scholars his ideas and deeds were strongly criticized. However, to some extent both of them, Kustos and Brożek expressed Silesian *separateness* and complained about policy of the Polish state in the Silesian Voivodeship. Their cases differ probably in the fact that Brożek till his last days could integrate his strong feeling of Silesian *separateness* with strong Polish national identification. On contrary Kustos at some point of his consistent interpretation of own Silesian identification decided to reject his strong Polish national identity. That explains why Polish state can honour the former and reject the latter. Probably due to the irony of history after the Second World War the daughter of Brożek married the son of Kustos.

The example of similarities between Kustos and Brożek is one of the evidences that Upper Silesian *separateness* could assume different faces and manifestations. Moreover, unity between Silesian *separateness* and Silesian separatism seems to be rather an exception than a rule in the modern history of that land. Silesianness could define itself through the strong confessional identity and deliberate national indifference towards Polish and German

nationalism before the First World War. On the other hand the same characteristics of the Silesian people were the germ and foundation for Upper Silesian political separatism and ethnic nationalism after 1918. Political and economic autonomy for Silesia in the Second Republic of Poland did not prevent Silesia from the policy of national and cultural integration with the Polish State. Finally the demand of a special treatment for Silesia and resistance to the Polish unification policy could be deeply rooted in the Polish nationalism. Even the Kustos concept of the Upper Silesians as a “folk minority”, which emphasised the difference of ethnicity was still not totally cut out from the Polish frames for it.

Even though these various forms of the Silesian identification ripened on the similar social and ethnic background, the historical conditions steered them into different directions. After all, paradoxically, the decision about the understanding of the Upper Silesian group identity was a personal decision. On the basis of the same preconditions a person under the pressure of the history could frame own identification in a various ways. The borderland personality in the face of the national identification possessed the autonomy which was more useful and important than any political autonomous regulation.

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