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"One's Countrymen" vs. "Strangers" in Upper Silesia

1. The Concept of Research. Theoretical Assumptions

1.1. Introduction

For several years the team of sociologists from the Department of Research on Contemporary Culture has conducted research on the socio-cultural identity of the inhabitants of Upper Silesia (Wódz [K.] (ed.), 1992; Łęcki et al., 1992; Łęcki et al., 1992a).

In the first stage of the research the authors' team has set itself the task of "defining by means of the phenomenologico-formal analysis the limits and contents [...] of the Silesians' experienced world" (Łęcki et al., 1992). We assumed that the source of the socio-cultural identity of the Silesians is transmitted in the processes of primary socialization and strengthened in everyday relations of the personal type social scope of knowledge about the specific features and location of one's own regional group. An attempt to reach the resources of common knowledge of people who define themselves as Silesians, was taken on the basis of the analysis of a dozen or so life stories, and more precisely — stories of one's own life recorded on a tape. The material collected in this way was the basis for reconstructing the ways of defining the limits of social world by the examined, its inner structurization, and especially division into one's countrymen and strangers. In the following stage

we concentrated on two, key from the point of view of ethnic relationships, problems — identification dilemmas and the dynamics of the picture of a "stranger" in a conflict situation.

The results of current analyses concerning both of the above-mentioned problems were presented in the work *One's Countrymen and Strangers in Upper Silesia* (Wódz [K.] (ed), 1993). The integral elements of this publication are included in the annex original scripts of two "life stories" being the basis for the reconstruction of mental structures being of interest to us. The considerations presented below are devoid of crucial — from the point of view of accepted research procedure — fragments of the original utterances of the examined. We do hope that we managed to present without too far reaching deformations — the most important features of the common way of thinking of the Silesians about themselves and about the world.

The accepted by the team methodological option is contained in the widely understood humanistic-interpretative paradigm connected with the names of Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, William Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, George Herbert Mead. We took theoretical inspirations, first of all, from the sociology of knowledge in its form suggested — in reference to Alfred Schütz's concept — by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. We also made use of some solutions offered by the classic of formal sociology George Simmel, in the works of William G. Sumner or Robert Ezra Park. We finally took into consideration the experience of Fritz Schütze from his research on trajectories.

The starting point of the undertaken research was the assumption about the existence of the separate "experienced world" (*Lebenswelt*) of the specific ethnic group created by the Silesians. The core of this world is — as we believe, transmitted in the process of primary socialization and strengthened by everyday "face to face" interactions social resource of knowledge (beliefs about the specific features and location of one's regional group). Reaching this resource is not an easy thing, since it is part of this natural, prereflexive attitude which tells the members of this cultural group to "take for granted" the beliefs about the essential separateness (relating to customs, mentality) of native Upper Silesians influencing their attitudes towards the strangers. The analysis of the subjective interpretation of one's own life seemed to us to be the best way enabling reaching the "experienced world" on condition that the life story is treated as "a text requiring deepened interpretation and understanding" (Giza, 1991:105).

The starting point were the experiences gathered in many research on the Upper Silesian community both by means of the qualitative and quantitative methods. Such and not other choice of the respondents is justified wider in the part "Selection of Testees. Characteristics of Material. Course of Research". Here, we would just like to point that in order to examine the interesting

us interdependencies — the representativeness of the testees — the proving of which with the analysis of only two authobiographic stories would be a breakneck task — is not necessary. When the subject of the research are opinions and the attention is concentrated on their coexistence and mutual relationships and not on their distribution in the society — Zetterberg claims — the testees representativeness in not necessary (Zetterberg, 1954).

The characteristics of observing "one's countrymen" and "strangers" in conflict situations or the dilemmas of one's own picture of the people from cultural borderland (such are undoubtedly Silesians), as they were presented here, do not obviously pretend and cannot pretend to the description of the whole very diversified Upper Silesian community. They show, however, as it seems — certain important — aspect of the situation, characteristics of something which can be defined as a social "grey zone", maybe closest to the world experienced in the clear form. And it was this world — although we do not want to absolutize its importance for the more widely understood social life — which interested us most. In it, in turn, the most important seemed to us the problems of divisions into "one's countrymen" and "strangers" such as they appear in conflict situations as well as connected with these divisions dilemmas of the picture of oneself.

1.2. "One's Countrymen" and "Strangers"

The problems of "strangeness" and "homeliness" have become the subject of analyses of social researchers since the end of the 19th century. The first important work discussing these problems was written by Ludwik Gumplowicz (Gumplowicz, 1905). He connected the intergroup relationships with two types of attitudes: solidarity in relationships with one's own countrymen and hostility in relationships with strangers. In the order of the history of sociology the continuator of these trends of thoughts of the author of *Der Rassenkampf* which are connected with the attitudes towards "others", was the American sociologist William G. Sumner who distinguished the notions of in-group and out-group (Sumner, 1906). According to Sumner, there is a distinction between us, we-group or one's own group and all others or groups of other foreign groups. This distinction has far reaching consequences: the members of one's own group are characterized by the mutual relationships of peace, order, law, government and economy; the attitude towards all people from outside one's own group is war and plunder, unless it has been changed by agreements. For Sumner the attitudes of comradeship and peace in one's own group and war in reference to foreign groups are interdependent — loyalty towards one's own group, devotion to it and hatred and contempt for people from outside the group, fraternity

inside, war outside, all this appears simultaneously as the product of the same situation (Sumner, 1906:12—13, quated after Merton, 1982:350).

The basic notions used by Sumner to characterize the phenomena of ethnocentrism have dominated for many years in the considerations about the nature of "strangeness" and "homeliness". Many researchers believed that relationships and attitudes described in *Folkways* are the only, or — in the weaker version — basic form relationships between the communities of the in-group and out-group type. Only Robert K. Merton paid attention to different types of the psychosocial attitude of persons not being group members towards the specific groups depending on meeting or not meeting the conditions of membership and the attitudes of candidates towards group participation. Merton's classification scheme points to the possibility of much greater complication of relationship towards the community than the pattern distinguished by Sumner (Merton, 1982:338—349).

Georg Simmel, the suthor of the essay *Stranger* puts forward the thesis that about strangeness in the sociological sense one can talk only within the framework of the opposition "close—distant" (Simmel, 1975:504—512). Simmel characterizes the situation of a "stranger" first of all due to the common group features of the community which the stranger represents and persons with whom he comes into contact. According to Simmel, "stranger" is close to us, in so far as we feel common to us and him similarity of national, social, professional or universal features; he is distant to us in so far as these common features do not cover only us, in so far as they connect us only because they connect very many (Simmel, 1975:509). Simmel roughly distinguishes several kinds of "strangeness". Firstly, separation occurs when, despite the feeling of closeness, similarity and harmony, the belief appears that these features are common and belong to many people. In this case an individual loses the feeling of the exceptionality of relationship. Secondly, there is sometimes separation outside the community of general values when the meaning of "stranger" is not assigned positive properties. Simmel leaves this last situation away from the analyses carried out in the essay. The relationships between the elements of "closeness" and "distance" occurring — according to Simmel — in each social contact in certain defined proportions and with certain tension change into the attitude towardes the stranger.

In the American sociology the continuations of some theoretical trends of William G. Sumner and Georg Simmel can be found in the concept of "marginal individual" by Robert E. Park (Park, 1928:881—893; Nowicka, 1990:8). Marginal man is a person not assimilated with the culture of the group to which it aspires and simultaneously no longer connected with the community he comes from. Park's category seems to be a good tool for the description of the situation of individuals and community in the multiethnic society where the processes of aculturation and assimilation

take place. Besides, Park applied for the first time in the analysis of ethnic relationships the notion of social distance which was earlier used by Leopold von Wiese and Max Weber (Wiese von 1941:30, quoted after Abel, 1977:232; Weber, 1959, quoted after Bendix, 1975:82). Operationalization of this term was done by Emory S. Bogardus creating the scale later named after him. By social distance he understood the scope of acceptance or rejection of the members of different ethnic groups and the difference of the degrees of distance felt by the groups he called "social distance differential". Park's and Bogardus' works started in the 1920s had for a long time great influence on the sociological analyses of attitudes towards "stranger".

In Poland the precursor of research on the attitude towards "the stranger" was Jan Stanisław Bystroń whose subject of analyses was national xenophobia (Bystroń, 1923:371—396; 1935; 1980:277—313). Florian Znaniecki and Józef Chałasiński, on the other hand, dealt with the problem of antagonism in relationship between ethnic group (Znaniecki, 1930/1931:158—209; Znaniecki, 1931:80—108; Znaniecki, 1990:265—404; Chałasiński, 1933). All these works are models of very interesting deepened studies. It is worth stopping especially at Znaniecki's analysis contained in the work *Studies on Antagonism Towards Strangers*, since his theoretico-empirical proposals — although they were founded on the ground of a different philosophical tradition — are close to the meaning given to the notion of "stranger" later by Alfred Schütz. Znaniecki widers the scope of the notion of *der Fremde* taken from Simmel's tradition. For the author of *Contemporary Nations*, one should introduce what we call **humanistic coefficient** the definition of strangers, just like in general to any scientific approach to social phenomena. Foreign in reference to the examined individual or group are those, and only those whose this individual or group experience as foreign. Strangeness in Znaniecki's approach stops being absolute feature all the time rested in the same man or the same class of people and becomes the relative feature which the same man or the same class of people independently of their own modifications may possess in certain conditions and not possess in others. The problem of strangers does not, thus, limit itself for Znaniecki to the question, which people are foreign in reference to the specific individual or group but boils down to the question "in what conditions given people of a given class are foreign in experiencing the specific individual or group"? These conditions obviously are part of the conscious social life of this individual or group which sometimes experiences and sometimes does not experience given people or people of a given class as foreign or non-foreign. It does not mean that they are "subjective". Using the humanistic coefficient, taking the position of a man as the experiencing and acting subject, as subjective, we can consider only what he himself considers subjective (Znaniecki, 1930/1931:292—293), Znaniecki puts here forward the hypothesis as a statement — human object is experienced by the subject

as foreign only when there is social contact between them on the ground of separable systems of values (Znaniecki, 1930/1931:300). In accordance with this statement during the analysis of the problem of a "stranger" special attention should be paid to the experienced by man sphere of different systems of values of individual and persons or groups with whom the acting subject contacts. The significant turn in the studies over the "stranger" took place thanks to phenomenological sociology. The founder of this trend, Alfred Schütz, in his earlier works and especially in the book *Der Sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* attempted to create theoretical framework for the experience of "the other", which he called the theory of understanding of a "stranger" (*Theorie des Fremdverstehens*) (Schütz, 1981:137—197). The real understanding of a "stranger" was based, in his opinion, on the acts of one's own interpretation of the other (more specifically, the objectives of his activities). In other words, the acting individual is trying to change foreign motives "in order to" (*Um-zu-Motiven*) into its own, in accordance with the scheme of meanings established for the activities of the other (Schütz, 1981:156—160).

The problem of the specific attitude of a "stranger" towards the group is developed by Schütz in the essays "The Stranger" and "The Home-comer" (Schütz, 1964:91—105; Schütz, 1972:70—84). The notion of a "stranger" means for him an adult who is constantly trying to be accepted or at least tolerated by the group to which he would like to belong. The greatest obstacle in this individual's attempts to be accepted, is the difference of the cultural patterns of groups (one's own and foreign). It results from the specifity of knowledge about the social world experienced by an individual. Schütz writes in his essay: "The system of knowledge thus acquired — incoherent, inconsistent, and only partially clear, as it is — takes on for the members of the in-group the appearance of a **sufficient** coherence, clarity, and consistency to give anybody a reasonable chance of understanding and of being understanding and of being understood. Any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him [...] as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world. The knowledge correlated to the cultural pattern carries its evidence to the contrary. It is a knowledge of trustworthy recipes for interpreting the social world [...] Thus, it is the function of the cultural pattern to eliminate troublesome inquiries by offering ready-made directions for use, to replace truth hard to attain by comfortable truisms and to substitude the self--explanatory for the questionable" (Schütz, 1964:95).

The reality basic for man, the world of everyday life is based on the system called "thinking-as-usual". The stranger does not have the same — as the group to which he aspires — system of rules — recipes. He is a man who

has to reflect on almost everything which for the foreign group remains understable by itself. Only after collecting certain knowledge about the interpretative functions of the new cultural patterns "the stranger" can use these patterns as schemes of his own experience.

In a specific case when "the stranger" is a person coming back home (to one's own group) after a longer stay abroad obstacles in mutual understanding result from the difference between exceptionality and importance that the absent assigns to his experiences and the evaluation of these experiences by his countrymen (Schütz, 1972:80). Big role is played in this process by the evaluation of experiences of the returning person by his own group in the categories of success or failure. The degree of intimacy of contacts of the returning person with his own group changes depending on the changes in the essence of "the stranger". Schütz believes that once interrupted relationship of "you" is again established with difficulty since the condition of this relationship is mutuality.

An interesting proposal of the analysis of the relationship of acting--actor with the patterns of his interaction was presented by Erving Goffman, the founder of the dramaturgic perspective in contemporary sociology.[1] The dramaturgic model of interaction pays special attention to the processes of mutual communication of partners combined with mutual presentation. The understanding of the other ("stranger") consists in catching the sense of situationally conditioned behaviour and grasping the cohesion and situational adequacy (Ziółkowski, 1981:120). During interaction the actors carry out idealization, consisting in adjusting the behaviour so that it would suit the way of thinking and expectations of the community in which this "information game" is taking place (Goffman, 1981:74). Localization consists in learning the basic techniques which enable performing different types of roles. In accordance with this perspective inner states play important role in understanding the other, if only they are connected with outer behaviour. Finally, one can say that understanding which is situationally determined takes place in the dynamic interaction. In a narrower sense it consists in investigating the partner's motives and intentions. Understanding the sense of behaviour of "the other" does not always consist in reaching the hidden reality since the major part of institutionalized activities can be understood at the level of outer manifestations (Ziółkowski, 1981:122). One can say that "the stranger" in accordance with the dramaturgic perspective, is the acting whose basic system of meanings strays to a large extent from the sense given to other elements of everyday life by his partner.

In the Polish sociological, ethnological and historical literature one can find many important works concerning the widely understood problem of "the stranger". From the sociological analyses, it is worth paying attention to, first of all, studies by Stanisław Ossowski (Ossowski, 1966:110—220;

Ossowski, 1967:201—300), Aleksander Hertz (Hertz, 1988) as well as Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania (Jasińska-Kania, 1988) and Ewa Nowicka (Nowicka (ed.), 1990). Among ethnologists are the distinguished analyses of "the stranger" carried out by Ludwik Stomma (Stomma, 1986) creative continuator of the approach started by Jan Stanisław Bystroń.

As far as the research on "homeliness" and "strangeness" in Upper Silesia is concerned, it was undertaken both by sociologists (Wódz [J.], 1991) and historians (Kopeć, 1986). The problem of "one's countrymen" and "strangers" is in Upper Silesia not only the problem of academic investigations. It is a real social problem of the region. Such divisions are deeply rooted in the consciousness of many inhabitants of this region.[2] It is also worth reminding that it is also a problem which in different historical periods and in different ways was used as the element of political game.

1.3. Conflict Situation

All this causes that the crucial perspective in which it is worth looking at the division into "one's countrymen" and "strangers", is the perspective of conflict. This real and only potential; the one which should be defined as social tension rather than something already completed in the irremovable from the definition of conflict situations acts of aggression. Maybe, as it has been assumed in these approaches which put stress on examining the origin of the phenomena, these are only two sides of the same medal. Maybe without knowledge about the sources of social tensions we are not able to understand the nature and dynamics of the resulting conflicts. If, however, such or similar assumptions are made, it is essential to examine both mythologized forms of ideological thinking and the forms of common consciousness. In the latter one should look for important lodgements which can be referred to in the processes of transition — from social tension to mature conflict situations.

Similarly to the distinction between "one's countrymen" and "strangers" also the problem of conflict situation, in the perspective of which we would like to look at the relation between "one's countrymen" and "strangers", has in sociology its rich literature. Although far away, not all of the described determinants of this situation find application in the analysis of the empirical material collected by the authors, at least some deserve reminding. They allow to locate the conflicts of "one's countrymen" and "strangers" in Upper Silesia in a slightly wider theoretical context, faciliting understanding their so often hidden and always complicated sense.

"Conflict situation is such a social situation in which the acting people have contradictory aims, expectations, interests and are forced to take up either defensive or aggressive activities in reference to other people" — it

is only one of the possible descriptions of the conflict situation (Białyszewski, 1983:68).[3] The main feature of the conflict situation is the type of behaviour called aggressive, connected with it. There are five types of aggression being the basis and, at the same time, the form of social conflict. They seem to correspond to the established — to the large extent situationally — degrees of increasing the conflict. Putting it briefly — every manifestation of "hidden verbal aggression" carries in itself potential, situationally liberated "verbal aggression of the public character", this, in turn, carries with itself not at all imagined threat — the history of great social and national movements give here enough examples — of "physical aggression": each form of "avoidance aggression" (manifesting itself in the form of applying isolation as a means of doing harm to others) contains in itself the embryos of "sabotage aggression" — consisting in intentional impediment or frustration of the existing co-operation, in minimizing its effects.

Two parameters fix conflict situation: 1) the scope of conflict — which can be expressed through the number of people directly involved in it and through its feedback in the public opinion and 2) its intensity — measured by the degree of engagement in the defense of the rights of the parties being in conflict.

The smallest scope — due to the participation of direct participants — have interpersonal conflicts, they are often described as incidents. They are usually short-lasting, reflect individual's interests, rarely enagage deeper the attention of the wider social surrounding. They are — usually — easy to solve. The reservation as to the latter one seems necessary. If interpersonal conflicts will overlap on the conflicts taking place in small social groups and — further — they can be read as an expression of conflicts breaking large social groups, then their inner dynamics changes naturally and — what follows — the characteristics of this type of conflicts. This specific conflict interference is not a rare phenomenon in contemporary world, however, its nature should be clearly distinguished — although in many cases it can cause big problems — from interpersonal conflicts generated through macroconflicts. The source of these difficulties maybe even the fact that very often the thesis is written in the ideology of macrosocial conflicts that it is only the expression of accumulated interpersonal conflicts.

In the case of ideology which is one of the markers of the intensity of conflict, the above-mentioned relationship governs itself with the "rule of reflection". Here the ideologists of macrosocial conflicts often refer to interpersonal conflicts if not to legitimize their visions, then at least to illustrate them. However — on the other hand — at the interpersonal plane eliminating the personal factor makes this conflict more severe. This is how the two seemingly opposite tendencies jointly work to dynamize the conflict. The same ideology integrating the community by showing the necessity of subordinating

to the collective interest, blurring the divisions inside it and preventing the disputes, sharpens the differences between the parties of the conflict. Another function of ideology is widening the scope of the disputable problems and polarization of the position of the parties of the conflict.

The emotional marker of the conflict situation covers intensive emotional states, first of all, of the negative character, thus, prejudices, anger, hatred, fear, jealousy, etc. It increases the mobilization of the powers in the conflict and fans the tendencies for excessive involvement of the systems of values which leads to deobjectivization of debates. In the natural way it imposes the affective definition of the conflict situation.

Four psychological mechanisms influence the intensification of conflict:

1. Mechanism of *"post facto* rationalization" — the present involvement in the conflict is justified by past involvement. The conflict has lasted for a long time, the "last fight" is needes for victory.

2. Mechanism based on the process of reduction of cognitive dissonance — people start to appreciate things they made sacrifices for.

3. Mechanism defined by Deutsch as the "vicious circle of fear" — based on the psychological phenomenon of the feeling of threat, growing together with the development of conflict. Threat intensifies conflict, more intensive conflict causes the increased threat, etc.

4. "Situational trap". Its source is often manifested among people being in conflict belief that the undertaken act of aggression will necessarily cause withdrawal of the enemy. Other markers of the intensity of conflict are the degree of complexity of the conflict problem — whereas, not only important is the multiplicity of the debatable problems but also to what extent there is clarity as to the hierarchy of the importance of these matters. But — and here comes the last of the factors of conflict intensification, i.e. importance given by the parties of the conflict to the problems being the subject of the conflict — an important (central) problem is such a problem which is considered as important by individuals or communities being in conflict.

The latter statement — similarly as it happened in the case of the sociological problem of the "stranger" refers us to the accepted by the authors of "the humanistic coefficient" and the whole trend of humanistic sociology.

1.4. The Picture of Oneself and Its Function

Individual life always contains its own, unique history. However, in order to understand it, it is necessary "to place" it in the concrete of social conditions in which it takes place. This way this human life becomes, on the one hand, conditioned by this concrete of the social context in which it takes place

and, on the other hand, it is the evidence of one's own participation in the constantly created social world. In all these processes the individual is (to a different degree) the consciously acting actor. All the activities, in turn, are in the important degree dependent on how the socially acting individual sees itself, how it evaluates itself as an individual and itself as a participant of the social game in which it participates. Hence, considering the problems of offending oneself has for a long time interested sociologists. It concers particularly all those sociological trends encompassed in the trend of so-called "humanistic sociology". It was not by accident that the great Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki, writing about social personality, pointed to the role of the so-called "subjective ego and reflected ego", i.e. the variants of one's own picture in social shaping and functioning of an individual (Znaniecki, 1934). In the whole phenomenological and derived trends we can also find many considerations concerning the function of the picture of oneself in the social activities of individuals, but in the activities of the communities within the framework of which certain kinds of the picture of oneself seem to dominate or characterize the average members of the community (Kellerhals, Lalive d'Epianay (eds.), 1987). In this way the considerations about the picture of oneself and its functions become an important element of the sociological analysis and allow to understand human behaviour.

Considering this problem gains additional sense in connection with running for a long time discussion on the dimension of social identity in Europe, this identity which is to a large degree dependent on the really functioning in specific social communities the pictures of one's own created in the conscious-ness of the members of these communities (Morin, 1989). Considerations of this type introduce us into an additional sphere — the sphere of political conditionings of the discussions on identity taking place in Europe. It is clearly pointed out by Elise Marienstrass (Marienstrass, 1991: 27—34) who, on the example of France, shows the importance of political conditionings in the processes of looking for identity by specific individuals, communities. Ob-viously it also influences the picture of one's own. Another aspect of the same problem is pointed by Rene Gallisot differentiation into social self--identification through the feeling of real affiliation to the specific social community (*identification d'appartenance*) and through reference to some community, either existing in the past (thus, reference to historical premises or experiences both individual and communal), or existing currently in another (distant for the real for a given individual or community) social space (*identification de reference*) (Gallisot, 1987: 12—38). It is the differentation worth making use of in the case of the analysis of social phenomena in the regions of the neighbouring or trans-border character, where the problems are current and often influence creating the picture of oneself by the individuals and larger communities (Wódz [J.], 1992). One should also refer here to the

references to symbolic space, being often the framework of the pictures of oneself. Such symbolic space may also be the really experienced space or the reference space, thus, the idealized picture (Wódz [J.], 1989:263—279).

Pointing briefly to the most important functions of the picture of oneself, one cannot ignore the problem of background against which the processes of autodefinition of individuals and communities take place. This background are, first of all, other communities participating in everyday life, the ones which through everyday contacts force to create the picture of one's own against others. Marie-Jose Chombart de Lauwe writes directly that the picture of the individual depends directly on the game of the picture of one's countrymen and strangers who have to be somehow defined, so that one's countrymen could be defined against their background, and among one's countrymen oneself (Chombart de Lauwe, 1992:9—29). We, thus, have to do with as if necessary process of defining the social world on the background of which we define ourselves. These phenomena are the more interesting in our analyses where the basis is the story of everyday life, where every contact influences the fixing or modification of the picture of oneself.

Stressing the dynamics of the problems of functioning the pictures of oneself makes us in this way look at the totality of the problem of identity. It refers both to the so-called inner identification and to the so-called outer identification. It is, thus, once reference to one's own activity seen through one's own picture and once reference to the outer world, to social ties to the vision of oneself as the social actor in the social world created by "one's countrymen" and "strangers". These problems are discussed by Zbigniew Bokszański who develops the analysis of mutual interdependencies of these identifications (Bokszański, 1989:17).

1.5. Reconstruction of the Picture of Oneself through Life Story

The story of life or, as some want it, life story, is always the individual, always subjective story of an individual about what for himself, in his spontaneous account was important in his life. However, thanks to this spontaneity of account, we obtain in the life story the most important elements of the collective memory about commonplaceness. The importance of this problem is stressed by Franco Ferrarotti where he writes about as if natural appearence in these accounts of rootedness in the realities of place, social relations, the importance of earlier part to which the examined refers (Ferrarotti, 1983:33ff). Thanks to this the researcher obtains, through the application of special interpretative techniques, the possibility of recon-structing the social world in its everyday dimensions, which is impossible when applying the traditional sociological approach. One should be aware,

however, that the very acceptance of the research perspective based on life stories, forces the researcher to critical approach. Roberto Cipriani, Enrico Pozzi and Consuelo Corradi analysing the stories of family life warn against a very easy to commit mistake of ideologization of everyday life. The researcher has to very precisely mark the borders what is the examined account of his life story. Otherwise, he is threatened by falling into ideology, or overestimating the role of everyday life, or local life, or the examined world of work, etc. (Cipriani et al., 1985:253—262). This warning refers to any research but it is the more important the more the accounted reality, due to its earlier fixed images, easily undergoes ideologization. It seems that we have to really do with this danger in the case of analyses of life stories coming from the region of Upper Silesia.

Zbigniew Bokszański discussing Florian Znaniecki's earlier settlements points to the occurrence in life stories of specific ordering and consequence in the selection of persons which appear in biographies (Bokszański, 1989:72—73). It refers, going further, to the typical character of roles fulfilled by these persons and to the values advocated by these persons. Another author, Jean Remy, writing about the method of research on life stories pays attention to the necessity of being consequent in defining "one's countrymen" and "strangers" by the teller who most often are presented as specific "adversaries", although it does not always mean rational objections or grudges against these "strangers" (Remy, 1987:115 ff). It can be read, according to this author, from the context or the dramaturgic situation within the framework of which the examined locates and defines this "stranger". It is important to the extent that later the picture of one's own is often created in opposition to the picture of this "stranger". It is, thus, necessary to understand precisely how the "stranger" is presented, in order to understand against this background the picture of one's own.

Reading the picture of one's own through life stories is always burdened with the danger of relative subjectivism (the examined relates himself, even if he talks about others, whom he sees through his own experience), and the objectivization of this picture is only possible through interpretation which must take into account the context in which particular fragments of the story were created and through comparing the accounts with outer events known to the examiner. It is this type of interpretation that we use in further analyses.

2. Choice of Samples. Characteristics of Material Course of Research

In the case of two in-depth biographical interviews, the choice of respondents, although unavoidably must have the features of vague freedom, should be particularly well justified. Both advantages and limitations of the always to a certain degree arbitrary choice of the examiners should be pointed out. In the research run by the authors' team the great role was played by the fact that it was the continuation of earlier, many years' interest in the Upper Silesia problems. Particularly this stage of research the result of which was the work *The Social World of the Silesians, Reconstruction of the Contents of Common Consciousness* (Łęcki et al., 1992) fundamentally influenced the shape of these research intentions, the final results of which were put in this volume.

In the above-mentioned research, it was possible to reach and persuade to participate in the research of one these Silesian families which has been connected with this land for generations, in the history of which have concentrated many typical for the resident inhabitants of Upper Silesia biographical moments and the kinship and kindred ties covered both Polish and German ancestory — among them were both Silesian insurgents and Wehrmacht soldiers. The kinship relationship connected this family with the name of the activist for the Polish character of Silesia — Wojciech Korfanty. The majority lives in Poland and did not intend (despite having the legal possibility of obtaining the German citizenship and conferring German nationality) to leave Upper Silesia. Only few members of the family made use of this possibility.

Not all agreed to be interviewed, not all out of whom expressed such agreement (at least initially) endure till the end. They pointed, however, to next potential interviewees, and we considered such "orders" as sufficient.

Now we faced another type of problems. Considering the declaration as to the nationalistic orientation of the respondents as binding, we tried simultaneously — which was of course possible for only two respondents — to find more "tough" bases, to make the qualification as univocal as possible. Respecting the choice of the nationalistic option of these respondents whose declarations remained in contradiction with the otherwise known, often told by themselves facts from the history of themselves and their families.[4] We would not want to consider this type of causes as not fully univocal. But — putting aside for the time being interest in these intriguing divergencies — we would now like to concentrate attention only and exclusively on the doubtless cases. We were looking, thus, for:

1. Silesian living (which is important!) in Poland, declaring the German nationalistic option.

2. Silesian declaring the Polish nationalistic option. We tried to reach the respondents outside the organizations and associations acting in the region and grouping the persons who not only univocally define their national option (referring in both cases to their Silesian roots), but actively act for ideological constructs connected with these options. In accordance with the distinction between "experienced consciousness" and "created consciousness" (Łęcki et al., 1992) made by us in the work *The Social World of the Silesians*, we would like to consequently concentrate on these forms of consciousness which are as close as possible to the first one.

The persons found in this way should have — that is what we wanted — additionally met the condition of some comparability of the experienced fate. In the reality of Upper Silesia '92, it was not easy to find the respondents who would meet requirements, and at the same time would agree to give the interview of the autobiographical character. In so far as it was relatively easy to obtain knowledge about the opinions of this type of respondents on particular matters and problems, especially the ones which released their emotions, they agreed to the accounts of the autobiographical type unwillingly, or not at all. There were surely reasons for it: arduousness connected with the larger amount of visits of the interviewer, something which we called "the microphone effect" (Łęcki et al., 1992:21—25) in the description of the course of our previous research. This effect causes difficult to anticipate disturbances in the interviews run in various environments, and it would be very risky to make it dependent on, e.g. the respondents' level of education. The example can be not only interviews collected by us. Interesting is also — in this aspect — sociologists' report which examined the groups' style of life which practically does not part with microphone — reporters. In the book entitled *The Style of Reporters' Life* (Miller, 1983:307—308) we read: "Marek Miller: Before I pressed the cassette-recorder's button, you told about your ill will towards its presence in our conversation. Where does it come from? Ludwik Flaszen answers: I feel the tape-recorder as the undesirable witness. If the conversation is between us, it is between us. We can then find a common vista which is the organic vista. However, the cassette-recorder records in the objective mode. It is blunt and very faithful. Such a demonic ear which intends to take notes and then reproduce. It unables situationality, privacy between us. The listener who does not react now but... I am not saying that the cassette-recorder is a bad shamanic invention. I would only like to explain why for me speaking to the microphone is very embarrassing. As if I had to do with the listener whom I do not know, with whom I cannot make contact. [...] Here the cassette-recorder is still considered to be a certain wonder. If we talk to the cassette-recorder, there have to be important, festive, clever

things [...] This machine puts on certain mask which has to be very clear, which goes beyond me [...] I don't know if you paid attention, but when we were talking, before you switched on this machine, our voices were different, our syntax was different, and now all this looks different."

Also "the fever" of our times in which there is little time for the deepened reflection over one's own life, did not favour long conversations. Some of our attempted respondents did not even want to come back to the history of their life, their life choices — the perspectives of systemic changes for many old persons (and we were to reach them) seemed something lost, unimportant. We had to with this phenomenon independently of the respondents' attitudes to the changes taking place in our country. Sorrow for something lost together with the collapse of real socialism, minimum social safety mixed with bitterness — "new Poland" is no longer for them.

For the first time we have also come across the questions about compensation for "the lost time". Whe had to give up — sometimes with pity — such possible respondents. One of the respondents (I. Z) her permission to give an interview made dependent not only on listening to the tape (it also happened in the earlier run research and seemed natural) but on the possibility of correcting the typewritten version of this interview. The correction included also completing the fragments of interview with crucial and omitted in the nervous, marked by "the presence" of the tape conversations. We considered it as permissible both for practical (we would have to give up the participation of the respondent in the research) and methodological reasons. We thought it inadmissible to run the introductory selection of the respondents depending on the easiness of their getting accustomed to the technique of the recorded interview. These added fragments, often caused by our questions, were marked in the text by square brackets — [...].

The recordings of two autobiographic interviews which in the authors' intention were to lead to the reconstruction of the "course of life" (Dobrowolska, 1992) present at the same time two national options — Polish and German. The father of the first of the respondents (I. Z.) was the regular officer of the Polish army — military service brought him to Upper Silesia. During all the years of the German occupation he carried sewn on the arm letter "P" — he did not sign the *Volksliste*. The maiden name (I. Z.) belongs to the best known names of the Polish nationality.

The father of the second (R. R.) fought in Wehrmacht during the war. Her name clearly points to the German roots.

In the selection of persons whom we asked for opinions, we tried to — as it has already been mentioned — use the criteria enabling creating (even very general) plane of comparison of their life stories. In this specific case (apart from belonging to one generation) the criterion was — the same in both cases

– the "landmark"[5] from early childhood, the loss of father. In the first case it was the death, in the second, transportation up to the Soviet Union. These events seem to be of a comparable character — that the father is alive the second respondent learnt as a grown up woman. Both respondents unanimously stressed the importance of this fact for their further fate. These events took place directly after the end of Second World War. In the primary socialization of both respondents, thus, the main role was played by mothers, older siblings and relatives. The role of the latter, due to the difficult material situation of the respondents' families, was becoming more important than normally.

The poverty caused that both respondents despite the talents revealed at school (both — as they claim were distinguished pupils) were very early forced to take up jobs. Both the first and the second starting their professional carreer from simple functions of an office-boy or physical worker, after many years reached the posts included into the so-called middle viewer. And only the first one (I. Z.) completed her education, obtaining in the 1970s "evening certificate of secondary education". Both respondents consider themselves to be "Silesians" (of the Polish and German option respectively), but (R. R.) tends to assign greater importance to this self-determination. Both respondents have relatives and friends in Germany with whom they frequently interchange letters. None of them has ever thought about leaving Poland (Silesia) for good, although both had chances and possibilities to do so. Finally — children (daughters) of both respondents are studying, strangely enough the same field (arts).

So much for — at least the most general and possible to grasp in the initial stage of research — similarities. Obviously, differences appear next to them in the natural way.

The husband of the first of the respondents (I. Z.) has become a miner who came from the Rzeszów region, the second (R. R.) — native Silesian, a son of the Silesian insurgent. Different was also the atmosphere of childhood — direct **consequence** of the loss of father. Finally, respondents differ in their relationships with siblings. Intimate and full of warmth in the case of (R. R.), quite cold in the case of (I. Z.) It is difficult to completely univocally decide, how much complete coincidence is there in the last difference and for how much one should blame (then how interpreted?) taken from childhood memory of the situation of the feeling of threat and released by this feeling of ties and solidarity within nuclear family. Let's add that the first respondent had only a brother, while the second — several siblings.

The reasons given above seem to be sufficient for the authors of this work to carry out — in some way surely enriching the analysis of the respondents' utterances — the comparisons.

The obtained biographical responses are — in many aspects — highly differentiated. The first one (I. Z.) is shorter, the life facts are presented in

a more abstract, impersonal way. There is lack of the whole mosaics of particulars and details which so visibly add colour to the response of the second respondent (R. R.). To a certain extent decisive here was the fact of certain type of experience, the fact that (R. R.) had already had direct contact with sociological research. This explanation, however, does not seem to be sufficient to explain such a drastic difference. "Polish orientation" respondent (I. Z.) used without any difficulty the language for which the norm is literary language, switching, however, in the course of narration freely into dialectal vocabulary.

Fairly detailed analysis of the linguistic means of building the social world in the autobiographical utterances of the Silesians was presented in the earlier mentioned work *The Social World of the Silesians* (Łęcki et al., 1992:26—55). Here, we would like to devote some space to the discussion of the language of utterance of the (I. Z.) respondent, who clearly declaring the Polish nationalistic option considers herself to be Silesian. The analysis of the material collected by us points to it, as well as deviations from the linguistic norm established by the standard of spoken Polish, and further by literary language, are in the case of (I. Z.) of the individual and not cultural character. Incorrect syntax, wrong use of words, chaos of utterance, numerous parentheses having the character of digression are quite characteristic for certain performances of spoken Polish in general. These imperfections, even when they take the form of errors, do not thus become the element of stigmatization.[6] The respondent defining herself as Silesian could not give even one example of resulting from this ill will on the part of the no-Silesian environment. It seems to confirm the hypothesis that it is the dialect which is the most recognizable element of the negative stigmatization of the Silesians.

All this is connected with the slightly different in reference to two respondents linguistic and wider — cultural background. The thing is worth noting.

The elements of conventionalization to be observed at [I. Z.] are explained by the finished secondary school — evening secondary school for the working people ([R. R.] finished her education on vocational courses). The higher degree of conventionalization was probably also decided by — connected somehow with the obtained education — books from the obligatory reading list [I. Z.]. We can treat her as a person relatively — when the system of reference is her generation, persons with similar status to hers — well-read. Her flat is full of books of Polish (Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz) and foreign classics. The respondent [I. Z.] is the reader of these books, she was one — as she claims — much earlier before revealing the humanistic talents of her only daughter. She regularly reads *Gazeta Wyborcza* (the most popular newspaper) and *Twój Styl* (the fashionable women's magazine).

The [I. Z.] respondent does not speak German at all which was fluently used by her mother — the Silesian from Ruda Śląska, with clearly Polish orientation (the fact that she went to a "Polish school" and then married the Polish officer against her family, is a proof of it).

The [R. R.] respondent knowing German very poorly limits her reading to women's magazines (Polish and German) and watching German satelite TV programmes. These programmes are "Glücksrad" ["The Wheel of Fortune"] and "Heimatsmelodie" ["Native melodies"]. It is difficult to univocally interpret this fact — it may testify to, e.g. better adjustment of German TV to the tastes of mass receiver. The proof of it is that as most important journals she considers *Bunte* [*Colourful*], *Quick* [*Quick*]. On the basis of this reading she considers herself to be well-oriented in world politics. She considers Polish press as not highly reliable and interesting. She sporadically reads *Uroda, Kobieta i Życie* (popular women's magazines) and *Skandale*.

Both respondents had difficulties in direct answers to the questions when the questions referred to their own life. There were also communication difficulties resulting from the phenomenon which we characterized elsewhere as "historical inadequacy" (Łęcki et al., 1992:28—29; Łęcki, Wróblewski, 1991:119—132).[7] In the case of the [I. Z.] respondent it is, however, connected not only with "marginalization of the ethnic status" (Łęcki, Wróblewski, 1992b) but with the phenomenon encountered much more often — being outside, or — still better — near history. In the book by Sławomir Łubiński (defined as a writer with unusual sociological hearing) we find such an illustration of the discussed phenomenon — "I am not interested in politics either. For a woman house and family are important. For example, I've learnt about President Bierut's death two days later. I didn't care about it, anyway. Not this one, then the other one. And I will have to go to work every morning anyway [...] (Łubiński, 1980:28).

Somehow breaking the course of narration, its anecdoticity is also connected with it. Lack of strong placement in the framework of influences of the field with high degree of institutional legal validity, with simultaneous desintegration of the forms of one's own subculture[8] seems to be responsible to a certain extent for the state of certain "crookedness" in attempts of giving sense to the course of one's life. What remains is the attitude of cognitive openness resulting from the methodological credo of one of the best known examiners of trajectories, Fritz Schütze, according to whom: "It's not that we are using certain accepted from the outside concept of biographical trajectories which we impose on empirical data. Analysing the text of the story, we have to be open to the social and biographical processes revealing themselves in its content and formal features. For our considerations the fact is important that 'trajectory' is simultaneously

a very abstract notion and strongly rooted in empirical data" (Schütze, 1987:67—156, quoted after Riemann, Schütze, 1992:103).

The research was carried out in August, September and October 1992 in Chorzów and Michałkowice, a district of Siemianowice Śląskie. The respondents were interviewed in the presence of two examiners. The interviews took place in the living room, in the case of the [R. R.] respondent also in the kitchen — in the absence of the respondents' families. These meetings were always preceeded by loose social conversations which was thought to be the necessary (although never clearly stated) initial condition of running the interview. These conversations have sometimes extended, becoming then, however, additional, unique sets of information on our respondents. Particular "approaches" of the examiners, which is also worth mentioning, differed in length.

The interviews were recorded on tapes. In the case of the [I. Z.] respondent — as it has already been mentioned — completed during meetings on the typewritten form of the interview. In the case of the [I. Z.] respondent one could get the impression that the skeleton of the course of life sketched in the recorded conversations, she herself wants to treat as the first step, "place to complete".

It seems that in other, similarly designed research, it would be necessary to introduce the alternative towards the tape form of recording.

3. "One's Countrymen" and "Strangers" in Conflict Situations

In the story of [I. Z.] conflict situations are signalled rather than described. It remains in close relation to the general character of her utterance which was described in one of the earlier parts of this work. However, it deserves — for the form of the utterance — attention.

Here, the appearing in all the interview motive of the pride of father — Polish patriot, in the perspective of analysis "one's countrymen" and "stranger", is balanced by the "strangeness" of the father's family. First, it is the strangeness resulting from unacquaintance (which in itself may seem symptomatic); then this "strangeness" is confirmed during the division of heritage — small property near Warsaw. This situation so often and in various environments leading to conflicts, the inner history of which we can only guess, shows the respondent other, than only clearly spatial dimensions of "strangeness" ("Only not long ago I met this part of the family, when dividing the heritage — small property near Warszawa. They always considered us as strangers, although it was my father who was giving his mother money to survive. It wasn't a rich family, besides I never really

treated them as real family"). This feeling of isolation ("they always treated us as strangers") combines with the feeling of harm ("my father was giving money to his mother to survive") and rejection ("I never treated them as true family"). In the utterance of [I. Z.] one can find here rancour caused by the noticeable accusation of father's family of what, in accordance with the terminology accepted here, we would call the weaker version of "avoidance aggression".

But although the description of gaining a footing among mother's Silesian family contrasts with it clearly ("I was very close with this family. We often met with the whole family, told jokes. It was very funny. [...] We recollected my father. Everybody remembered him well. Even this brother of my mother who came from Germany after the war"). The [I. Z.] respondent never connects the different character of the relationship in both families with any form of ethnic division. It is connected with the observable uncertainty of the respondent's "own position" in the world in which the examined feels the incoherence of the definition elements of this "world of one's countrymen" in reference to her own position.[9]

With the character of respondent's father are connected further, very varied forms of conflict or proto-conflict situations. The proto-conflict situation is connected with the position of "fulfilling" the role, in this way we define the situation which objectively should lead to conflict but accidental circumstances hinder or even make impossible the articulation of this conflict.[10]

To the proto-conflict situations one can surely include the respondent's reaction to the upsetting her fact that when she was very proud that her father did not sign the *Volksliste*, the Silesians whom she met in Germany (the first trip of the respondent to Germany falls in the 1990s) are proud of the fact that their parents signed the *Volksliste*. The respondent uses the same word in both cases, "to be proud". Although here again there is lack of wider discussion of specific stuations, it is obvious that these situations should be called pro-to-conflict ones. Towards the symbolic provocation which must have been for the respondent ostentatious (this is at least how she felt about it) showing of pride by her peers, the pride resulting from the fact that their parents signed the *Volksliste* — the situation was created which could be defined as proto-conflict: it did not even reach the level of hidden verbal aggression. The opinion recorded on the tape convinces about the latter ("I was in Germany and I observed that those whose parents once signed the *Volksliste* are very proud of it. Thanks to this they could now stay in Germany. Thus, they were proud of this fact just like my father was once proud that he was Polish").

The inconvenient in this type of cases position of "the guest" certainly fulfilled to some extent the role of a buffer relieving obvious, in the case of such evident and brutal violation of the myth of childhood tension. The fact that [I. Z.] respondent completely consciously did not renew contact with

their German but coming from Upper Silesia hosts seems to confirm correct interpretation through the concept of crypto-conflict.

It is of course difficult to define to what extent this type of situations are typical, although much points to the fact that the one presented here is not isolated.

The figure of the [I. Z.] respondent's father tones up — which may surprise — the attitude of the respondent towards the Germans, even those whom she knows only from her mother's recollections talking about the Second World War. When the [I. Z.] respondent's father as a Pole was kept in the camp near Opole, against mother's speculations he was not beaten, nothing wrong happened to him. The justification, according to which "there are very good people among Poles" and, thus, nothing wrong will happen to father, must seem quite difficult to accept. Even because of the thought consequences. Did all other Poles, the ones who did not come, did not come only because they were not "very good people?" The [I. Z.] respondent prefers to explain to herself the case of saving father in the categories of the "precedence" which was enabled by father's inborn nobleness. Such purposeful narrowing of the cognitive perspective — quite common as a social phenomenon — allows the [I. Z.] respondent to preserve the coherence of opinions from the position of "withdrawal", i.e. reconcile the positive family experience (father was let free, anyway) with known to her historical proofs of German murders.

The notion of "strangeness" is reserved by [I. Z.] for the persons from outside the Polish national community identified with Polish language and Polish citizenship. But the way of pointing to the "stranger", i.e. Romanian, Gypsy, should rouse reflection. Here different is in this case also "worse". Such and not other choice of example may be attributed to incident but one can observe in it also characteristic symptom of seeing "strangeness" in the unclear situation, unsure own position based on the network of incoherent identifications.

Such a hypothesis is not refuted but, just the opposite, the reason for its formulating seems to be strengthened by the attitude of [I. Z.] to the ethnic divisions responsible for incoherent identifications of the respondent — ("I have never distinguished between Poles and Silesians. Never because of being the Silesian have I had any problems or difficulties. And I often have contact, due to my job, with people from outside Silesia").

This general belief is strengthened by two examples. In the first one one can easily find the conditions enough to cause the conflict situation — in practice we have to do with the almost classical scheme of the conflict situation based on the game of interests of the zero sum which could, but at least in these specific case, it did not become — the beginning of real conflict — ("in the 1960s we had a flat with mining damages with a zero standard. My mother moving to a larger city got married once again and bought a house. In this

house there was a flat consisting of a room and the kitchen, dry, without humidity, without cracks. It would seem that I as the daughter had the right to this flat. I was born in Silesia. I have lived here in Silesia, the house was ours, and the chances were that I would get it. But it turned out that no, that the flat was assigned to the newcomers. And I still lived in a flat with cracks, with holes. The fact that I am Silesian never helped me. Nothing has been godsent to me because I am her at myself").

In the second example ("My friend's from work husband went to Germany. She was from Warsaw. She has never had any problems because she was from Warsaw, she was liked in fact. These prejudices have disappeared and now it is not important who comes from where") to the foreground comes with greater strength the belief about the unimportance of criteria of evaluation resulting from ethnic divisions which once were (since now they disappeared) according to the respondent important. One should remind here the reception of the father of [I. Z.] in the Silesian or rather German nationalistic orientation — ("When my mother got married her family was not happy. To choose a Pole as husband... But later on when they got to know him better, the situation has changed. My father did not hinder anybody, if he could he would help everybody. Thus, he was accepted. Maybe not to such an extent as if he were German or Silesian but still they accepted him").

The conclusions which the respondent draws seem to confirm that she is looking for the social determinants of her life difficulties rather in general, layer or class-layer categories than ethnic ones ("That my life had difficult periods resulted from the fact that I was poor and not from the fact that I was Silesian. It also refers to my father's family in Warsaw. As I've said I don't make distinctions Poles — Silesians"). It is characteristic that [I. Z.] herself in her own, individual fate seems to detect some sort of equivalent of the Silesian melting pot ("My father was a Pole, a Varsovian and my step-father Silesian, so everything seems to be clear. However, I always preferred my mother's family, more German. Although in Silesia everything is mixed up"). Here one should quote the fragments of interview telling about the conflict of [I. Z.] with step-father — Silesian while idealizing the father coming from Warsaw.

The respondent finds around her enough proofs for the truthfulness of her beliefs on the great "mixture of matter" in Silesia — vide the story of the respondent's friend, "the Varsovian" who left for Germany.

The picture of conflicts outlined in the story of [I. Z.] has greyish shade. One cannot resist the impression that this greyishness — maybe having its sources in the uncertainty of one's position towards "the world of one's countrymen" — somehow becomes the interpretative imperative through which [I. Z.] wants to read the history of her life. It is difficult to find

here any forms of aggression even the one that the theoreticians of conflict call "verbal hidden". These conflicts usually involve a small number of people (the Warsaw family of the father of [I. Z]) and do not show interference tendencies. Even when in the place of specific persons appear general categories (these Silesians who after leaving for Germany are proud of the signed by their predecessor *Volksliste*), these generalizations to a small extent influence the scope and intensity of the conflict. As a matter of fact it is difficult to talk here about conflict in the right sense of the word. Maybe the suggested by us category of proto-conflict or rather the proto-conflict situation will turn out to be more appropriate and helpful in the case of wider analyses. And the emotional indicator of the conflict situation is, in the latter case, probably toned down by — which was mentioned earlier — the feeling of relative handicap of one's own position, in relationship to these Germans who decided to leave for Germany. It seems that this situation has undergone quite complicated changes in the recent times. Disappear, for example, the most glaring disproportions in the level of life, at the same time appear others, of the cultural-civilization character. The long-term consequences of these changes are extremely difficult to anticipate.

If in the story of [I. Z.] the conflicts are signalled rather than described, then in the life story of the second respondent [R. R.] they appear only in the far perspective, they are, as if, in the model form filtered through the prism of everyday life. Characteristic seems to be here the attitude of the respondent to the social crises decisive for the life of the country. All the dates important for the contemporary history of Poland are reduced to the events from respondent's everyday life, so that one can get the impression that the question about, for example, 1956 (and not, for example, 1959) is for the respondent almost an accidental choice. And so particular dates are associated by the respondent either with greater wealth (the beginning of the 1970s) or empty shelves of the shops (the 1980s). Only the question about martial law reminds the respondent — remembering the horror of war — her own fear about her children.

Such utterances can be easily neglected, as one can suppose, it is not the people coming from these social groups who decide about the dynamism of great social conflicts. At the same time — which is easily observable — without exploring the consciousness of the members of this silent majority, it would be impossible to explain very varied attitude of the Polish society towards the heritage of the Polish People's Republic (for example, extreme popularity of linked with propaganda films of this period — vide "The Four Tankmen and the Dog").

Three elements: residence, practical lack of spatial mobility as well as the connected with the two previous elements and, in a sense being their consequence — isolation from the world different than the old district of Siemianowice Śląskie, as well as connected with this attitude towards the

strangers establish the frameworks of life in which there was no place for big conflicts. The [R. R.] respondent interprets rather the story of her life — and here there are many divergencies with the story of [I. Z.] — in rather the categories of individual (and family) material poverty than the result of unfavourable social conflicts, or on the ethnic basis or not.

Let's take into consideration the understanding of "strangeness" by [R. R.] — which is reduced to two elements only — friendliness and understanding, the ability to understand the other's situation. One can observe here clearly some sort of narrow, reduced to the situation of everyday life pragmatism in noticing separating "one's own countrymen" and "strangers". Everybody who uses appropriate procedures ("understanding"), meets specific conditions may be considered as one's own countryman. It is clearly seen on the example of the brother-in-law of [R. R.] coming from a different region of Poland, fully accepted by the Silesian family.

Characteristic seems also the description of the situation which for many years has caused real conflicts, in which through all kinds of aggression, physical aggression was also reached. It is the problem of the immigratory workers quartered in the workers' hotels. In the story of [R. R.] the conflicts are reduced to the natural for young age attempt to relieve energy, will to frolic.

The behaviour of the inhabitants of the workers' hotels towards the local girls is not glaring for [R. R.], it explains itself by their youth, although it clearly is different from the patterns of meeting girls in the neighbourhood environment — which is exemplified by the second of the brothers-in-law of [R. R.] — a Silesian who meets his wife through family contacts. It is understandable that such a way was closed for young men who came from different regions of Poland.

Similarly happens in the case of the second ticklish in Silesia problem — assigning newly built flats, to the newcomers rather than native Silesians. And here — as in the case of fiance's of [R. R.] — the respondent tends to look for rational reasons of this type of divisions — new flats are assigned to people who are better educated.

The same pragmatism which establishes the attitude of [R. R.] towards non-Silesians she tends to quite clearly attribute also to the second side — assigning them, for example, very high evaluation of the Silesian women's thrift.

Connected with this is — maybe — the general attitude of [R. R.] to the conflict situations — which she tries to tone down, calm down, also her prejudice towards people orientated towards conflict.

But the description of contemporary situation the virtue of which is not interfering with others lives, even the clossest neighbours, contrasts, however, with the picture of the neighbourhood environment a little bit idealised due to the childhood of [R. R.] when the community in which she lived

was much more homogeneous. This contrast, however, does not have to be connected with the environmental mixing, it can be read as a manifestation of the general civilization — cultural changes.

In both analysed life stories there dominates seeing conflicts as interpersonal, without referring to more general categories, such as "one's countrymen" or "strangers". This ill will may be of course explained in different ways. In order to responsibly attempt at answering these questions resulting from the outlined here problem situation, it seems purposeful to examine the greater number of cases as well as combine the instruments of sociological analysis with psychological perspective.

4. The Dilemmas of the Self-Image

4.1. The Space of Everyday Life as the Framework of Seeing Oneself

In the case of both analysed utterances we have to do with the stories of life very strongly established in the concrete reality of everyday life. Although both utterances differ considerably, also in terms of the frequency of occurrence in them details from everyday life, it is impossible not to notice that the crucial elements of these life stories are always located in the realities of commonplaceness and not in any events of the general — social or political — nature. Great problems which must have strongly influenced life of inhabitants in this region since inter-war up till modern times, remain, as if, in the background of this very personal stories about life. One could, thus, say that this told life happened mainly in the framework of commonplaceness and the social space of everyday life (what in the dramaturgical analysis we would call the scene of everyday life) is at the same time the space in which the picture of oneself is shaped to the largest extent. Is it really like this? It seems that it is necessary to distinguish here ˈ .ᴏ pla.ˈ ᴇs of the definition of oneself occurring among the examined. Tʰ ᴀirst one are surely the elements of the specific context of everyday life (we would say again referring to the dramaturgical concept — this scenography, building the space of everyday life scene), the second are references to the events important for the examined (both for family reasons and due to the general social and political context of their life), where the events influence the way in which the examined act in this space of everyday life. And in the second case the space of everyday life is no longer the clearest element of their autodefinitions. Let's take some examples from the utterances of the examined. First, some examples pointing at the first of the above--mentioned planes. In the first interview [I. Z.] in which we have far less

than in the second interview [R. R.] references to the details from everyday life, we find, however, pointing both to work and everyday life realities. The first of the interlocutors, although she is not enthusiastic about her work, which she probably does not like, writes about her relationships with her co-workers — "Maybe a little bit about my work. 27 years ago I was employed as a physical worker. It was quite a difficult period in my life. I worked in different posts. I managed somehow. And they started to promote me. After 5 years of work I was promoted for the head of the complex of warehouses. And I have been working on this post for 20 years. I had different workers. I worked also with my relative. We enjoyed working together, we have worked for 10 years." [I. Z.]. In the picture of oneself very important is getting used to fulfilling the specific social role. Here we have to do with the situation in which this role has been considered by the examined as a result of length of fulfilling it, as something in a sense obvious in her everyday life. Undoubtedly it has a stabilising influence on the picture of oneself presented by this examined.

As we have already mentioned, the second of the examined in her utterance much more often refers to everyday realities looking in them for the elements determining her life. The whole extensive fragment concerning her girlhood and decision whom to marry is a clear proof of it. Then we also have a proof how important were some elements of the scenography of this scene of everyday life for her future decisions (e.g. the story about the way of dressing when going to meet her boyfriend's parents, or the story of a cake at a party). There in no doubt that all these elements must have influenced her own imagination about herself and, thus, also her autodefinition. It confirms our observation from our previous research about the big role of everyday life in shaping the examined identity (65).

The second plane of analysis is pointing to reference either to very important events from the family past or important events of the social or political nature. Of course what is meant here are such important events which condition thinking and acting of the examined in their everyday life. In the case of the first interview [I. I.], will be undoubtedly her father's decision not to sign the *Volksliste*. This decision will several times appear in the utterances of the examined as the justification of her own thinking and acting in many everyday situations. She justifies in this way certain important elements of the picture of herself. In the case of the second interview, we have several such facts. It is surely the history of father but also the course of events connected with promotion at work and participation in the Festival of Youth in Warsaw. All these events, however, do not play such important role as the mentioned in the case of the first interview decision of the examined father.

If one, thus, agrees that many important elements of autodefinition are in everyday life realities, that important events and political and social discussions do not play the essential role in everyday life of the examined than

the importance these important events have in forming some elements of the contents of everyday behaviour should be stressed, even if this influence is indirect. We, thus, have certain frameworks of search for the contents of autodefinition, it is time to consider these contents.

4.2. Life among "One's a Countrymen" Noticing "Strangers"

Shaping the picture of oneself is a social process consisting in defining oneself in specific social situations. From this point of view, it is very important to what extent the co-tenants of everyday life are seen in the categories of similarity or difference in relation to the examined own status. It is not only the cultural differences that matter here, it is important, which clearly results from our interviews, to what extent are seen the differences of the social position resulting from the degree of wealth and the degree of education. On the other hand, and this also clearly results from our interviews, being among "one's countrymen" (defined always individually by the examined herself) gives the feeling of certainty, thus, strengthens the elements of the definition of oneself.

In the first interview [I. Z.] we have to do with the clear situation of uncertainty of one's position in the world in which the examined feels incoherence of the definition elements of this "world of one's countrymen" in reference to her own position. If she remains in reference to her own positon, if she remains in everyday contacts with the closest, this world seems to her defined, but in this everyday life there are references to the past (especially the ones which are somehow connected with her father's position, his demonstrated Polish character), it turns out that not always and not all persons from her world of everyday life can be fully included into this world of one's countrymen. This dilemma seen in many situations causes several times lack of consequence in her own life stories, finally causes that the border between the world of one's countrymen and strangers is not univocal for her and changes in particular situational systems of everyday life.

Slightly different looks the situation in the case of the second interview [R. R.]. Here the world of one's countrymen, defined by precisely described situations of everyday life and the positions of all the actors of these situations seems to be disturbed in a double way. First of all, and this is characteristic, through the differences in the social position coming from the differences in wealth, education, position within the framework of the systems of subordination — super ordination at work, secondly, through noticing the dissimilarity of persons coming from other regions. These disturbances are not caused by referring to important events from the past, as is the case with the first interview, but they appear in the accounts from

many different situations of everyday life. In the second interview [R. R.] we find the description of the situation in which there are simultaneously both these disturbances. The respondent recalls the conversation with her mother on one of her suitors, being a relatively rich man, educated and with a professional position in mining but coming from different region of the country. Here we have to do with the consciousness of the separateness of this suitor's position, for the examined it is obvious that he does not belong in the simple way to "her world". It is expressed by her mother pointing out that everybody will envy her daughter such a feature situation. It is characteristic that in the situation when we have to do with double disturbance of the border of "the world of one's countrymen" to the foreground come the differences resulting from differentiating the social position and not the differences of the regional origin. One can observe that when in the case of the first interview (I. Z. — respondent clearly declares her affiliation to the "Polish option") these dilemmas in the univocal drawing the borders between "the world of one's countrymen" and "strangers" come from the reference to the Polish option, then in the case of the second interview (R. R. — the respondent refers to "the German Option") the dilemmas come from feeling the differences in social position, reference to regional differences, although they appear, they come second in order, there is, however, lack of any clear reference to the feeling of national affiliation. The latter factor does not appear here as the definition element of "the world of one's countryman", as if it were outside the world deciding about the definition of oneself. It is worth stressing that often exposed today by different types of movements and regional societies feeling of separateness of the local people and "the newcomers", thus, people coming from other regions of Poland, does not find in the second interview (by the way — how deeply rooted, in the realities of everyday Silesian life!) greater confirmation (Gerlich, 1992; Wódz [J.], Wódz [K.], 1992). The world of everyday life of the examined in which appear the pointed out dilemmas of the picture of "the world of one's countrymen" closes in the realities experienced by her and does not give the basis for further generalisations.

4.3. "Me" through Seeing "One's Countrymen" and "Strangers"

Continuing the considerations started by the analysis above, it is necessary to ask how the picture of the examined themselves is influenced by differentiating between "one's countrymen" and "strangers" noticed in their everyday life. Specifying still this wide question, it is worth pondering over the question — whether this differentiation is always acute and whether it can be identified with the emotional attitude of the type "one's own countryman — friendly" and "foreign — unfriendly".

This question is justifiable to the extent that in the present opinions on ethnic relationships in Upper Silesia there is no lack of such simplification (Gerlich, 1992: passim, originating often from the so-called "regional ideology" (Wódz [J.], Wódz [K.], 1991:93—110) having often the functions of political justification for the ambitions of the local leaders in their political games. A sociologist who does not evaluate but tries to understand the existing situation, must be interested to what extent the individual picture of the region inhabitants, the one which appears from the analysis of their life stories is or is not written in this scheme of mutual relations of "one's countrymen" and "strangers" in Upper Silesia.

These problems appear in the univocal form in the first interview [I. Z.] when the examined refers to the past of her family. When talking about her mother's getting married (a Silesian was marrying a Varsovian), she refers to existing then associations connected with the origin ("stranger") of her father ("When my mother was getting married her family was not happy. To choose a Pole for a husband... But later on, when they got to know him better, the situation has changed. My father was not in the way of anybody, if he could he would help everybody. Thus, he was accepted. Maybe not to the extent as if here German or Silesian but still they accepted him"). This opinion refers to the past but is seems to be deeply rooted in the examined memory, and it is difficult to acknowledge that since it referred to the person close to her, it had no influence on shaping her own "me". Characteristic is the last part of the utterance pointing to the difference in evaluating the distance between "the native", Varsovian, Pole and German. Of course from such single utterance one cannot draw any general conclusions, but one cannot either not notice that such a scheme of mutual relationships registered in the memory of the examined must have influenced her own picture of herself. She must have in many everyday situations meet the conflict evaluations of specific persons, she must have considered these distances in these evaluations.

The second of the examined [R. R.] sees the world in a slightly different way than the first of the examined. She also notices the influences of functioning in the world divided into "one's countrymen" and "strangers", but accepts this world more openly, not building from the observed distances permanent elements of her own picture. A number of her opinions confirms this thesis, since the intensity of contacts in her family house clearly influenced her own experiences.

Coming back to our analysis of the influence coming from the contacts with "one's countrymen" and with "strangers" on shaping one's own "me" of the examined, it must be noticed that the problem of mixed marriages, very important for forming the picture of oneself against the divided commonplaceness, is quite similarly put in both cases. One can observe the differences of the regional origin, but it does not make the final prohibition of such

marriages, just the opposite, both examined, although in different situations point to the possibilities of accepting such marriages. Obviously, they still remain different and the second of the examined notices that certain stereotype opinions about "the strangers" (in this case — *gorols*) undergo, in the course of experience, even serious modifications. One can also observe certain interesting interdependence coming from the degree of reflectiveness of the story of the first and second of the examined. Undoubtedly, the story of the first of the examined [I. Z.] is more reflexive, it refers to the whole of her story. The second of the examined [R. R.] stops much more often on the details themselves; there is less general reflection in her story. One can notice, reading both these life stories that the division of the world of everyday life into the contacts with "one's countrymen" and with "strangers" in much stronger way influences the "me" of the first of the examined than it is in the case of the [R.R.] examined. Can one generalize this conclusion even more assuming hypothetically that the deeper and more reflexive the personality of the examined the stronger is the influence on her own picture of herself of the experience coming from everyday contacts with "one's countrymen" and with "strangers"?

4.4. Attitudes towards Germans and Departures for Germany as an Element Shaping and Disturbing the Self-Image

Both examined are the women in the age allowing them to remember the post-war times, the period of tense Polish — German relationships, finally, the times of normalization. Thus, they have the possibility to evaluate the difficult problem of the influence of Polish — German relationships on the social reality of Upper Silesia, on the existing here social relationships. On the other hand, it is here that the generation of our examined created its picture, gained its identity in the conditions of complicated relationships between the local people and the migrants, between the Silesians for years favouring the Polish option, the Silesians who were brought up in the German option, finally, the ones who not favouring any of these options considered themselves as "the people from here". How did this situation influence their picture of themselves? How were these divisions reflected in the definition of oneself? Obviously, we are not going to deal here with all the problems of the Polish — German relationships in Upper Silesia, here is neither place nor necessity to develop such a complicated topic. What we want to do is to draw attention to some consequences of these relationships on the level of everyday life of our examined.

The first of the examined, stressing her Polish option, points many times to the disturbing role of certain conflict systems connected with Polish — Ger-

man relationships for her "inner calm" which should be understood as the occurrence in her own picture of herself the necessity of sensitising to how she is seen by the others. On the other hand, however, we do not find in her story any traces of ill will towards those who have a family in Germany or decided to leave for Germany for good. Sometimes it seems that she feels sorry for them. On the other hand, it cannot be not noticed that this problem forces the examined to permanently define herself towards the current problems of the Polish — German relationships. She herself while expressing opinion admits that it was certain shock for her, a mature and experienced woman, that being in Germany she met the Silesians who were satisfied of the fact of signing *Volksliste*, since it facilitated them settling in Germany. Let's not forget that the examined for many years has shaped the picture of herself under the impression, according to her, of a very proper attitude of father who refused to sign this list. This is of course only an illustration of a wider phenomenon which could be expressed by a simple statement — for many, even older Silesians the Polish — German relations in this land are still the factor dynamizing their own imagination about themselves. They have to, even after many years, change certain life evaluations, they have to verify their imagination about the closest or about themselves.

Let's come back to one more aspect of the opinion of the first of the examined [I. Z.]. She recalls the example of her friend who left for Germany and is constantly homesick, she cannot fully adapt to live in Germany. This aspect of "the fate" of the local people is also present in the picture of oneself. From other research results also the confirmation of the consciousness of this "condemnation to homesickness" written in the picture of oneself being the element of identity of local people. In the competition for the opinions of Upper Silesians about themselves we also meet references to this homesickness for Silesia of the persons who emigrated to Germany (Wódz [J.] (ed.), 1990).

The second of the examined, although she has a clearly different than the first of the examined attitude to German culture, also points to this aspect of the separation of family ties in the case of departures for Germany. It is always an unpleasant moment in life and the frequency of mentioning this fact proves that in the personalities of the examined there is, as if, the coded reaction to such a possibility. As important observation coming from the analysis of the second interview [R. R.] is the claim that the examined [which she proves many times] does not consider the German cultural area as strange for her and she treats the departures for Germany as one of the possibilities of the fate of local people. It would be difficult to say to what extent this fact is connected with the lack in her opinion of reference to the feeling of national affiliation. One must not from the fact of the lack of such references conclude about the lability of the very feeling of national affiliation, one can, however, ascertain that it is not a problem which would be one of the dilemmas of autodefinition

of the examined. In the case of the first of the examined [I. Z.], clearly admitting to the Polish option, the elements of the feeling of national affiliation appear several times and, as we have mentioned it above, at this examined it is one of the elements conditioning her own picture of herself.

Notes

1 The dramaturgic concept of the life of Erving Goffman, being one of the trends of symbolic interactionism, is treated together with phenomenological sociology as a variant of humanistic sociology (Ziółkowski, 1981:106—127).
2 For example, a well-known Silesian blues musician Jan Skrzek in the interview for *Goniec Górnośląski* tells this about his new record: "The majority of the subjects on this record concerns the district of Siemianowice called Nowy Świat. It is a typical Silesian district, like Batory or Lipiny. Nowy Świat is an area 'where strangers are not allowed and the natives know who is who' " (*Goniec Górnośląski*, No. 52, 1865, Dec. 22—31). About "strangeness" as one of the elements of the social closure of space wider in Łęcki, Wróblewski, 1990.
3 The problems of conflict situations have been presented basing on this — being to a large extent of the compend character — work.
4 When his German origin is declared by the son of the Silesian insurgent, obviously such a decision may be and even should be respected — the complicated fate of Silesia are maybe for such declaration satisfactory justification. In this part of our research of a clearly qualitative character, we would like to concentrate, however, on the cases not presenting the smallest, even unjustified doubts.
5 The distribution between "life events" and "decisive events" has been taken from Danuta Dobrowolska (Dobrowolska, 1992:82—87). "Decisive events" are "such events which according to a given individual had essential influence on her, for example, they changed the course of her life, they radically changed her social environment or, in general, wider society within which she remains, they changed her own mentality and identity (Dobrowolska, 1992:84). "While in the case of life events — as one can suspect — one applies both objective and subjective criteria, here only the latter come into play: only he himself may decide what was for a given man a decisive event" (Dobrowolska, 1992: 84).
6 The character and mechanisms of this "negative stigmatization" were discussed wider in our work devoted to the social world of the Silesians (Łęcki et al., 1992: 26—28).
7 Empirical material, pointing to the existence of this phenomenon, the reader will find in Łęcki, Wróblewski, 1992b: 90—104.
8 The biographies of our respondents take place in the "grey", "blurred" sphere, where there is, lack of classically understood rites de passage or status passage. The culture of Silesia is also much less rooted in habits (which function here in the residual form) and much less folkloristic in its commonplaceness than — following easy stereotypes — one used to believe.
9 See part of "Dilemmas of the Picture of Oneself" of the present article.
10 It slightly reminds the theoretical status of "hidden interest" in the sense suggested by Ralf Dahrendorf (Dahrendorf, 1975:443—444).

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Krzysztof Łęcki, Jacek Wódz, Kazimiera Wódz, Piotr Wróblewski

„Swoi" i „obcy" na Górnym Śląsku

Streszczenie

Analizy, zamieszczone w tym artykule, zawierają dane zebrane w wielu badaniach społeczności górnośląskiej, tak za pomocą metod jakościowych, jak i ilościowych. Koncentrują się one przede wszystkim na dylematach identyfikacyjnych oraz na dynamice obrazu „obcego" w sytuacjach konfliktowych. Przyjęta opcja metodologiczna mieści się w szeroko rozumianym paradygmacie humanistyczno-interpretatywnym. Punktem wyjścia podjętych badań było założenie o istnieniu „świata przeżywanego" (*Lebenswelt*) tej szczególnej grupy etnicznej, jaką tworzą Ślązacy. Charakterystyka postrzegania „swoich" i „obcych" pokazuje pewien — niezwykle ważny — aspekt sytuacji, charakterystykę czegoś, co można by określić jako społeczną „szarą strefę", najbliższą, być może, światu przeżywanemu w czystej formie.

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„Unsere" und „Fremde" in Oberschlesien

Zusammenfassung

Die in diesem Artikel vorhandenen Analysen beinhalten die während vieler Untersuchungen der oberschlesischen Gesellschaft gesammelten Daten, wobei sowohl die quantitative wie auch die qualitative Methode verwendet wurde. Sie konzentrieren sich vor allem auf die Identifikationsdilemmata und auf die Dynamik des Bildes eines „Fremden" in Konfliktsituationen. Die angenommene methodologische Option ist Teil eines breit verstandenen humanistisch-interpretativen Paradigmas. Den Ausgangspunkt der durchgeführten Untersuchungen bildete die Annahme, daß es eine „erlebte Welt" dieser besonderen ethnischen Gruppe — der Schlesier, gibt. Die Charakteristik der Wahrnehmung der „Unseren" und „Fremden" zeigt einen äußerst wichtigen Aspekt der Situation, eine Charakteristik von etwas, was man als eine gesellschaftliche „graue Sphäre" bezeichnen kann die wahrscheinlich am nähesten der erlebten Welt in reiner Form steht.