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Silesian identity in the period of nation-states (1918-1945)

Abstract:

When addressing relations between the nation-state and the region, as well as national and regional identities, three categories of identities can be identified in the *topoi*: the land of the Bohemian Crown, Silesian regionalism and the Pan-Silesian approach. Within each nation-state there were some self-identified 'true' identities. These national identities attempted to subdue and engulf the regional identities which stemmed from modern Silesian patriotism, creating borderland identities. They took their final form at the turn of the 20th century and during its first decades. Three aspects are subjected to a detailed analysis: the concept of Silesia's territory and Silesia's 'own' borders, elements of 'true' Silesian identity, and the approach to outsiders. Thus, each 'National Silesia' had its own borders, different while overlapping. Their denizens could choose from many identities, similar in every 'National Silesia' in only the genetic and structural sense, since their essence was the exclusion of those foreign in the national sense. In the second part, these offers are elaborated in three areas: regional and national symbolism (basing on the naming structure adopted in Czechoslovakian Silesia), places of distinct identity in leading cultural institutions (The Upper Silesian National Museum in Bytom) and the implementation of Silesian regionalism within the Polish educational system.

Keywords:

gesamtschlesischer Raum, land of the Bohemian Crown, Silesian regionalism, magazines

Introductory comments. The objective and the subject matter of the study

The division of Silesia, as a result of the Silesian Wars in the 18th century, among two supra-national monarchies had manifold political, social and cultural ramifications. Most importantly, the region lost its independent status and began to function within both the states as a marginal territory. This political change was internally connected with Silesia being deprived of its 'country (autonomous) status', in other words: Silesia ceased to be a crown land of the Habsburgs. From a social perspective the consequence of this breakthrough was – vividly speaking – a geometrical change: the regional society started to lose its vertical, estate character, which was gradually replaced by a horizontal, civic character with plenty of space for new social groups and new bonds.

From that moment onward the Silesian identity (or rather identities, for many, often even exclusive sets of identities started to aspire to this name), with its deep roots and complex character, but at the time mostly determined by religion, positioned itself next to broader concepts, which came from outside and settled both above, and in opposition to, all kinds of ideas of Silesian patriotism. Then Silesian patriotism was downgraded to the status of regional identity, and every now and then even that of local folklore.

This situation did not change either as a result of the fall of trans-national monarchies nor as a result of the First World War, which led to the incorporation of Silesia into the following three nation-states: Weimar Germany, whose alter-ego was to transform into the Third Reich, the bi-national Czechoslovakia and the newly reborn Polish Republic. In addition, at the time there was no single 'Silesia', and its subsequent divisions only further increased the number of its components. The existence of two Silesian sub-regions: Lower and Upper Silesia overlapped following the 1740-42 division of the region into two 'national' Silesias: Prussian and Austrian. Both the Prussian and Austrian Silesias were again divided in the wake of the First World War, the former between Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia (Prussian) and the latter between Poland and Czechoslovakia (Austrian)[1].

In each of these – *de facto* – regions clearly separate communities existed. Their character was much broader than that of local communities, which makes it particularly difficult to analyse them at the macro level. In this brief overview it is impossible to cover all these areas. As a result, we will concentrate on the areas of where there was contact between groups and conflicts between the nations. Which should facilitate a proper presentation of the Silesian national identities and the basic differences between them.

Focus on the national aspect of identity follows from its status in the interwar period, when it was the fundamental subject of attention of governmental authorities and a point of reference for various identities, regional as well. Already at this point it needs to be noted that studies which attempt to present the chosen aspects of a national or regional identity influenced by various sources and produced mostly by governmental administration, certain attitudes, usually political ones, are presented somewhat by default at the expense of more permanent elements of communities[2].

[1] Each of these sub-regions has been the subject of a relatively new historical synthesis. For Upper Silesia see: *Historia Górnego Śląska. Polityka, gospodarka i kultura*; for Lower: *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*; and of the numerous papers for Czech Silesia see for instance: Dan Gawrecki (et al.), *Dějiny Českého Slezska 1740-2000,* vols. 1-2, Opava 2003.

[2] This is also illustrated in the recent attempt to present the relations that are within our interest here: *Die Grenzen der Nationen. Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit,* eds Kai Struve, Philipp Ther, Marburg 2002.

What is more, as a result of disputes among members of the national movement, the term 'national/regional identity' is first and foremost understood as a group's language and attitude (again, mostly the members of political elites) towards the language[3]. Therefore, too, though this paper covers a relatively short period of time between 1918 and 1945, it is at the same time an attempt to reach back to the roots of these identities, or rather evolution of their sets.

The detailed aims of this study include – for one thing – the analysis of the formation of identities and their components, and – for another – the analysis of how they functioned and on which scale they were propagated. Three of them would eventually be dominant, considered by the state to be 'authentic'. These sets of identity emerged in the interwar period in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany in the shape of theses of: 'the land of the Bohemian Crown', 'Silesian regionalism' and *gesamtschlesicher Raum* (all-Silesian space) and their relations with other, particularly regional/local/Silesian identities. In consequence, other, sub-regional, local identities whose presentation would exceed the scope of our discussion we decided to treat marginally, while establishing that it would be possible to include them into the discussion with the use of the skills of historians.

The introduction to these substantive deliberations will provide a description and a basic definition of the analytical categories and their modern genesis in Silesia. The article, in its main part, follows an analysis of the development and features of individual identities and their relation to other ways of identification within the region. Examples of these 'offers' are examined based on the following three levels: that of regional and national symbolism (which is done on the basis of the preferred names of the region. By way of example we will use Czechoslovakian Silesia); that of the status of individual identities in leading cultural institutions (this issue will be presented using the example of the Upper Silesian State Museum in Bytom (Beuthen); and that of the identity's social implementation through education in school (this issue will be discussed with reference to the issue of school education in the Silesian Voivodeship and regionalism's role in it).

In summary, we will attempt to determine the effectiveness of these offers and the influence of individual 'offers of identity' on the disappearance/development of the inhabitants' identification with the region and the nation-state.

[3] Cf. the comments of Dan Gawrecki and the analysis of literature regarding the usage of linguistic criterion in defining identity: *idem*, *Regionale und nationale Identitäten in Östereichisch-Schlesien im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Die Grenzen der Nationen,* p. 116.

Nation-state – region – modern identity

The nation-state is a unique product of European and American history. It hasn't been around long. It was only during the period of the Enlightenment, with its ideas of human equality and individual liberty, that an ideological foundation was formed for the concept of an estate-country, as a hierarchical and isolated entity. Eventually it was industrialisation and urbanization that forced the transformation of the state into a nation-state, bringing together a community of citizens who occupy a single territory and are called a 'nation'.

As a matter of fact, two definitions of nation-state emerged. On the one hand, the term was used to describe all the residents of a given state. On the other, which manifested itself mostly in the territories of the Eastern European empires where throughout the centuries ethnic communities, national groups and conquered nations have existed, the ideologists of these groups came up with the idea of an ethnic nation – a pre-political entity – through an absolutisation of common origin and on this basis demanded such groups be granted their own territory and government[4].

These aforementioned statements may also be treated as a potential source of conflict between the region and the nation-state and between regional and national identities.

Both of these territory-restricting constructs featured similar components. Yet, in the case of the region these were for various reasons much 'weaker' compared to the phenomenon of the nation-state, which in every way exceeded the region in terms of its 'age' and the permanence of its constituent features. Already the very attempt to outline the region's area is problematic, for throughout history many various approaches to this issue have been noted, and equating a region with a chosen unit of administrative division is more often than not, and to a large extent, a matter of one's choice.

When this issue is viewed from the perspective of identity, we see that here the case is similar. All people possess identities, namely, features which cannot be defined by any other attributes. However, this only seems to be an individual quality, for its constituents are imposed by the group. This concerns not only anthropologic/physical features such as sex, and skin colour, which are generally not subject to change. In other areas an array of qualities acquired during the process of socialisation/culturalisation, which, due to the way they are acquired, are also referred to as

[4] On the state and its attributes see: Grażyna Skąpska, *Państwo,* In: *Encyklopedia Socjologii,* vol. 3, Warszawa 2000, pp. 56-63. The author marginalizes the significance of the state-nation. That is why it is also worth examining the issue from the perspective of studies of nationalism, for instance: H. Schulze, *Staat und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte,* München 1994.

identification or awareness. It is these, that is, language and religion, habits and customs, norms and attitudes that are subject to smaller or greater modifications, even at relatively short intervals. It happens under the influence of political and economic changes, social interactions and individual perception. Identity itself is a dynamic and multi-level creation, as a result of which its constituents may in fact match various models[5].

Let us now return to territorial deliberations and to exemplifying the differences in the categories we are interested in: if a nation possesses a language, then the inhabitants of a region communicate – at most – by means of non-standardised dialects which are visibly influenced by other cultural codes. What is worse, on any cultural level, in the case of regions that feature unique traditions and customs, there was a level which was common for those inhabitants who differed ethnically/nationally from others in the area, which to some extent questioned the basic nationalist principle of striving to exclusivity and homogeneity[6].

When we relate these comments to Silesia, it appears to be a typically 'weak' region with a politically volatile history, religious diversification, complex linguistic relations and a culture to which claims were put forward by various groups and political creations.

Towards the borderlands: the emergence of modern national identities in Silesia

Modern narratives and identity have their roots in the Enlightenment, even in cases when they originated as a result of this cultural development. A belief in human beings served as a foundation for theses on the mutual equality of individual members of society and for the rejection of social and class-related divisions. It was behind this anthropology and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's admiration of primitive man and nature that lay modern historicism, reinforced by Herderian thought.

The ideology of the Enlightenment perfectly matched the situation in Silesia prior to its annexation by Prussia. It was formulated and promoted by the new Protestant Prussian officials, all of whom in fact originated from outside of Silesia and

[5] Cf. comments of P. Ther and K. Struve, *Einleitung*, [in:] *Die Grenzen der Nationen,* pp. 4-6.

[6] On the subject of relations state-region-identities see: *Regionale Bewegungen und Regionalismen in europäischen Zwischenräume seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhundert,* eds Philipp Ther, Holm Sundhaussen, Marburg 2003, especially the introduction of the former: P. Ther, *Sprachliche, kulturelle und ethnische „Zwischenräume" als Zugang zu einer transnationalen Geschichte Europas,* [in:] *Regionale Bewegungen und Regionalismen*, pp. IX-XIX.

who populated the regional *Kriegs-und Domainenkammers*[7]. For obvious reasons they juxtaposed 'the new', which was represented by themselves and by Prussia with 'the old', namely, Catholic Habsburgs. Based on accounts of travellers who provided descriptions of 'the wild' and backward region, plans were formulated to make up for the region's civil and cultural backwardness, which was already at the time associated with the lasting consequences of a Polish/Slavonic presence[8].

This description was in fact already in place at the turn of the 19th century. The conviction on the part of the elites of the necessity of modernizing the state was consolidated by the defeat of Napoleon. This period of the 'wars of liberation' was also the moment of a German national breakthrough in Silesia, to which both groups of the German nation referred both to that of the civic and the 'Borussian'. It was there that one of the first German language departments was created and where Catholic monasteries were secularised. It was also there that Frederic William III introduced the Iron Cross in March 1813 and issued the appeal entitled 'To my People' (*An Mein Volk*), in reaction to which the French were attacked by the first *Freikorps* (volunteer force) under the command of General Adolf v. Lützow[9].

Up until 1848 these enjoyed the status of fundamental places of German remembrance. The national narrative – taken over by liberalism – dominated and marked out the linear road of the region's development: a release from the centuries-long backwardness was only possible for natural, good-natured and diligent Silesians under the leadership of the German bourgeoisie.

This breakdown of faith followed a linear progression up until the last decades of the 19th century alongside the reception of social Darwinism and the emergence of political forces which questioned German ideas and demands. In Prussian Silesia this was mostly the Polish national movement which was viewed by the Prussian authorities as an aggressive and uncivilized group. The German reaction to this subsequent cultural breakthrough was a growth in pessimism and a culture dominated by fear as well as the birth of a defensive ideology, on which *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil), as it was known, was founded. Already at the turn of the century a synthesis of liberal narration with modern nationalism progressed. Now all the elements of civilised development were associated with peaceful labour – which had taken place

[7] Jerzy Maroń, *Dolny Śląsk w czasach habsburskich i pruskich*, [in:] *Dzieje Dolnego Śląska*, pp. 258-260.

[8] Due to the specific identity of the authors of this narrative, it is not surprising that the connection between the destruction of Silesia as a result of wars conducted by Frederic II and the civilizational backwardness of the last decades of the 18th century was left unnoticed. See: Karin Friedrich, *Nationsbewußtsein im Schlesien der frühen Neuzeit*, [in:] *Die Grenzen der Nationen*, pp. 36-38.

[9] Teresa Kulak, *Dolny Śląsk w latach 1806-1918*, [in:] *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia*, pp. 388-391.

at least since the times of the 'German colonisation' – of subsequent generations of Germans, who were transferring various values to the wild 'East'[10].

For Poles this entire concept and the doings of the Germans were tantamount to a multi-century, forceful denationalization of the continuous (from as early as the 11th century) Polish nation. From their perspective, it was the Polish nation that was conducting a centuries-long defensive battle for the preservation of its language, religion and customs. This was the ethnic basis on which Slavonic Upper Silesians were incorporated in the mid-19th century into Poland as it had been postulated.

The basis of the battle for the preservation of the national boundaries was related also to the situation in Austrian Silesia where the indigenous Polish resisted immigrant Germans and Czechs[11]. Whereas the Polish-Czech conflict was in fact initiated in the 20th century and was stimulated by the rapid economic development of Cieszyn Silesia (Czech: Těšínské Slezsko, Polish: Śląsk Cieszyński, German: Teschener Schlesien), at the time the most territorially and culturally remote state of 'the Crown of Saint Wenceslaus', which – viewed from the Czech perspective – was quickly promoted to the status of the most populous and richest region of Austrian Silesia. A few decades earlier the Czech-German conflict flared up, which mostly took place in Opava Silesia (Czech: Opavské Slezsko, German: Troppauer Schlesien, Polish: Śląsk Opawski)[12].

The geographical-cultural marginality of Austrian Silesia, in contrast to Prague, resulted from the long-term necessity to tackle the fundamental problem of the Czech national movement which was a rejection of the political definition of a nation which included various linguistic groups. The disintegration of the supra-linguistic Bohemia begun also around the close of the 18th century. In Austrian Silesia the Czech movement emerged practically together with the rise of the association *Matice Opavske* (1877), which started to make efforts in the cultural sphere, whose aim was the region's incorporation into the Czech state. Prague high society and intelligentsia became aware of the existence of Silesia only thanks to the poetry of Petr Bezruč, and most importantly his 'Silesian Songs' (1909)[13].

[10] The analysis was developed mostly based on W. Kunicki, *Śląsk. Rzeczywistości wyobrażone*, pp. 7-68.

[11] It is aptly shown when discussing the role of Zofia Kossak in the transfer of Polish borderland ideology from the east to the west by Christian Prunitsch, '(…) *błędem jest każda emigracja*. Zum Transfer der Kresy-Ideologie aus Ostpolen nach Schlesien bei Zofia Kossak', In: *Teschen. Eine geteilte Stadt im 20 Jahrhundert,* eds Ludger Udolph, Christian Prunitsch, Dresden 2009, pp. 69-91.

[12] For more information see: Robert Luft, *Das Teschener Schlesien als national und regionale Geschichtslandschaft,* [in:] *Teschen. Eine geteilte Stadt*, pp. 11-22.

[13] For more information on the inclusion of Silesia in the sphere of Czech history see: Joachim Bahlcke, *Die tschechische Geschichtsschreibung über Schlesien. Von Palacký bis zum Zusammenbruch des kommunistischen Systems,* 'Berichte und Forschungen. Jahrbuch des Bundesinstituts für ostdeutsche Kultur und Geschichte', 3 (1995), pp. 189-213.

Another, also crucially important source of Czech narrative of the entire state and Silesia, was the history of the law of the Bohemian Crown, based on which Opava Silesia and Cieszyn Silesia were incorporated into the Czech state and which served as a basis for the claim to federalize the Austrian monarchy, and later for the demand for Czech independence.

The scope of identity constructs

These mentioned discourses, which were formalised at the very latest at the turn of the century, were founded on deeply rooted interwar sets of dominant, national identities of the inhabitants of various parts of Silesia.

Let us now take a closer look at the structure and components of these three sets, starting with the one which – viewed from the perspective of the interwar period – is chronologically the oldest and whose structure is most stable. Somewhat paradoxically, the road leads us from 'the land of the Bohemian Crown', through 'Silesian regionalism', up to the *gesamtschlesischer Raum*, which turned out to be the most revolutionary and most offensive concept, with well-known consequences. We will focus on three aspects only: the ideas of the territory and borders of 'one's own Silesia', the elements of a 'real' Silesian identity and their attitude towards strangers and their identity.

The land of the Bohemian Crown

When it comes to the Bohemian example, we will try to address the aforementioned questions on the basis of the analysis of the role and content of the 'Věstník Matice Opavske' magazine (1878-1935).

The magazine was first published in 1878. At the time, in line with its title, this was a bulletin which provided information on the creation of the *Matice opavske* association and its objectives[14]. Its principal role was to fill the social void and, by means of the joint effort of its members, to look after the spiritual development of the Czech and Slovakian nation. This was to be performed through the promotion of education and knowledge.

Already the opening address of Priest Ludvik Ochrana outlined the programme of this cultural revival and the scope of this particular offer of identity. The speaker – one of the local Catholic clergymen – emphasized that 'one cannot be ashamed of

[14] *Správe jednatelská o činnosti „Matice Opavské" od jehího založení až do 15 března 1878 r.,* 'Věstník Matice Opavske' (hereafter referred to as VMO), 1878, issue 1, p. 3.

the language of one's own fathers and mothers, the language in which the Saints Cyril and Methodius prayed and which is nowadays spoken by millions of Slavs'[15].

Also during this opening meeting of the association the role of representatives of intelligentsia for modern nations was revealed in the person of Vinzenco Praska, a gymnasium teacher from Opava[16]. Also he repeated the historical argumentation on the downfall of the Czech nation and the need for its rebuilding through proper schooling and self-education. In his speech he pointed out the German successes achieved thanks to the development of schooling and the cultivation of their native language as well as to similar constitutionally granted opportunities for other national groups in Austria[17].

A dozen or so years had passed between the publications of two subsequent issues of 'Věstník' magazine, for the second one appeared only in 1892. During this time the Czech movement in Opava and in Austrian Silesia had consolidated and developed a firm structural basis.

The fundamental problem of the Czech movement was the delineation of the borders of Czech Silesia. And we are not talking about territorial borders, which were of no particular interest to anyone, but the borders of awareness related to German Silesians, who up until the close of the First World War dominated in the national awareness debate and were becoming an increasingly negative point of reference. It would be reasonable to note that when it comes to the question of the territorial boundaries of Silesia, besides mentioning both parts of Austrian Silesia, which was increasingly often referred to in the periodical as Czech Silesia, it was rather occasionally that literary reviews referred to publications on the Duchy of Nysa (Neisse) and the land of Oświęcim-Zator (Auschwitz-Zathor), while the articles presenting the history of the Czech language in Silesia did not fail to mention the Duchy of Opole-Racibórz (Oppeln, Opolí-Ratibor, Ratiboř)[18].

This was however not an issue that would catch much of the authors' interest. The magazine devoted much more attention to demonstrations of the Czech character of the region, which was part of the Habsburg monarchy and the crucial input of this group (understood narrowly as the Slavonic group) in its civil development. This was achieved by means of historical arguments, mostly those of a linguistic-ethnic bent. The term Czech Silesia started to dominate towards the close of the 19th

[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 6-7.

[16] For more extensive information on this period in the history of cities and their internal national relations see: Dan Gawrecki, *Opava znowa v čele Rakouskeho Slezska,* [in:] Karl Müller, Rudolf Žaček, *Opava*, Praha 2006, pp. 249-256.

[17] *Správe jednatelská*, pp. 8-10.

[18] Cf. for instance: *Přehledy kulturní ze Slezska,* VMO, 2 (1892), pp. 30-39; *K dějinam Češtiny na Slezsku,* VMO, 1895, pp. 34-35.

century also in historical disquisitions, which was a clear example of 'presentism' and reached back into the past desires of the Czech national elite[19].

This expression stemmed from the thesis that it was the Slavonic people that initiated the civil development of the region, for which the Germans wanted to take credit. These were the Slavs who were to build tribal strongholds (gords) and to create numerous fortifications[20]. The vein of comments by other authors was similar. They mentioned the names of various towns and claimed that these towns had been founded on *ius teutonicum* (German code) when in fact they had been built on a Slavonic basis – either Polish or Czech[21].

Much attention was devoted to the descriptions of the functioning of the Czech municipal communities in the history of Czech cities, and this period was extended practically to the 17th century. In this case the linguistic argument prevailed and references were made to entries in Czech found in municipal and parish records. Also guild records were presented, with an emphasis on the fact that the guilds were Czech organizations. The authors also supported their theses by providing the analyses, surnames and forenames of the residents of municipal estates, which yielded conclusions that up to the battle of White Mountain (1620), the presence of the Czech national element was at least important[22].

From the close of the 19th century the attempt to prove that the Czech, and at times even Slavonic character was the real identity of the territorially limited Silesia was extended by new elements, resulting from a cultural turn towards the populace and a broadly understood folk character, streaked with naturalism and Darwinist social thought, especially one related to natural conflict.

The texts on Slavonic ethnic groups and Silesian as well as Beskidian folklore can already be found in the first issues of the reinvented 'Věstník' magazine. They, for instance, cover the issue of the origin and cultural contributions of the tribes of Wallachs, Lachs and Moravecsi and their traditional dresses and sub-dialects of various regions of Austrian Silesia[23]. Just as often they contained descriptions of the

[19] Cf. for instance Josef Stypa, *Slezští rodaci v českém písemnictvi. Pokračování,* VMO, 13 (1905), p. 23.

[20] Josef Pospíšil, *Krátký přehled předhistorických památek slezských*, VMO, 8 (1899), pp. 9-11.

[21] *Stará města česká a polská ve Slezsku*, VMO, 2 (1892), p. 12.

[22] Cf. for instance articles from one issue: Vaclav Hauer, *Křestní jména na Paskovcu mezi l. 1633-1745*, VMO, 7 (1897), pp. 1-3; Josef Zukal, *Z najstaršich metrik opavských,* VMO 7 (1897), pp. 5-17; *Z dávnovékosti Tešina,* VMO 7 (1897), pp. 25-26.

[23] Cf. for instance: Vincenc Prasek, *Valaši na Frýdecku,* VMO, 5 (1895), pp. 1-8; Jan Vyhlidal, *O kroji na Tešinsku,* VMO, 5 (1895), p. 19-22; František Myslivec, *Národní kroj slezský na Klimkovsku,* VMO 6 (1896), pp. 18-19; Jan Vyhlídal, *Z pověr a zvyků lidu Slezského,* VMO, 7 (1897), p. 21; *idem*, *O povaze lidu slezského,* VMO, 11 (1903), pp. 23-25; Věnčeslav Hruby, *Nečo o podřeči bezkydském,* VMO 11 (1903), pp. 69-70.

customs of the Silesian people, which from the outset of the 20th century was becoming, to say the least, moralizing. The people were presented as, in fact, mistrustful and often employed stereotypical thinking, yet it is emphasized that owing to their hardness and tenacity they were always 'a healthy social element', and that thanks to their straightforwardness, when having once trusted a stranger, they showed him their utmost generosity[24]. It was the Silesian countryside and the Beskid Mountains that were the mainstay of piety and the preservation of ancestral customs and the Slavonic character of language and Czech songs. This description also contained a clear cultural demand: it was on these foundations that it was possible to rebuild the identity of Czechs, negatively influenced by the Germans; it was there the dormant power of the nation lay.

This idyllic picture, relating not only to customs but also to dress, was typical of the contemporary European-wide trend. What was particular about the Czechs was the support of national pride and political postulates with the idea of revitalising the Bohemian Crown. This concept in the case of Silesia is in fact connected with only one person: the lawyer Jan Kapras[25]. He was mentioned for the first time by 'Věstník' magazine in 1906, following the positive reception of his paper on the remains of the code of Opava and Karniów (Jägerndorf, Krnov)[26]. From that moment on, he appeared in the magazine virtually every year, either presenting his own papers or as the author of reviewed publications. With his focus on the presentation of the formal role of the Czech language in the late medieval and modern period as the language of officials and diplomacy, he supplemented the largely similar views of the authors of Opava[27]. The unique feature of his publications was that he pointed to the organic historical-political connections of Silesia, especially Opava Silesia, with Moravia[28]. These views led Kapras, in 1919, to Paris where during the peace conference, he was appointed as an expert on Silesian affairs to the Czech delegation.

The pre-war period saw the creation by Czech intellectuals of ann image of 'strangers', which was valid for several following decades. Also in this area it is

[24] For instance J. Vyhlidal, [*Spod Lysej Hory*], VMO, 14 (1906), p. 22.

[25] For more information on Kapras see: Joachim Bahlcke, *Geschichte als Argument. Der Prager Rechsthistoriker Jan Kapras (1880-1947) und die tschechische Schlesienforchung am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] *Silesiographia. Stand und Perspektiven der historischen Schlesienforschung. Festschrift für Norbert Conrads zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds Matthias Weber, Carsten Rabe, Würzburg 1998, pp. 69-81.

[26] Jan Kapras, *Z nasi literackiej domacnosti*, VMO, 14 (1906), p. 79.

[27] Cf. also: D. Gawrecki, *Regionale und nationale*, p. 122.

[28] Jan Kapras, *Testament knížete Přemka Opavského a jeho providení*, VMO 15 (1907), pp. 1-8; *idem*, *O státoprávnich poměrach Opavska*, VMO, 16 (1908), pp. 35-49 (continued in the following issue); *idem*, *Srovnání sporů stavu opavských roku 1534*, VMO, 18 (1910), pp. 1 and following.

possible to notice an evolution and considerable changes. The Germans were initially treated with admiration, mostly due to their economic successes. Also their cultural input in the development of Silesia gained much recognition[29]. Nonetheless, from the very outset this was coupled with tough insistence on Czech historical and political rights. With reference to these rights, Germans in medieval towns constituted at most the base around which the Slavonic population functioned and to whom the region actually owed its development. The growing national antagonisms found their way to the pages of 'Věstník' magazine. In the 1890s it was still discussing German historic papers on Silesia, at the outset of the new century these suddenly ceased to be noticed. The picture of social relations in Silesia was more and more streaked with conflict and the Germans were viewed as enemies. They became the hated owners of coalmines and steelworks, and high state officials. The only role that was left for the Czechs was that of their servants, and that role made them easily surrender to Germanisation[30].

Crucial modifications were also taking place inside the Polish community. Undoubtedly, up until the outbreak of war on the Czech side a belief in Slavonic brotherhood and unity prevailed, which was further consolidated by the ideas of commonly working towards the success of the region and the linguistic fluidity of regional dialects positive assessments of recent talks between the two sides[31]. The 'Věstník' magazine's attitude towards the Polish historical papers on Silesia was for a long time positive. A small degree of envy surfaced only when addressing the issue of better organising Polish national life and the more rapid cultural development of this group[32].

The first frictions came about when the Poles started to demand exclusive s to the history of the Duchy of Cieszyn (Teschen, Těšín). The reaction to this fact was, for instance, very conspicuous in the negative review of history of Silesia written by Feliks Koneczny, who described the region as indigenously Polish and Germanised by Germans and... Czechs[33].

As we have already mentioned, the Czech-Polish relations and the picture of this group started to evolve very rapidly along with the Czechs stating their opinion on the national processes taking place in the industrial region of Ostrava. 'Věstník'

[29] *Správe jednatelská*, p.10; *Z dávnovékosti Tešina,* VMO, 7 (1897), p. 26. The evidence of the narrow distance between the two groups may be the obituary of the priest Augustin Weltzl of 1897 where his contributions for the Czech historiography are emphasised. See: [Obituary of Augustin Weltzl], VMO, 7 (1897), p. 49.

[30] *O domorodém lidu ve farnosti Orlovské,* VMO, 9 (1901), p. 26-27.

[31] *Stare mesta ceske.*

[32] *Přehledy kulturní ze Slezska*, p. 21.

[33] *Zprávy o došlých nás spisech*, VMO, 7 (1897), p. 92-93.

published a statement that Ostrava had witnessed a surge of foreigners from Galicia who were slowly outnumbering the locals and due to the similarity of both languages was becoming Polonised[34].

As a matter of fact at the same time the magazine continued to publish statements on Slavonic unity and point towards the German threat to both of the groups[35], but this political rivalry even entered the pages of 'Věstník'. One could even say that both groups were becoming increasingly alienated from one other in proportion to the slump of the magazine's interest in Polish academic papers.

In the interwar period the progress of professionalisation at 'Věstník' was still ongoing and the magazine was assuming an increasingly academic character. From 1932 the subtitle 'Slezsky Sbornik' was added, which four years later was to become its title. The magazine concluded its pre-Second World War existence in 1937 with the publication of a monographic collection on the role of Petr Bezruč (properly: Vladimír Vašek). This does not change the fact that, the magazine's spheres of interest and basic categories of analysis of the region and its inhabitants were contained within a framework that was defined at the turn of the century and that a greater exception was made for one sub-region only: the Hlučín Region, which by decision of the Treaty of Versailles was incorporated into Czechoslovakia. The presentation of these territories and their (Czech) inhabitants was treated as a research priority, which was carried out in the first years following the regaining of independence[36].

Silesian regionalism

Silesian regionalism owes its intellectual genesis to the Cieszyn circle of the 'Zaranie Śląskie' magazine, whose ideas of the region's history and the true identity of its inhabitants were taken over by the ideological-political community focused around the Silesian voivode Michał Grażyński (1926-1939)[37]. Prior to this fact – symbolically and realistically this took place in 1935 when the Silesian Institute became its co-publisher and took over its financing – the quarterly had already

[34] *O domorodlim lidu*, p. 26-27.

[35] Cf. the posthumous tribute to Priest A. Gruda: Op. Tyd., *Dr. Antonín Gruda*, VMO, 11 (1903), p. 1 and the evaluation of the political situation at the outset of the second decade of the 20th century in: Vaclav Hauer, *Přehled důležitějších událostí ve Slezsku ve minulém roce*, VMO, 19 (1911), p. 60.

[36] Cf. for instance: Antonin Glos, *Přispevek ku poznani narodnostnich pomeru na Hlučinsku,* 28, VMO, 28 (1922), pp. 50-59.

[37] For more extensive information on the genesis and intellectual atmosphere in the interwar Polish Upper Silesia see: Marian Dyba, *Kształtowanie się polskiego środowiska historycznego na Śląsku w latach 1918-1939, K*atowice 1993; Bernard Linek, *Kilka uwag o stosunku ks. Emila Szramka i Romana Lutmana do niemieckiej humanistyki*, 'Rocznik Łubowicki', 8 (2010), pp. 104-125.

completed two phases of its Cieszyn existence: the years 1907-1912 and the period between 1929 and 1934[38].

Its beginnings and initial character were in many ways similar to those of 'Věstník' which we've already looked at here. Its conception came about at the outset of the 20th century in the circle of the Cieszyn intelligentsia, the teachers of a local Polish middle school. This was another Polish national association, which emphasized the affiliation of Cieszyn Silesia to Poland and the need to defend it against foreign influences.

The name of the magazine, published with the subtitle 'literary quarterly' heralded the beginning of a new era. This emotional call, its Art Noveau design and its content was more oriented towards the artistic Young Poland movement of Cracow and even further towards Podhale. It was there that Edmund Farnik, the periodical's founder and driving force, drew his inspiration from the activity of Władysław Orkan and Stanisław Witkiewicz and their successful attempts to include the *zakopiańszczyzna* (style in art characteristic for the Polish Tatra Mountains region with a main town of Zakopane) in the national culture[39].

In 'Zaranie' Farnik wanted combine two elements. He wanted to create an opportunity for young regional writers to make their literary debut and to develop their talents, as well as to publish the 'nameless works of the Silesian people'. Though both these objectives had an ideological-political foundation, what seems to be more crucial to our deliberations is the second – 'documentary' – aspect. Let us cite from 'A Word from the Editor' what role Farnik attributed to himself with regards to the periodical: 'By publishing works written in the folk dialect, 'Zaranie' wants to show to these very same folk that their language is still alive and that there is no need to be ashamed of it, that they should nurture it and protect it from foreign influence – for this language may only bring them closer to the treasures of the Polish language, enchanted by the words of our Poets – and, too, it is no less important for the periodical to prove it a false view that the Silesian dialect was a somewhat degenerated dialect'[40].

The inclusion of Silesia in the Polish culture at large was to be attained by means of the publication of fairy tales and songs, descriptions of Silesian customs and traditional garments. As a matter of fact, it would be difficult to call this regionalism, for

[38] More information on the 'Zaranie Śląskie' magazine see: Krystyna M. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *Zaranie Śląskie (1907-1939). Zarys monograficzny, K*atowice 1979; Ludwik Brożek, *Z dziejów „Zarania Śląskiego" (1907-1957),'* Zaranie Śląskie', 1957, issues 1-2, pp. 3-25 and an anniversary issue no. 2 of 1967 devoted entirely to its history, that contains alongside the studies of Heska and Brożek also those of Antoni Gładysz and Danuta Meyza.

[39] For more information see: K.M. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, *op. cit.,* pp. 7-25.

[40] *Słowo od Wydawcy,* 'Zaranie Śląskie' (hereafter referred to as ZŚ), 1929, issue. 1, p. 1.

it was more about raising the status of a certain 'familiarity' to that of art and national values. The folk element was to be the foundation of this relation. We do not know much about the broader horizons of the Cieszyn intelligentsia. They were undoubtedly trying to establish and uphold connections with the Poles from Prussian Silesia. 'Zaranie' published the works of Konstanty Prus, Jan Przybyła and the poems of Jan Nikodem Jaroń[41]. In terms of literary analysis, the cultural contributions of Józef Lompa, Konstanty Damroth and Norbert Bonczyk stand out[42], but these subjects as well as historical texts never settled on this version of the quarterly.

The leading element was the ethnographic legacy of Cieszyn Silesia, which dominated both in frequent naively didactic, dramatic and poetic works, as well as in ethnographic materials. All this was clearly nationally engaged and treated as Polish. What was already meaningful was the approach of E. Farnik to Czechisms and Germanisms presented in 'A Word from the Editor', where he announced that the Editorial Board did the following to the folk works: '[they] purify the language from foreign influences, while acknowledging them only exceptionally in cases when they are particularly characteristic or may not be removed without damage to the content'[43]. The attitude towards the Germans is clearly reflected for instance in a passage taken from the drama by Józef Lebiedzik entitled 'Brzaski Odrodzenia' (The Dawning of Revival), where the following passage is delivered by Paweł Stalmach:

'Ludność niemiecka to obcy przybysze,
Którzy się żywią naszych włościan pracą;
Lecz w hardej dumie i nadmiernej pysze,
Nasz lud ciemiężą i zeń się bogacę'

(Germans are alien to our land,
Those Who Feed on the Labour of Our Peasants;
Yet impertinently proud and excessively arrogant,
They grow rich by tyrannizing our people)[44].

Already this vision shows that they were treated in Silesia not in the least as positive people, partners or individuals considered worth referring to. What seems nonetheless puzzling is the similar fate of the Czechs, who were silently omitted. In the four issues of the magazine they were mentioned much less frequently than the

[41] Cf. Jan Jaroń, *Z pobojowiska*; *idem*, *Modlitwa chorążego*, ZŚ, 1912, issues 2-4, pp. 87-88.
[42] E. Grim, *O poetach górnośląskich,* ZŚ, 1910, issue 2, pp. 49-52.
[43] *Słowo od Wydawcy*, ZŚ, 1929, issue 1, p. 2.
[44] Józef Lebiedzik, 'Brzaski Odrodzenia', ZŚ, 1911, issue 1, p. 10.

Slovaks, and if it were not for the poem by Jan Neruda[45], none of the Czech authors whatsoever would be mentioned in the bibliography of the quarterly!

The profile of the magazine, as it was clearly manifested, triggered various critical reactions. Those most distanced were coming from nearby Cracow and its circle of Cieszyn students, who were members of a student society called 'Znicz'. In the context of our interest, what seems particularly important are negative opinions about 'parochial patriotism'. These were provided by individuals who were at the time already connected with the nationalist all-Polish movement, and whom evaluated the attitude of the Cieszyn professors as excessively passive and hesitant. This environment was also negatively predisposed towards the quarterly's confinement to Silesian authors and towards showing off the Silesian dialect, for this was in line with '(…) the separatist principle promoted by the Ślązakowcy: "Silesia for Silesia", for we should always remember that Silesia is to Poland as Poland is to Silesia and that even creating the appearance of this separatist rule is fatal for us'[46].

Similar problems were faced by the magazine following its re-launch in 1929 and whose title was extended by the subtitle 'regional quarterly'. Also in this version the revival initiative came from E. Farnik. Not long after another generation of the Cieszyn intelligentsia came to the forefront. The most significant members of this group were Paweł Musioł (a member of the editorial board of the publication beginning with the second issue), Alojzy Targ and Roman Dyboski, a professor at Jagiellonian University and a formal patron of the society. An intellectual imprint on the periodical's profile was also left by Gustaw Morcinek, who from 1930 was the director of its editorial council and Roman Lutman, head of the Silesian Institute.

Whereas in the first period, Silesian regionalism had an 'intuitive' character (it was K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz who came up with this epithet), at that time it acquired a theoretical dimension – more often than not – and to a large extent, abstract. The fundamental task, however, remained the same. It was formulated by Farnik, who was inspired by Kazimierz Nitsche, and it was in the form of a question: 'Why then (…) has Silesia failed to produce such literary works as in Podhale?'[47].

The breakthrough and realization of these objectives was to take place through a (re)definition of the idea of Silesian regionalism, which was most frequently

[45] Jan Neruda, *Ballada górska*, ZŚ, 1908, issue, 3, p. 113.

[46] Lud-ka, *Czytelnictwo na Śląsku*, 'Dziennik Cieszyński', 1911, issue 72. Quotation from: Danuta Meyza, *„Kwiaty z łąk naszych" czy „zaścianek literacki"? Z recepcji pierwszych roczników Zarania Śląskiego,* ZŚ, 1967, issue 2. pp. 214-214. There is also more extensive argumentation of the magazine's opponents.

[47] E. Farnik, *Szkice z Niwy polskiej Śląska,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 1., p. 6. Envious comments on the 'zakopiańszczyzna' appeared frequently in the magazine. See also for instance: L. Kobiela, *Talent pisarski i znaczenie Karola Miarki,* ZŚ, 1929, issue. 2, p. 83.

addresssed by literature in 1929, although Paweł Musioł revisited the subject again later[48]. The fundamental difference lay in the attitude towards native heritage, which was to be transformed from a conservative one to an active one; from one of preserving heritage to one of using it to transcend beyond localness and regionalism towards building new national bonds. So was the idea expressed by Musioł himself: '(…) regionalism must be something much more than an embalmed folk character, than admiration for a warped, though at the same time, original highland cottage. Regionalist ideas are in our understanding nothing more than a social movement, encompassing the variety of life; a new movement, which has originated from society's striving to develop faster and more completely. (…) If we dissect the method of this movement, it will present itself to us as: 1. The exploitation of the psychological and cultural values of a given region for the sake of new creations, which are only based on these values, and their subsequent incorporation into the vascular system of the all-Polish social life; 2. A quicker and more complete implementation of progress (…)'[49].

Let us stress that these recipes were to be the cure for the marginalization of Silesia and were to place it in the public consciousness of the national culture. Alojzy Targ wrote that it was necessary that more vital fluids flowed into 'the basin of Polish culture'[50]. At the same time there were numerous reassuring voices claiming that 'the building of culture on customs and local foundations' does not constitute an obstacle for 'the civic unification of the Polish nation'[51]. Such suspicions were nonetheless frequently formulated. This seems to be illustrated for instance by the reprimand of Alfred Jesionowski a year-later, who on the occasion of the introduction of Silesian regionalism in secondary schools warned that: 'what only needs to be seen to is that the issue of Silesian independence from Poland (as a whole) was not emphasized, but rather its being its own constituent part, of the general Polish spiritual and material culture, in the context of its being of a higher value'[52].

Already in these dilemmas concerning definitions of region and regionalism, principal problems of an 'identity' so formulated for Polish Silesians surface. Both identity and problems with it were not connected with the recent, international borders of Polish Silesia. For cited above authors Silesia was still contained according to will of superpowers within the area of the pre-war *Regierungsbezirk* of Opole

[48] The views formulated at the time were repeated by him in a virtually identical form in 1935. See: Paweł Musioł, *Zagadnienie regjonalizmu na Śląsku,* ZŚ, 1935, issue 2, pp. 87-90.
[49] Paweł Musioł, *Śląska Młodzież Akademicka wobec Śląska,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 3, p. 117.
[50] Alojzy Targ, *O jednolity typ Ślązaka,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 4, p. 190.
[51] Roman Dyboski, *Młodzież akademicka śląska a położenie międzynarodowe Polski,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 4, pp. 172-173.
[52] Alfred Jesionowski, *Regjonalizm w szkołach średnich na Śląsku,* ZŚ, 1930, issue. 4, p. 217.

and within the former Duchy of Cieszyn. The controversies were of a multi-faceted borderland character, but took place on a consciousness-related level. And it was not only about the borders drawn between what was Polish and German or Polish and Czech, but also about the removal of the double internal borders: between the pre-war states territories – stretching between Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia and between the regions inside the reborn Poland – stretching between Silesia and rest of the country. What is more, this operation was undertaken after it had been signalled that the measures employed in this process could be easily utilized to re-inforce the existing borders or to build a barrier between the Silesian and Polish national movements. The reason for undertaking this action can be seen in the emerging claims put forward by hostile elites towards these elements of identity.

For these reasons the practices of publishing and discussing literary works authored by Poles from the German province of Upper Silesia were undertaken without much hesitation, yet the reports on the situation in the territory were rather lacking and schematic[53]. Even the writings of Musioł show his rather passive attitude towards these territories, for although when referring to Czech and German Silesia he puts the names in quotation marks, he nonetheless calls the reader to maintain a mental unity with these territories and does not formulate any broader positive programme[54].

On the opening of his campaign for the removal of internal borders Paweł Musioł simply claimed that Polish Silesia was 'a vast expanse of uncultivated fallow land' and offhandedly pointed out the lack of ideological life of Silesian university students[55]. He then stated that this negligence and historical reasons were the source of the conflict. And that Poland could only gain superiority by conquering the region and incorporating it into its territory[56].

Musioł was supported by his mentor, Roman Dyboski, who in his article: 'Młodzież akademicka śląska a położenie międzynarodowe Polski' (Silesian academic youth and the international situation of Poland) – where he quite aptly heralded the looming reconstruction of Germany's political power – while supporting regionalism and the building of a society based on a foundation of local tradition, he at the same time cautioned the readers: 'solid and real evidence is needed to prove that Silesia is in fact spiritually and culturally unified with Poland and that it

[53] Cf. for instance the review of the volume of *Wiersze śląskie* by Jakub Kania written by Erwin Niemiec, ZŚ, 1932, issue 3, pp. 191-192or a description of the German tyranny inflicted upon the Polish people by Jacek Koraszewski in the article entitled 'Kilka słów o młodzieży akademickiej Śląska Opolskiego', ZŚ, 1930, issue 1, pp. 21-22.

[54] P. Musioł, *Śląska Młodzież Akademicka,* p. 118.

[55] *Ibidem*, pp. 113-114.

[56] P. Musioł, *Słowo wstępne,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 4, p. 169.

has really returned to its homeland in the spiritual sense, and that this is not *natio Silesiaca,* whose culture is mostly German, and who has been incorporated into Poland by a somewhat political coincidence'[57].

In the deliberations on the target character and place of Silesians he partnered with Alojzy Targ, who wrote about 'the ever-growing unification' of both the region and the country and about the elimination of the significant differences between the groups, and eventually the development of 'a uniform mental character of the residents'[58]. The anonymous author of the review of the Znicz association's *Księga o Śląsku* (Book of Silesia) expressed the same thought with the following words: '(...) so that by merging Cieszyn Silesia and Upper Silesia into one it would be possible to bring forth from this stretch of land an appropriate light for the all-Polish culture'[59].

This debate was waged by means of military language, which raised the region's status to that of a borderland, as it was becoming both the bastion and frontier and whose residents were presented as a unified group and on closer examination described as a mass. Yet, what particular features of identity were attributed to Silesians?

Most importantly, what was continuously brought up was the distinctive role of their dialect, which was treated as unequivocally Polish. Farnik had already defended this approach two decades earlier and claimed that 'this dialect is capable of expressing even more complex feelings'[60]. This claim was supported by texts written in the dialect, which were published together with Silesian-Polish dictionaries[61]. Even more important was the practice to clear the texts from Germanisms and Czechisms, which were treated as 'weeds' and foreign borrowings. A similar strategy was applied to names and only those preserved in the dialect were considered 'real'[62].

The conservative vision of the world was upheld and it was stressed that the strength of Upper Silesian Poles lies in their traditional culture and cultivation of old customs[63]. What is more, over time this view was updated and enriched by new central figures, for more often than not it was pointed out that the true Silesian group were the labourers. This community was also referred to by Dr. Wiktor Ormicki of Jagiellon University ('(…) everything that was done in Silesia was in fact

[57] R. Dyboski, *op. cit*., p. 171.
[58] A. Targ, *O jednolity typ*, p. 190.
[59] M.A.J., *Księga o Śląsku,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 3., p. 162.
[60] E. Farnik, *Szkice z Niwy*, p. 6.
[61] See for instance Józef Kaleta, *Wiyrba,* ZŚ, 1930, issue 1, pp. 13-15.
[62] Paweł Musioł, *Odrodzenie narodowe Śląska,* ZŚ, 1930, issue 2, p. 63.
[63] Emanuel Imiela, *Zwyczaje weselne na Górnym Śląsku,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 1, p. 30.

done with by the hands of the Polish labourer'[64]) and Professor Roman Pollak of Poznań ('higher classes of society in Silesia had become Germanized and 'Czechized', and lower ones continue to live in line with their traditional culture which is both Piast and folk at the same time'[65]), and, most notably, Gustaw Morcinek ('(…) the entire quest of Silesians to maintain their national assets was merely based on social foundations, especially in industrial regions (…) the most nationally conscious in Silesia and the most capable of devoted fighting were the Silesian labourers'[66]).

This vision was convergent with that of the left-wing 'Naprawa', political movement headed by voivode M. Grażyński. It would be hard not to mention here that its total triumph fell in the period following 1945, when it was the People's Republic of Poland that became the dominant feature in the life of Upper Silesia and Silesians.

All this followed from a principle that the groups' national nature was exchangeable and the continuation of the Polish nation on an individual level. Stanisław Kot described this widespread view as follows: 'throughout the centuries a mass of Polish people lived there, though they were politically detached from their homeland, they continued to preserve their native speech, customs and traditions'[67]. What's important, and what explains their attitude towards 'strangers' and their input in the history of Silesia, these centuries were treated as a time of ordeals and partitions, against which the Silesians also fought[68]. And here G. Morcinek placed himself ahead of his time, by putting forward a claim that the Polish labourer was fought by German and Czech capitalists.

In this context the role of 'others/strangers' was more than marginal. Literature in German and Czech was indeed noticed, but only when it brought up Polish themes or when it was to serve as material for polemics[69].

It paradoxically follows from the contents of 'Zaranie' magazine, and from a number of references, that it was the Silesian national/separatist movement that was a much more serious enemy for the group connected with the magazine and for this reason all these reassurances emerged, as in for instance: 'We do not consider Silesia to be a somewhat 'taboo' for non-Silesians! And a strange scare tactic has

64 Wiktor Ormicki, *Co każdy Polak o Śląsku wiedzieć powinien,* ZŚ, 1931, issue. 2, p. 76.
65 Roman Pollak, *Przemówienie,* ZŚ, 1931, issue 3-4, p. 138.
66 Gustaw Morcinek, *Człowiek*, ZŚ, 1931, issue 3-4, p. 173.
67 Stanisław Kot, *Zaniedbania polskie wobec kulturalnej przeszłości Śląska*, ZŚ, 1929, issue 4, p. 216.
68 Paweł Pampuch, *Jan Nikodem Jaroń,* ZŚ, 1929, issue 1, p. 23; W. Ormicki, *op.cit*., p. 74.
69 Cf: E. Wadowski, Udział Śląska w literaturze czeskiej*,* ZŚ, 1932, issue 2, pp. 122-128.

been going around recently that a Silesian is a 'different-Pole' or a 'super-Pole', but, anyway, someone who should be particularly privileged and revered'[70].

In spite of everything – to conclude this theme – it is worth noting one particular dimension of influence of these traditional enemies. This is, namely, the influence of historical policy and expansionist approaches to the region's heritage favoured by the Germans, which following 1935, served as a model for R. Lutman. This, in another echo of 'the policy of reciprocation', was promoted by M. Grażyński and resulted in the fact that other places emerged – alongside Cieszyn and Katowice (Kattowitz, Katovice) – where the magazine was published, namely, Bytom (Beuthen) and Orlova (Orlau, Orłowa) – both located outside the territory of Poland. Lutman justified this fact with the need to emphasise both 'Polish' Silesia in its entirety as well as the Polish rights to its heritage[71].

Gesamtschlesicher Raum

As we have already mentioned, the German narrative about Silesia that was introduced following the fall of trans-national monarchies postulated the most radical redevelopment of socio-political reality. As a matter of fact the number of existing studies on the leading cultural role of the Germans in Silesia were not in the least insufficient even much earlier. The entire historiography written in Wrocław has illustrated this fact. But the unique character of interwar approach lay in the renouncement or even negation of the role of the factor that earlier was considered as prime mover in the history of the German nation: the state, which up until 1918 was eulogized and praised to the skies. Now – in the face of being deprived of numerous territories inhabited by the German community, which continued to suffer discrimination elsewhere – it was considered to be a historical necessity to rebuild German thinking in the categories of the allegedly forgotten national community rather than historically changing states' borders[72].

Thus liberation from the statist dogma resulted in the fact that at the time it was the German nation that was considered the prime mover of history, its subject and the actual driving force of civil advancement. The final consequence of this reasoning was the claim that, where there are Germans (understood as a group) there should be Germany (in an institutional sense; as a state). Before arriving at

[70] P. Musioł, *Śląska Młodzież Akademicka,* p. 117.
[71] Roman. Lutman, *Śląsk – jeden, niepodzielny,* ZŚ, 1935, issue 3, p. 147.
[72] Markus Krzoska, *Nation und Volk als höchste Werte: die deutsche und polnische Geschichtsschreibung als Antagonisten zwischen den Weltkriegen,* [in:] *Nacjonalizm a tożsamość narodowa w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIX i XX w.,* eds Bernard Linek, Kai Struve, Opole-Marburg 2000, pp. 301-302.

this conclusion, an attempt was made to answer the question as to what constitutes a national community? And in the case of Silesia the answer was the same as in the entire volkist paradigm: a common dialect, which was quickly complemented with common blood, and a continuity of settlement in a particular territory which was always connected with German cultural input[73].

Let us examine the details of this way of thinking taking as an example a group focused around the idea of an 'all-Silesian tribal space' and their periodical entitled 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch' published between 1928-1941[74].

Let us once again repeat: this was generally a return to the origins of the German national movement but at the time the core of the non-falsified 'Germanity' was exclusively considered to be the people. The firmly established function of this view seems to be illustrated also by the character of public debate in the 1919-1921 plebiscite areas. Whereas in the contemporary German press the greatest emphasis was put on the centuries-long harm and maltreatment of this region by the Prussian state, these claims were immediately followed by disquisitions on the subject of the ethnogenesis of the Upper Silesians, which in principle led to the emphasis on the leading role of the Germans and German culture in the civilising advance of the region.

When referring back to the debate conducted at the very outset of the republic on the pages of 'Der Oberschlesier' magazine, which was to play the role of supra-political and supra-national forum for discussion of the region, curiously enough, according to almost all representatives of the German circle, historical time had started along with the period of German settlement[75]. If they decided to reach further back into the past, then, having mentioned the Celts, extensive passages were devoted to the German/Silingi tribe and the discovery of their treasures, which were to be the evidence for at least their far-reaching connection with the Romans. In fact, they were succeeded by the Slavs, yet there were only a few wooden ploughs and clay vessels left after their several-centuries-long presence. Two hundred years of Piast reign brought no modifications in the layout of marshes and woodland, and the Piasts' most significant historical decision was to invite German settlers, as a consequence of which 'the German return' took place. History again moved on,

[73] See also Eduard Mühle, *Obraz historii i polityka historyczna. O historiograficznej konstrukcji „ogólnośląskiego obszaru plemiennego" i jego politycznej instrumentalizacji,* [in:] *Górny Śląsk wyobrażony*, pp. 60-62.

[74] Sound analysis of assumptions and basic fields of action of this movement was carried out by Maria Gawrecka, *Idea Velkého Slezska mezi světovými válkami,* 'Acta Historica et Museologica', 6 (2003), pp. 317-324.

[75] Cf. for instance.: B. Nehlert, *Zur oberschlesische Frage*, 'Der Oberschlesier',1919, issue no. 3 of 17 X.

and the behaviour of Slavs during the Hussite period failed to prevent the formation of a new German tribe (*Volksstamm*) – Silesians[76].

It is this thesis on the uniqueness of the Silesian tribe, that had already come into existence in the period of the Middle Ages that served as a foundation for the ideological circle of the 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch'. Silesians, who had been shaped in the Middle Ages had not altered their national character, their dialect was evidence of this, along with their social origin and blood, in spite of the territorial changes following the 1740 and 1918. It was only necessary to rebuild the consciousness of this community for it was this group that raised the hopes of reinstating German greatness or at least of stopping Slavonic expansion[77].

From the 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch' we learn more about the structure of Great Silesia and the identity of Silesians. What was particularly surprising was that we find there that the Silesian territory lay open in almost every direction. In the south and in the south-west it reached Austria and included (due to its language) the so-called Sudetenland. In the east it naturally included Polish Silesia, but the magazine also mentioned the role of Silesians in the foundation and flourish of such cities as Cracow and Sandomierz. Its southern border ran along the river Warta (Warthe), but experts claimed that the Silesian islands were mentioned also in Eastern Prussia. Even the western border of 'the Great Silesia' was blurred, for it had been emphasized that Upper Lusatia was similar to Silesia in terms of national character and history[78].

Silesia was divided into three sub-regions: Lower, Central and Upper. In the case of the latter, one of the three other units were distinguished, namely, Prussian Silesia, Sudetenschlesien (Czech Silesia and the Sudetenland of 1918, but different from the Sudetenland of the 1938 Munich Agreement) and 'Polish' Silesia, and as a matter of fact the incorrectness of the latter name was intentionally emphasized. This was one of the three new German cultural regions, which were formed in the medieval period. Besides this region (namely, Central-Eastern Germany) Richard Patscheider, initially the main ideologist of the movement, mentioned the

[76] See: W., *Gedanken zur oberschlesischen Kultur,* 'Der Oberschlesier', 1919, issue no. 8 of 21 XI, p. 6-7; dr Malisch, *Das Volk in Not,* ' Der Oberschlesier', 1919, issue no. 11 of 13 XII, p. 1. Authors of statements such as these were in agreement that as a result of peaceful infiltration the region had seen the formation of a mixed nation (*Mischvolk*), and that this was owing to the insufficient proportion of 'German blood'. Yet, they quickly added that the fundamental changes to the identity of Upper Silesians were introduced by free German peasants. If what dominated formerly was the mentality of Polish serfs, distrustful and unwilling to take the initiative, these were the former ones who had introduced courage and self-consciousness, which shaped the character of all Silesians. See also: Rudolf Urbanek, *Zur Lösung der Oberschlesische Frage,* ' Der Oberschlesier', 1919, issue no. 9 of 28 XI, p. 1-2.

[77] M. Gawrecka, *Idea,* pp. 317-318.

[78] Based on the disquisitions of Ernst Schwarz, *Schlesische Sprachgemeinschaft,* 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch für deutsche Kulturarbeit im gesamtschlesischen Raume", 1 (1928), pp. 17-28.

North-Eastern Margraviate (that is East and West Prussia) as well as South-Eastern Germany (namely Austria). These joined the six historical German cultural regions, namely: Lower Franconia, Lower Saxony, Central Franconia, Thuringia-Saxony, Great Swabia and Bavaria[79].

These deliberations were largely devoted to the Silesian German dialect. As a matter of fact it evolved from a synthesis and exchange of various old German dialects and a small Slavonic admixture, but what was crucial was that its supra-territorial connection – thanks to Silesians – with both sides of the Sudetes and small differences within its range, were smaller than in the west, in older dialects. This was surely the argument that was raised in favour of the tribal cohesion of Silesians. This cohesion followed from their centuries-long resistance to the Slavonic surge (and this argument was only a step away from the thesis that Silesians were a unique group within the German community, which would initiate the revival of a national community)[80].

One of the basic objectives of modern academic research was considered to be the study of regions (*Landeskunde*), whose purpose was to recreate the natural condition of a given territory and actions that would contribute to the creation of a cultural region. If we apply this to Silesia, its fundamental task would be the demonstration of the German input in the development of the province[81].

The breakthrough took place when this academic community was joined by Herman Aubin – or rather when he took over its ideological basis – the most prominent representative of the Wrocław humanist community, who was 30 years old at the time, and who provided intellectual stimuli for German studies of the region working towards the end of the 'cold war'. He not only took over the folk and spatial-historical interpretation of the history of East-Central Europe with a special emphasis on the German contribution to this history. He also accepted the postulate on the absolute necessity of engaging academic elites in the actual promotional activity[82].

An important element of this structure was its attitude towards the Slavonic population and tradition that was other than German and to which it was difficult to put an end to with the arrival of German settlers. In the historical perspective various layers of the region's culture were noticed, but it was emphasized that the whole of it was actually German. If the Slavonic nation was mentioned, it was its

[79] [Rudolf] Patscheider, *Das schlesische Stammland als Kulturlandschaft,* 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch für deutsche Kulturarbeit im gesamtschlesischen Raume'', 1 (1928), pp. 75-77.
[80] E. Schwarz, *op. cit*.
[81] Konrad Olbricht, *Der Entwicklung der schlesischen Kulturlandschaft*, 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch für deutsche Kulturarbeit im gesamtschlesischen Raume', 1 (1928), pp. 80-83.
[82] M. Krzoska, *op. cit.,* p. 301, E. Mühle, *op. cit.,* pp. 55-59.

difference from Poles that was emphasised and it was considered part of the German cultural circle. On this basis the supporters of Jozef Kozdoń were included in the group of Germans, and he himself was honoured on the occasion of the Second Week of Silesian Culture (1926)[83]. The academic exegesis of this movement was most extensively presented by Walter Kuhn, who proved that what was important in the East was the group's orientation, and that the *Schlonsaken's* national orientation was German[84].

Implementation

At the same time each of the national-Silesias possessed its own borders – they were all different, but they overlapped. Their inhabitants had access to the complete range of identity offers, which were in fact similar for all the Silesias, but only genetically and structurally, for their main objective was to exclude individuals who were 'alien' in terms of nationality. Let us now take a closer look at the functioning of these sets in the discussed nation-states on three levels: that of symbolism, that of cultural institutions and that of school education.

Symbolic sphere: from Těšinsko and Opavsko (Cieszyn and Opava (Silesia) regions) to the conclusion of the independent Czech Silesia

We will analyse this first element by looking at the Czech example, but what needs to be noted at the very outset – and this may be also applied to the remaining examples – for each of the sides attempted to present its claims also on the symbolic level. It bears mentioning that, suspiciousness in this respect was so far-fetched that when in 1925 the Vatican signed a concordat with Poland, where the foundation of 'the Silesian diocese' was announced, which was most probably the Vaticans' *lapsus lingue*, the German consulate in Katowice alerted '*Unter den Linden*' on the implied revisionist meaning of this act[85]. Political pilgrimages and pressures on the Catholic hierarchy whose intention was to establish 'their own' bishopric became a permanent element of debate among the political elites of Silesias, also in the case of Austrian Silesia and later Czechoslovakian Silesia[86].

[83] [R.] Patscheider, *op. cit*., pp. 76-77; Wilhelm Mak, *Das slavische Volkslied in Oberschlesien,* 'Schlesisches Jahrbuch für deutsche Kulturarbeit im gesamtschlesischen Raume", 1 (1928), pp. 129-133.
[84] E. Mühle, *op. cit*., p. 75.
[85] Maik Schmerbauch, *Die Seelsorge für die deutschen Katholiken in der polnischen Diözese Kattowitz und das Diözesanblatt „Der Sonntagsbote" in den Jahren 1925-1939/41*, Münster 2012, p. 179.
[86] Maria Gawrecka, *Československé Slezsko mezi světovymi válkami. 1918-1938,* Opava 2004, p. 10.

The name that has been used so far to refer to the part of Silesia which was retained by the Habsburgs is Austrian Silesia. It was given this territory relatively late in history, namely at the turn of the 19th century, as earlier terminological revisionism reigned and Habsburg diplomacy claimed the right to the whole of Silesia[87]. For a considerable part of the 19th century the territory functioned in the collective consciousness as a crown country of the Habsburgs, populated by a supra-linguistic nation similar to that of the Czech state where in 1848 all eyes were turned to Frankfurt am Main not to Prague, to the German parliament not to the Slavonic congress[88]. In the course of 19th-century history Austrian Silesia gradually gained validity, although it is perhaps worth pointing out that this term in fact also carried a certain degree of nationalisation of this notion, and even the embers of nationalism, if we look at the inter-war debate when it was applied to with nostalgia by the Silesian nationalists from the Silesian People's Party, headed by J. Kożdoń.

The official name of the territory separated by the Ostravica river was slightly different, and this was: 'Krönland Ober- und Nieder-Schlesien, das Herzogtum Schlesien österreichisches Anteils', rendered in English as, the 'Crownland of Upper and Lower Silesia, Duchy of Silesia, the Austrian share'[89]. Hence, this was a relic of the social class system and in reference to quite a remote past.

Yet, towards the end of 1918, when the monarchy of Austria-Hungary was bursting at the 'national seams' none of these names was used, and numerous epithets emerged referring to various territorial aspirations of particular ethnic groups. Looking to the west, in the territory of Opava Silesia the final word was left up to the Germans, who on 30 October 1918 proclaimed the creation of the Sudetenland. This territory was to become part of German Austria. It was populated mostly by Germans whose representatives had no difficulties whatsoever with assuming control over the area and organizing the administration and even their own military forces[90].

Yet, under pressure from the Czechs and following the December consultations with Vienna its leaders submitted their power to the Czechs and following a wave of protest at the declaration of President Wilson – emigrated. From then on the territory was officially called Opava Silesia or simply Opavsko, which made it sound Czech.

Immediately before the Germans, claims to Opavsko were put forward by the Cieszyn Poles. 19 October 1918 saw the appointment of the National Council for the Duchy of Cieszyn, whose task was to coordinate Polish activity in this territory,

[87] See: D. Gawrecki, *Regionale und nationale*, pp. 112-113.
[88] *Ibidem*, pp. 117-118.
[89] D. Gawrecki a kol., *Dejiny,* vol. 1, Opava 2003, p. 13.
[90] On this event: *ibidem*, pp. 296-298.

which was restricted only to the eastern part of Austrian Silesia. Their objective was to incorporate the territory to the 'reborn' Poland[91]. Such a declaration was made on 29 October during a council meeting in Orlova. This triggered the Czech reaction and already the next day saw the establishment, in the (still) Polish Ostrava, of the *Česky Zemsky Narodni Vybor pro Slezsko* (The Czech Territorial National Committee for Silesia), which claimed the entire Austrian Silesia. As we know, at the outset of October a temporary agreement had been signed and the disputed area was divided, but both sides ignored these changes. Firstly, the Poles announced their plan to conduct elections to the Sejm in the disputed territory in January, which met with the Czechs' reaction in the form of a military campaign on the day before the election[92].

The eventually divided territory was called by many names in the interwar period. Both sides were readily using the term Cieszyn Silesia (the Czech version was Těšinsko), which was associated by the Czechs only with their own territories of the former Duchy of Cieszyn. In addition the Poles came up with their own name for the Czech part of the divided territory, namely Zaolzie, Polish *Śląsk Zaolziański*, which was a clear signal of their opposition to this decision and raised the threat of them demanding its revision, which actually happened in the shadow of the Munich Agreement of 1938 and as a result of which Zaolzie 'was returned' to Poland[93].

Prior to this fact, both parts of Czech Silesia had become reunited with the Hlučín Region (this district was formally subject to Prague), which up until that moment had been part of the county (*Landkreis*) of Racibórz (Ratibor, Ratiboř). It was incorporated into Czechoslovakia following its separation from Prussian Silesia, and this decision took place at the Versailles Treaty. The Czechoslovak Silesia – it would be suitable to call it this due to the country's Unitarian character, though the name Czech Silesia was still used – maintained the character of a separate land, a second-level administrative unit with its capital city in Opava, although this did not put an end to the former problems and conflicts[94].

These were felt for the first time in June 1924 when President Tomas G. Masaryk visited Opava and was deeply affronted by its German authorities. It was on their behalf that County Head (*Landrat*) Ernst Franz welcomed him to 'the principal German city', which was emphasized by banners displayed on the city town hall, among which there were no Czechoslovakian ones. The Czech politicians considered this to

[91] Artificially about this issue: *ibidem*, pp. 298-303.
[92] More on the Czech-Polish conflict see in articles by Tomasz Kruszewski and Grzegorz Strauchold in this volume.
[93] An extensive historical-identity analysis of particular names is performed by: R. Luft, *op. cit.,* pp. 24-35.
[94] Dan Gawrecki a kol., *Dejiny,* vol. 1, Opava 2003, pp. 306-309.

be a sign of disloyalty, as a result of which the power of first instance was transferred to the county of Opava[95].

This was only a prelude to the administrative reform undertaken in 1927, whose effect was the joining of the land of Silesia with that of Moravia and the introduction of the Moravian-Silesian land with the capital city in Brno (Brünn). This act met with widespread protests from all of the local population independent of their nationality. In the arguments presented by the authorities historically-economic points dominated. When it comes to the first aspect, what was mostly emphasized was a return to the situation which mirrored that of the Middle Ages, that of the 18th century and that of the mid-19th century. To support this thesis even the example of Moravians of Hlučín was brought up. In the economic arguments the difficulties connected with the functioning of such a small unit of self-government was emphasized as well as the expected savings[96]. Also political arguments were produced, and it was brought up that the land of Silesia was to have already been divided in 1920. At the time it was only the press that highlighted the fact that the Czechs were a minority in this territory, and the intended – alongside the new administrative divisions – introduction of self-government on the second level of administration would lead to the dominance of Germans contesting the alliance of the Czech government with the Poles.

The argumentation of objectors of the reform was presented by J. Kożdoń in the brochure entitled: 'Das Recht unserer schlesischen Heimat auf die verwaltungsmässige Selbständigkeit'[97]. He was also the one to bring up historical, economic and political arguments which favoured the on-going existence of the independent land of Silesia. In his extensive disquisition he repeated that Silesian princes joined the Crown of Bohemia on a voluntary basis, and that the province had always maintained its independence. He recalled the frequent and long-term Silesian protests of the 18th and 19th centuries against the merge with Moravia. He intended to prove that despite its small size the region was well-governed and free from economic crises.

He devoted much of his attention to political issues. Arguments were concocted for internal use that the citizens of Silesia would be forced from then on to settle all their matters in remote Brno. And that in Brno decisions would also be made regarding their life, on which they would have no influence whatsoever, for they would constitute a minority in this administrative entity. He also mentioned his

[95] M. Gawrecka, *Československé Slezsko*, pp. 94-95.
[96] *Ibidem*, pp. 95-99.
[97] Jozef Kożdoń, *Das Recht unserer schlesischen Heimat auf die verwaltungsmässige Selbständigkeit*, Troppau 1927.

talks with the Czech political elite which took place between the end of 1919 and the beginning of 1920 in Prague, during which all the elite's representatives allegedly promised him that the region would be independent.

This well-thought-out argument brought little result and on 1 December 1928 both lands were joined, in reaction to which almost all Czech periodicals published black, obituary-like frames on their front pages. However, the protests quickly fell silent and – as it would seem – unlike Kożdoń, the remaining formations were motivated by objectives other than the defence of Silesian identity. For the Opava Germans this was a favourable opportunity for launching an attack on German activist factions – co-creators of the government – with the objective of trading the Sudetenland for posts. Also the Poles treated the protests as an occasion to consolidate their own circle. Opava was to them as equally remote as Brno, and what was most important were 'the Polish affairs' and looking toward what was looming from beyond the Olše river[98]. These desires came to fruition in the autumn of 1938.

Cultural institutions – the Upper Silesian State Museum in Bytom

The beginnings of the Bytom Museum are similar to the history of other such facilities in Upper Silesia. It was founded thanks to the efforts of a circle of local enthusiasts of the city and the region who, having in 1910 previously established an association named, Beuthener Geschichts- und Museumsverein (The Historical and Museum Society of Bytom), that very same year also opened the Bytom museum. It became the fourth museum in the region, next to the ones in Nysa (1897), Opole (1900) and the Upper Silesian Museum in nearby Gliwice (Gleiwitz, Hlivice) (1905)[99].

The organizers had two objectives in mind. To raise the interest of the locals in the city's history through publishing works on local history and collecting relics and documents related to this history. Just as the remaining *Heimatmuseums,* in the initial period of its activity the Bytom Museum faced various housing and financial problems, and the content of its collections was largely random and dependent on donors' generosity. The museum also housed precious municipal and guild documents as well as family heirlooms from Bytom and the neighbouring area. There were even collections brought from very remote countries, such as Japan[100].

[98] M. Gawrecka, *Československé Slezsko,* pp. 98-99.

[99] For more information on the beginnings of Upper Silesian museums see articles in the magazine 'Rocznik Muzeum Górnośląskiego w Bytomiu', 1963, issue. 1, where Gliwice and Zabrze are described but with the exception of Bytom.

[100] On the beginnings see also: [K.] Bimler, *Die Entwicklung des Beuthener Museums,* 'Mitteilungen des Beuthener Geschichts- u. Museumsvereins', 1913, issue 3, pp. 35-46. The history of the Museum is

The foundation of the Weimar Republic changed little in this respect and it continued to be part of the sphere dominated by amateurs who were willing to dedicate warm summer afternoons to making their collections available to viewers. Already in the 1920s this practice received much criticism from professionals who emphasized that the Upper Silesian Museums were lacking a central, leading theme and did not answer the question as to who was their target audience. It was also emphasised that they were not specialised enough. Hubert Kotzias, having presented these charges, answered them and pointed out that the Upper Silesian museums should assume the role of the non-existing universities and educate the entire society as well as to present the province as a homeland. When it comes to Bytom, he wanted the town to specialize in mining, that is, to present the German cultural contributions in this field[101].

A decisive impulse to perform a makeover of the museum's profile actually came from Katowice and was connected with the activity of Tadeusz Dobrowolski who, on the order of M. Grażyński from 1927 set about organizing the Silesian Museum, which was to present the entire history of the region from an exclusively Polish perspective. In this case it was first the municipal authorities and then its provincial counterparts that, having reconsidered the idea, decided to finance both the construction of the new headquarters and the activity of the new *Oberschlesisches Landesmuseum* (Upper Silesian State Museum)[102].

The purpose of the reorganisation was unequivocally political and in line with the German idea of Upper Silesia. The region was to be presented as exclusively German, and the museum – by means of academic methodology and its exhibitions – was to counter Polish claims on the primacy of pre-Slavs and the pro-Polish character of Silesia. At the same time much emphasis was placed on the archaeological collection the museum had already boasted of much earlier, and to whose extension there were many opportunities at the time. An equally important element was the collection on the town's beginnings. The 1930s was also the time when its ethnographic collection was extended. It was only in 1935 that the Upper Silesian labourers were chosen to be the theme of one of the museum's exhibitions, but this theme was later modified and the exhibition eventually focused on a display of the miners' social class and its input into the civil development of the entire region.

most comprehensively presented in: *Muzeum Górnośląskie w Bytomiu*, eds Mieczysław Dobkowski, Jan Drabina, Bytom 2011, where this period is described by J. Drabina, *Muzeum w Bytomiu 1910-1932,* pp. 11-30.

[101] [Hubert] Kotzias, *Zur Ausgestaltung des Beuthener Museums,* 'Mitteilungen des Beuthener Geschichts- u. Museumsvereins', 1929, issues 11-12, pp. 191-197.

[102] See Przemysław Nadolski, *Górnośląskie Muzeum Krajowe w Bytomiu. 1932-1945,* [in:] *Muzeum Górnośląskie w Bytomiu*, pp. 31-44.

An important piece of information on the museum's mission was the motto located near its entrance: 'Help us to study, help us to teach, to nurture all that is ours, to defend ourselves from all that is alien, to venerate our town and our region'[103]. Together with the change of political system in 1933, changes were also introduced to the character of the institution's activity, which made itself accessible to visitors as much as possible. This was attained by such practices as the distribution of free tickets to the poor, inviting organized groups of schoolchildren and adult visitors, also outside of opening hours, as well as providing an opportunity for children and youth to spend time in the museum without the adult supervision. As a result, the museum was visited by 80-90,000 people every year.

Whereas the main activity of the museum was more of a cultural character and only to some degree presented the region as a German bastion in the East, in the 1930s exhibitions were frequently engaged in the sphere of pure politics and propaganda and they referred to the injustice inflicted upon the Germans during the plebiscite and the unhealed wound of the divided region. Most meaningful was the exhibition from 1939 entitled 'Think about it'. Next to the plebiscite posters it also presented a bust of Bismarck from his destroyed tower in Katowice and Reden's head sculpture from his recently destroyed monument in Chorzów (Königshütte, Chořov).

Regionalism in the education programmes of schools of the Silesian Voivodeship

In June and July of 1922, during the final division of the plebiscite area, the elites of Upper Silesia were very enthusiastic and convinced that a change would result in the merger of various regional groups and the constitution of a united Polish nation communicating by means of literary Polish. This change was promised by the immigrant representatives of the intelligentsia, mostly teachers, but also Catholic priests, who in fact were the only native group with similar linguistic skills, but were more for it than against it. They owed their skills to the excellent Slavonic language department of Wrocław University and the Wrocław Curia's emphasis on their bilingual education.

The divergences between these elites were already at the time manifesting themselves at the suggested pace for the spread of the nationwide language. The priests suggested its gradual emergence and at least a few dozen years of the Upper Silesian dialect functioning as a legitimate variation of Polish. Only in 1919, did Priest Jan Kapica write: 'The only thing the *wasserpolnish* language lacks is a school.

[103] *Ibidem*, p. 35.

Provide the Upper Silesians with a good Polish school, and ten years from now they will speak Polish as well as the Poles from Congress Poland (former Russian Kingdom of Poland – P.W.)'[104]. This granting of equal rights to various linguistic varieties is illustrated in the pages of for example 'Gość Niedzielny' magazine, which frequently published tales, dialogues and even articles written in the dialect[105].

The attitude of immigrant teachers was quite different. What we notice besides the doctrinal reasons is the reflection of the customs and etiquette of the gentry and the consequent aversion to the folk-related features of this language as well as to this environment. The immigrant teachers initially treated the Silesian dialect with contempt, and they considered its characteristics to be the result of centuries-long bondage[106]. For this reason, they insisted that only literary Polish language be used in schools. In the annually published (up until 1928) by the Wydział Oświecenia Publicznego (Division for the Public Enlightenment of Silesia) at the Silesian Voivodeship Office (Urząd Województwa Śląskiego)[107] 'the programme of education' this view was described as follows 'children need to have explained to them that at school they will be taught the language that will serve them to communicate with all their compatriots and in which Polish literature is written, and that mastering this language is the obligation of every Pole, and at the same time a vital necessity'[108]. The result of such an approach towards the Silesian dialect was the clearing of regional history textbooks. In the most popular school textbook by Jan Żebrok

[104] This statement appeared in the famous address of Priest Kapica published by 'Der Oberschlesier' magazine during the pre-plebiscite debate of the region's future and constituted the argument supporting the incorporation of the region into Poland. It was also evidence for the priest's unexpected turn towards nationalism. See: [Johann] Kapitza, *Was wollen denn eigentlich die Polen?,* 'Der Oberschlesier', 1919, issue 6 of 7 XI, p. 1-2.

[105] Of symbolic character was the publication by the magazine of a work entitled 'Stary Kościół Miechowicki' in the years 1923-1924 by Priest Norbert Bonczyk, which was widely considered to be the most important poetic work for the Polish-speaking Upper Silesians. Cf. also: *Gawęda Stacha Kropiciela,* 'Gość Niedzielny', 1924, issue 7 of 17 II, p. 8, where the following statement is contained: 'Nie byda sie tam wysiłoł pisać jak to padają językiem literackim – jakby kto językiem pisać umioł – jo już nie, bo pisza piórem, ale też nie byda naszego górnośląskiego języka naciągoł i koślawił, jeno byda pisoł jak gawędzą, bo za to ręczy dawne pochodzenie moje z dziada i pradziada jako gawędziarz (…)' (I will not try to write as they do with a literary tongue – as if anyone could write with a tongue – I will not, for I write with a pen, but I will not strain and distort our Upper Silesian language, I will only put down what people are saying, for this is justified by my origin: a storyteller just like my grandfather and great grandfather).

[106] Cf. Eugeniusz Kopeć, *Z zagadnień integracji językowej śląskich kresów Rzeczpospolitej (1918-1939)*, [in:] *Z problemów integracji II Rzeczpospolitej,* ed. Józef Chlebowczyk, Katowice 1980, p. 20.

[107] In the autonomous Silesian voivodeship this was a counterpart of the all-Polish board of education. On behalf of the Sejm of Silesia it was directed by the governor of Silesia. See: Maria W. Wanatowicz, *Województwo śląskie na tle Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, [in:] *Województwo śląskie (1922-1939). Zarys monograficzny,* ed. Franciszek Serafin, Katowice 1996, p. 24.

[108] Based on: Anna Glimos-Nadgórska, *Regionalizm czynnikiem integrującym czy dezintegrującym w pracy szkoły powszechnej województwa śląskiego*, [in:] *Regionalizm a separatyzm – historia i współczesność. Śląsk na tle innych obszarów*, ed. Maria W. Wanatowicz, Katowice 1995, p. 81.

– who was otherwise an active member of the Polish Teachers' Union – entitled 'Nasze czytanki' (Our reader) and written in literary Polish, there were hardly any mention of 'the wakers of the nation' from the Polish national movement in Upper Silesia[109].

The only thing that was awoken by this question in Polish cultural elites was some tension (at most)[110]. The 'Gość Niedzielny' magazine indeed criticised Żebrok's textbook, but mostly for the omission of religious issues and not for promoting literary Polish. Yet, from the very outset it met with the negative reactions of the Upper Silesians themselves, and especially their older representatives, whose standards of life were often no worse than those of the teachers. They considered literary language to be 'lordly' language and criticised such behaviours displayed by the teachers – even when it came to their way of dressing. The first one to engage in this conflict was Jan Kustos, the leader of the independent Silesian movement in Polish Silesia, who was accused by his opponents of separatism and who referred to the teachers from Galicia as 'Kulturträgers from the land of illiterates'[111]. Children from Silesian families scolded at home for using literaty Polish picked it up at home and when reprimended for using Silesian dialect by the teachers would, by way of answer, tell them that they were going to tell their 'fater'[112].

The significance of these relations started to grow along with the growing politicisation of the regional heritage status following the May revolt of 1926. First the Christian Democracy of Wojciech Korfanty, which up until then was the principal force behind the integration of various sections of society – but, let us add, on the basis of Upper Silesian values and 'in the presence of the prime minister from Katowice' – took a turn and passed on to a one-sided valorisation of the regional heritage. In a reaction to this, voivode Grażyński did an even more significant about-turn and making use of the Cieszyn intelligentsia, he started to promote Silesian regionalism but with a positive attitude towards the fabricated dialect and regional culture makers.

In 1935 this programme of cultural engineering was explained to the teachers by Grażyński: 'The obligation of teachers is to raise a citizen who would think in the categories of the entire country, to raise an individual of a new kind, connected

[109] *Ibidem*.

[110] Żebrok's book was as a matter of fact written on commission by the Voivodeship authorities, which – as it would seem – were initially in favour of a quick integration, or at least could not imagine the consequences of publishing such work. Anna Glimos-Nadgórska, *Szkolnictwo i oświata pozaszkolna*, in:] *Województwo śląskie (1922-1939)*, pp. 497-498.

[111] Maria W. Wanatowicz, *Inteligencja na Śląsku w okresie międzywojennym, K*atowice 1986, p. 89.

[112] Anna Glimos-Nadgórska, *Polskie szkolnictwo powszechne województwa śląskiego, K*atowice 2000, p. 159.

with regional values, which need to be translated into all-Polish values'[113], this was a clear borrowing from the former publicist publications in 'Zaranie' magazine. In a school context this expression was also justified by Józef Witczak, who was a member of the Silesian parliament on behalf of the Silesian Sanation and a member of the Association of Silesian Insurgents: '(…) we are declared supporters of the preservation of regional values but a uniform system of education is the most crucial foundation of the collective spiritual unity of the nation[114].

This was ideologically supported by G. Morcinek who claimed that 'the dialect is a variety of Polish language which lies at the foundation of literary language', which found its expression in his works, enthusiastically promoted by the voivodeship authorities. In education programmes this thesis was illustrated in the recommendations of 1931 to 'accustom children gradually and very slowly to replacing the dialect'[115].

Therefore, this was nothing else than the acceptance of views that were initially promoted by the Upper Silesian priests. And moreover, what should be in fact the least surprising is that these recommendations were boycotted by immigrant teachers who, in fact, having no appropriate textbooks whatsoever at their disposal were actually unable to fulfil the orders of the educational authorities.

Conclusion

Modern nations were developing in Central Europe mostly on the foundations of nationality. In politics, this was the decisive element of identity, around which, from the 19th century onwards at the very latest, there other elements started to focus. This also led to a questioning of the cultural values and the former direction in which they were transferred, (re)building of other connections and an emergence of new areas of conflict.

As a result of these phenomena at the turn of the 20th century Prussian and Austrian Silesia were practically already 'promoted' to the status of national 'borderlands', where former religious conflicts (between Protestantism and Catholicism) and related national conflicts (between the Habsburg and Borussian tradition and loyalty) frequently had fierce battles between competitive national subjects, who promoted identities which increasingly eliminated 'those others'. What is more, the nationalising supra-national monarchies met with resistance and the

[113] *XIII zjazd delegatów Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego, okręg śląski,* 'Ogniskowiec', 1935, no. 5.
[114] After: Mieczysław Grzyb, *Walka Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego w województwie śląskim o jednolity ustrój szkolnictwa w latach 1922-1939,* 'Zaranie Śląskie', 36 (1974), issue 1, p. 17.
[115] A. Glimos-Nadgórska, *Regionalizm czynnikiem integrującym,* p. 86.

counteractions of Slavonic national movements, whose primary objective was to gain/regain their own countries.

Before the aforementioned 'offers' were finally formulated multiple socio-political revolutions occurred, two out of which were particularly crucial for the interwar identities. Most importantly Germany, with the exception of German Silesia, had lost the status of state-nation and their offer could no longer make use of the aid provided by this institution. In spite of this fact they aspired to retain the dominate group position in other territories as well and their vast majority gave an enthusiastic welcome to the carrying out of their postulates by the Third Reich.

Secondly, the strictly regional Silesian movements, which had earlier frequently emphasised their independence from German culture and gravitated towards Slavonic national movements, were fully confronted with the offer and identity of the new nation-states, which did not always happen smoothly, for they also aspired to carry out their own plans on the overlapping political and cultural entities. However, as the canon of their cultural system was formed outside Silesia, various varieties of regionalism were frequently interpreted as separatism and eradication.

A new factor which dynamised the situation and eventually led to a 'hot' phase in the conflict, was the competition between nation-states. It resulted in the fact that identities went through another phase of politicisation between 1918 and 1939, which means that the organs of individual nation-states were actively interested in their shape or structure and made efforts in this direction, trying to impose on Silesians those sets of identities that were considered to be 'real'. Let us add here that this was done in an atmosphere where militant attitudes were still very much alive in the minds of the representatives of elites, and that these attitudes were responsible for the fact that the character of the countries and groups' mutual relations resembled that of a cold war between nations, and the delineation of borders, beyond which there were only ruthless enemies, was among the priority issues.

This less conspicuous factor, namely, the permanent and persistent presence of a military past had a decisive impact on the character and scale of conflicts related to the identity of the inhabitants of Silesia in the interwar period. What is more, military heritage needs to be understood not only as the memory of the war trauma that was experienced but also hatred for the conflicts which took place immediately after the Great War: Polish-German and Polish-Czech military confilcts, which were very much alive, all the more so that the Polish-Czech conflict, with its armed episode from the outset of 1919 was concluded a year later, and that Polish-German, with three bloody uprisings, was continued up until the summer of 1922. They were as a matter of fact still present – if it was only in the shape of combatant

organisations, which for these very reasons demanded special treatment, which exceeded far beyond the democratic system. These were also the organizations which made the greatest efforts to transform their offers of identity – which was voluntary up until 1914 – into an obligatory one for all the inhabitants of respective Silesias.

In spite of the fragmentation of Silesia into national Silesias and in spite of the mutual antagonisms, attempts were continued to describe the region as a whole, although its constituent territories were largely different from one another, and what is worse, various nations claimed rights to single territories. Paradoxically, also the largely similar cultural background was exploited for these purposes, which yielded results in the shape of the progressing disintegration of the province and an ever-growing gap between individual Silesias. Also in the field of internal affairs we may distinguish similar actions undertaken for the sake of the entire country's unification and awarding its population with a uniform, national cultural code.