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THE ECONOMIC HISTORY OF SILESIA IN THE POLISH-GERMAN ACADEMIC DIALOGUE AFTER 1945 (OVERVIEW)

HISTORIA GOSPODARCZA ŚLĄSKA W POLSKO-NIEMIECKIM DIALOGU PO 1945 R. (ZARYS PROBLEMATYKI)

ABSTRACT: The impressive development of industry in Silesia was reflected in many works of Polish and German historians after 1945. Differences in assessments are generally small, and those that do exist are mainly due to different national positions. These differences relate in particular to the crisis situation after 1918 and the division of Upper Silesia. After 1989, evaluations of this kind occur incidentally, and rather just in publications of a popular-science character.

KEYWORDS: history of historiography, Silesia, industrialisation, German-Polish relations

The differences that appeared in academic studies in Poland and Germany between 1949 and 1989 were mainly due to different national approaches. This is a thesis that we will try to prove by quoting a broader fragment of Henryk Olszewski's statement from 2006: "Historiography", wrote a well-known researcher of Polish-German relations, "expresses collective memory, is like the oxygen that nations breathe [...] In particular, the historiography of neighbouring countries is sometimes exposed to the temptation of one-sided or even tendentious approaches; by willingly using myths and stereotypes, it manifests complexes, is biased, and when faced with tasks directed towards it from outside the sphere of science, it wants to be an advocate of *raisons d'état*, and subordinates itself to pressure from

public opinion and pressure from politicians. The history of historiography of German-Polish relations can serve as a clinical example¹. A fragment of them, i.e. the Polish-German historical dialogue on the economic history of Silesia conducted after 1945, should be divided into several time sections and into many thematic areas. In its short outline presented here, not all of these aspects can be addressed with due diligence. Thus, the focus was on the issue related to the industrialisation of Silesia, while refraining from a similar presentation of agriculture, forestry, crafts and trade, which also developed rapidly in the 19th and 20th centuries, i.e. in the period when industrialisation decided about the region's large-scale economic transformation and acceleration of its civilizational development.

When speaking about agriculture, it is worth mentioning that in the 19th century, in the Silesian countryside, there was almost a revolutionary transition to a capitalist economy, which took place as a result of enfranchisement reforms and the modernisation process. Large land estates and farms of rich peasants gradually introduced crop rotation, used machines and artificial fertilizers. This led to a significant increase in yields per hectare of cereal crops, potatoes and industrial plants (rape, flax, sugar beet)². With regard to these then new crops, it should be added that the cultivation of flax and also sheep farming was gradually regressing, due to competition from imported cotton. On the other hand, the cultivation of sugar beet, processed in more and more numerous sugar factories, was growing rapidly. Alongside them, a modernised food industry was being set up, especially breweries, distilleries, mills and dairies. At that time agriculture, as well as the food industry, had to cope with numerous crises – including the deepest economic collapses in 1840s and the 1870s, when the global agrarian crisis appeared. Generally speaking, in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, agricultural production increased very rapidly, and differences in the opinions of Polish and German historians on this issue are practically imperceptible³.

¹ Henryk Olszewski, *Klaus Zernack i jego filozofia historii stosunków niemiecko-polskich*, [in:] Klaus Zernack, *Niemcy–Polska: z dziejów trudnego dialogu historiograficznego*, Poznań 2006, p. 9.

² See e.g. Reinhard Krämer, *Die schlesische Wirtschaft vom ihren Anfängen bis zur Industrialisierung*, [in:] Joachim Bahlcke, *Schlesien und die Schlesier*, München 2000, p. 239. In 1800–1930, the productivity of cereals per hectare doubled and yields increased 2–3 times (for wheat even 8 times). The author stresses that the years 1890–1914 in the area of grain and potato cultivation in Silesia were among the most beneficial (as was the development of industry).

³ See e.g. Kazimierz Popiołek, *Śląskie dzieje*, Warszawa–Kraków 1976, pp. 160–161, 164, 213; Arno Herzig, *Geschichte Schlesiens. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2015,

In the “socialist” period, before German reunification, a distinction must be made between the historical Polish-East German dialogue and the Polish-West German dialogue. The latter, before the signing and ratification of the Warsaw Agreement of December 1970, was clearly unilateral on both sides, so it can hardly be called a dialogue. Each of them made their own statements, presented their own arguments, criticised the researchers of the opposite side and reviewed their publications severely. Mutual personal contacts have been possible since 1971, however, they were relatively rare at that time. The cooperation within the framework of the so-called textbook commission deserves a mention in this period⁴. There was hardly any discussion with East German historians, and H. Olszewski noted that in the first post-war decades “probably the only common particularity of the historical sciences in Poland and West Germany was the unanimous ignoring of unilateral hard-hitting trends in texts published in the GDR”⁵. After the political changes and the reunification of Germany, the conditions for a rapprochement of positions were created. This was all the more possible especially in the 21st century, when the older generation, ‘burdened’ with previously fierce discussion.

In presenting the position of West German historians regarding the industrialisation of Silesia in the 19th and 20th centuries, we must draw attention to a research direction called *Ostforschung* (research of the East). The leading figure of the Silesian *Ostforschung* was Hermann Aubin (1885–1969), professor at the University of Breslau (Wrocław) until 1945. He was not a member of the NSDAP during the Nazi period, but was one of the party’s sympathisers who worked scientifically for totalitarian ideology. After the war he continued his academic career and after 1949 he played an important role in the institutional rebuilding of the history

p. 71; Hans-Jakob Tebarth, *Technischer Fortschritt und sozialer Wandel in deutschen Ostprovinzen Ostpreußen, Westpreußen und Schlesien im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung*, Berlin 1991, pp. 186–187; Marek Czapliński, *Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945*, [in:] Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs, Rościślaw Żerelik, *Historia Śląska*, Wrocław 2002, pp. 268, 310; Piotr Pregiel, Tomasz Przerwa, *Dzieje Śląska*, Wrocław 2005, p. 127; Teresa Kulak, *Dolny Śląsk w latach 1806–1918*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński, Wrocław 2006, pp. 435–436.

⁴ The Polish-West German Commission for School Textbooks on History and Geography was established in 1972. Its activities have been somewhat forgotten, and the achievements in the field of scientific dialogue were, after all, very large. The Recommendations were published in 1977. In both countries in 300,000 copies. See e.g. *Empfehlungen für Schulbücher der Geschichte und Geographie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Volksrepublik Polen, Internationales Jahrbuch für Geschichts- und Geographieunterricht*, vol. 17, Braunschweig 1977, pp. 155–184.

⁵ Olszewski, Klaus Zernack, p. 17. Cf. also Christoph Kleßmann, *DDR-Historiker und “imperialistische Ostforschung”*, “Deutschland-Archiv”, 35 (2002), 1, pp. 13–31.

science in West Germany. In 1950, he was, among others, the founder of the Herder Institute in Marburg and president of its Research Council until 1959, and the publisher of the scholarly journal “Zeitschrift für Ostforschung” (1952–1966), the most important body of Eastern research in West Germany. The creator of Aubin’s academic biography, Eduard Mühle, was very critical of his social activities and in fact repeated the Polish accusations against him of scientific bias – the use of science for political, nationalist purposes⁶. Eduard Mühle described Hermann Aubin’s attitude in the Nazi period as affirmative and cooperative⁷.

Another representatives of the Silesian *Ostforschung* were Ludwig Petry (1908–1991) and Josef Joachim Menzel (born in 1933 in Upper Silesia). The former was a doctoral student of Herman Aubin, a member of the SA since 1933 and of the NSDAP since 1937. Even before the war he worked as an assistant professor at the University of Breslau and from 1950 to 1973 as a professor at the University of Mainz. He was also co-publisher of the “Zeitschrift für Ostforschung”. Despite his Nazi past, he is still considered to be a precursor of research on Silesia in West Germany. Josef J. Menzel was Petry’s assistant and then took up his post as a professor in Mainz in 1972. Like his predecessor, he studied, above all, medieval history. All three of them published a total of three volumes of the history of Silesia, which were reprinted unchanged still in 2000⁸.

The current researchers in the history of Silesia are mainly Arno Herzig and Joachim Bahlcke. Arno Herzig (born 1937 in Albendorf / Wambierzyce) is not considered to be part of the *Ostforschung* trend, because this research direction has clearly taken on a negative character, which has long been pointed out by Polish and East German historians⁹, and for some time now, this has also been emphasised by

⁶ Cf. Eduard Mühle, *Für Volk und Deutschen Osten. Der Historiker Hermann Aubin und die deutsche Ostforschung*, Düsseldorf 2005 (Schriftenreihe des Bundesarchiv, 65). Eduard Mühle was Director of the Herder Institute in Marburg from 1995 to 2002 and Director of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw from 2008 to 2013 – a very important institution for the cooperation of historians from Poland and Germany.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 625: “affirmativ-kollaborativ” in German.

⁸ *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 1: *Von der Urzeit bis zum Jahre 1526*, eds. Ludwig Petry and Hermann Aubin, Sigmaringen 1960; *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 2: *Die Habsburger Zeit 1526–1740*, eds. Ludwig Petry, Josef J. Menzel, Sigmaringen 1960; *Geschichte Schlesiens*, vol. 3: *Preußisch-Schlesien 1740–1945, Österreichisch-Schlesien 1740–1918/1945*, ed. Josef J. Menzel, Stuttgart 1999.

⁹ It is difficult to describe here the complexity of the *Ostforschung* problem. A comprehensive and accurate analysis of it can be found in: Eduard Mühle, “*Ostforschung*”. *Beobachtungen zu Aufstieg und Niedergang eines geschichtswissenschaftlichen Paradigmas*, “Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung”, 46 (1997), pp. 317–350. From older Polish literature, see e.g. Gerard Labuda, *Stare i nowe tendencje w historiografii zachodniemieckiej*, “Przegląd Zachodni”, 1956, pp. 224–252;

historians of the united Germany¹⁰. This is due to the fact that Arno Herzig has a very open approach to the history of his homeland and cooperates with Polish researchers¹¹. In his history of Silesia, he is very critical of the Nazi rule, and his assessments are devoid of any nationalist, anti-Polish accents, even when describing the Silesian uprisings and the division of Upper Silesia in 1921¹².

Joachim Bahlcke is much younger (born in 1963), but like the ones mentioned earlier, he is engaged in the organisational activities of historical institutions, including those connected with the history of Silesia, such as the Historical Commission for Silesia (Historische Kommission für Schlesien) and Herder-Institut. He regularly cooperates with Polish and Czech researchers, but it should be admitted that his history *Schlesien und Schlesier*, translated into Polish as *Śląsk i Ślązacy (Silesia and Silesians)*¹³, was written primarily for the “expellees” and he considers rather those who left the area after 1945 to be Silesians¹⁴. On the

Jacek Sobczak, *Przegląd ważniejszych ośrodków tzw. Ostforschung w NRF*, “Przegląd Zachodni”, 1959, pp. 439–461; Wacław Długoborski, *Śląsk w oczach zachodniemieckiej Ostforschung*, Katowice 1962; Józef Szłapczyński, Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Nauka w służbie ekspansji i rewizjonizmu (Ostforschung)*, Warszawa 1969. In East Germany, there was a special institute for research on the “imperialist Ostforschung”. See Hans Elsner, *Abteilung für Geschichte der imperialistischen Ostforschung*, [in:] *Osteuropa in der historischen Forschung der DDR*, vol. 1: *Darstellungen*, ed. Manfred Hellmann, Düsseldorf 1972, s. 123–131.

¹⁰ See e.g. Mühle, “Ostforschung”; Karl Arne, *Das Erbe der Ostforschung. Zur Rolle Göttingens in der Geschichtswissenschaft der Nachkriegszeit*, Marburg 2002 and the review of the recent work: Hans-Christian Petersen, Rezension zu: Karl Arne, *Das Erbe der Ostforschung. Zur Rolle Göttingens in der Geschichtswissenschaft der Nachkriegszeit*, Marburg 2002, “H-Soz-Kult”, 12 XIII 2003, www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-5032 (access: 22 XII 2019). Among the West German historians who tried to change the character of Eastern research as early as the 1950s and 1960s, the following are mentioned Walter Schlesinger, Eugen Lemberg, Christoph Kleßmann, Klaus Zernack, Gotthold Rhode, then also Hans Hennig Hahn and Rudolf Jaworski.

¹¹ Arno Herzig, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, Małgorzata Ruchniewicz, *Śląsk i jego dzieje*, Wrocław 2012.

¹² Herzig, *Geschichte Schlesiens*, pp. 88–91.

¹³ Joachim Bahlcke, *Śląsk i Ślązacy*, transl. Michał Misiorny, Zofia Rybicka, Warszawa 2001.

¹⁴ *Idem*, *Schlesien und die Schlesier*; In fact, this is a collective work of 6 authors, and part of Joachim Bahlcke accounts for about 45% of the total. See the opinion of M. Czaplinski: “It turned out that one of the German histories of Silesia has been translated into Polish and widely distributed, a book by Joachim Bahlcke, *Śląsk i Ślązacy*. All the more so given that Professor Bahlcke, whom I know and respect, has written it for a specific reader. He wrote it for those who, as the Germans say, were expelled from these lands. [...] At many points, I cannot agree with Professor Bahlcke’s book. Professor Bahlcke, who is regarded as a modern historian, took a number of facts from literature from years that we don’t approve of, from German literature, especially from the inter-war or Nazi years”. For: Wojciech Trojanowski, *O „Historii Śląska” Marka Czaplńskiego*, http://web.archive.org/web/20120626030418/http://www.miastowroclaw.pl:80/index.php?option=com%20_content&view

cover of this publication a somewhat biased opinion (with an exclamation mark at the end) was quoted by Monika Glettler, professor at the University of Freiburg in 1994–2002 (review in the journal “Bohemia”): “Looking at the whole picture, the authors have achieved [...] a remarkable accomplishment, especially since the history of Silesia after World War II was proclaimed as the domain of Polish historiography, which by unilaterally emphasizing the links between Silesia and Poland tried to convey a false image of Polish continuation. Also for this reason this book is important!”¹⁵. Joachim Bahlcke also published a collective study on the history of Silesia¹⁶ and moreover, together with Dan Gawrecki and Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Historia Górnego Śląska (History of Upper Silesia)*, which established his position as an expert in the history of the Silesian region, cooperating with Polish and Czech researchers¹⁷.

It is worth noting at this point, at least in a few sentences, Klaus Zernack, one of the most eminent German researchers. He is the author and propagator of the term ‘negative Polenpolitik’, which indicates, in particular, Frederick II’s destructive policy towards the Rzeczypospolita and ‘undermines’ at the same time the myth of the ‘Great’ Frederick¹⁸. Zernack has educated many outstanding scholars who are also engaged in a positive historical dialogue with Polish researchers. In the 1970s, he participated in the work of the Polish-German Textbook Commission and publicly defended its conclusions in Germany. He also supported the departure of the Herder Institute in Marburg from the *Ostforschung* principles.

=[article&id=182:o-historii-lska-marka-czaplińskiego-&catid=14:%20artykuly&Itemid=98](#) (access: 22 XII 2019). J. Bahlcke’s name in the quote was “polonized”.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, last page on the book’s wrapper: “Aufs Ganze gesehen ist den Autoren ... eine höchst bemerkenswerte Leistung geglückt, zumal die Geschichte Schlesiens nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zu einer Domäne der polnischen Geschichtswissenschaft erklärt wurde, die durch das einseitige Hervorheben der Verbindungen Schlesiens mit Polen ein falsches Bild polnischer Kontinuität vermitteln wollte. Auch deshalb kommt diesem Buch eine wichtige Bedeutung zu!”. Transl. L. C. Belzyt.

¹⁶ *Historische Schlesienforschung. Methoden, Themen und Perspektiven zwischen traditioneller Landesgeschichtsschreibung und moderner Kulturwissenschaft*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, Köln–Weimar–Wien 2005.

¹⁷ *Historia Górnego Śląska. Polityka, gospodarka i kultura europejskiego regionu*, eds. Joachim Bahlcke, Dan Gawrecki, Ryszard Kaczmarek, Gliwice 2011. This study was highly rated by Marek Czaplinski in his review: “it increases knowledge [...] of the history of Upper Silesia, free from political, ethnic or religious prejudice”. See: <http://frodo.com.pl/portfolio/na-papierze/publikacje-ksi%C4%85%C5%BCkowie/historia.html> (access: 22 XII 2019).

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. Zernack, *Niemcy-Polska; idem, Preußen – Deutschland – Polen. Aufsätze zur Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen*, eds. Wolfram Fischer, Michael G. Müller, Berlin 1991 (*Historische Forschungen*, 44).

After World War II, several studies on the history of Silesia were published in Poland. The first of these, by Kazimierz Piwowski, was published as early as 1947¹⁹. Next, there were publications by Kazimierz Popiołek²⁰ and the team led by Stanisław Michalkiewicz²¹. All of them, published during the period of real socialism, sinned by a more or less pro-Polish and anti-German attitude. However, in many areas – this is especially true of the collective work under the direction of Stanisław Michalkiewicz – they are very solid and astonishing in their meticulousness, but without exception they consider Silesia (sometimes even East Prussia) to be the Prussian partition and promote the ‘liberation’ of Silesia in 1945²².

After 1990, those historians who tried to present the German-Polish relations of the past in a reliable way also increasingly often made their voices heard in Poland. At that time, several monographs on the history of Silesia were prepared. In 2002, *Historia Śląska (History of Silesia)* was published by Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs and Rościsław Żerelik²³. Three years later, Piotr Pregiel and Tomasz Przerwa published a popular (and shorter) study²⁴, and in 2006 a monograph on Lower Silesia edited by Wojciech Wrzesiński²⁵ was released. These works demonstrate – in comparison with the previously mentioned ones – objectivity and try not to expose the pro-Polish interpretation of the history of the Silesian province²⁶. Marek Czapliński, said, for example: “The Polish-German national struggle spread into history, it spread into the study of history. Everyone

¹⁹ Kazimierz Piwowski, *Historia Śląska w zarysie*, Katowice–Wrocław 1947.

²⁰ Kazimierz Popiołek, *Historia Śląska od pradziejów do 1945 roku*, Katowice 1972; Popiołek, *Śląskie dzieje*.

²¹ The history of Silesia (*Historia Śląska*) published by the Polish Academy of Sciences (Polska Akademia Nauk) consists of three volumes, of which we are interested here in two parts of volume 3: *Historia Śląska*, vol. 3: 1850–1918, part 1: 1850–1890, ed. Stanisław Michalkiewicz, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1976, and *Historia Śląska*, vol. 3: 1850–1918, part. 2: 1891–1918, ed. Stanisław Michalkiewicz, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1985.

²² See e.g. *Historia Śląska*, vol. 3, pp. 134, 148; Popiołek, *Śląskie dzieje*, pp. 503–509.

²³ Czapliński, Kaszuba, Wąs, Żerelik, *Historia Śląska*.

²⁴ Pregiel, Przerwa, *Dzieje Śląska*.

²⁵ *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, Wrocław 2006.

²⁶ See, e.g., review of *Historia Śląska*: Tomasz Jurek, Review: Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs, Rościsław Żerelik, *Historia Śląska*, Wrocław 2002, pp. 612, “Roczniki Historyczne”, 68 (2002), pp. 264–268. Its author severely assesses Żerelik’s part concerning the Middle Ages. He thinks that part of M. Czapliński (years 1806–1945) shows maximum objectivity, also with regard to difficult issues, such as the Silesian uprisings, the plebiscite, the expulsion of Germans after 1945 and the takeover of administration in the area by the Polish Catholic Church. He writes that M. Czapliński noted “specific protocols of discrepancies between the views of Polish and German researchers”. (p. 267).

had to prove to themselves what role they played, and they did not see what the other side had accomplished here"²⁷. To this list should be added a very balanced, five-volume work in English, *Cuius regio?*, which covered the entire history of Silesia, from around 1000 to 2000. It was edited in 2015 by Lucyna Harc, Przemysław Wiszewski and Rościśław Żerelik²⁸.

The Polish-German dialogue on the industrialisation of Silesia in the period up to 1945 was less conflicting than that on the whole of Silesian history. Differences of opinion in historical works appeared mainly in descriptions of the division of Upper Silesia in 1922. Additional discrepancies were noted in the assessment of periods of collapse, stagnation and prosperity in the industry and in the presentation of economic results in particular industries, which were not split according to the criteria of national researchers. They were more determined by the professionalism of the individual publications. It is worth presenting evaluations of several of the most important studies.

Hans-Jakob Tebarth based his work, published in 1991, mainly on the existing literature of the problem, including also the older one from the 19th century. He also made use of statistical data from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, but completely skipped archival documents²⁹. He draws attention to the development of the textile industry after its crisis in the second quarter of the 19th century (the Silesian Weavers' Uprising in 1844), caused by the influx of cheaper goods from England. In the second half of the 19th century, this sector became the second largest and economically important in Silesia after heavy industry. The author lists

²⁷ Trojanowski, O „Historii Śląska” Marka Czaplńskiego.

²⁸ *Cuius regio? Ideological and Territorial Cohesion of the Historical Region of Silesia (c. 1000–2000)*, eds. Lucyna Harc, Przemysław Wiszewski, Rościśław Żerelik, vol. 1–5, Wrocław 2013–2015.

²⁹ H.-J. Tebarth refers, among others, to the work of a researcher of the Upper Silesian economy: Kurt Fuchs, *Vom Dirigismus zum Liberalismus. Die Entwicklung Oberschlesiens als preußisches Berg- und Hüttenrevier. Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte Deutschlands im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 1970; Kurt Fuchs, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte Oberschlesiens 1871–1945. Aufsätze*, Dortmund 1981. The lack of sources from the Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin-Dahlem is particularly problematic for the part that deals with the ethnic structure of the eastern Prussian provinces. However, it must be acknowledged that this author avoids biased interpretations of statistical results. The picture he presents of the ethnic structure of East and West Prussia and Silesia without a proper correction of statistical data is far from reality. For example, he wrongly praises the 1861 census. See Tebarth, *Technischer Fortschritt*, p. 149. On this subject, see Leszek C. Belzyt, *Pruska statystyka językowa (1825–1911) a Polacy zaboru pruskiego, Mazur i Śląska*, Zielona Góra 2013.

a dozen or so centres, including Zielona Góra (Grünberg), but omits important regional centres such as Żagań (Sagan) and Nowa Sól (Neusalz an der Oder).

The period of initial industrialisation in the second half of the 18th century in Upper Silesia, supported by the Prussian government, is assessed by him rather low, and he points to the small number of mines and miners. He recognises, in turn, the development of ironworks in the area at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, caused by the demand from the army. He acknowledges Upper Silesia as the leading iron and steel producer in Prussia until the mid-19th century. It likewise highly values zinc mining and smelting – but he does so, in just two sentences: “Still in 1850, 50% of iron in the whole of Prussia was produced in Silesia, but after 1857 the production of the Ruhr region was already dominant”³⁰. Generally speaking, he states that the heavy industry of Upper Silesia was characterized by stagnation until the 1840s, and the situation changed after the construction of railway connections. At the same time, the metallurgical industry was switching en masse to coke, in the production of which Upper Silesia was also the leader, definitely ahead of the Ruhr area (only during the introduction of steam machines). The structurally unilateral development of industry in Upper Silesia (mainly semi-finished products were exported) caused deeper economic crises, as for example after 1873 (Gründerzeitkrise) and in 1882 and 1893³¹. Tebarth also mentions the significant participation of landowners in industrialisation, which he even considers to be somewhat negative, as it shows a lack of financiers and rich merchants among the burghers. He says that at the beginning of World War I as many as 7 of the 10 richest Germans came from Upper Silesia, headed by Count Henckel von Donnarsmarck, Duke von Pless and Duke von Hohenlohe³².

In the aforementioned study by J. Bahlcke, *Schlesien und Schlesier*, the economic issues was elaborated by Reinhard Krämer. He also drew attention to the fact that the breakthrough initiating the development of great industry in Upper Silesia took place in the middle of the 19th century, when the problem of communication was solved, i.e. the establishment of a network of railway connections³³. The industry in Upper Silesia only managed to survive the years of crisis, lasting from the Napoleonic Wars to the mid-1840s, thanks to the impressive development of the zinc industry.

³⁰ Tebarth, *Technischer Fortschritt*, pp. 189–190, 192: “In 1850, 50% of iron in the whole of Prussia was still being produced in Silesia, but after 1857 production in the Ruhr was already higher”.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 193.

³³ Krämer, *Die schlesische Wirtschaft*, p. 232.

In 1821, there were 33 zinc works there, and in the 1860s, already 40% of world production of this metal was produced there³⁴. He does not mention the severe crisis of 1830 and points out that the industrialisation of Silesia was a special case because of the involvement of large landowners. However, it was only the inflow of capital after 1871 – from contributions after Germany’s victory over France – enabled greater investment in Upper Silesia³⁵. He also pointed out the development of industry in the Wałbrzych–Nowa Ruda Basin (Walmbrig / Waldenburg Neurode Becken), which – in his opinion – recorded a “breathhtaking development” after 1871, lasting until 1909. Annual coal output increased in the years 1850 to 1909, from 378,000 tonnes to 5.6 million tonnes³⁶. The third Silesian industrial centre was Wrocław (Breslau), the largest urban centre in eastern Germany. The Linke-Hofmann-Werke wagon factory, established in 1839, was the most significant plant there.

With regard to the division of Upper Silesia in 1922, he writes about “significant losses of German heavy industry”³⁷. However, he pointed out that in 1940 there was an increase in coal output in the whole of the already ‘united’ Upper Silesia, among other things thanks to modernisation³⁸. This view was supported by certain figures, but it was left without comment, so it sounds a little provocative to Poles³⁹. For the Third Reich, during the War, the economic importance of the region increased, as it was not bombed until 1945, so many industrial plants from western Germany, producing synthetic petrol and armaments, among other things, were moved to this region. R. Krämer also expressed the opinion that after the conquest of Upper Silesia by the Red Army on 30th January 1945 the economic and military fate (sic!) of the whole Germany was already determined⁴⁰.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 234.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 235. On page 236, however, the author states that after 1871 German heavy industry remained in deep crisis for the next 20 years. This position differs from his earlier opinions and partly from his later ones!

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 237. This assessment is contrary to the viewpoint given on the previous page (p. 236).

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 241.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 243–244: “Eine wichtige Vorgabe erhielt die Bergwerksverwaltung Oberschlesiens im Frühjahr des Kriegsjahres 1940. Die Förderleistung auf den Zechen, die in der Friedenszeit noch bei 58 000 t täglich gelegen hatte, sollte möglichst schnell auf 100 000 t, später sogar auf 120 000 t gesteigert werden. Begleitet wurden diese Forderungen von einem umfassenden Modernisierungsprogramm, das die technischen Möglichkeiten des Untertagebetriebs auf den Zechen erweiterte”.

³⁹ The author refers to the work: Volker Hentschel, *Deutsche Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik 1815–1945*, Düsseldorf 1980, pp. 68–69.

⁴⁰ Krämer, *Die schlesische Wirtschaft*, p. 244.

Arno Herzig also outlines the process of industrialisation of Silesia and states that the Napoleon's continental blockade guaranteed a short period of prosperity for the textile industry, while the war of 1813–1814 caused a significant increase in production in Upper Silesian heavy industry⁴¹. After the opening of European markets in 1815, the Silesian economy found itself again in a structural crisis. It was only the railway connection to Upper Silesia in 1845 that caused the development of the local industry and the second largest basin in Germany emerged there⁴².

The development of weaving industry was stimulated by a Jewish industrialist, Salomon Kaufmann, who supplied 5 of his factories with modern weaving machines, whose production after 1851 brought Silesia to the leading position in Germany⁴³. A. Herzig points out, like other researchers, that large landowners were those who invested in industry. He notes this fact without any special assessment, but adds that they belonged to the richest families in Germany, but “their subjects in mines and estates were among the poorest”⁴⁴. Apart from the Upper Silesian Basin, he also mentions the Wałbrzych–Nowa Ruda Basin and states that in 1910, the former extracted 40 million tonnes of coal annually and the latter only about 6 million. In Lower Silesia, industry was mainly invested in by bourgeois merchants and financiers, so Wrocław and smaller towns were developing simultaneously, where machine, chemical, wood, ceramic, glass, paper, food and spirits industries were being established. In the Karkonosze Mountains (Riesengebirge) and Kłodzko Valley (Glatzer Kessel), the tourist and resort industry developed on a large scale⁴⁵.

Among the Polish researchers who represented the nationalist, sometimes also “Marxist” view of the history of Silesia, one can mention Kazimierz Popiołek, who regarded the whole of Silesia as “Polish lands”, according to the post-war canon of Polish “official” historiography⁴⁶. He stresses that in the mid-18th century coal mining in the Wałbrzych Basin was ten times higher than in Upper Silesia, and in 1800, still four times higher⁴⁷. In the Napoleonic period the local ironworks

⁴¹ Herzig, *Geschichte Schlesiens*, p. 72. The author does not explain this in more detail, but he probably meant iron and steel production and not the development of mining.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 73, and p. 74, where he writes: “Als Großindustrielle und Großgrundbesitzer zählten die oberschlesischen Adligen zu den reichsten Familien in Deutschland, ihre Untertanen in den Gruben und auf den Gütern allerdings zu den ärmsten”.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

⁴⁶ Popiołek, *Śląskie dzieje*, p. 164.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

worked for the army and soon Upper Silesia was the best developed economically “among Polish lands”⁴⁸. Later, English competition led to difficulties in selling, and it was only in the 1840s that the situation improved, thanks to the imposition of a duty by the Prussian state on imports of pig iron⁴⁹. Already in 1841, 40% of the pig iron in the Prussian state was produced in Upper Silesia, the situation was worse in steel production. The author estimates that the transition to coke was at a slower pace than in Western Europe⁵⁰, yet Tebarth has a different view on this issue, as mentioned earlier. K. Ash also expresses the opinion that in the first half of the 19th century “the decline of the Silesian textile industry continued and deepened”, although he partially contradicts this categorical statement on the following pages⁵¹. However, like other researchers, he points to the “serious development of Upper Silesian industry” in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He determinates the crisis periods between 1857–1859, 1873–1875 and 1900–1902⁵². Nevertheless, looking at the longer term, he recognises that coal mining and the production of pig iron and steel has increased rapidly.

The Silesian Uprisings 1919–1920–1921 are evaluated very positively by Popiołek and he writes about the victorious Third Uprising, pointing out the political pressure and falsifications during the plebiscite on the German side. The division of Upper Silesia in 1922 was, in his opinion, partly unfair, as was seen also by some German researchers, but from a different perspective⁵³. He admits that the Polish side received most of the industrial potential of the Upper Silesian region, but since German ownership was still preserved there, the most disadvantaged part was the ‘masses of people’. Especially the Upper Silesian workers, whose social situation has not changed much in Poland. In the interwar period, “German capital played an extremely detrimental role in Poland in both the economic and national fields”⁵⁴. In turn, Zbigniew Kwaśny, who specialised in the research of Silesian industry, published a quite balanced study in 1983⁵⁵. He confirms many of the facts mentioned by K. Popiołek, and makes a factual analysis of the various branches of industry.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p 209.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 165.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 166.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 169.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 205. Likewise, in a previous publication: Popiołek, *Historia Śląska*, p. 209.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 352–361 and 371–372.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 379.

⁵⁵ Zbigniew Kwaśny, *Rozwój przemysłu na Górnym Śląsku w pierwszej połowie XIX wieku*, Wrocław 1983.

In principle, the author is not interested in polemics with German researchers, so the work is devoid of particular anti-German accents. Z. Kwaśny highlighted the unilateral development of the Upper Silesian industry⁵⁶ and the particularly low level of working wages, as compared to other areas of Germany. However, he assessed it rather positively, because food commodities were also cheap there and so there was considerable stabilisation of real wages⁵⁷. Stanisław Michalkiewicz, in *Historia Śląska* vol. 3, also refers to industrial development and despite numerous anti-German accents in the whole volume, his analysis of the industrialisation process is extremely thorough and belongs to the most solid parts of the whole study. He stresses the diversity of industrial branches and the varied pace of both sectoral and territorial development. Like other researchers, S. Michalkiewicz points to the years of economic crises in 1873, 1890 and 1900–1903⁵⁸. He does not avoid certain inconsistencies in this regard, for example in the assessment of the time when 20 million tonnes of coal were mined in Upper Silesia⁵⁹.

In *Historia Śląska* under the editorship of Marek Czapliński from 2002, Gabriela Wąs points out that the policy of the Prussian state in the second half of the 18th century in Upper Silesia did not yield many results (Hans-Jakob Tebarth expressed a similar view) and more private landowners invested there. In 1806, the value of mining and metallurgy production represented only 10% of canvas production and 30% of cloth production⁶⁰. According to M. Czapliński, this intensive industrialisation of Silesia “is one of the most difficult epochs for the inhabitants of the province who were forced to switch from the feudal to the capitalist system at an accelerated pace”⁶¹. He notes that the Napoleonic continental blockade has brought more damage than the benefits for textile production (unlike Arno Herzig)⁶². He also stresses, like other researchers, that initially the driving force of heavy industry in Upper Silesia was the zinc metallurgy, which nevertheless experienced

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 267.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 268.

⁵⁸ *Historia Śląska*, vol. 3, pp. 169–170.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 169–171. In addition, he is no longer, rightly, considered Gubin (Guben) as part of Silesia, but includes Żary (Sorau) and Lubsko (Sommerfeld), which also undoubtedly belonged to Lower Lusatia.

⁶⁰ Gabriela Wąs, *Dzieje Śląska od 1526 do 1806 roku*, [in:] *Historia Śląska*, pp. 234–235.

⁶¹ Czapliński, *Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945 roku*, p. 250.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 252.

a severe crisis in 1830 (62% decrease in production!)⁶³. The analysis of the process of economic development in the history of Silesia is very solid, as it draws attention to all major branches and even smaller industrial centres (such as Zielona Góra and Żagań) – not only the Upper Silesia, Wrocław and the Sudeten Industrial District (with the Wałbrzych–Nowa Ruda Basin). He describes the Silesian uprisings, the plebiscite and division of Upper Silesia without nationalistic accents⁶⁴. He stresses the really difficult economic situation of the German part of Silesia after 1921⁶⁵. His assessment of the internal situation during the Nazi period is characteristic and he claims that: “Poles are often inclined to see Germany of that time as one big concentration camp. The reality was more varied. Many Silesians benefited from the growing economic prosperity and could enjoy life”⁶⁶. M. Czapliński also stresses, like R. Krämer, that between 1940 and 1943 there was a significant increase in production in the “whole” Upper Silesia, but points out that this was due to slave labour of prisoners and forced labourers in “terrible conditions”⁶⁷.

Industrialisation is also mentioned by the authors of *Dzieje Śląska (History of Silesia)* from 2005, Piotr Pregiel and Tomasz Przerwa. Their work is not as detailed as the previously discussed publications. They also – like Marek Czapliński, among others – evaluate the Napoleon’s continental blockade as a very unfavourable phenomenon for the Silesian textile industry⁶⁸. Although the crises of the economy in the second half of the 19th century is not noticed in the book, it nevertheless draws attention to the most important problems of industrialisation in Silesia. It is an astonishingly balanced study, without any anti-German accents, and in the case of the Silesian Uprisings it highlights, among other things, cases of rape and terror on both sides⁶⁹. The division of Upper Silesia in 1922 is considered to be a success of the Polish side – due to obtaining the most of industry infrastructure and resources of coal, zinc ore, lead and iron⁷⁰. The authors do not write about the “liberation”

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 266. Similar opinion: Adam Frużyński, *Industrializacja Górnego Śląska do 1922 roku*, [in:] *Encyklopedia Województwa Śląskiego*, 2016, vol. 3, pp. 7–8, available online: [http://ibrbs.pl/mediawiki/index.php/Kategoria:Tom_3_\(2016\)](http://ibrbs.pl/mediawiki/index.php/Kategoria:Tom_3_(2016)) (access: 28 XII 2019).

⁶⁴ Czapliński, *Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945 roku*, pp. 358–360.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 366–367.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 391.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 409–410.

⁶⁸ Pregiel, Przerwa, *Dzieje Śląska*, p. 113.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 144–147.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 147.

of Silesia in 1945 (only for captives and prisoners)⁷¹, and they mention the “tragedy” of the Germans in 1945 in a very balanced way⁷².

In the monograph *Dolny Śląsk (Lower Silesia)* from 2006, Teresa Kulak took up the problem we are interested in. She presents the industrialisation in this area (i.e. without Upper Silesia) until 1918 in a concrete way and draws particular attention to the dominant role of the textile industry which developed in many centres. In the second half of the 19th century, it employed almost 24% of workers (the most in the “rebuilt”, after the crisis in the first half of the 19th century, linen branch)⁷³. Heavy industry (mining, machinery and metal industries) was the second most important sector, employing almost 17% of the workforce, and then, due to agriculture dominating in the Lower Silesian province, over 14% was employed by the food industry – especially sugar factories, distilleries and breweries⁷⁴. She also highlights the crisis during the First World War, when the arms industry in Lower Silesia, as well as the leather and tobacco industries developed for the needs of the military. However, the previously developing agricultural machinery industry was “forgotten” when men and horses were sent to the front, so most branches of industrial production suffered from a lack of raw materials and the population from a lack of food⁷⁵.

Teresa Kulak presented similar theses on the economic development of Silesia in one of the chapters of the five-volume work *Cuius regio?*. It should be added that she included Upper Silesia to her research. She drew attention to the protective policy of Frederick II and his successor, Frederick William II, in relation to the local mining and metallurgy. The latter was supported due to the needs of the army⁷⁶. This author also highlights the huge increase in zinc production in the first half of the nineteenth century (40 percent of the world production) and a very rapid increase in coal mining and steel production in the second half of this century. She also cites figures indicating the concentration of enterprises in these industries – the number of mines and ironworks was clearly decreasing, with rapidly increasing

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 172.

⁷² *Ibidem*, pp. 173–176.

⁷³ Kulak, *Dolny Śląsk*, p. 431.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 432–435.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 463–465.

⁷⁶ Teresa Kulak, *The economy and socioeconomic processes in the Silesia region (from the mid-18th century to 1918)*, [in:] *Silesia under the Authority of the Hohenzollerns (1741–1918)*, eds. Lucyna Harc, Teresa Kulak, Wrocław 2015 (*Cuius regio? Ideological and Territorial Cohesion of the Historical Region of Silesia (c. 1000–2000)*, 3), pp. 73–74.

production and the number of workers⁷⁷. In the fourth volume of the aforementioned study, Miron Urbaniak in a very objective way, without national prejudices, shows the division of Silesia after World War I, noting that Poland had the largest part of the industrial potential. In addition, he points to numerous complications for all the countries in the area: Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland⁷⁸.

At the end of the reflection on the industrialisation of Silesia, it is worth noting the publication of Yaman Kouli, who takes an unusual approach to this question⁷⁹. This is a comparative work in the fields of history, sociology and economics (it also includes human capital management), and part of its title – “failed [industrial] reconstruction of Lower Silesia” – suggests a research conclusion from the very beginning. The main thesis of the author is that due to the displacement (the author speaks about the “expulsion”) of German professionals and workers in 1945-1950, new residents unfamiliar with industrial production arrived in Lower Silesia, so it was not possible to achieve the economic “miracle” till 1956, which marked itself in the economies of Western Europe. At the same time, it tries to prove that the destruction, robbery and dismantling in 1945 was not too great and could not have affected the failure of the post-war “reconstruction”. By emphasising the role of “human capital” in economic development, he underestimates the extent of economic losses in Lower Silesia. It also does not take into account the political and systemic conditions of the time, including the effects of the presence of Soviet troops, which were located in the Lower Silesian area. These circumstances could not have been conducive to economic development requiring decision-making autonomy, especially modernisation of industry. Jaromir Balcar, a reviewer of Yaman Kouli’s book, emphasises, first and foremost, that he overly absolutises his thesis on the “central importance of knowledge networking for production”, or in the original: “Zudem

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 89.

⁷⁸ Miron Urbaniak, *Integrating and disintegrating factors for the economy of Silesia in the interwar period*, [in:] *Region Divided. Times of Nation-States (1918–1945)*, eds. Marek Czapliński, Przemysław Wiszewski, Wrocław 2015 (Cuius regio? Ideological and Territorial Cohesion of the Historical Region of Silesia (c. 1000–2000), 4), pp. 70–72. The author consistently uses the names of places not only in Polish and German, but also in Czech.

⁷⁹ Yaman Kouli, *Wissen und nach-industrielle Produktion. Das Beispiel der gescheiterten Rekonstruktion Niederschlesiens 1936–1956*, Stuttgart 2014. Polish transl.: *idem*, *Dolny Śląsk 1936–1956. Szybki rozwój i nieudana odbudowa. Wpływ wiedzy na produkcję przemysłową*, transl. Tomasz Dominiak, Warszawa 2018.

verabsolutiert Kouli seine These von der Zentralen Bedeutung der Wissensnetzwerke für die Produktion”⁸⁰.

Polish and German historiographies after 1945 initially showed significant differences in the interpretation of Silesian history. They were connected, among others, with the continuation of the so-called *Ostforschung* trend in West Germany and, on the other hand, with the introduction of Marxist historiography in Poland and East Germany. It is clear that immediately after the war, there were strong anti-German nationalist accents in Poland, just like in the GDR there was a strong criticism of the ‘rematchism and imperialism’ of West German historians who ‘practised the *Ostforschung*’. After 1989, the positions of Polish and German historians are becoming increasingly similar, although assessing the pace of this convergence of views is more complicated. This is partly due to the fact that many historians on both sides of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse have already presented different attitudes, more open than the officially dominant ones. Even today, there are sometimes “traditional” attitudes and “national” statements. As an example of the latter, we can mention on the German side both the aforementioned publication by J. Bahlcke *Schlesien und Schlesier* and also the publications of the Federation of Expellees, e.g. Helmut Neubach’s 1996 publication⁸¹. On the Polish side, in turn, we can mention Stefan Mizi’s 1997 popular science booklet⁸². In it, Julian Janczak, “Instead of an introduction”, wrote unambiguously: “The author presents the Polish point of view on the past of the Silesian land, and let’s say it openly, although with great regret that lately it has not always been fashionable and well seen! A deep patriotism speaks through him...”⁸³.

As far as the industrialisation of Silesia is concerned, it should be stated that both Polish and German historians describe the processes taking place in Silesia

⁸⁰ Jaromir Balcar, Review: Kouli, Yaman, *Wissen und nach-industrielle Produktion. Das Beispiel der gescheiterten Rekonstruktion Niederschlesiens 1936–1956*, Stuttgart 2014, [in:] H-Soz-Kult, 19 II 2015, www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-21491 (access: 28 XII 2019).

⁸¹ Helmut Neubach, *Kleine Geschichte Schlesiens*, ed. Bund der Vertriebenen, Bonn 1996 (Kulturstelle Arbeitshefte, 24). He writes about the Silesian uprisings in quotation marks, about the great losses after the division of Upper Silesia in 1921 and about the “industrial basin torn apart by violence” (p. 14).

⁸² Stefan Mizia, *Historia Śląska. Popularny zarys dziejów*, Wrocław 1997. On the division of Upper Silesia in 1921, he writes that “as a result of German machinations” Poland was granted only 30% of the plebiscite area (p. 40). He does not mention anything about the results of the plebiscite, nor about granting Poland the vast majority of Upper Silesian industry. In his opinion, in 1945 the whole of “Silesia was liberated” (p. 41).

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 4.

during the 19th and early 20th centuries in a similar way. Apart from insignificant differences, they describe almost the same chronology of prosperity and crises that have affected heavy industry, textiles and other industries, and describe their causes in much the same way. The differences found in the studies are more often due to the degree of research soundness (it happens that, for example, the authors contradict themselves or approach the problem in a superficial way) than to nationality. Only on the issue of the division of Upper Silesia and its industrial potential in 1922 the evaluations are nationally differentiated, but – recently – without any more severe antagonistic accents. Thus, it can be concluded that the thesis put forward at the beginning of the article is basically correct in assessing the overall approach to the history of Silesia, but with regard to Polish-German analyses concerning the industrialisation of this district, it has only partially proved true. It is worth noting at the end that the differences in the opinions of Polish and German historians are most noticeable in publications from 1945–1989.

STRESZCZENIE

Historiografia polska i niemiecka po 1945 r. początkowo wykazywały znaczne różnice w interpretacji dziejów Śląska. Związane to było m.in. z kontynuacją w Niemczech Zachodnich nurtu tzw. *Ostforschung*, a z drugiej strony z wprowadzaniem historiografii marksistowskiej w Polsce i w Niemczech Wschodnich. W Polsce silne były nacjonalistyczne akcenty antyniemieckie, a w NRD ostro krytykowano „rewanżyzm i imperializm” historyków z RFN, którzy „uprawiali *Ostforschung*”. Po 1989 r. stanowiska historyków polskich i niemieckich coraz bardziej są podobne do siebie, chociaż problem tempa przemian jest sprawą bardziej skomplikowaną. Między innymi dlatego, że wielu historyków po obu stronach Odry i Nysy Łużyckiej już wcześniej prezentowało inne, bardziej otwarte, postawy od dominujących oficjalnie. Z drugiej strony i dzisiaj zdarzają się postawy „tradycyjne”, zabarwione „narodowo”. W sprawie uprzemysłowienia Śląska stwierdzić należy, że zarówno historycy polscy, jak i niemieccy w podobny sposób opisują występujące tam procesy w XIX i na początku XX w. Poza nieistotnymi różnicami prawie tak samo określają chronologię okresów koniunktury i kryzysów, które dotyczyły przemysł ciężki, włókienniczy i inne, mniej istotne gałęzie, a ponadto podobnie opisują ich przyczyny. Występujące w opracowaniach dyferencje częściej wynikają ze stopnia solidności badawczej (kiedy np. autorzy sami sobie przeczą lub pobieżnie podchodzą do problemu) niż przynależności narodowej. Jedyne w sprawie podziału Górnego Śląska i jego potencjału przemysłowego w 1921 r. oceny zróżnicowane są narodowo, ale – ostatnio – bez ostrzejszych akcentów antagonistycznych.

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