

“SILESIA AT THE CROSSROADS”: DEFINING GERMANS AND POLES IN UPPER
SILESIA DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND PLEBISCITE PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

Allison Ann Rodriguez: "Silesia at the Crossroads": Defining Germans and Poles in Upper Silesia During the First World War and Plebiscite Period
(Under the direction of Chad Bryant)

On March 20, 1921, nearly 1.2 million Upper Silesians went to the polls, participating in a plebiscite to determine if they would belong to Germany or Poland. A part of German Prussia since the mid-eighteenth century, Upper Silesia differed from other areas of Prussian Poland in that it was never a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The area was ethnically and linguistically mixed but religiously homogenous, with Catholics comprising 90 percent of the population. Many inhabitants held fast to a regional or religious identity rather than a national one. In the age of national self-determination, however, non-national identities would not do.

Much of the historiography of nationalism in East Central Europe has focused on lands of the Habsburg Empire. This dissertation, set in a different national context, argues that the Upper Silesian Plebiscite and its preceding two-year propaganda campaign gave nationalists the space in which to define and refine what it meant to be German or Polish. As the German Revolution remade Germany into a Republic and Poland was reconstituted, a myriad of possibilities became available for Upper Silesians. The area was inundated with plebiscite propaganda for almost two years. I argue that the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats, with the backing and blessing of their respective governments, appropriated the new post-war situation to continue the work of previous national activists in the region with new tactics. Through the plebiscite propaganda, Germans and Poles redefined themselves and each other. The propaganda

employed a variety of techniques, stressing not only the importance of one's ethnicity but also the economic consequences of "staying in Germany" or "becoming Polish." In addition, class and gender distinctions, the latter of which has not been explored in the historiography on the region, feature prominently and add to the conceptions of what it meant to be German or Polish. Finally, this dissertation examines the plebiscite results and the ultimate decision, made by international leaders, to divide the region.

To Jack and Ben
You are my sunshine.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
Historiography.....	7
Sources and Organization	26
PART ONE: BEFORE THE CROSSROADS: UPPER SILESIA BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR.....	34
1. Upper Silesia Before the War.....	35
1.1: Upper Silesia: Its Place, People and Politics.....	37
1.2: The Elections of 1903, 1907 and 1912	55
2. Upper Silesia at War.....	71
2.1: Upper Silesia During the First World War	73
2.2: The First World War in the Polish and German Press.....	80
PART TWO: “DOWN WHICH ROAD?”: THE MYRIAD PATHS FOR UPPER SILESIA IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR.....	96
1. Revolution and Rebirth: Germany, Poland and Upper Silesia After the First World War.....	100
2. The Different Roads: Options for and Reactions to the Future of Upper Silesia.....	122
2.1: The Socialist Alternative(s).....	122
2.2: The National Choice	132
2.3: “Upper Silesia for Upper Silesians”: The Autonomist Movement.....	138
3. The Path Determined: The Allied Decision and its Impact on Upper Silesia.....	146

3.1: The Peace Treaty at Versailles	147
3.2: Violence and Order in Upper Silesia in Late 1919.....	154
PART THREE: “STAY IN GERMANY” OR “BECOME POLISH”? THE UPPER SILESIAN PLEBISCITE PROPAGANDA.....	172
1. The Summer of 1920: Another Plebiscite, Another War, Another Uprising	176
2. The Upper Silesian Plebiscite Campaign.....	188
2.1: The German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats	188
2.2: The German and Polish Plebiscite Press: Newspapers and Satirical Magazines.....	196
2.3: The German and Polish Plebiscite Propaganda: Posters, Pamphlets and Other Materials	237
PART FOUR: TO THE POLLS: THE UPPER SILESIAN PLEBISCITE AND ITS AFTERMATH	259
1. The Results of the Plebiscite	261
2. The Immediate Reaction in the Press	270
3. Drawing the Line: The Third Silesian Uprising and the Final Border Decision	280
EPILOGUE.....	289
BIBLIOGRAPHY	297

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Silesia in the German Empire.	31
Figure 2: Upper Silesia.....	32
Figure 3: The Partition of Upper Silesia.	33
Figure 4: Advertisement, Volkswille, 9 March 1921.....	199
Figure 5: Advertisement, Kattowitzer Zeitung, 20 March 1921	201
Figure 6: "Woitek geht auf Abstimmung," Pieron, No. 3, 31 July 1920	215
Figure 7: "Und Eure Kinder -?", Pieron, No. 21, 4 December 1921	236
Figure 8: "Mein Körbchen liegt Dir wohl im Sinn?" APK, PKP, Syg. 281.....	241
Figure 9: "Nur die allerdümmsten Kalber wählen ihre Schlächter selber," B.Śl., U.Śl. 887.....	248
Figure 10: "Wyzwól się od Twych gnębicieli!" B.Śl. U.Śl. 867, U.Śl. 873	253
Figure 11: "Matko pamiętaj o mnie," B.Śl. U.Śl, 875	256
Figure 12: "Polki Górnośląskie!" APK, PKP, syg. 267	257

INTRODUCTION

On 20 March 1921, the residents of a small territory in East Central Europe went to the polls. A part of German Prussia, Upper Silesia, like other regions of East Central Europe, was ethnically mixed with a strong regional identity. However, in the wake of the First World War, and with the subsequent reshuffling of territories and the creation of new nation-states, national ambivalence would hardly do. The Allied Powers had decided in late spring 1919 to hold a plebiscite in Upper Silesia, in order to determine the borders that would divide reconstituted Poland and reorganized Germany. The plebiscite would also resolve the issue of which country would receive the territory's rich deposits of coal, which had helped power Germany during the war. For nearly two years the nascent German and Polish governments inundated the region with various forms of propaganda, calling on Upper Silesians to "stay with Germany" or "become Polish." And so, on Palm Sunday, 1921, Upper Silesians were ordered to put aside any regional or supranational identities and decide whether to be German or Polish.

The plebiscite occurred at a moment of flux. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Upper Silesians experienced intensive nationalizing efforts from both German and Polish nationalists. Large portions of its population, however, seem to have stayed remarkably resistant to these attempts; they identified themselves first and foremost as Catholic Upper Silesians.¹

¹ See especially James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). Also see Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2007) and *Schlonska mowa: Język, Górny Śląsk i nacjonalizm*, tom II (Zabrze: Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, 2006).

Never a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Upper Silesia did not experience the Polish partitions of the late eighteenth century and, unlike Posen/Poznań,² its neighbor to the north, had no strong Polish nationalist movement until the turn of the twentieth century. The First World War, however, brought a host of new possibilities, not just for Upper Silesia, but East Central Europe at large. With the collapse of the three eastern empires – Austro-Hungarian, German and Russian – a Polish state returned to the map of Europe. The German Revolution transformed the country from Reich to Republic. Citing American President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points and doctrine of national self-determination, new nation-states arose from the ashes of the old empires. In the heady chaos following the end of the war, Upper Silesia found itself at a crossroads.

This was not the only plebiscite to occur in the years immediately following the First World War. Plebiscites had been held in Central and Northern Schleswig, determining Germany’s new borders with Denmark, and in Allenstein and Marienwerder, defining its border with Poland, a year earlier.³ The Upper Silesian example, however, stands out. For one, this plebiscite encompassed many more people. Over one million Upper Silesians cast votes in the plebiscite. This was over three times the number of votes cast in Allenstein, the next largest plebiscite. The percentage of participation - 97.5 percent - was also the highest (although the

² Place names seem to be a problem for all historians of Central and Eastern Europe. Some, such as Pieter Judson, use all the linguistic variations, but I find the multiple hyphens to be a bit tedious. Therefore, I will use both the German and Polish variants the first time a city or region is mentioned, and thereafter use only the historical name.

³ The Schleswig plebiscites occurred in February and March of 1920; the Allenstein and Marienweder plebiscites were held in July 1920. For a comprehensive look at these and other plebiscites, see Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War with a Collection of Official Documents*, v. 1-2 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933). For more on the plebiscites, see: Peter Thaler, *Of Mind and Matter: The Duality of National Identity in the German-Danish Borderlands* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2009); Richard Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans?: Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001).

first Schleswig plebiscite came close, with 91.5 percent).⁴ More important than numbers, the Upper Silesian plebiscite was also the most fiercely contested. Both the German and Polish states hurried to establish plebiscite commissions in the region and then flooded the territory with posters, pamphlets, leaflets and brochures in an attempt to win the vote. While such tactics were also practiced in the other plebiscite zones, they did not match the frenetic intensity found in Upper Silesia. Though the results of the others were clear-cut (74.2 percent for Denmark in Northern Schleswig, 79 percent for Germany in Central Schleswig), if not ridiculously lop-sided (Germany won 92 percent of the vote in Marienwerder and 98 percent in Allenstein), in Upper Silesia Germany carried the vote by a comparatively smaller majority, earning sixty percent to Poland's forty.⁵

These percentages are almost the exact inverse of the 1910 language census, in which 57 percent of Upper Silesians declared *Polish* to be their mother tongue. This was down from roughly 66 percent in a survey taken ten years earlier, causing Polish national activists to renounce the results of the 1910 census and argue that reality was closer to the earlier figures.⁶ The Polish nationalists claimed that the number of Poles in the region was higher than the 1910 language census indicated, because many "Polish" children were no longer able to speak Polish fluently as a result of the intensive nationalizing efforts of the Prussian state and the German Empire in this region.⁷

⁴ Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, vol. 1, 82.

⁵ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 82-86; 132-134.

⁶ *Ibid*, 211 and T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 13. Both argue that bilinguals were counted as German-speakers in the 1910 census.

⁷ By 1908, when a new law officially forbade it, Polish was rarely taught in schools. Already in 1886 Silesians who claimed Polish as their mother tongue could not work as governmental officials. The 1908 law, then, was more a form

The results of the language surveys in 1900 and 1910 lead not only to the question of how to interpret the change in percentages, but also suggest questions with respect to the 1921 plebiscite's results. Here, Upper Silesians were supposed to be declaring and expressing their "true" national identity through the act of voting. The discrepancy in the figures of the 1910 language census and the 1921 plebiscite indicate, however, that a significant proportion of Upper Silesians were not voting, as nationalists on both sides expected, along purely ethnic-national lines, but rather that they considered a much broader variety of factors, most importantly their economic and social prospects, when casting their ballot.

These factors were reflected in the language and imagery of the plebiscite propaganda produced by the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats, the organizations tasked with overseeing the plebiscite campaign. Alongside ethnic-national differences, they emphasized economic and social distinctions. Religion played an important role in the Polish propaganda; while the high percentage of Catholics in the region (90 percent) meant that the majority of Germans also practiced this faith, the Polish propaganda represented all Germans as Protestants.⁸ The plebiscite propaganda was also highly gendered; a common motif found in both the German and Polish propaganda was that of the nation as a family. Woman appeared almost exclusively as mothers, charged with not only caring for their children but also teaching them the language and culture of their given nation. Men, as husbands and fathers, protected their families – and, thus, their nation – from external and internal enemies. These propaganda images were an important component in the construction of a new German and Polish identity.

of Prussian harassment against the Poles. See: Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*; Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*.

⁸ James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 7. Neither German nor Polish propaganda addressed the Jewish minority.

The plebiscite propaganda was not the only context in which German and Polish nationalists strove to define themselves and each other. With the end of the First World War, a myriad of options became possible for the lands of East Central Europe. It was not just a question of whether Upper Silesia belonged to Germany or Poland, but what being German or Polish meant in the wake of the First World War. In the immediate weeks and months following the war, before the Allied Powers' decision to hold a plebiscite, various groups scrambled to put forth their own, often competing, visions of Upper Silesia's future. These were divided along national and political lines, as especially nationalists and socialists offered their own definitions of what it meant to be "good" Germans or Poles.

This dissertation asks four main questions. First, what political possibilities for Upper Silesia arose during the First World War and, especially, in its aftermath? How were these new options presented, and how did Upper Silesians receive and react to them? Second, how did various groups co-opt the language of nationalism to promote their own agendas? Third, what arguments did propagandists use in the plebiscite propaganda? How did these differ across various mediums – newspapers, magazines, brochures, posters, etc.? Finally, how did German and Polish nationalists use the plebiscite to define or redefine their nation and each other? In what ways were these images defined by gender, class and ethnicity?

This dissertation argues that the numerous possibilities open to Upper Silesia in the immediate aftermath of the First World War were all filtered through a nationalist lens. When members of the SPD or PPS argued from socialism, they put forth their own specific, national – German or Polish – brand of socialism, which stood in opposition to the other. Municipal election results were used to determine Upper Silesians' national sentiment and loyalty. When the Allied Powers conceived of the post-war world, it was ordered around the nation; the

plebiscite was to be the purest form for national self-determination. Thus, I also argue that the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats, with the backing and blessing of their respective governments, appropriated the new post-war situation to continue the work of previous national activists in the region with new tactics. Through the plebiscite propaganda, Germans and Poles redefined themselves and each other.

While proving reception is the bane of many a historian, I argue that, in the case of Upper Silesia, we can use the results of language surveys, the regional outcome of elections and, most importantly, the results of the plebiscite itself as an indicator for Upper Silesians' responses. It is important, however, to not interpret these results as Upper Silesians declaring their nationality; this was the nationalists' logic and reading of the situation. Instead, other factors besides the nation and nationality must be considered, especially with respect to the plebiscite.

One of the main reasons Germany and Poland so fiercely campaigned in the run-up to the plebiscite was to secure access to Upper Silesia's industrial might and resources – especially its coal. At the outbreak of the First World War, Upper Silesia was second only to the Ruhr in coal production in Germany, supplying about twenty-three percent of the nation's coal. Clustered on its eastern border, the cities of the “Industrial Triangle” (defined by those enclosed within Kattowitz/Katowice, Gleiwitz/Gliwice and Beuthen/Bytom), dominated the region. While this area comprised of only five percent of Upper Silesian territory, almost half of the region's 2.28 million people (47 percent) lived in the cities or their surrounding industrial lands.⁹ By 1910, all three cities had a German-speaking majority. The countryside, however, was predominantly populated by Polish-speakers who worked in the mines and smelting industries. They were not

⁹ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 207.

farmers and peasants like their contemporaries to the north and west; they were a proletarian workforce.

Because of this ethnic and social mix, as well as the importance of the region to Germany and Poland, each nation's propaganda initiatives specifically targeted the Industrial Triangle, making it the most contested area in the years preceding the plebiscite.¹⁰ Both states hurried to establish their plebiscite commissariats' headquarters in the region, Germany in Kattowitz and Poland in Beuthen. The propaganda produced by both nations stressed the importance of the Industrial Triangle, and the commissariats focused especially on winning the votes of Upper Silesians in this economically important region. In fact, it could be argued that the whole reason for the Upper Silesian plebiscite was to determine which nation would receive these lucrative industries. Because of all these factors, the Industrial Triangle is the ideal location in which to set this study.

Historiography

This dissertation is situated in several main fields of historiography: the history of Upper Silesia specifically; the First World War and its immediate aftermath in East Central Europe; and nation and gender in East Central Europe. While most works on the region discuss the former Habsburg lands, my focus on another multi-ethnic region, situated in a different national context, provides another vantage point from which to study the area. Of particular importance here are the works that highlight the national indifference and ambiguity of the people in this region. While the First World War and its immediate aftermath in Western Europe have been intensively studied, the war in East Central Europe during this time remains in many ways a blank page.

¹⁰ Bjork, "Neither German nor Pole," 17-18.

Before examining the historiography of Upper Silesia in more detail, it is necessary to separate the region from its northern neighbor—Posen/Poznań. In retelling the story of Prussian Poles, most historians have focused on this latter region, which was a stronghold for Polish nationalism within the Prussian/German partition. This is true of classic studies, such as William W. Hagen's *Germans, Poles and Jews*, as well as more recent additions to the historiography; Mark Tilse's 2011 *Transnationalism in the Prussian East* offers tangential references to Upper Silesia, but focuses predominantly on Posen and West Prussia.¹¹ It is important, however, to distinguish between the two regions. Upper Silesia stands apart from Posen for several reasons, perhaps most important of which is the fact that the region was not a part of pre-Partitioned Poland. Poles in Posen needed only to look into the relatively recent past to find their connection to the old Polish state; Upper Silesians, in contrast, had not been a part of the Polish kingdom for nearly a millennium. Upper Silesians were almost universally Catholic, whereas in Posen religious differences fell along national lines; Protestants tended to be Prussians/Germans, while Catholics were Polish. Posen was largely agrarian and had retained its Polish nobility (*szlachta*) class; no such class existed in Upper Silesia, and, as will be seen, the region underwent rapid industrialization in the last half of the nineteenth century. Therefore, Upper Silesia does not fit into the model established by the historiography of the Posen Poles. Studying this region

¹¹ William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Mark Tilse, *Transnationalism in the Prussian East: From National Conflict to Synthesis, 1871-1914* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). For more literature, see especially: Richard Blanke, *Prussian Poland in the German Empire (1871-1900)* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1981); John J. Kulczycki, *School Strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901-1907: The Struggle over Bilingual Education* (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1981); Richard Wonser Tims, *Germanizing Prussian Poland: The H-K-T Society and the Struggle for the Eastern Marches in the German Empire, 1894-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941); Lech Trzeciakowski, *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland* Trans. Katarzyna Kretkowska (Boulder, CO: Eastern European Monographs, 1990). For literature on East Prussia, especially the Masurians, see: Richard Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans?: Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Colongue: Böhlau, 2001); Andreas Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen?: Die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus, 1870-1956* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001); Helmut Walser Smith, "Prussia at the Margins, or The World that Nationalism Lost," in Niel Gregor, Nils Roemer and Mark Roseman, eds., *German History from the Margins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

requires a different set of questions and approaches, which are visible in the scholarship on Upper Silesia and the plebiscite.

Almost immediately after the plebiscite, and continuing through the Second World War, several studies on the region appeared, written predominantly by German and Anglo-American scholars. Here, the results of the plebiscite and the decision to split the region were rehashed and reargued. These publications clearly served a nationalist agenda and considered the German and Polish nation and nationalism in Upper Silesia to be innate and immutable; there was no discussion or acknowledgment of regional or religious loyalties. German works stressed the integration of Upper Silesia into the German nation — an integration that was interrupted by invading Polish national activists. Ilse Schwidetsky's *Die Polnische Wahlbewegung in Oberschlesien*, which is still one of the standards of German historiography on the region, calls the appearance of the Polish party on Upper Silesia's political scene an "invasion."¹² Several other works of this time were written by men who were born in the region and experienced first-hand the events of the plebiscite period; Karl Hofer's *Oberschlesien in der Aufstandszeit*, for example, is part history, part document collection, and part memoir of a man who served as commander of the German units during the Third Silesian Uprising.¹³ In this period, Rudolf Vogel's 1931 dissertation on the German press and propaganda stands out for not being so overtly nationalistic.¹⁴ Written only ten years after the plebiscite, and including interviews with

¹² Ilse Schwidetsky, *Die Polnische Wahlbewegung in Oberschlesien* (Breslau: Osteuropa Institut, 1934).

¹³ Karl Hofer, *Oberschlesien in der Aufstandszeit, 1918-1921, Erinnerungen und Dokumente* (Berlin: Verlag von E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1938); see also: Rudolf Schrickler, *Blut Erz Kohle: Der Kampf um Oberschlesien* (Berlin: Verlag und Vertriebs-Gesellschaft m.g.H, 1933).

¹⁴ Rudolf Vogel, "Deutsche Presse und Propaganda des Abstimmungskampfes in Oberschlesien" (PhD diss., Universität Leipzig, 1931).

many of the major German players, Vogel's work is still essential to the historiography of the region.

Published at the same time, Anglo-American studies on the region — such as J. Weinstein's *Upper Silesia: A Country of Contrasts* (1931), William J. Rose's *The Drama of Upper Silesia* (1935) and Robert Machray's *The Problem of Upper Silesia* (1945) — shared a nationalist approach. They, too, perceived nations as “naturally” given, but supported the Polish side and were driven mainly by a structural approach, which measured everything from language use to coal output, and assumed “Poles” and “Germans” to be fixed categories.¹⁵ While written by Anglo-Americans, the main aim of these three works appears to be to defend and justify Poland's claim to the region, as did most historians of this time, thereby defending the policy pursued by the Western Allies in the Treaty of Versailles.

One of the few to espouse Germany's needs was Sidney Osborne, in his 1920 *The Upper Silesian Question and Germany's Coal Problem*.¹⁶ Still, Osborne (an American) is quick to stress that his views, “much they may seem favorable to German interests, are in no sense the result of German influences or pro-German bias,” and adds that he “sympathized with the aims and ideals enunciated by the Allied and Associated Governments during the war.”¹⁷ Osborne is more explicit in his support for Germany in his *The Problem of Upper Silesia*, in which he argues that the region must not be divided, and as such, giving the whole region to the Poles would prove the plebiscite to be “a mere farce,” whereas granting the territory to Germany would

¹⁵ J. Weinstein, *Upper Silesia: A Country of Contrasts* (Paris: Gebethner and Wolff, 1931); William J. Rose, *The Drama of Upper Silesia* (Brattleboro, VT.: Stephen Daye Press, 1935); Robert Machray, *The Problem of Upper Silesia* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1945).

¹⁶ Sidney Osborne, *The Upper Silesian Question and Germany's Coal Problem* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1920).

¹⁷ Osborne, *The Upper Silesian Question*, 5.

uphold the much-vaunted “doctrine of self-determination.”¹⁸ Writing seven years after the division of Upper Silesia, Graham Seton Hutchinson likewise argues that Germany should have retained, if not all of Upper Silesia, than the whole of the industrial region – although one of his main reasons for this is that Poland was proving to be a strong competitor against Britain in the coal market.¹⁹

As interest in the region waned among German and Anglo-American scholars after 1945, it was in this new post-war setting that Polish historians began studying Upper Silesia in earnest. Like earlier works, these studies held to the traditional national narrative, with Upper Silesian Poles regaining their “national consciousness” after decades of suffering under the German yoke. Emphasizing Poland’s “natural” claims in Upper Silesia helped solidify and justify Poland’s new post-1945 western borders, which encompassed the whole of Silesia as well as other formerly German lands. As might be expected, the plight of the working classes was of particular interest for historians writing in Communist Poland. Marian Orzechowski’s 1965 *Narodowa Demokracja na Górnym Śląsku (do 1918 roku)*, for example, examines the National Democratic Party in Upper Silesia through a class lens, arguing that the party supported middle class ideals at the expense of the working class.²⁰ This emphasis on class, in combination with a Marxist interpretation of historical development, carried on throughout the Communist period, although

¹⁸ Osborne, *The Problem of Upper Silesia, with Five Maps* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1921), 4.

¹⁹ Graham Seton Hutchinson, *Silesia Revisited 1929 (A Examination of the Problems Arising from the Plebiscite and Partition and the Relation between the British Coal Problem and Silesia)* (London: Simpkin Marshall LTD, 1929).

²⁰ Marian Orzechowski, *Narodowa Demokracja na Górnym Śląsku (do 1918 roku)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich-Wydawnictwo, 1965). For an example of working class conditions and industrialization, see: Karol Jońca, *Położenie Robotników w Przemysle Górniczo-Hutniczym na Śląsku w Latach 1889-1914* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1960).

works in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the last of the three-volume *Historia Śląska*, did discuss the development of national politics as well.²¹

Of special import in the Polish historiography are the three Upper Silesian Uprisings of 1919, 1920 and, especially, 1921.²² The Uprisings are viewed almost exclusively in the nationalist context; historian Kai Struve notes they are “*the* Polish national symbol in the history of Upper Silesia of the 19th and 20th centuries.”²³ These three events were held up as proof that Upper Silesians never lost their Polish-character; in addition, the Polish historiography stressed the atrocities and “terrors” committed by Germans during these Uprisings, while ignoring or denying those committed by Poles. This view of the Uprisings is still present today. As recently as 2003, in a collection of papers prepared during the eightieth anniversary of the Third Uprising, Wiesław Lesiuk could quote at length from the 1982 *Encyklopedia powstań śląskich* – “The Silesian Uprisings are among the most beautiful pages in the history of the Polish nation” – and call it “still fully valid today.”²⁴

²¹ Stanisław Michalkiewicz, ed., *Historia Śląska* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1976, 1984). For more on Upper Silesia, see: Jan Przewłocki, *Międzysojusznicza Komisja Rządząca i Plebiscytowa na Górnym Śląsku w Latach 1920-1922* (Katowice: Śląski Instytut Naukowy, 1970); Maria Wanda Wanatowicz, *Historia społeczno-polityczna Górnego Śląska i Śląska Cieszyńskiego w latach 1918-1945* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994).

²² For literature, see: Roman Horoszkiewicz, *W Trzecim Powstaniu Śląskim* (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1936); Mieczysław Wrzosek, *Powstania Śląskie, 1919-1921* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1971); Tadeusz Jędruszczak, *Powstania Śląskie 1919-1920-1921* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1972); Henryk Zieliński, “The Social and Political Background of the Silesian Uprisings.” Trans. Antoni Szymanowski. *Acta Polonicae historica* 26 (1972): 73-108; Jan Ludyga-Laskowski, *Zarys historii trzech Powstań Śląskich, 1919-1920-1921* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn, Naukowe, 1973); Włodzimierz Dąbrowski, *Trzecie Powstanie Śląskie, rok 1921* (London: Odnova Limited, 1973); Marian Anusiewicz and Mieczysław Wrzosek, *Kronika powstań śląskich 1919-1921* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1980).

²³ Kai Struve, “Einleitung: Geschichte und Gedächtnis in Oberschlesien. Die polnischen Aufstände nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg,” in Struve, ed., *Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: Studien zu einem nationalen Konflikt und seiner Erinnerung* (Marburg: Verlag Herder-Institut, 2003), 2. Emphasis in original.

²⁴ Wiesław Lesiuk, “Plebiscyt i powstań śląskie z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia,” in *Powstania śląskie i plebiscyt z perspektywy osiemdziesięciolecia*, ed. Marek Masnyk (Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2003), 20.

German and Anglo-American historiography on the region started again in the 1960s and 1970s in the context of the rising social history, which replaced the traditional political history. Now scholars mostly interpreted nationalism as a political and social phenomenon of modernity. In this historiographic context the new studies on Upper Silesia by German and Anglo-American historians, too, emphasized the level of industrialization and the related class differences in their research on Upper Silesia — but they rejected any dogmatic Marxist approach. One early example is Wolfgang Schumann's 1961 *Oberschlesien 1918/1919: von gemeinsamen Kampf deutscher und polnischer Arbeiter*.²⁵ Later work by West German scholars, such as Günther Doose in his 1987 *Die Separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1922)*, focused more on the phenomenon of nationalism in the region and the separatist movement after the First World War.²⁶ Lawrence Schofer's 1975 *The Formation of a Modern Labor Force: Upper Silesia, 1865-1914* was one of the first of these new histories to appear in the Anglo-American historiography. Here, he uses the region as “a test case for suppositions about the special problems inherent in the formation of a modern industrial labor force.”²⁷

Beyond the attention given to Upper Silesia as a region of accelerated industrialization and class conflicts, however, the interest in the area remained relatively low, especially in the Anglo-American context. One of the few works to focus on the region was Richard Blanke's

²⁵ Wolfgang Schumann, *Oberschlesien 1918/1919: von gemeinsamen Kampf deutscher und polnischer Arbeiter* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1961).

²⁶ Günther Doose, *Die Separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1922)* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987). See also: Ralph Schattkowsky, “Separatism in the Eastern Provinces of the German Reich at the End of the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 29 (1994): 305-324.

²⁷ Lawrence Schofer, *The Formation of a Modern Labor Force: Upper Silesia, 1865-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 1. Also see: Laura Crago, “Nationalism, Religion, Citizenship and Work in the Development of the Polish Working Class and the Polish Trade Union Movement, 1815-1929: A Comparative Study of Russian Poland's Textile Workers and Upper Silesia's Miners and Metalworkers.” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1993).

1975 article, “Upper Silesia, 1921: The Case for Subjective Nationalism.”²⁸ Here, he used the plebiscite to explore national subjectivity. Historians, he argued, have come to define nationality only by “objective” qualities – language, race, religion and ancestry among them. But in certain cases, nationality must be defined “subjectively” – that is, “nationality defined in terms of individual consciousness alone, usually formed by traditional loyalties to provinces or dynasties or other non-ethnic political units, which loyalties can be quite at odds with ‘objective’ ethnic conditions.”²⁹ Upper Silesia’s plebiscite provides an excellent case study for objective versus subjective nationality, as a good proportion of Polish-speakers ultimately voted for Germany. Likewise, Harry K. Rosenthal looked to Upper Silesia in order to challenge the idea of national self-determination, arguing that the “assumption – that all human beings hold membership in national groups – can be challenged. Upper Silesia can serve as an illustration.”³⁰ Nearly thirty years before the field at large would seriously consider the concept of “national indifference,” Rosenthal asked, “Might it not be that the doctrine of national self-determination, rather than satisfying a real demand, has actually forced many people, as in the case of Upper Silesia, to acquire a nationality?”³¹

Since the late 1990s, research on Upper Silesia has slowly but steadily gained momentum, especially in the Anglo-American context. One of the first publications of this last wave is T. Hunt Tooley’s 1997 book *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922*, which examines the plebiscite from the vantage point of the new

²⁸ Richard Blanke, “Upper Silesia, 1921: The Case for Subjective Nationality,” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* 2 (1975): 241-257.

²⁹ Blanke, “Upper Silesia, 1921,” 242.

³⁰ Harry K. Rosenthal, “National Self-Determination: The Example of Upper Silesia,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 7, no. 3/4 (July-Oct. 1972): 231.

³¹ Rosenthal, “National Self-Determination,” 241.

Weimar government and argues that, while the plebiscite was used as a way to bolster support for Germany on its eastern border, it also resulted in a reshaping of the relationship between Prussia and Germany.³² Tomasz Kamusella has written extensively about Silesian nationalism, ethnicity and language since the early 2000s.³³ Especially important for this dissertation are three recent publications. Waldemar Grosch's 2002 *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien, 1919-1921* analyzes the German and Polish plebiscite propaganda, including fliers, leaflets and posters, although this examination is more quantitative than qualitative.³⁴ James Bjork, in his 2008 book, *Neither Germany nor Pole: Catholicism and Nation Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, has argued that in the wake of the intense German and Polish national projects, Upper Silesians avoided choosing a national identity by embracing their (Catholic) religious identity.³⁵ The Catholic Church, acting as a supra-national institution, played the leading role in the triumph of the religious over the national in Upper Silesia at least until the outbreak of the First World War. Finally, and most recently, Brendan Karch's 2018 *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland* examines national activists' efforts, and failure, to turn Upper Silesians into loyal Germans or Poles over a

³² Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*.

³³ For some of Kamusella's works, see: *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006); *The Szlonzoks and Their Language: Between Germany, Poland and Szlonzokian Nationalism* (San Domenico: European University Institute, 2003); "The Szlonzokian Ethnolect in the Context of German and Polish Nationalisms," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 4, no. 1 (2004): 19-39; "Upper Silesia 1870-1920: Between Region, Religion, Nation and Ethnicity," *East European Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 443-462.

³⁴ Waldemar Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien, 1919-1921* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 2002).

³⁵ Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*. Guido Hitze also argues for the primacy of Catholicism in Upper Silesians' identity. Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873-1953), oder, Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002).

hundred-year period.³⁶ While still mainly concerned with a nationalist narrative, some Polish historians are now also examining Upper Silesians' regional identity. Marek Czapliński, in the 2002 *Historia Śląska*, writes that there are “a considerable number of those for whom “Silesian-ness” [“śląskość”] is the most important and who do not want to declare themselves either Polish or German.”³⁷

This dissertation fits into this new historiographical tradition; it does not assume that Upper Silesians were “naturally” Germans or Poles, but rather examines the efforts made by various groups to define and shape a German or Polish identity. However, both Bjork and Karch examine the region over several decades – Karch’s work covers over one hundred years, stretching from the middle of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth – allowing for a greater discussion of changes over time. My dissertation includes the First World War and the years prior, but is primarily focused on the immediate aftermath – the plebiscite period. By zeroing in on these few years, I am better able to examine the nuances of the period. Tooley also limits his discussion to the plebiscite period, but his work only includes the German side. By incorporating both the German and Polish aspects, I believe my work will produce a broader view of Upper Silesia. Like Grosch, I examine the various arguments put forth in the plebiscite propaganda, especially the posters. But while Grosch’s approach is quantitative – calculating the percentage of posters which fit in this category or that – I take a qualitative approach, examining how the images not only represent economic and/or national interests, but also how they define what it means to be a German or Pole in these new nations. Above all, the plebiscite propaganda

³⁶ Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

³⁷ Marek Czapliński, “Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945 roku,” in *Historia Śląska*, ed. Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs and Rościsław Żerelik (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 296.

is highly gendered, an aspect that is conspicuously absent across the historiography. By incorporating gender into my analysis of the plebiscite period, and especially the propaganda, I add a category of analysis that is lacking in the Upper Silesian historiography.

More broadly, this dissertation contributes to the literature of Eastern Europe during the First World War. While the war on the Western Front has a long and rich historiography, the experience of the First World War is still relatively understudied. The last two decades, however, have witnessed a growth in the field, and not just in works on the battlefields. This new scholarship has examined the plight of refugees and displaced peoples, especially in the Russian Empire;³⁸ the German encounters with and subsequent imaginings of the eastern borderlands;³⁹ and the experiences of the Home Fronts and their changing relationship with the state.⁴⁰ Perhaps most important for my own work, however, is the growing focus on the violence and fighting which continued until the early 1920s throughout Central and Eastern Europe.

While the First World War officially ended with the Armistice of November 1918, and fighting did cease on the Western Front, Central and Eastern Europe continued to exist in a state of chaotic upheaval and violence until the 1920s. Robert Gerwarth argues, “To view [11 November 1918] as the end point of the Great War is thus only possible if we ignore what was happening in the East, where violence often continued unabated for several years.”⁴¹ Peter

³⁸ For examples, see: Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Gatrell and Nick Baron, eds., *Homelands: War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia, 1918-1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

³⁹ For examples, see: Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

⁴⁰ For examples, see: Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

⁴¹ Robert Gerwarth, “Foreword,” in *World War I in Central and Eastern Europe: Politics, Conflicts and Military Experience*, eds. Judith Devlin, Maria Falina and John Paul Newman (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), ix.

Holquist has used the term “continuum of crisis” to describe the years between 1914 and 1921; while speaking mainly about Russia during this time, he does note that, “Throughout much of central and eastern Europe, the war wound down in an extended convulsion of revolutions and civil strife.”⁴² Likewise, Maria Bucur argues, “Declarations of war or the signing of an armistice or peace treaty no longer demarcate when the war started or when it ended.”⁴³ Although here she is speaking directly to the experience of the Second World War in Romania, the sentiment holds true for the First World War in the larger Eastern European context.

This new scholarship examines why violence was so endemic across the “shatter zones” of Central and Eastern Europe. Violence was most concentrated in the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious borderlands of the fallen empires, as well as in areas which perceived themselves to be among the “losers” of the war.⁴⁴ While most of the focus is on Germany’s eastern border, the new nations of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Civil War, historians have also included Ireland in this discussion, often comparing its civil war and revolution to Polish, and even specifically Upper Silesian, paramilitarism.⁴⁵ Running parallel to this scholarship, but not yet connecting, is the work led by women and gender historians exploring how nations resettled after the First World War by re-establishing the gender order and

⁴² Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

⁴³ Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), xi.

⁴⁴ See: Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, “Introduction: Aftershocks: Violence in Dissolving Empires after the First World War,” *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 3 (2010): 183-94; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, “The Great War and Paramilitarism in Europe, 1917-23,” *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 3 (2010): 267-73.

⁴⁵ For Ireland, see: Anne Dolan, “The British Culture of Paramilitary Violence in the Irish War of Independence,” in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); for Ireland and Poland, see: Julia Eichenberg, “Soldiers to Civilians, Civilians to Soldiers: Poland and Ireland after the First World War,” in *Ibid*; for Ireland and Upper Silesia, see: T.K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

reintegrating men into society. While there is a sizable amount of literature on this for Western Europe,⁴⁶ Central and Eastern European historians have yet to fully examine these questions; the main exception is Maureen Healy's work on post-war Austria.⁴⁷

Thus, my own work fits into this growing field. I argue that Upper Silesia's "continuum of crisis" lasted until the summer of 1921, when the Third Uprising ended, at the earliest, and June 1922, when the region was officially divided, at the latest. The plebiscite period is book-ended by violence and upheaval, beginning with the German Revolution and ending with the Third Uprising. However, I also argue that postwar Upper Silesians, in the face of continued violence, attempted to return, to paraphrase Margaret Anderson, to the "practice of democracy."⁴⁸ Not counting the plebiscite, Upper Silesians voted in three democratic elections during this period. With the exception of the Third Uprising, violence was not used as a *fait accompli* for either Germans or Poles to take control of the region by force. While neither side liked it, both agreed that the fate of Upper Silesia would be decided at the ballot box, not the battlefield.

⁴⁶ For women, see: Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy after the Great War: Women, Gender and Postwar Reconciliation between Nations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For men and studies of masculinity, see: Joanna Burke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men: War, Psychiatry and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); John Horne, "Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Nation-States and the World Wars, 1850-1950," in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Glenda Sluga, "Masculinities, Nations and the New World Order: Peacemaking and Nationality in Britain, France and the United States after the First World War," in *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Healy, "Civilizing the Soldier in Postwar Austria," in *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 47-69.

⁴⁸ Margaret Lavinia Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Finally, this dissertation fits into broader historiographical trends regarding nation and nationalism. For the national activists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the nation was a primordial, ancient entity; the nation's people were always its people, even if they themselves had forgotten this. It was the charge of the nationalists to "awaken" their co-nationals from their "slumber." This potent narrative is present in the national historiographies produced decades later, as seen in the above discussion of Polish literature on Upper Silesia; especially in the 1960s and 1970s, but even continuing to today, the three Upper Silesian Uprisings were viewed as the moments when the Polish nation in the region "awoke," declaring themselves definitively as Poles.

The 1980s brought about a constructivist turn in the scholarship, led by Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner. Anderson defined the nation as an "imagined political community,"⁴⁹ while Gellner called nationalism "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."⁵⁰ While a shared linguistic or cultural heritage might form the base of a group or community, the nation as such was only born when educated elites decided to make it so. Gellner maintained, "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round."⁵¹ Miroslav Hroch argued that national development, at least in Central and Eastern Europe, began when educated social elites, not belonging to the ruling ethnic group, decided that their own language and culture was worthy of a nation of its

⁴⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

⁵⁰ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

⁵¹ Gellner, *Nations and Nationalisms*, 55.

own, and then took it upon themselves to “awaken” the people.⁵² Above all, though, this interpretation of the nation placed it as a modern phenomenon, one only possible in an age of print, growing rates of literacy and industrialization.⁵³

What none of the above theories consider is the gendered aspect of nationalism. Even after Joan Scott’s seminal 1986 article, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,”⁵⁴ the connections between gender and the nation were only explored in the early 1990s, when feminist scholars of the Third World began to study women’s participation in nationalist struggles in the imperial context. Since then, gendered nationalism has erupted among scholars of gender and feminism. Gender not only shapes conceptions of the nation, but nationalism also establishes constructions of gender identity. As Mrinalini Sinha has argued, “The attachments to modern gender and national identities have developed together and reinforced each other.”⁵⁵ Anderson, Gellner and their peers defined the nation as a political entity, therefore relegating it to the public – re: masculine – sphere. In the 1990s, however, women and gender historians began to “rediscover” women as active participants in the nation-building projects, serving as both biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, as well as activists in national movements.⁵⁶

⁵² Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Ch. 4.

⁵³ For literature, see above authors and: John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1982); Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge: MIT Press and Wiley, New York, 1953); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Anthony J. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

⁵⁴ Joan Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91, no.5 (1986): 1053-1075.

⁵⁵ Mrinalina Sinha, “Gender and Nation,” in *Women’s History in a Global Perspective*, vol. 1, ed. Bonnie Smith (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 2005), 231.

⁵⁶ Sinha, “Gender and Nation.”

Incorporating a gender perspective into studies of the nation and nationalism do not just return women to the narrative, however; it also reevaluates the role men played *as men*, and the contested constructions of masculinity. By treating “men” as “the universal,” studies of nationalism have often overlooked the importance of masculinity for the imagination and construction of the nation and national identities.⁵⁷ Nationalist discourses, then, often use gender images — constructions of femininity *and masculinity*, which were closely related and often complementary — to define who belongs to the nation and create a hierarchical gender order of the nation.⁵⁸

One of the most widespread gendered constructions is the image of the nation as a “peoples’ family.”⁵⁹ Historians such as Ida Blom have noted that, in the image of the nation as a family, women are usually charged with keeping and passing on their nation’s history and culture. The term “mother tongue” highlights this notion, as it was the mothers’ responsibility to teach her children their national language.⁶⁰ Women were often constructed as the “reproducers” of the nation, not the “producers” — reproducers both of culture, as well as of future members (men) of the nation.⁶¹ Men, as fathers and sons, stand to protect and provide for this national family. Thus, while women are used to symbolize the nation’s past, Anne McClintock argues

⁵⁷ Ibid, and Horne, “Masculinities in Politics and War.”

⁵⁸ See Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall, *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2000). For Eastern Europe: Sophia Kemlein, ed., *Geschlecht und Nationalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa, 1848-1918* (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2000); Katherine David, “Czech Feminists and Nationalism in the late Habsburg Monarchy: ‘the First in Austria,’” *Journal of Women’s History* 3, (1991): 26-45.

⁵⁹ Marian Lampland, “Family Portraits: Gendered Images of the Nation in Nineteenth Century Hungary,” *Eastern European Politics and Society* 8, (1994): 187-316.

⁶⁰ Ida Blom, “Gender and Nation in International Comparison,” in *Gendered Nations*, ed. Blom, et al, 3-26.

⁶¹ Geoff Eley, “Culture, Nation and Gender,” in Ibid, 27-40.

that men “represent the progressive agent of national modernity.”⁶² Only when all family members are employed at their own tasks and in their own spheres – that is, performing their prescribed gender roles -- can the nation be considered strong.

But even these gendered works on the nation were confined to the constructionist paradigm which, while denying that nations were “eternal,”⁶³ still held them to be an eventuality; Gellner noted that “nationalism as such is fated to prevail, but not any one particular nationalism.” Political legitimacy in the modern world revolved around the nation; therefore, all people, everywhere, would eventually be swept up and belong to a nation. Nations did not exist before the modern age, but their existence now was in no way questioned. Only in the last decade have historians of East Central Europe begun to examine in earnest issues of national ambivalence and indifference – of the possibility that people’s highest loyalty could be not to the nation, but to another facet of identity – for example, a region or religion. In her 2010 article “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” Tara Zahra argued, “Making indifference visible...enables historians to better understand the limits of nationalization and thereby challenges the nationalist narratives, categories and frameworks that have traditionally dominated the historiography of eastern Europe.”⁶⁴ She specifically pointed to Upper Silesians as “perhaps the most famously indifferent population in twentieth century Europe...The story of Upper Silesia challenges the teleological assumption that nationalization

⁶² Anne McClintock, “‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Nationalism, Gender and Race,” in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 263.

⁶³ Hroch noted, “Now the ‘nation’ is not, of course, an eternal category, but was the product of a long and complicated process of historical development in Europe.” Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe,” *New Left Review*, 198 (March-April 1993), 3-20, reprinted in *Becoming National: A Reader*, eds. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 61.

⁶⁴ Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review* 69:1 (2010): 93-119, here 94.

was irreversible.”⁶⁵ The concept of national indifference opens historians “to consider the history of individuals who stood outside or on the margins”⁶⁶ of the national community.

Much of the work on nation, nationalism and national activism in Eastern Europe has focused on the Habsburg Empire, particularly the Czech and Bohemian lands;⁶⁷ Keely Stauter-Halsted’s *The Nation in the Village* examines Polish nationalism in Austrian Galicia.⁶⁸ However, these works do not address how the First World War and its immediate aftermath affected nation-building and national activism in the region, focusing instead on the last half of the nineteenth century up to 1914. In *Guardians of the Nation*, Pieter Judson argues that it was during the First World War that local nationalists finally triumphed over national indifference.⁶⁹ However, this examination appears only in the epilogue, and Judson himself admits that the historiography on the war is still rather weak. Nor have such works fully explored the gendered dimension of nationalization and nation-building. While war, nation and gender have been the subjects of increasing exploration in the Western European context,⁷⁰ such studies on Eastern

⁶⁵ Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities,” 99-100.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 97. For recent literature, see: Maarten van Ginderachter and Jon Fox, eds., *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁶⁷ For literature, see: Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2001); Pieter M. Judson and Marsha L. Rozenblit, eds., *Constructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

⁶⁸ Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁶⁹ Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*.

⁷⁰ See: Nicoletta Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Susan Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North

Europe are still quite sparse.⁷¹ Bucur and Nancy Wingfield, in their *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, note that it is only recently that cultural and social facets, as opposed to traditional diplomatic and military concerns, have been explored, but “gender analysis has remained marginal in this new trend.”⁷² They argue that a major reason for this gap in the literature is the “overriding centrality of the tension between nationalism and trans-nationalism or internationalism....The concern of political elites with consolidating the national identity of the nascent states of eastern Europe crowded out most other issues raised by the experience of World War I.”⁷³

Thus, this work, following the examples of Bjork and Karch, examines national activism in an area known for its national indifference, but takes a gendered view of the nation and its representations. While most Eastern European studies of nationalism focus on the former Habsburg Empire, my focus on another multi-ethnic region, situated in a different national context, provides another vantage point from which to study the area.

Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1999); Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, ed., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War?: National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Janet S.K. Watson, *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷¹ For literature, see: Healy, *Vienna* and “Civilizing the Soldier in Post-War Austria;” Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006) and “The New ‘Woman Question’: Gender, Nation and Citizenship in the First Czechoslovak Republic,” in *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe, 1918-1948*, ed. Mark Cornwall and R.J.W Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Eva Plach’s work focuses on women’s national activism during the *Sanacja*. Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Pilsudski’s Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006.)

⁷² Wingfield and Bucur, *Gender and War*, 2. For more on the state of gender history in Eastern European historiography, see: Bucur, “An Archipelago of Stories: Gender History in Eastern Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (Dec. 2008): 1375-1389.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

Sources and Organization

The main source base for this study is primarily comprised of the wide variety of printed sources found in the *Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach* (State Archive of Katowice; APK) and the *Biblioteka Śląska* (Library of Silesia). These sources can be divided into three broad categories: newspapers published in the region; leaflets, pamphlets, brochures, posters, caricatures, and other materials produced as propaganda for the plebiscite; and the results of various national and local elections, language censuses and, of course, the plebiscite itself.

I chose six newspapers – three German, three Polish – and followed them throughout the period from 1912 to 1922, as much as the holdings of the *Biblioteka Śląska* would allow. The German newspapers I selected were the nationalist *Kattowitzer Zeitung* (published daily) and *Oberschlesier* (published monthly), and the left-wing *Volkswille* (published daily). The Polish newspapers I examined were *Górnoślązak* (published daily), the Polish nationalist/Catholic *Katolik* (published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays), and the left-wing *Gazeta Robotnicza* (also published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays). These newspapers not only tried to define in their articles what it meant to be German, Polish or Upper Silesian; they also informed their contemporaries about the activities of the two competing nationalist movements. They provided information about events and associational life from different perspectives, because each publication had its own political bias, and they also provided analysis and interpretation of election and poll results. The newspapers are especially important in the months immediately following the end of the First World War, as each espoused a different path for Upper Silesia to follow in this time of uncertainty. In addition, I examine two satirical magazines produced as plebiscite propaganda: the Polish-language *Kocynder* and the German-language *Pieron*. Both represent the nationalist extreme of the propaganda material.

My second group of sources includes the posters, brochures, flyers and such produced as plebiscite propaganda. These items were found in the *Biblioteka Śląska* and in the APK. I use these sources to analyze the competing constructions of what it meant to be German, Polish or Upper Silesian. In them, the visual and textual elements are most closely related. Because they value imagery over text, I would argue that the posters analyzed here largely provoke an immediate response. Similar to the printed sources mentioned above, the images are both highly gendered and highly classed, and thus are a good source to examine how these and other “categories of difference” played out against the national. The leaflets and brochures place text in the primary position. With more space in which to craft an argument, and include a myriad of statistics, these materials tend to produce a more considered response.

Finally, I analyze the results of national and local elections, the language censuses and, especially, the plebiscite as a way to determine Upper Silesians’ reactions to the nationalistic rhetoric and propaganda. Again, though, one must be careful not to examine these results from a purely nationalist vantage point. For example, the language censuses are useful in that they illustrate how many “Germans” and “Poles” nationalists took to reside in Upper Silesia, but do not tell us how German or Polish these speakers actually felt or considered themselves to be. Lastly, I use the plebiscite as an indicator for how Upper Silesians reacted and responded to the plebiscite propaganda. While complete knowledge of reception is impossible, these results of the plebiscite do tell us which *state* the Upper Silesians chose to live in, even if this did not correspond to their ethnic *nation*.

This dissertation begins with an examination, as its title suggests, of “Upper Silesia Before the Crossroads.” Upper Silesia’s politics, economy and demographics at the turn of the twentieth century are discussed, with special attention given to the Reichstag elections of 1903,

1907 and 1912. It was during these years that Wojciech Korfanty's Polish Party made its entrance on the political scene, and through these elections we can see how the Upper Silesian electorate swerved between the German and Polish national parties and the supranational Catholic Center and, to a lesser extent, the German Socialist Party. In analyzing the newspapers, I examine the different representations of Upper Silesians, Germans and Poles before the war, and how these representations changed during the war. I pay special attention to the change in the Polish press after 1916, when it started to become clear that the dream of an independent Poland would be fulfilled. This part also discusses Upper Silesia's experience during the First World War; while never a site of actual fighting, the region was an important site for wartime manufacturing, and its coal proved vital for the German war effort.

Part II, entitled "Down Which Road?," examines the fifteen months between the end of the First World War and Inter-Allied Commission's occupation of the region, during which time a myriad of choices for the future of Upper Silesia were possible – German, Polish, Independence, and several Socialist alternatives. Upper Silesia stood in the middle between Germany, which was transitioning from Reich to Republic, and Poland, which was attempting to knit together three disparate parts to form one coherent nation-state. It was a time of violence, with the German Revolution, strikes in the mines, and the First Upper Silesian Uprising in August 1919. At the same time, however, most Upper Silesians attempted to leave the chaos of the war and its aftermath and reestablish democratic norms. Upper Silesians would vote three times in 1919, each time free of violence and corruption. This Part also examines the negotiations occurring far from Upper Silesia, as Roman Dmowski and Ignacy Paderewski attempted to convince the Allied Powers to give the region to Poland. Due in large part to David

Lloyd George's misgivings, the Treaty of Versailles instead stipulated that the future of the region would be determined by plebiscite.

The plebiscite campaign is the focus of Part III, entitled, "'Stay in Germany' or 'Become Polish'?" After a brief discussion of the events of summer 1920 – the Polish-Soviet War's Battle of Warsaw and the "Miracle on the Vistula," the East Prussian plebiscites and the Second Upper Silesian Uprising – the part turns to the German and Polish plebiscite campaigns. Both sides established Plebiscite Commissariats to oversee the propaganda. I divide the propaganda into three groups. First, I examine how the plebiscite was presented in the newspapers. Even as the various papers worked towards the goal of securing the plebiscite for their nation, their own political agendas were still expressed in the articles, giving nuance to how each defined what it meant to be German or Polish. The satirical magazines, *Kocynder* and *Pieron*, relied heavily on illustrations, cartoons, and at times crude or dark humor. The most extreme definitions of Germans and Poles are found here. Finally, I analyze the posters, leaflets and brochures produced for the campaign. Throughout all these different media, I highlight the arguments put forth – national, ethnic, economic – and discuss how these gendered images informed and shaped what it meant to be a German, Pole or Upper Silesian.

Lastly, the plebiscite and its consequences will be discussed in the Part IV, entitled "To the Polls." Here, I examine detailed voting records from the plebiscite, which included all voting districts, from the large cities in the Industrial Triangle to the tiny villages in which less than fifty votes were cast. When it appeared that Poland might lose the Industrial Triangle to Germany, Korfanty engineered the Third, and largest, Upper Silesian Uprising; fighting would last from May until July. As the decision was made to divide the region, I again return to the papers and

magazines, examining how the division was perceived and presented. As a final point, the Epilogue carries the Upper Silesian story into the mid-1920s, to determine what lasting effects, if any, the experience of the plebiscite had on Upper Silesians' conceptions of national identity.



Figure 1: Silesia in the German Empire. Source: Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland*, 25.

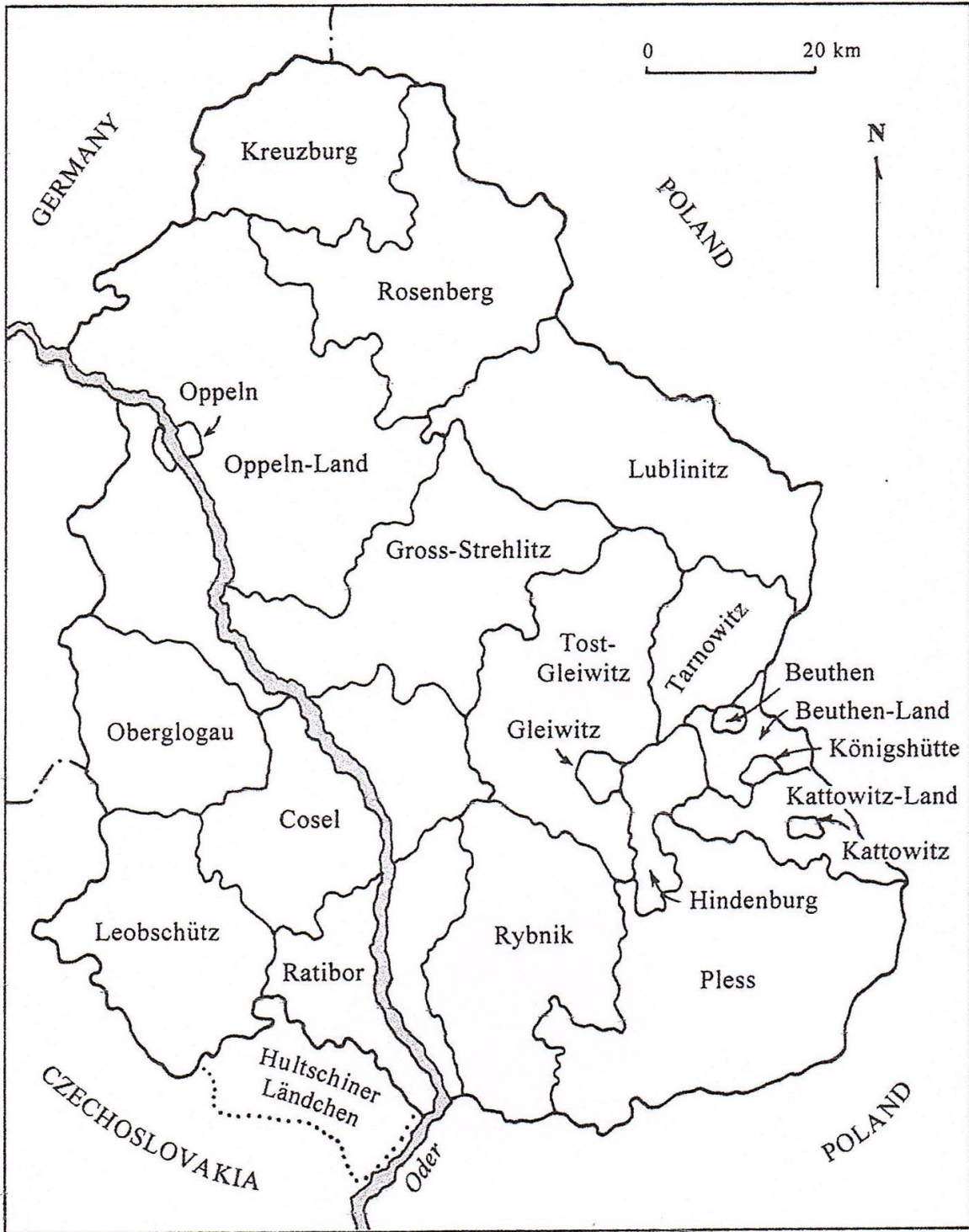


Figure 2: Upper Silesia. Source: Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, xiv.

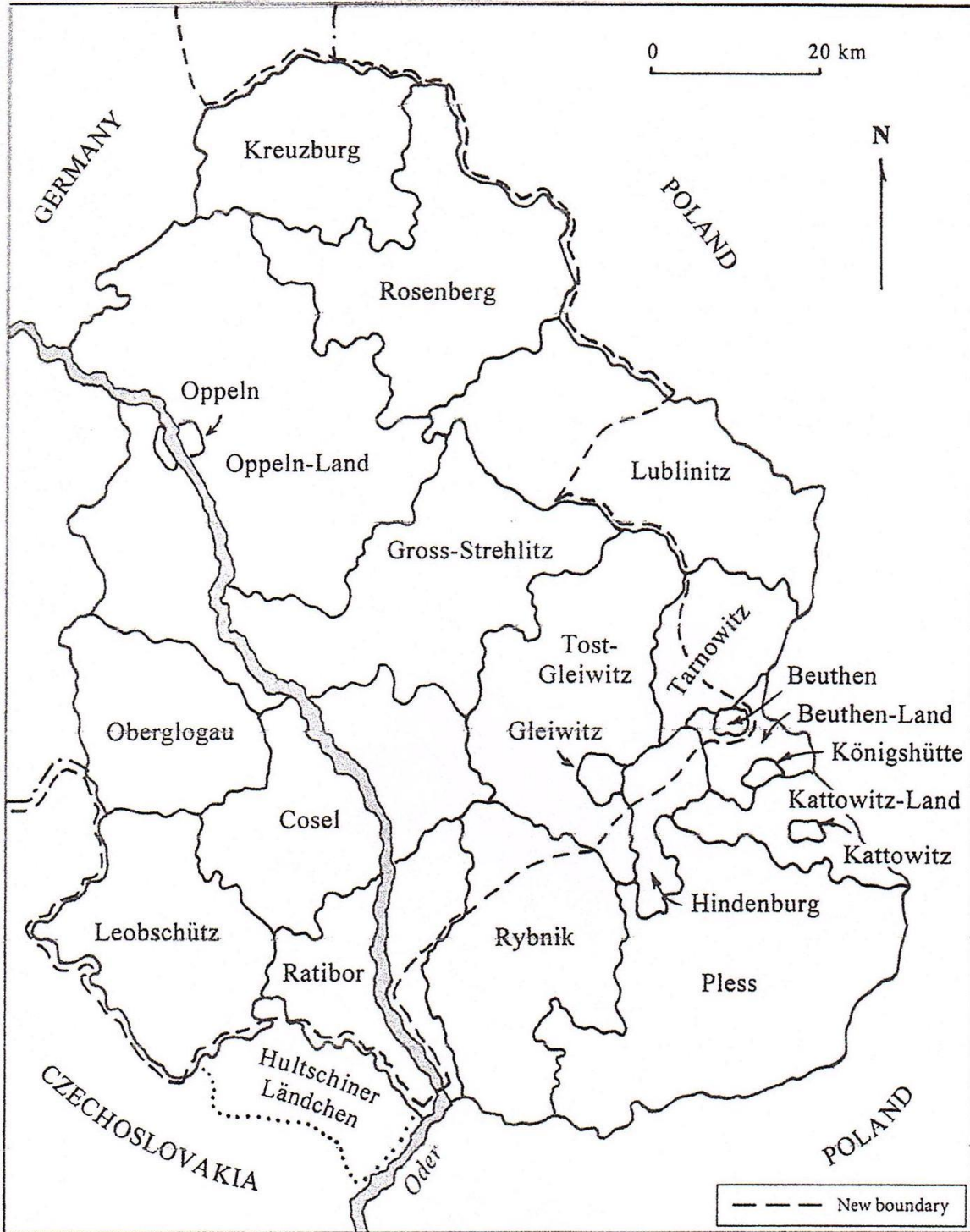


Figure 3: The Partition of Upper Silesia. Source: Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany*, xv.

**PART ONE:
BEFORE THE CROSSROADS:
UPPER SILESIA BEFORE AND DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

To be Upper Silesian in the mid-nineteenth century meant predominantly one thing – to be Catholic. The religion of the vast majority – 90 percent – of the population, Catholicism was the main identifier for most Upper Silesians. Politically, the Catholic Center Party reigned supreme, dominating in the Reichstag elections of the 1880s and 1890s. While inhabited by German- and Polish-speakers, ethnic and national differences were not emphasized, and many, if not most, Upper Silesians were at least functionally bilingual. But as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, national activists – both German and Polish – began to focus on Upper Silesia.

This part examines the two events which changed Upper Silesians' perceptions and definitions of Germans and Poles in the region – the growing nationalist movements which appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, and the First World War, which brought with it the possibility of an independent Polish nation-state. The first chapter explores the wave of Polish nationalists who appeared in the region after 1890. The battle for Polish nationalism in Upper Silesia was waged between two groups: the Catholic moderates, led by Adam Napieralski and his newspaper empire, and the new radicals, headed by Wojciech Korfanty, a political firebrand who was only beginning to make his mark on Upper Silesia. During the last three Reichstag elections before the outbreak of the First World War – 1903, 1907 and 1912 – the newly formed Polish Party, headed by Korfanty and later supported by Napieralski, challenged the political hegemony of the Catholic Center Party. Looking especially at the 1912 election, Napieralski and

his *Katolik* camp issued their own specific definition of what it meant to be a Polish Upper Silesian, one which excluded not only German-speakers but also Polish-speakers who did not vote for the Polish national party.

The second chapter focuses on Upper Silesia's experience in the First World War, as well as how the war caused Polish nationalists to question what it meant to be Polish. For Napieralski, Polish nationalism's main concern was securing linguistic and cultural rights for Poles in Upper Silesia, not independence. By 1914, Poland had been off the map of Europe for over one hundred years. The First World War, however, brought with it the possibility of an independent Polish state, and with it the questions of who would belong to that state. This chapter examines the evolution of Napieralski's wartime rhetoric, from conciliatory at its outbreak, his elation at the November 1916 announcement of the establishment of the Kingdom of Poland, and bitter resentment at the fact that this new Poland would not include Upper Silesia. The change in German nationalist rhetoric in the newspapers is also discussed, as the German press hardened its stance on Poles as the war drew to a close. This part, then, serves to establish a baseline definition of how Germans and Poles in Upper Silesia viewed themselves and each other, in order to examine how these definitions and perceptions changed in the post-war plebiscite period.

1. Upper Silesia Before the War

Upper Silesia holds a unique place in German, Polish and Central European history. It was religiously homogenous but culturally, ethnically and linguistically mixed. Its Polish-speaking residents were separated from their German neighbors by language and class, and from their Polish counterparts in Posen, to the north, by history. Whereas Posen had been a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and held fast to its Polish heritage, Upper Silesia had only

been a part of the medieval Piast kingdom. In the nineteenth century Posen was agrarian where Upper Silesia was industrial; Germans in Posen were predominantly Protestant, while in Upper Silesia they shared the Catholic faith with Poles. Posen was at the vanguard of Polish nationalism; Upper Silesians held to a religious or regional identity.

In the last decades before the First World War, however, Upper Silesia underwent a series of changes that would challenge these local identities, especially for those who were culturally and linguistically Polish. A new brand of Polish nationalism, inspired by that in Posen, would sweep through the region, causing in-fighting between those who favored a moderate program of nationalization and those who advocated a more radical approach. In the midst of this, the outbreak of the First World War occurred. As the fighting wore on and Upper Silesians began to lose faith in the German government, Polish and German Upper Silesians would struggle to redefine themselves and each other.

This chapter will serve as an introduction to the region – its politics and growing industrialization at the turn of the twentieth century and especially in the years leading up to the First World War. It will also examine how Polish- and German-speaking Upper Silesians defined themselves and each other, and in what ways the rhetoric surrounding these definitions changed before and during the First World War. As will be seen, expressions of Germanness and Polishness in the German press are comparatively light when compared to those produced by the Polish press. This should not come as a surprise; Upper Silesia was, after all, a part of the German Reich, and its people were German citizens. The German press did not view the Polish nationalist movement as a threat until the First World War, and German nationalist groups preferred to focus their efforts in Posen. The task was harder for Polish activists, who had to persuade the Polish-speaking population – many of whom were bilingual and saw Germanization

as a means of social mobility – that their true national loyalties lay with a country that appeared on no maps. Focusing on the publications of Adam Napieralski's *Katolik* camp, which were among the most widely-read Polish-language newspapers in the region, it becomes clear that being a Pole meant something much more than simply speaking the Polish dialect at home. True Poles were defined not only by their ethnicity, but just as importantly (if not more so) by their religion and politics.

1.1: Upper Silesia: Its Place, People and Politics

Upper Silesia lies at the crossroads of Germanic and Slavic Europe. A part of the Polish kingdom in the Middle Ages, the entire region was later transferred to Bohemian and, in 1526, to Habsburg rule. It remained a part of the Austrian Empire until Frederick the Great claimed the land during the Austrian Wars of Succession in 1742. It was, therefore, not a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was partitioned by Prussia, Austria and Russia in the late eighteenth-century. This history explains Upper Silesia's unique place in East Central Europe. While it had been separated from Poland for seven centuries, and was a part of Prussia/Germany for less than two, both German and Polish nationalists claimed that the land was historically and nationally theirs.

After the Wars of Liberation in 1813, Silesia became a province in its own right, split into the three districts (*Regierungsbezirke*) of Lower, Middle and Upper Silesia, the latter known also as the Oppeln Regency, after its main seat in the city of Oppeln/Opole.¹ The division of Silesia into these three districts would have far reaching and unintended consequences. While Lower and Middle Silesia were inhabited predominantly by German-speakers and Protestants, Upper Silesia was ethnically mixed with a large majority of Polish-speakers, especially in the

¹ Lower and Middle Silesia were centered around Leignitz/ Legnica and Breslau/Wrocław, respectively. Breslau also served as the capital for the entire province of Silesia.

industrializing eastern counties (*Kreise*).² While ethnically mixed, the district was religiously homogenous, with over 90 percent of Upper Silesians declaring Catholicism as their faith in 1890.³ These differences served to highlight Upper Silesia as distinct from the rest of the province.

The defining geographical feature of the region was the Oder/Odra River and its plain. The Oder cut through the western-most counties of the district and served as a linguistic dividing line between German-speakers on the left bank and the ethnically mixed regions on the right. To the south, the Beskids (a branch of the Carpathians) formed the border with Habsburg Moravia. The eastern border was not so much geological as it was political; by 1795, Upper Silesia bordered the Russian and Austrian-Habsburg holdings of partitioned Poland, as well as, farther to the north, the Posen area of Prussian Poland. By and large, Upper Silesia in the early 1800s was an agricultural district, centered mainly on grains and potatoes.⁴ It was not over winter wheat and rye, however, that Germany and Poland would stake claims to the region. In the mid-

² Brendan Karch, "Nationalism on the Margins: Silesians between Germany and Poland, 1848-1945" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2010) 43. Sarah Wambaugh divides the counties between three categories: Industrial (Beuthen, Beuthen City [Stadt], Königshütte, Kattowitz, Kattowitz Stadt, Hindenburg/Zabrze), Industrial-Agricultural (Gleiwitz Stadt, Tost-Gleiwitz/Toszek Gliwice, Rybnik, Pleß/Pszczyna, Tarnowitz/Tarnowski Góry), and Agricultural (Kreuzburg/Kluczbork, Namslau, Rosenberg/Oleśno, Oppeln, Oppeln Stadt, Gross-Strehlitz/Wielkie Strzelce, Lublinitz/Lubliniec, Kosel/Koźle, Neustadt/Prudnik, Ratibor/Racibórz, Ratibor Stadt, Leobschütz/Głupczyce). Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the First World War, with a Collection of Official Documents*, v. 1-2 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), vol. I, 206. Some of these districts were combined to form the twelve larger electoral districts, which were: Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, Oppeln, Gross Strehlitz-Kosel, Lublinitz-Tost-Gleiwitz, Beuthen-Tarnowitz, Kattowitz-Zabrze, Pleß-Rybnik, Ratibor, Neustadt, Leobschütz, Falkenberg-Grottkau and Neisse. All but the last three were mixed-language districts; the others, located west of the Oder, were predominantly German-speaking.

³ Eight percent declared themselves Protestants, while one percent of the district was Jewish. Protestants and Jews were, for the most part, German-speaking, although a number Polish-speaking Protestants could be found in Kreuzberg county, located in the north-west corner of the district. James Bjork, "Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Ambivalence in Upper Silesia, 1890-1914" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999), 28.

⁴ Stanisław Michalkiewicz, ed. *Historia Śląska*, Vol. III, part I (Wrocław: Polska Akademia Nauk, Institut Historii, 1976), 89. For more on Upper Silesian agriculture and its development, see: Michael R. Haines, "Agriculture and Development in Prussian Upper Silesia, 1846-1913," *The Journal of Economic History* 42, no. 2 (June 1982): 355-384.

nineteenth century, Upper Silesia truly distinguished itself not by what grew in its soil, but by what could be found beneath it.

The color black seemed to rule in Upper Silesia. It was the color of the Center Party, whose predominance in the region will be described in more detail below, and it was the color of Upper Silesia's economic driving force: coal. Situated on one of Europe's main coal fields⁵ – a field which ignored political boundaries and extended into Russian Poland and Austrian Galicia – over the course of the nineteenth century Upper Silesia came to be defined by its mining and rose to be one of the most important industrial centers in Germany. Coal was king, but iron ore and zinc were also mined, and steel production and smelting operations also came to be important in the late nineteenth century. While mining had been a part of the Upper Silesian economy since the late eighteenth century (the foundries in Gliwice were said to have cast the Prussian guns used against Napoleon in Leipzig in 1813),⁶ it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that Upper Silesian mining truly asserted itself as a major force.

From 1852 to 1885 Upper Silesian mining increased by 1000 percent.⁷ While coal production at mid-century was 1.7 million tons, by 1885 it had grown to 12.7 million tons; on the eve of the First World War, Upper Silesia was producing almost 44 million tons of coal annually.⁸ The region was second only to the Ruhr in German coal output, supplying 23 percent

⁵ Robert Machray, *The Problem of Upper Silesia* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1945), 32. Machray locates the other main European coal fields in Great Britain; the Ruhr Valley, extending to northern France and the Benelux countries; and Donetz region, now in Ukraine.

⁶ Norman J.G. Pounds, *The Upper Silesian Industrial Region* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1958), 59.

⁷ Laura Crago, "Nationalism, religion, citizenship and work in the development of the Polish working class and the Polish trade union movement, 1815-1929: a comparative study of Russian Poland's textile workers and Upper Silesian miners and metalworkers" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1993), 61.

⁸ Marek Czapliński, "Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945 roku," in *Historia Śląska*, ed. Marek Czapliński, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs and Rościsław Żerelik (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 304; Lawrence Schofer, *The Formation of a Modern Labor Force: Upper Silesia, 1865-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 10. Czapliński puts the 1913 total coal production at 49.3 million tons.

of Germany's coal at the outbreak of the war. Though not as important as coal, the mining of zinc and iron ore also significantly contributed to Upper Silesia's economy. Zinc production continued to increase up until 1914 and remained important for Germany, but it could not keep up with zinc production in other areas of Europe. Iron ore production, meanwhile, peaked in 1890 and steadily declined after the turn of the twentieth century as deposits were mined to completion. Essential in the local manufacture of steel, after 1900 Upper Silesian plants began importing more and more iron ore from other European nations.⁹

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, and even before, the wealthy families of Silesia had held large stakes in mining, but their hold on the industry increased sharply in the 1870s. Taking advantage of the years of economic uncertainty which followed unification, noble families like Henckel von Donnersmarck began consolidating firms into large conglomerates. At the turn of the twentieth century, fourteen of the twenty-two firms operating in Upper Silesia controlled over 92 percent of production.¹⁰ These Junker industrial magnates were universally German and predominantly Roman Catholic.

The workers, on the other hand, though also Catholic, were culturally and linguistically Polish – about 85 percent of the workforce were Polish-speakers.¹¹ Despite comprising the overwhelming majority of workers, Polish-speakers were severely underrepresented in skilled and managerial positions. Most took on the unskilled jobs of sorters, haulers and shovelers, while German-speakers held the semi-skilled and skilled, not to mention better paying, positions. At the lower administrative and managerial level, German-speakers outnumbered Polish-

⁹ Schofer, 10.

¹⁰ Crago, 64; Schofer, 29-31.

¹¹ Crago, 71.

speakers two to one; only three of the 420 mining directors and administrators were Polish-speakers.¹²

Recruited mainly from the surrounding countryside, these workers powered Upper Silesia's industry, which, as discussed above, grew by leaps and bounds in the last half of the nineteenth century. The workforce also quickly expanded at this time, none more significantly than those employed in coal mining. In the span of just over 40 years, from 1870 to 1913, the number of coal miners grew by over a factor of five, from 23,000 to 123,000 miners. By this time, the number of ironworkers had dropped from its 1885 peak of 3800 to 1000 workers, but zinc mining held steady, employing about 13,000 workers.¹³ As more workers and their families moved to the Industrial Triangle, the urban landscape of this region changed dramatically. By 1910, the four major industrial cities – Kattowitz, Gleiwitz, Beuthen and Königshütte/Królewska Huta – had populations of over 60,000, and 62 percent of the area's residents lived in cities or towns of 25,000 or more.¹⁴ All told, industry employed almost half of those able to work in the region.

Despite these large numbers, however, firms frequently complained of work shortages after 1890. Though large, the growth in the workforce could not keep pace with increased production. Unlike in the Ruhr, where labor shortages were often due to a lack of skilled workers, in Upper Silesia the problem lay in the need for unskilled workers, a situation which labor historian Lawrence Schofer refers to as “something of a mystery.”¹⁵ One of the main reasons for the labor shortage appears to be internal migration away from Upper Silesia to other

¹² Ibid, 72-3.

¹³ Schofer, 13.

¹⁴ Crago, 61.

¹⁵ Schofer, 17.

areas of Germany and Prussia – the so-called *Ostflucht*, or Flight from the East. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Upper Silesia had one of the highest birthrates in the *Kaiserreich*.¹⁶ However, it lost much of this natural population increase to emigration, as (mainly Polish-speaking) workers left Upper Silesia for the higher-paying mining jobs in the Ruhr.¹⁷ Some 75,000 immigrants came from other areas of Germany and Prussia, predominantly Saxony, starting in the late 1880s. These German Protestants would change the face of some of the industrial cities,¹⁸ but because they held mainly administrative and managerial positions in the industrial firms and plants, they did not alleviate the shortage of unskilled labor.¹⁹

To fill the work shortages while simultaneously avoiding raising wages, firms looked to three groups: women, children and foreign workers. On the eve of the First World War, women and children together accounted for ten percent of the Upper Silesian industrial workforce. Female employment reached its peak in 1889, when 12,000 women worked in industry;²⁰ by 1914 the number had fallen to about 10,000, or five percent of the overall workforce. Though, after 1900, teenage boys over sixteen years of age were considered to be adult workers, the number of children working in mines did not experience a noticeable decline. In 1912, they made up 4.3 percent of the workforce. The majority of women and children worked in coal

¹⁶ Bjork, “Neither German nor Pole,” 28.

¹⁷ These Polish-speaking emigrants would later be a point of contention during negotiations on the plebiscite. Polish representatives wanted then to be able to return and vote, believing they would vote for Poland. For the same reason German representatives objected to their participation.

¹⁸ Crago notes that the number of Protestants in cities rose by 65 percent between 1861 and 1914. Crago, 74.

¹⁹ Schofer, 33.

²⁰ Detlev Puls, *Rochaden zwischen Unterwerfung und Widerstand Oberschlesische Bergarbeiter, 1871-1914* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1994), 104.

mining, although a significant minority (between 30 and 40 percent for women, 40 percent for children) also labored in zinc smelting.²¹

The largest of the three groups, however, consisted of foreign workers, who themselves comprised ten percent of the workforce in 1914. This was a new development in the region, however, as in the mid-1800s foreign labor made up a very small percentage of the total labor workforce. When the German government expelled all alien Poles (those from Russian Poland and Austrian Galicia) in 1885, the industrial firms did not protest and only a total of 7000 Poles were forced to leave; because many workers had brought their families with them, the number of workers lost was well below this. But as both industry and agriculture began to increase in the 1890s, and more labor was needed to supplement the Upper Silesian workers, the government eased the ban on Polish labor. Still, the number of foreign workers remained small, numbering between one and two thousand for most of the 1890s. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, foreign employment exploded, peaking at 20,000 in 1909.²²

Despite the large and growing number of workers, socialist parties and organizations found it hard to gain traction in the region. Founded in the same year as the Józef Piłsudski-led main branch, the *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna Zaboru Pruskiego* (*Polish Socialist Party, Prussian division*, or PPS zp) established its base in Berlin in 1893 and quickly aligned with and received financial support from the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (the Social Democratic Party of Germany, or SPD). While the Social Democrats would make gains at the polls, especially in the elections of 1898 and 1912, overall the party and its organizations remained quite small; the flagship paper of the PPS zp, *Gazeta Robotnicza* (*The Workers' Gazette*), only

²¹ Schofer, 27.

²² Schofer, 22-5; Puls, 127-34.

had a subscription of about 1500 throughout the prewar period.²³ The SPD and PPS zp fundamentally differed on the question of Polish nationalism and independence, which caused Polish-speaking workers to be wary of both organizations. This was one of the main obstacles for the expansion of socialism in the region. Another was that Upper Silesians did not need socialist working groups, as many already belonged to a workers' union backed by the two most powerful institutions in the region – the Catholic Church and its political representative, the Center Party.

The Center Party's (*Zentrumspartei*)²⁴ entrance into Upper Silesian politics could be described as inauspicious at best. In the first Reichstag elections of 1871, the party founded to protect the interests of German Catholics won only one electoral district in an area that was 90 percent Catholic. This statistic meant, of course, that most of those who ran and won under one of the two conservative parties' banners were also Catholics. Only in the district of Pleß-Rybnik did the Center Party prevail, a victory that would be a sign of things to come in Upper Silesia. Father Eduard Müller, a poor German priest from Berlin, defeated none other than Victor Moritz Karl, the duke of Ratibor, a large estate holder, and the chosen candidate of the Prince of Pleß.²⁵ Three years later, however, the Center would win eight of the twelve electoral districts, and from

²³ Bernhard Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1945: Dokumentation und Strukturbeschreibung* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1993), 334.

²⁴ For literature on the Catholic Center Party in Germany, see: David Blackbourn, *Class, Religion and Local Politics in Germany: The Center Party in Württemberg before 1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Ellen Lovell Evans, *The German Center Party, 1870-1933: A Study in Political Catholicism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981); Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984). For literature on the Center Party and Catholicism in Upper Silesia, see: Mieczysław Pater, *Katolicki Ruch Polityczny na Śląsku w latach 1848-1871* (Wrocław: Prace Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1967); Pater, *Centrum a Ruch Polski a Górnym Śląsku (1879-1893)* (Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1971).

²⁵ Margaret L. Anderson, "Voter, Junker, Landrat, Priest: The Old Authorities and the New Franchise in Imperial Germany." *American Historical Review* 98, No. 5 (Dec. 1993): 1465-6.

1884 to 1903 would claim eleven.²⁶ The Party never received less than 60 percent of Upper Silesia's vote total in Reichstag elections, and on three occasions earned 80 percent of all votes cast: 1881, 1884 and 1893.²⁷ Prior to the Center Party's dominance, the representatives of the region were predominantly large landowners, but by 1893 all Center party representatives were commoners, including members of the clergy.²⁸

The supremacy of the Center Party in the region was due in large part to the *Kulturkampf*, during which Chancellor Otto von Bismarck aimed to use the power of the state to lessen the influence of the Catholic Church. The result in Upper Silesia, as in other predominantly Catholic areas of Germany, was for voters to heed the cry of their parish priests and rush to support the Center Party, the political defenders of the faith. Unlike in Bavaria or the Rhineland, however, in Upper Silesia there was also a nationality issue to be dealt with, as a number of the measures were also forms of Polish persecution. It appears, however, that Upper Silesians placed religious matters over linguistic or national ones, as illustrated in an 1873 list that placed the rights of the church and the maintaining of confessional schools above defense of the Polish language.²⁹

²⁶ Ilse Schwidetzky, *Die polnische Wahlbewegung in Oberschlesien* (Breslau: Verlag Ferdinand Hill, 1934), 112. The Center actually swept the region in 1881. From 1884 on, the sole non-Center district was Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, which held a significant Protestant population (including Polish Protestants). The Conservative (*Konservativ*) Party reigned here.

²⁷ Michael Gerber, "Politische Geschichte 1848-1918," in *Geschichte Schlesiens: Bd. 3. Preussisch-Schlesien 1740-1945, Österreichisch-Schlesien 1740-1918/45* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999), 69; James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 19; Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 54.

²⁸ Anderson, "Voter, Junker, Landrat, Priest," 1466.

²⁹ Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 23.

Parents and priests alike, it seemed, were more concerned that their children receive the “right” sort of religious instruction than with the language in which it was taught.³⁰

It was only in the 1880s, after the fires of the *Kulturkampf* had been mostly extinguished, that the language question came to the fore, and would serve as a sticking point between the clerical and lay leaders of the Catholic/Center milieu. The clergy had survived the *Kulturkampf* with their authority intact, but their numbers severely depleted. In an effort to rebuild church infrastructure, priests were less willing to fight against language laws. This was especially true after Georg Kopp became Prince-Bishop of Breslau in 1887. Always eager to accommodate the wishes of Berlin, Kopp worked to repair the relationship between the church and the state while at the same time subtly promoting the German language in Upper Silesian churches and religious instruction. At first these measures struck a wrong chord with the clergy in Upper Silesia, many of whom were born in the region and had worked hard to learn the Polish language to better reach out to their parishioners. Soon, however, what historian James Bjork termed “church patriotism” turned most of the Upper Silesian clergy to Kopp’s side, as they determined “the autonomy of the institutional church...was worth a *Kulturkampf*; the defense of ‘Polishness’ was not.”³¹

In the last decade of the 1800s, the banner of Polish nationalism was carried by Adam Napieralski and his *Katolik* camp. As editor of the largest paper in the Upper Silesian industrial region, Napieralski wielded vast political power; to be backed by *Katolik* in the 1890s virtually assured success at the polls. Napieralski aimed to transform the Center Party from within,

³⁰ Already in 1863, Polish was allowed to be used only in the first year of primary school, although religious education was exempt. In 1872 Germany extended this law to include religious education, pushing out the use of Polish. It was this expansion of the law that so angered Polish-speaking Catholics, who felt their children would not receive proper religious instruction if they could not understand the language in which it was taught. Michalkiewicz, *Historia Śląska*, Vol. III, 1, 468-72; Bjork, “Neither German nor Pole,” 37-38.

³¹ Bjork, “Neither German nor Pole,” 43.

slowly adding Polish nationalist interests and concerns into the party's platform. This caused tension between him and the Catholic Church, which worried that Napieralski's changes would eventually put nation over faith. Meanwhile, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, a new generation of Upper Silesian Poles came to find Napieralski's moderate approach to be too slow. Inspired by Roman Dmowski's new *Narodowa Demokracja* (National Democratic) party, these men challenged the Center's supremacy in the region. Led by Wojciech Korfanty, they formed the Polish Party, unabashedly and unambiguously placing Polish nationalism front and center for the first time in Upper Silesia's politics.

Founded in 1868 by Karol Miarka, *Katolik* had cemented its reputation during the *Kulturkampf* as the Polish newspaper of the Upper Silesian industrial region,³² during which time Miarka focused mainly on publishing articles on religious themes, favoring them especially over those of the national.³³ Once the fighting was over, however, Miarka and others in the *Katolik* camp turned their attention to the Polish cause, which many viewed to be inextricably linked to their Catholicism. They distrusted the Germanizing policies allowed under Kopp and emphasized Polish national culture and language. While they continued to expand their efforts throughout the 1880s, the *Katolik* activists did not have much political influence in the Center Party, which at the time was still run by the large German estate holders, most of whom knew little to no Polish. It was not until 1889 and the arrival of Adam Napieralski on the Upper Silesian scene that the *Katolik* camp truly became a leading force in the region.

Born in the fall of 1861 in Kluczewo, about 45 miles south-west of Posen, to a family of lower nobility, Napieralski was part of what would become known as the "Posen Triumvirate" –

³² Gröschel, 143-144. The paper was founded in Königshütte, but moved to Beuthen when Napieralski took control.

³³ Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 23.

three young editors who moved from Posen to Upper Silesia in the late 1880s and quickly became the leaders of the Polish national movement through their work with the Center Party.³⁴ While Bronisław Koraszewski (editor of *Gazeta Opolska*, *The Oppeln Gazette*) and Jan Maćkowski (editor of *Nowiny Raciborskie*, *The Ratibor News*) certainly impacted not only the Upper Silesian press but also its politics, it was Napieralski who truly established himself as a leader in the region.

Katolik was already among the most successful papers in the region, with a subscription of 7,000 when Napieralski became editor. Within three years they had nearly doubled, to 13,000; by 1902, subscriptions numbered 22,000, making it, by far, the largest newspaper in the region.³⁵ Continuing the work of his predecessor, Father Stanisław Radziejewski, Napieralski inserted an even stronger Polish nationalist tone into the paper. As with others in the *Katolik* camp, he was also a devout Catholic; balancing these two institutions – the nation and the church – would be what gave *Katolik* its unique position in Upper Silesia. Napieralski believed a national movement had to come from the people of the lower classes, the workers and the peasants; it could not be imposed upon them by middle-class activists. Cultivating a sense of Polish nationalism in Upper Silesians meant first addressing their daily needs and demands, and this would take time. In addition, the link between Polish nationalism and the Catholic Church had to be emphasized. To this end, *Katolik* supported not only the clergy but the clergy's politics – the Center Party.

Napieralski and the rest of the *Katolik* camp would get the chance to prove the strength of their influence in the 1893 Reichstag elections. After 1890, Reichstag elections were to be held

³⁴ Marek Czaplński, *Adam Napieralski, 1861-1928: Biografia Polityczna* (Wrocław: Prace Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1974).

³⁵ Gröschel, 144.

every five years. Midway through this election cycle, Chancellor Leo von Caprivi introduced a new seven-year army bill, which would drastically increase military appropriations and the size of the standing army. The new bill brought the Center to an impasse. Since Bismarck's dismissal from office three years earlier it had reached a sort of *détente* with the new Caprivi government as a number of *Kulturkampf* laws had been repealed; voting against the bill could jeopardize this new relationship. At the same time, many Center party delegates had campaigned on a platform of lower taxes and military spending, and voting for the bill would anger their constituents. Leaders of the party decided to support Caprivi, but the rank and file rebelled and voted against the army bill. In light of the bill's failure to pass, Caprivi did what chancellors in Imperial Germany were wont to do – he dissolved the Reichstag.³⁶

Most of the Center's 106 representatives could return home and run again under the banner of having held to party policy with regards to taxes and military expansion. Eleven could not, and of these seven were from Upper Silesia. Landed magnates all, these local leaders now found themselves at odds with their constituents and, even worse, facing serious opposition from within their own party. Sensing that the time was right, Napieralski and the *Katolik* camp launched an electoral attack, running their own, middle-class candidates against the wealthy (German) establishment. Similar intra-party strife occurred in other areas of Catholic Germany, but in Upper Silesia there was also a nationality issue. *Katolik*-backed candidates not only opposed the army bill, but also supported Polish language and labor rights. For the most part, the local clergy supported the new candidates, as they were also against military expansion, but they did so warily. While Napieralski and *Katolik* argued that Polishness and Catholicism existed side-by-side, and were in fact intertwined, parish priests worried that these new delegates would

³⁶ A more detailed discussion of the 1893 election can be found in: Jonathan Sperber, *The Kaiser's Voters: Electors and elections in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

reverse the Center Party's platform, placing nationality over faith. This tension between the clergy and the *Katolik* press would remain through the early 1900s, as Napieralski and his camp came to dominate Upper Silesian Center Party politics.

The Center, however, could not hold forever. Napieralski's long-term plan of slowly transforming the Center into a Polish Catholic party from within was advancing too slowly for the younger generation which now appeared on the political scene. Influenced by the National Democrats and under the leadership of a young Upper Silesian named Wojciech Korfanty, these new national activists advocated for an immediate and decisive split from the Center and the formation of a new Polish Party in Upper Silesia.

Founded in 1897 by Roman Dmowski, Jan Ludwlg Popławski and Zygmunt Balicki, *Narodowa Demokracja* (National Democracy), or the Endeks (taken from their Polish abbreviation, ND), was a reaction to both the revolutionary and Positivist strands of Polish nationalism in the nineteenth century. The failed revolutions, especially that of the January Uprising of 1863, had led only to a further denial of Polish rights under the Russian government, while the Positivist movement, which had advocated the creation of a Polish linguistic and cultural nation through scientific work, was viewed by the National Democrats as paralyzing the nation. Instead, they advocated a return to "politics," by which they meant a new form of agitation and organization – their politics was a call to action.³⁷ The leaders of this new movement would not be the *szlachta* (Polish aristocracy), which had been behind the disasters of the previous century. In Dmowski's view, the new heart of Poland belonged to the small

³⁷ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93.

farmers, workers and townspeople.³⁸ The National Democrats' Poland was a closed nation; the minorities which resided inside the borders of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – Belarussians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians – would be subject to Polonization. Anti-Semitism was a key tenet of Dmowski's National Democracy, as was a strong anti-German stance, which helped the movement flourish in Posen.

This new version of Polish nationalism proved very attractive to young Polish-speakers in Upper Silesia. The region, lacking a *szlachta* class and not a part of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, had not fit the older conception of the Polish nation. Dmowski's Endeks, however, challenged these notions and called for a reevaluation of what it meant to be Polish. The result was the first true Polish national movement in the region, led by university students who could claim to be Upper Silesian born and bred.

It was in this context that Wojciech Korfanty entered the political stage. Korfanty was born in the spring of 1873 in Sadzawka, the fifth child of a coal-miner and his wife.³⁹ Although the family spoke Polish in the home, it was in school that he discovered his love for Polish literature and history. Polish was not taught at the Kattowitz Gymnasium, but Korfanty and other students, feeling slighted by their German teachers' low opinions of Polish culture, met to read and translate the great works of Polish Romanticism outside of class.⁴⁰ In August 1895, a few months before he was set to take his final exams, Korfanty was expelled from the

³⁸ Aleksander Gieysztor, Stefan Kieniewicz, Emanuel Rostworowski, Janusz Tazbir, Henryk Wereszycki, *History of Poland* (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1968), 576; Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 52-3. For more on National Democracy, see: Marian Orzechowski, *Narodowa Demokracja na Górnym Śląsku (do 1918 Roku)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1965); Lorraine Frances Elizabeth Toporowski, "The Origins of National Democracy 1886-1903: A Study in Polish Nationalism" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1975).

³⁹ Marian Orzechowski, *Wojciech Korfanty: Biografia polityczna* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1975), 25.

⁴⁰ Orzechowski, *Wojciech Korfanty*, 26.

Gymnasium for “Polish agitation.”⁴¹ For the next three years he traveled around Silesia and Prussia, even working in the mines for a summer. He considered joining the Polish Socialist Party while in Berlin, but disliked their internationalist outlook; besides, the Socialists were a fairly organized group by the late 1890s, and there was little chance for a young Korfanty to quickly move into the leadership position he so desired. He found such an opportunity in 1898, when he arrived in Breslau. There he was among the first to join *Zet (Związek Młodzieży Polskiej*, or Union of Polish Youth), a newly formed organization that stood as the vanguard for the National Democratic Party in the region.⁴²

Korfanty soon found himself as the head of this new Polish nationalist movement that forged a third way between the Center and the Socialists. In 1902 he took over the newspaper *Górnoślązak (The Upper Silesian)* in Posen, but quickly moved his base of publication to Kattowitz. Within a year the paper was one of the most widely read dailies in the Industrial Triangle.⁴³ Under his leadership the *Endeks*, operating under the name of the *Koło Polskie* (literally Polish Circle, but here translated as Polish Party), launched a strong program of Polish nationalism, with their goal of unseating as many Center Party representatives as possible in the 1903 election.

Alongside these new forms of Polish nationalism, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nationalist rhetoric and divisiveness also appeared in the form of new

⁴¹ Ibid, 27.

⁴² Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 84-5.

⁴³ Orzechowski places circulation at 11,500, while Gröschel, puts the number at 5000 for the paper’s first year of publication. Marian Orzechowski, *Narodowa Demokracja*, 139-141; Gröschel, 119-120. These figures make *Górnoślązak* the most widely read daily newspaper in the region. *Katolik* was the largest, but appeared only three times a week.

German organizations, such as the Pan-German League and the Navy League.⁴⁴ In Prussian Poland, the *Ostmarkverein* (the Eastern Marches Association) was the most powerful and active. Reacting against the new Caprivi government's concessions to Poles in the east, and still upset about Bismarck's undignified dismissal from the government, three Posen activists formed the *Verein zur Förderung des Deutschtums in den Ostmarken* (the Association for the Advancement of the German Nationality in the Eastern Marches) in 1894.⁴⁵ Ferdinand Hansemann, the youngest of the three at 33 years of age, was the son of a Berlin financier and was himself new to politics, although he considered himself an amateur publicist. Herman Kennemann, on the eve of his eightieth birthday at the Association's founding, was the largest landowner in the Prussian east, overseeing an estate comprised of over 200 square kilometers of land. Finally, Major Heinrich Tiedemann also held a sizable estate about 15 miles southwest of the city of Posen. He would become the driving force of the Association, holding the office of president from the first meeting until his death in 1922.⁴⁶ In its manifesto, the *Ostmarkverein* claimed its purpose to be "the strengthening and marshaling of the German nationality in the Polonized Eastern Marches of the Empire, by encouraging and fortifying German patriotic feeling as well as by augmenting the German population and strengthening it economically."⁴⁷ Based on the initials of these three men, the Association was also known as H-K-T, or *Hakata* in Polish. A derogatory term to the

⁴⁴ For these and other German nationalist organizations, see: Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Marilyn Shevin Coetzee, *The Germany Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

⁴⁵ Richard Wonsler Tims, *Germanizing Prussian Poland: The H-K-T Society and the Struggle for the Eastern Marches in the German Empire, 1894-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-25 and 35-39.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

Poles, who would use it during the Plebiscite period especially to refer to any German, the Association came to use this abbreviation as well.

At its founding the Association consisted mainly of other large, agrarian estate-holders, although membership was granted to any German who paid the annual fee of one Mark; in the future, however, teachers, clergymen, doctors, lawyers and government employees would come to swell its ranks.⁴⁸ But in its early years it remained quite small, with 2800 members in Posen, out of a population of almost 700,000 German-speakers. By the end of 1895 this branch would claim 3500 members, and in 1896 membership for the entire Eastern Marches (which included Posen, West Prussia and Silesia) numbered 6,132;⁴⁹ in four years the number of members jumped to 20,000, over half of whom resided in Posen or West Prussia – that is, the Polish territory partitioned to Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ It was here that the Association devoted most of its efforts.

Despite the fact that nearly one-third of Prussia's Polish-speakers lived in Upper Silesia, the *Ostmarkverein* all but ignored the region for its first several years. Branches first appeared in 1895 and 1896, but it was not until 1903 that the Silesian Regional Committee was formed in Breslau. Even then, many of the Society's programs failed to reach Upper Silesia. The reason for this was that the *Ostmarkverein* did not perceive Polish-speaking Upper Silesians as a credible threat to Germandom in the two areas the Association most focused its efforts: land and language. While members of the Polish *szlachta* ruled much of the large landholdings in Posen, in Upper Silesia it was German nobles who controlled the landed estates. As for language,

⁴⁸ Ibid, 34-5.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁰ William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 175.

German was already used in schools, with Polish allowed only as the language of religious instruction. Many Upper Silesians were bilingual. Finally, the *Ostmarkverein* and other German nationalists did not consider Upper Silesians to speak true Polish (*Hochpolnisch*), but rather a crude dialect, known as the derogatory *Wasserpölnisch*. Only on the eve of the First World War did the *Ostmarkverein* truly penetrate the region, with large branches opening in the industrial cities, headed in part by factory personnel.⁵¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, Upper Silesia was a region on the cusp of great change. The *Kulturkampf* had served to radicalize some towards more nationalistic politics, although the majority of the people still held fast to the politics of the supranational Catholic Center. German nationalism was advanced through both official state policy and the work of groups such as the *Ostmarkverein* – although they did not give Upper Silesia much heed until the early 1900s. Polish nationalism was the purview of Napieralski and his *Katolik* camp. But as Korfanty advanced Dmowski's National Democracy into the region, the vanguard of Polish nationalism began to change. Over the course of three pre-war elections – 1903, 1907 and 1912 – Napieralski and Korfanty would battle not only for votes, but for the right to define Polish nationalism in Upper Silesia.

1.2: The Elections of 1903, 1907 and 1912

The 1903 Reichstag election was the introduction of Korfanty's Polish Party into Upper Silesian politics, and while it might not have quite lived up to expectations – the party was projected to win three Reichstag seats but walked away with only one – it still managed to make its mark on the region. In four of the twelve voting districts the party finished in second place and forced a run-off in two – including Pleß-Rybnik, where Jan Kowalczyk actually finished in

⁵¹ Tims, 214-5.

first during the initial election.⁵² He won a plurality in the initial voting but fell about 1000 votes shy of capturing the district outright. In the subsequent run-off, his opponent, Center candidate Josef Faltin, won almost all the four thousand votes which had previously gone towards the German nationalist candidate and ultimately carried the election by a margin of almost 1200 votes.⁵³ The Polish banner, then, was carried solely by Korfanty's victory in Kattowitz-Zabrze. And a narrow victory it was. The Center candidate, Paul Letocha, had earned 44 percent of the vote, compared to Korfanty's 26 percent; he narrowly beat out Socialist candidate Franciszek Morawski, who earned 22 percent, for second place. In the runoff election, Korfanty reached an agreement with Morawski and arranged for the latter's supporters to back him. In the end, Korfanty won by a margin of 1.25 percent, earning 23,550 votes to Letocha's 22,875.⁵⁴ While Polish nationalists from Upper Silesia had served in the Reichstag in the past, they always did so under the auspices of the Center Party. Here was something new – a Polish nationalist serving as the representative of the new Polish Party.⁵⁵

Feelings of both German and Polish nationalism would play an even larger role in the next election. Like the election of 1893, in 1907 voters returned prematurely to the polls after the dissolution of the Reichstag the previous December. Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow had put forth a new colonial policy, which included more troops in Southwest Africa and more funds to support them. The nationalist parties – led by the Conservatives, National Liberals and Free

⁵² Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table. The Polish Party finished in second place in Kattowitz-Zabrze, Lublinitz-Tost-Gleiwitz, Groß Strehlitz-Kosel and Kreuzburg-Rosenberg – although, to be fair, here it earned a scant 393 votes to the Conservative's 9433. The Polish Party was roughly 250 shy of forcing a run-off in Lubnitz-Tost-Gleiwitz.

⁵³Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁵⁴Ibid, 59-64, and Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁵⁵ Korfanty was the first to represent Upper Silesia as a member of the Polish Party. Polish Party representatives from Posen had served in the Reichstag since 1871.

Conservatives – fully backed the proposal, while the Social Democrats, among others, refused to pass it. The swing bloc was again the Center Party, and when they voted against the bill Bülow immediately dissolved the Reichstag, signing and dating the order he had prepared days earlier.⁵⁶ With only about six weeks between the dissolution and new elections, the campaigns were hastily prepared as the nationalist parties hammered home a message of national pride and security. Across Germany these nationalist parties received a spike at the polls, and the same held true in Upper Silesia, where not only did the Polish Party make huge electoral inroads, but the German nationalist parties also had their greatest returns in almost thirty years.

Whereas in the past the Conservative, Free Conservative and National Liberal Parties had competed against each other for votes, in 1907 they coordinated and cooperated across party lines; only one German nationalist candidate ran in each of the nine mixed-language districts. Meanwhile, the Center Party experienced splits along ethnic lines. Not only was it losing voters to the Polish Party, there was also an internal party division between German and Polish Center candidates. In Neustadt three Center candidates (two German and one Polish) ran against each other, while in two others a specifically pro-German Center candidate ran with no pro-Polish Center opposition, although in Beuthen-Tarnowitz the Polish Party candidate (and victor) was none other than former Center stalwart Napieralski.⁵⁷ Shortly after the 1903 election, Napieralski had shifted his *Katolik* camp away from the Center – which still refrained from advancing a Polish national agenda – and towards Korfanty's Polish Party. According to

⁵⁶ George Dunlap Crothers, *The German Elections of 1907* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1941), 74-94.

⁵⁷ Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table. The other district which ran a specifically pro-German Center candidate was Oppeln.

historian Brendan Karch, “By 1906, Napieralski and Korfanty created a Polish front of radical and more moderate political voices united in opposition to the Catholic Center Party.”⁵⁸

The 1907 election brought the Center its worst returns since 1874, as it lost an additional four seats to the Polish party; in Pleß-Rybnik, for example, the Polish candidate crushed that of the Center’s by a margin of more than six to one.⁵⁹ In Oppeln, the Polish Party candidate was Paweł Brandys, a pro-Polish priest who held fast with the Center’s primary objective, defending the Catholic faith. However, Brandys also argued that the Center was a “German Party” that “does not protect our nationality or our language.”⁶⁰ Brandys beat his (German) Center opponent handedly, earning 4.5 times as many votes.⁶¹ Even more telling of the Center’s downfall, in four of the five districts that the Polish Party carried, the party in second place was not the Center, but rather a German national party.⁶² Returning again to Oppeln, the Free Conservative candidate received almost twice as many votes as his Center counterpart, who, again, was running on a pro-German platform; the National Liberal candidate in Kattowitz-Zabrze defeated his Center opponent, a Polish priest, by almost this same margin – although this hardly mattered, as Korfanty again won this district with 65 percent of the vote.⁶³ While the German nationalist parties failed to win any districts, with the exception of longtime Conservative stronghold Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, their overall electorate rose exponentially, catapulting them to the position of second strongest in the region. The Polish Party also

⁵⁸ Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, 84-5.

⁵⁹ Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Karch, 86.

⁶¹ Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

witnessed a huge upswing in its number of votes, growing by a factor of 2.5 to become the largest party in the district. While it could still claim six of the twelve seats, the Center lost 52 percent of its voters; once the undisputed leading party of the region, had been relegated to third place, with 23 percent of the vote. The Social Democrats experienced a loss of almost the same magnitude, claiming a scant seven percent of the electorate.⁶⁴ Because of the circumstances in which the election was called, there was a heightened sense of nationalism, especially German nationalism, in the truncated campaign cycle. Still, in the election of 1907, seventy percent of voting Upper Silesians supported a national party, up from a mere 27 percent in the previous election. Based on these results, it would seem that Upper Silesia was following the early twentieth century path of nationalization.

Appearances, however, can be deceiving, and in the years following 1907 the Center would make back some of its lost ground. Instead of further dividing into national camps, voters backtracked, turning once again to non-national parties, especially the Center. This was largely due to the so-called Bülow Bloc, the alliance of National Liberal and Conservative Parties arrayed against Catholics and Socialists in a mini-retread of the *Kulturkampf*. After the passing of anti-Polish legislation in 1908 – including restricting the use of Polish language in public meetings – the Polish Party and Center looked again to one another for support. Nothing brings two groups together like a common enemy. In the 1908 *Landtag* elections, the two parties ran on a coalition ticket, as the Center backed Polish nationalists in three districts.⁶⁵

As a part of this alliance, Napieralski and his *Katolik* camp returned again to their more moderate national rhetoric, much to the chagrin of Korfanty. As quickly as the two men had

⁶⁴ Calculated from Schwidetzky, 82 and Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁶⁵ Karch, 86-7.

come together, they fell apart. Denigrated as a radical nationalist and socialist by those in the *Katolik* camp, Korfanty was forced out of Upper Silesian politics. He sold *Górnoślązak* to Napieralski and spent his political exile in Berlin. It would not be until the very end of the First World War that he would return to the Upper Silesian political scene, but when he did, as will be seen, it was in great triumph.

In the lead-up to the 1912 election, however, Napieralski found it difficult to balance a moderate, Center-style nationalism with the wishes of the Polish working-class electorate. In a bid to keep them from voting Socialist, which was, albeit slowly, on the rise in the region, he again turned his back against the Center Party. Much as he had done in 1907, Napieralski put the full weight of his media empire behind the Polish Party.⁶⁶ In the 1912 election cycle and in the remaining years before the outbreak of the First World War, the *Katolik* press both defined what it meant to be a good Pole and identified those elements which endangered it. Not surprisingly, one of the main enemies of Polishness were German nationalists, who in the papers were almost always referred to as HKT-ists. Poles were warned not to fall prey to Germans and their promises of social mobility. But being a true Pole was about more than ethnicity. *Katolik* papers' definition of Polishness included both a religious and political component: Poles were Catholic and voted for the Polish Party.

One of the main threats to this definition of Polishness was Socialism. In this, *Katolik* followed the trend, found in parties across the political spectrum, of viewing socialism and socialist parties as a threat, as an “internationalist” organization whose loyalties lay outside the nation. On the eve of the January 1912 Reichstag elections the *Katolik* press ran a series of articles condemning the Socialist party. There was no distinction made between the PPS and

⁶⁶ Ibid, 89.

SPD. This firestorm of vitriol is in large part explained by the election, which in Katowice-Zabrze saw Polish Party candidate Wojciech Sosiński, a union leader, pitted against the (Polish) Socialist Józef Biniszkiwicz (the Center Party candidate, who was pro-German, was never mentioned). It makes sense that the rhetoric used to describe and distinguish Socialists from “good” Catholic Poles would be heightened. Still, these articles cannot be dismissed as mere electoral propaganda, as they also provide insight into how the *Katolik* camp was defining their own notions of Polishness.

Sosiński beat Biniszkiwicz in the initial election on 12 January, earning about 3,000 more votes but still well shy of winning the majority of the district; in fact, Sosiński won only 30 percent of the vote, less than half the 65 percent Korfanty had won to carry the district five years prior.⁶⁷ The run-off election was scheduled for 22 January, giving the *Katolik* press ten days to convince their readership to vote for Sosiński. They attacked from two fronts, criticizing Biniszkiwicz’s (and Socialists’ in general) lack of religion and strong ties to Germandom. “Now Biniszkiwicz and his comrades cry that they don’t fight religion, that religion is a private thing,”⁶⁸ declared an article in *Górnoślązak*. “But outside elections the most open Socialists are revealed to be against religion.”⁶⁹ To prove this, the article cited not only Biniszkiwicz’s current publication (“Anyone who reads *Gazeta Robotnicza* finds in each issue slurs against the Catholic Church”),⁷⁰ but also a paper for which he worked several years earlier. A 1906 edition of *Naprzód (Forwards)*, *Górnoślązak* reported, ran the following epitaph: “God is a clay idol,

⁶⁷ Schwidetzky, Reichstagswahlen Table.

⁶⁸ “Biniszkiwicz: socjaliści wobec religii,” *Górnoślązak*, 19 January 1912.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Biniszkiwicz was editor of *Gazeta Robotnicza*.

which you can easily smash with a hammer.”⁷¹ The next year, the same paper ran a small poem.

“We don’t fear anything in life;/ Freedom, brothers, that is our God./ So let’s live it up.”⁷²

Though he might deny it in an election year, Biniszkievicz and his fellow Socialists held God in disdain at the best, and at worst did not even believe in His existence. Such a man, such a party, could not be trusted to truly represent the interests of the good, Catholic Poles of Upper Silesia.

Intertwined with their lack of faith was the fact that, according to the *Katolik* press, Socialists were inextricably tied to the German camp. This was all part of the “Culture of Socialism,”⁷³ as a *Katolik* article put it. Describing a Socialist meeting from the week before (to which “their” Sosiński had been “intentionally invited,”⁷⁴), *Katolik* reported that at one point, “The ‘comrades’ in the hall shouted, ‘Out with the Poles!’”⁷⁵ The quote was printed in German, and “there were a lot of Germans and Jews”⁷⁶ in attendance, an interesting claim, given that Jews accounted for only one percent of Upper Silesians. Later that week, *Katolik* laid out exactly what they viewed was at stake in the upcoming run-off. Everyone in the district must vote for “his brother and compatriot” Sosiński.⁷⁷ “It would be a disgrace and a shame for our people,” the article argued, “should a Socialist win in Katowice-Zabrze, in cahoots with the Jews, a comrade of the Red German-HKT, a representative of modern paganism!”⁷⁸ Though highly

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ “Kultura socjalistów,” *Katolik*, 16 January 1912.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Katolicy Polacy!,” *Katolik*, 20 January 1912.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

doubtful that any self-respecting member of the HKT would ever call himself, or even associate with, a Socialist, in the *Katolik* worldview these terms are one in the same and infinitely interchangeable. We see here, as well, the conflating of Jewry with Socialism and Germandom – the same three groups Dmowski’s National Democrats so often railed against, illustrating the party’s strength and influence in the region. Socialism is associated with Germandom, which is itself synonymous with the HKT. All three of these elements – Socialists, Jews, Germans – are “Others” in Upper Silesia, interlopers who are not truly of the region, and therefore cannot represent the interests of the “real” (Polish) Upper Silesians.

In contrast to these pagan, German Socialists, true Poles were both staunch in their love of nation and devoutly Catholic, and have been so for a millennium. Claimed *Katolik*, “For a thousand years have the Holy Faith blossomed and the Polish people lived here, and now the Catholic and Polish people would elect a Socialist as their representative? No, it cannot be!”⁷⁹ It is important to note that here Catholic and Polish are adjectives describing the people who have resided in Upper Silesia for centuries. Later in the article, however, all “*katolicy Polacy*” were called upon to march to the polls and vote. This construction makes little sense in English. Translating it as ‘Catholic Poles’ makes the first word, Catholic, an adjective, and would imply that there are other, non-Catholic Poles. In the *Katolik* worldview, this is impossible. All Poles are Catholics; these identities are inseparable. In Polish, both “*katolicy*” and “*Polacy*” are given equal weight; that is, neither modifies the other. The man is a ‘Pole-Catholic,’ as awkward as that may sound in English. It is in defense of these two equal parts of one’s identity, “in defense

⁷⁹ Ibid.

of the Holy Faith and our Polish nationality,” that proper Upper Silesian Poles will vote for Sosiński, “our brother, a good Catholic and a good Pole, a son of the people.”⁸⁰

Sosiński won his run-off with Biniszkiewicz, capturing almost 60 percent of the vote. In other districts, however, the Polish candidate did not fare as well. Instead of building on their 1907 gains, the Polish Party lost ground, with one district, Lublinitz-Tost-Gleiwitz, falling back into the Center’s camp. Still, in Gross Strehlitz-Kosel, the Center’s long term incumbent, Father Josef Glowatzki, defeated his Polish challenger, Father Józef Wajda, by less than four hundred votes; meanwhile, in the staunchly Conservative district of Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, the Polish candidate, Father Paweł Kutschka, managed to force a run-off with Ludwig Meyer. In the run-off, the first in several election cycles, the Conservative candidate won with 58 percent of the vote.⁸¹

Despite these close races, the *Katolik* camp viewed these losses as a “Betrayal of the Social Democrats,”⁸² as a *Górnoślązak* article declared a few days after the results had been tallied. “Social Democrats in this year’s election have fought all along the line against the Polish candidate and directly or indirectly supported the Centrists, HKT-ists, Conservatives and Liberals.”⁸³ Socialists, the article claimed, sent out secret signals, telling members to stay at home and not vote in the run-off elections, thereby insuring a Polish defeat. In its closing it exclaimed, “The Polish people should with disgust turn away from these red helpers of the

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Schwidetzky, Reichstagwahlen Table.

⁸² “Zdrady socjalnych demokratów,” *Górnoślązak* 30 January 1912.

⁸³ Ibid.

HKT.”⁸⁴ Those who supported Socialist candidates also supported those backed by the HKT; they were not true Poles, who always voted for their national compatriots.

Examining the election results of the three districts shows this claim to be completely unfounded. Kreuzburg-Rosenberg was a Conservative stronghold; a Conservative candidate had won this district since 1884, usually out-right. The very fact that Kutschka, the Polish candidate, forced a run-off with Meyer proves that the Polish Party was starting to make in-roads in the district. Still, Meyer won by over 2,600 votes, almost doubling the margin by which he had defeated Kutschka in the first election. The Socialist Party earned a paltry 344 votes, or two percent of the total vote. Clearly they were not the swing block in this election. That distinction most likely went to those roughly 2,500 voters who initially voted for the National Liberal candidate and now threw their support behind the other pro-German option. In Gross Strehlitz-Kosel, the Polish candidate lost to the Center incumbent, but by a much smaller margin of votes as compared to the previous election, indicating that the district might have turned Polish in the next election, had there been one. It seems unlikely that the nearly 1,250 Socialist voters abstained in the run-off, as the total number of voters here rose by over 2,000 from first vote to run-off. Finally, in Lublinitz-Tost-Gleiwitz, Polish incumbent Father Theodor Jankowski lost to Center candidate Augustin Warlo by just under 800 votes. The *Katolik* camp has the strongest argument here that Socialist abstention caused them to lose the vote, as the number of voters dropped by 1,551 votes between the initial election and the run-off. Still, even if every abstention were a Socialist voter, that still would not account for the 2,200 who initially cast ballots for the party. Again, as in Kreuzburg-Rosenberg, it seems that Warlo was pushed over the top with the support of those voters who had previously voted for the pro-German

⁸⁴ Ibid.

candidate.⁸⁵ Taken together, the 1912 elections represent a region still very much in flux. While 55 percent of the electorate cast votes for a nationalist party, 45 percent did not.

The *Katolik* camp continued to express its distrust and disgust with the Left even after the 1912 elections, using the Socialists as convenient scapegoats. Shortly after the 22 January run-offs, for example, *Katolik* ran an “exposé” on the Party, questioning one of the central tenets of Socialism. “Are the Socialists a workers’ Party?”⁸⁶ the paper asked, before proceeding to examine the employment records of members of the Social Democratic Party and concluding that “there is not a single worker” and “the main part of the red members are made up of party clerks.”⁸⁷ Even months later, the newspaper ran an article entitled, “The Socialists want to capture Upper Silesia.”⁸⁸ Here Socialism is explicitly tied to Germandom; there are only the “German Social Democrats,” with no mention made to the Polish branch of the Socialist Party. “It is well-known that the German Social Democrats spare no effort or cost to win for themselves the Polish people; to cram them into the framework of the German party...German Social Democracy is the real daughter of German society...They call it in a Berlin tune, the most unsympathetic, the most conceited and the most brutal part of Prussian-ism.”⁸⁹ For the *Katolik* camp, German Socialism was even more dangerous to true Poles than the initiatives of the HKT. At least they were unabashedly pro-German. The Socialists, on the other hand, claimed to be representing the best interests of the Polish workers. Once caught, the party then attempts to

⁸⁵ Calculations taken from Schwidetzky, Reichstagwahlen Table.

⁸⁶ “Czy Socjaliści są partią robotniczą?” *Katolik*, 3 February 1912.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “Socjaliści chcą zdobyć Górny Śląsk,” *Katolik*, 22 August 1912.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

strip away all their Polish characteristics, transforming them into good Germans who would renounce their Polish and Catholic heritage.

For Napieralski and *Katolik*, then, the true danger to Polishness – and the political power of the Polish Party – came from the Socialists. Korfanty’s radical nationalism had spoken to and inspired the Polish working class. With him gone, the moderate camp feared these workers would turn to Socialism. In the 1912 election, there was little risk that Poles or Polish-speakers would vote for a German nationalist party; there was great concern, however, that they would turn to Socialism. For this reason, *Katolik* fixated on denigrating the Socialist Party, tying it to Germanism and setting it up as an enemy of Polishness.

Threats to Polishness did not just occur during an election cycle, however. German temptations were all around, especially in the Industrial Triangle. As discussed above, Polish-speakers rarely held middle management positions in the mines and factories; these jobs were reserved for German-speakers. Germanization, then, came to be seen as a means of social and economic advancement. The *Katolik* camp worked hard to discourage Polish parents from allowing their children to be Germanized, often running a small ad encouraging parents to “teach [their] children to read and write in Polish.”⁹⁰ An article published in early 1914 lamented the sad state of the Lithuanians, who were becoming increasingly Germanized and forgetting their Slavic roots. This tragic fate should serve as a warning for Upper Silesians. “Among us, unfortunately, are countrymen who, like the Lithuanians, don’t care for the Fatherland’s language, for Polish nationality. They don’t teach their children to read Polish and rewrite their

⁹⁰ “Rodzice! Uczcie dzieci czytać i pisać po polsku!” This ad appears often; for an example, see *Katolik*, 4 January 1912.

offspring as Germans... We will be alert, so that the treasure of the Fatherland's language won't be lost by our own negligence."⁹¹

It was not just inattentive and neglectful parents who worried *Katolik*; even well-meaning parents could lose their children, especially their sons, to German temptations. In an extended article published in the spring of 1914, *Górnoślązak* warned parents not to allow their sons to join the German army.⁹² The life of an NCO might seem to set one on the path of social mobility, but it was fraught with danger. Was a "well-decorated uniform" worth losing one's son to the Germans? After serving in the German Army, he would return home much changed: "He writes home in German – maybe even having completely forgotten the Polish language... He's entered into different relationships, into a different world, completely different from the one from which he came."⁹³ The article ends with a plea for parents to "educate [their] sons as decent people, as good Poles... Honor will not be won by Germanization or being an NCO... but rather by persistent, honest work... a respectable life, a true Catholic and Pole."⁹⁴ Again, the dual identity of being both a Pole and Catholic are stressed; these two elements are inseparable.

While the article frequently addressed "parents," it was really the mother who bore the brunt of the blame for her son becoming a Germanized NCO and turning his back on his Polish heritage. Whereas the father "might resist a little" at the idea of sending his son to NCO school, "the mother wheedles the father."⁹⁵ She thinks nothing of the consequences; she considers only

⁹¹ "Ojczy polski, matko polska przeczytaj i rozważ!," *Katolik*, 17 January 1914.

⁹² "Zgermanizowani synowie ludu polskiego," *Górnoślązak*, 4 March 1914.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

her own vanity. “‘How all the village will look at him, when he goes to church with her?’ she’ll say or think. ‘And such an office and such an income he will have – ho ho – no one would rival him.’”⁹⁶ There are also the son’s – and by extension, her – future prospects to consider. Women cannot resist a man in uniform, and being an NCO may help her son snag a rich wife – “And it’s understood that the parents get something from this happiness.”⁹⁷ The mother thinks nothing of the national or religious implications of having her son enter the world of a German NCO. She only cares how her own standing in the community will rise to have a son in uniform. This message is echoed in a *Katolik* article which appeared a month later. Here again mothers were accused of turning away from their Polish roots: “The Silesian woman [has] stopped being the dispenser of spiritual treasures...[and] feels drawn to the “fine” German [things].” No longer does she educate her children in the “customs of Old Poland, the piety and virtue of Old Poland.”⁹⁸ What does it matter that he will no longer be a “true Catholic and Pole,” so long as he captures a rich wife and shares his wealth with the family?

Mothers are often held as the conveyors and protectors of nationalism and religion; it is at their mothers’ apron strings that children learn their first language and are introduced to their faith. Women, then, had a special responsibility for teaching their children that fathers did not share; it was mothers who were praised when their children followed the path of true Polishness, and mothers who were blamed when these children fell to the temptations of Germandom. The day after the article warning of the perils of life as NCO, *Górnoślązak* published another admonition, this time aimed directly at women, particularly mothers. German women activists

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ “Kobieta polska na Śląsku,” *Katolik*, 4 April 1914.

were corrupting good Catholic, Polish women, enticing them with “coffee hours, feasts and fun.”⁹⁹ These gatherings brought together both Catholics and Protestants, and indeed erased all distinction between the two faiths. The article complained, “Our Polish women feel, unfortunately, overjoyed, when they drink coffee at a table with a ‘fine Protestant lady.’”¹⁰⁰ Even though the majority of German-speakers in Upper Silesia were also Catholic, in the *Katolik* press Germans were coded strictly as Protestants; Polish women were not just admiring a “fine Protestant lady,” but a German one. It was not just the mixing of religious faiths that worried *Górnoślązak*. The true motives of these “fine ladies” were to Germanize Polish women and mothers, and by extension their children. Polish mothers soon begin to “neglect religious education,” instead teaching their children (to whom they have given “non-Catholic names”) to be Prussian.¹⁰¹ These children grow up to “despise their [Polish] background, scorn their parents, forget about Catholic teachings and morals, corrupt themselves and follow the German stream to moral rot.”¹⁰²

Here again is the notion that Catholicism is tied to Polishness. The loss of these children to Germanization is not only “sad for the Polish nation,” but “not least sad for the Catholic Church.” And it was the duty of the mother to teach her children to be both. She was the protector of both Polish nationhood and the Catholic faith. It was her job to ensure the next generation of Polish Upper Silesians met all *Katolik* requirements – that they be Catholic (unlike the Protestant Germans and pagan Socialists), that they vote Polish (as opposed to Center, Socialist or, unthinkable, for one of the German nationalist parties), and that they honor and

⁹⁹ “Kobiety germanizatorski,” *Górnoślązak*, 5 March 1914.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

respect their Polish heritage. As will be seen, similar rhetoric was used in the plebiscite to target women, who were always assumed to be mothers or potential mothers. Plebiscite propaganda argued that mothers had a moral responsibility to vote for Poland on behalf of her child, to secure both his future and the future of the Polish nation.

On the eve of the First World War, Napieralski's *Katolik* camp issued its specific definition of Polishness. It was not enough to simply speak Polish; a "good" Pole was defined by his religion as well as his politics. To be a Pole was to be Catholic – ignoring the Catholic German-speakers of the region. To be a Pole was to vote for the Polish Party – thereby excluding any workers who might have identified more strongly with their class than nation. Defense of Polishness began at home, where children learned to speak Polish at their mothers' apron strings. Napieralski was not advocating for independence; Polish Upper Silesians still belonged to the German state. But with the outbreak of the First World War, and especially its end, the dream of a Polish nation-state became a reality, leaving Upper Silesian Poles to question their place within its undetermined borders.

2. Upper Silesia at War

The First World War would reshape every aspect of Europe – politically, socially, culturally – but its impact would be especially felt on the flat plains of Central Europe. Peace between the three eastern empires had ensured Poland remained erased off the map of Europe for over one hundred years. Now, those empires were at war with one another. Suddenly, Polish nationalism no longer simply meant supporting a cultural nation; it meant the establishment of a new Polish state – or, at the very least, the reunification of Polish lands under one flag. The war also opened new possibilities for other nationalities and ethnicities in the region – including an industrial territory situated at the border of the three empires: Upper Silesia.

There has already been much ink spilt on the First World War, and for this reason an in-depth discussion of the war itself will not appear here.¹⁰³ The focus will remain on those elements that directly affected Upper Silesia – the experience of Upper Silesians in the military; the breakdown of the Home Front; and especially, the 5 November 1916 announcement by Germany and Austria-Hungary proclaiming the establishment of a new Kingdom of Poland. Although nominally independent, this new Poland was nothing more than a puppet state, to which Germany held the strings. It was a constitutional monarchy without a king, a state without any determined borders; it was merely another country in Germany's vast *Mitteleuropa*.¹⁰⁴ Still, as a symbol this new Poland held much power, especially for those Poles living outside it, in Austrian Galicia, Prussian Poland, and Upper Silesia. Upper Silesians took great interest in what a future Poland might look like, and this affected their own impressions of life under German rule. As will be discussed in more detail below, there was a shift in how the *Katolik* camp discussed Polish life in Germany after 1916, as Napieralski shifted from a conciliatory to more

¹⁰³ For an older but still useful account of the First World War on the Eastern Front, see: Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (Penguin Books: London, 1975). For the current state of the field, see: Mark von Hagen, "New Directions in Military History, 1900-1950: Questions of Total War and Colonial War," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 4 (Fall 2011). For more literature, see: Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Mark von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland: Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine, 1914-1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007). For literature on the First World War and Poland, see: Eldon Ray Burke, "Polish Policies of the Central Powers during the World War" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1936); Werner Conze, *Polnische Nation und deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Köln: Böhlau, 1958); Davies, *God's Playground*; Titus Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920* (London: W. Heinemann, 1957); Paul Latawski, ed., *The Reconstruction of Poland* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1992); Wojciech Rojek and Andrzej Kastory, eds., *Sprawa Polska podczas Wielkiej Wojny, 1914-1919* (Krakow: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2016).

¹⁰⁴ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 190-2.

nationally strident tone. Likewise, the German press, which had largely avoided any discussion of Polishness or Polish Upper Silesians, took on a harsher tone towards the end of the war, as the German Army began to falter and a truly independent Poland – not a German puppet state – became a reality.

2.1: Upper Silesia During the First World War

In many important ways, the experience of Upper Silesia during the First World War was no different than that of the rest of Germany. In the heady days of August, tens of thousands of Upper Silesians mobilized to the front; Laura Crago estimates that over 70 percent of the mining and metalworking work force volunteered in the first weeks after the declaration of war, and historian Bernard Link notes that up to 25 percent of the industrial region served in the military.¹⁰⁵ Cries for the Kaiser rang out in the streets and military songs were sung. There was, as one historian has noted, “an atmosphere of Prussian patriotism,” as cheering crowds followed men mobilized to the Fronts to the train station.¹⁰⁶ Early Russian advances into bordering Galicia united both German- and Polish-speaking Upper Silesians as they braced for a Russian invasion that never came. After the great spring offensives of 1915, during which Paul von Hindenburg drove the Russian army back over their own border, imperial war headquarters were established in the palace of the Prince of Pleß. That same year, the industrial village of Zabrze was renamed Hindenburg.¹⁰⁷

Support for the war and the German military was not unanimous, however, especially among Polish activists in the region. A few dozen prospective agitators were preemptively

¹⁰⁵ Crago, 218; Bernard Link, “Górny Śląsk w cieniu wojny. Węzłowe problemy badawcze,” in *Wielka Wojna, Mały Region: Pierwsza Wojna Światowa w perspektywie górnośląskiej: Szkice i studia*, ed. Bernard Link, Sebastian Rosenbaum and Joanna Tofilka. (Katowice: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2014), 21.

¹⁰⁶ Czapliński, “Dzieje Śląska,” 342.

¹⁰⁷ Kamusella, 246.

arrested and imprisoned for a short time at the war's outbreak. Among the arrested were several prominent Polish-language editors and publishers. Napieralski escaped imprisonment, however, due to his cooperation with the Germans, and he alone was allowed to continue publication of his papers during the war's initial phase, making his the only Polish-language newspapers allowed to print, although he, too, was still subject to censorship.¹⁰⁸

The policy of conciliation, spearheaded by Napieralski and other Catholic-Centrists, would continue throughout most of the war. Cooperation with Germany was not done out of any sort of state or national loyalty, but rather pragmatically, as Napieralski and others believed victory by the Central Powers was the best way to advance their national cause. Upper Silesia, as discussed above, had not been a part of pre-partitioned Poland, and so did not, at the start of the war, call for the return of an independent Poland. Napieralski himself hoped that Congress Poland would be incorporated into the German fold as an autonomous region, while Upper Silesians, in turn, would be given more linguistic and cultural freedom.¹⁰⁹

Polish-speaking Upper Silesians fell in the middle ground between ethnic Germans and ethnic Poles, coming from other areas of Prussian Poland, who served in the military. As historian Alexander Watson notes, “[Poles] underwent the same training as ethnic German troops, were placed under a similar disciplinary regime, shared the danger and hardship of the battle zone and were assimilated into frontline primary groups.”¹¹⁰ They did not, however, share the “patriotic allegiances of their German comrades.” But here Watson is mainly referring to

¹⁰⁸ Czaplinski, “Dzieje Śląska,” 342-3; Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 179; Kamusella, 246. Kamusella places the number arrested at 60 and stresses that socialist activists were also among the arrested, and that *Gazeta Robotnicza* was among the papers temporarily shut down.

¹⁰⁹ Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 175-6.

¹¹⁰ Alexander Watson, “Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army, 1914-1918,” *The English Historical Review* 126, no. 522 (Oct. 2011): 1139.

those Poles from Prussian Poland, especially Posen, which was a hotbed of Polish nationalism prior to World War I. Dmowski's National Democracy, which held that a Russian victory would be the best outcome for Polish nationalism, was especially strong there, and so many of the two million Poles fighting from Posen felt themselves to be working at a cross-purpose. Polish soldiers did desert, although, as historian Edward Mendel states, it was, and still is, impossible to determine just how many soldiers did flee.¹¹¹

But whereas Poles from Posen and West Prussia were looked at with suspicion by their German superiors, Polish-speaking Upper Silesians were often praised for their bravery and loyalty. When, in April 1915, the VI Army Corps, in which Silesians served, was placed under scrutiny for desertion, an inquiry by both civilian and military officials found these concerns to be unfounded; Friederich Wilhelm Loebell, the Prussian Minister of the Interior, declared that Upper Silesian Poles were not under suspicion of desertion and were performing "impeccably."¹¹² Since many Upper Silesians were bilingual, they did not suffer the same linguistic difficulties as their Polish counterparts from other areas of Prussian Poland. In November 1915, the German Army decreed that new Polish recruits would not be sent to their Army Corps, but scattered across units from the west, in hopes of both assimilating them into German culture and minimizing group desertions. Upper Silesians, as a reward for their loyal service, were exempt from this by April 1916, and thus allowed to remain in their home Corps.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Edward Mendel, *Polacy na Górnym Śląsku w latach I wojny światowej* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk," 1971), 103.

¹¹² Mendel, *Polacy na Górnym Śląsku*, 103.

¹¹³ Watson, 1156.

On the fronts, Upper Silesians appear, by all accounts, to have fought admirably, with about 56,000 Upper Silesians killed during the war.¹¹⁴ The Silesian VI Army Corps suffered 18 percent casualties in France in the opening weeks of the war.¹¹⁵ It was only as the war lagged on for longer than expected, combined with the failure of the German government to keep the Home Front from breaking down, that Upper Silesians, of both ethnicities, began to question their loyalty to the cause.

At home, Upper Silesia put its industrial might to work and was one of the major contributors to the war industry, providing everything from ammunitions to underwear. A large explosives factory was opened in Beuthen, and chemical plants stopped producing fertilizer and began making bombs. Upper Silesia was one of the largest suppliers of arms, ammunitions and grenades for the Germany army; arms production in the region had increased thirteen times its pre-war levels by 1915.¹¹⁶ The region's factories also produced uniforms and other articles of clothing for the troops, and was an innovator in the production of nitrogen-based fertilizers, which were needed to increase crop yields.¹¹⁷

This transition from peace to wartime manufacturing was not smooth, however, as almost overnight the composition of the Upper Silesian workforce changed radically. Adult men were conscripted into the army, leaving behind an untrained workforce, much to the chagrin of the

¹¹⁴ T.K. Wilson lists the number dead at 56,000, while Crago places this figure at 66,000. T.K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 26; Crago, 222. Neither breaks down this figure between German- and Polish-speakers, but Crago does note that over 100,000 Poles died in the service of Germany. Crago, 219. Davies places the total number (German, Austrian and Russian) of Polish deaths at 450,000, with over a million casualties. He claims almost 15 percent of the Polish population of Prussia served in the war. Davies, 382.

¹¹⁵ Watson, 1146.

¹¹⁶ Adam Frużyński, "Przemysł w górnośląskim okręgu przemysłowym w czasie pierwszej wojny światowej," in *Wielka Wojna*, 102.

¹¹⁷ Frużyński, "Przemysł w górnośląskim," 113.

industrialists. By the end of 1914, 25 percent of the experienced workers had been drafted, compared to the five to six percent of workers drafted from the Saar and Ruhr.¹¹⁸ To fill this void, women entered the industrial workforce in larger numbers than ever before in Upper Silesia. On the eve of the war, in 1913, women had comprised 4.5 percent of the coal-mining workforce; by 1918 this percentage had almost tripled, to 12.3 percent.¹¹⁹ At the Giesche zinc works in 1915, women comprised 25 percent of the total workforce.¹²⁰ As these increases were still not enough to keep up with production, Poles from Austrian Galicia were also used, although they made up only 15 percent of the workforce. This is because, in the spring of 1915, Upper Silesia could tap into a much large pool of workers: Russian prisoners of war. Already in October 1914 65,000 POWs were working in the mines and factories; this number would later rise to 100,000 POWs. Mostly Russians and Serbs, these men provided twenty percent of the coal-mining workforce.¹²¹ By 1917 they comprised 60 percent of the total industrial workforce in Upper Silesia, and by war's end only 22 percent of workers had pre-war ties to the region.¹²²

Only a small percentage of workers were unionized before the war, and this percentage dropped as the trained workforce left for the front. The mines operated in relative peace for the first half of the war. As the fighting continued much longer than ever anticipated and living conditions at home worsened, though, workers became increasingly agitated. With the passing

¹¹⁸ Crago, 55.

¹¹⁹ Already by 1916, women comprised 11.5 percent of the workforce. By comparison, in 1918 women only made up 2.2 percent of the mining workforce in Saarbrücken and five percent in Dortmund. Mendel, 86-87. Kamusella places this percentage lower, at 9.4 percent of the total mining workforce during the war years. He places the number of women employed in mining in 1914 at 5,623, and at 14,037 in 1918. Kamusella, 248.

¹²⁰ Crago, 243.

¹²¹ Czaplinski, "Dzieje Śląska," 345.

¹²² Crago, 243.

of the Auxiliary Service Law in December 1916, union organizers began entering the mines and factories looking to recruit new members. Over the next year union membership soared; the Metalworkers' Union, for example, grew from 226 to 5153 members.¹²³ Newly organized, the workers went on strike. Throughout the summer of 1917 the region was engulfed by strike after strike. By mid-summer coal production had fallen by half a million tons.¹²⁴ The strikes continued into the fall in conjunction with food riots, led mostly by women. Workers struck sporadically through the winter and spring of 1918, but in summer the striking workers caused such a disruption in production that the mines were militarized. The presence of armed forces in the mines did little to dissuade the miners, who continued to hold smaller-scale strikes until the war's end, even at the discouragement of the unions.

Within months of the war's outbreak Upper Silesia was already experiencing supply problems. By December 1914 the shortage of foodstuffs and other materials was severe enough to warrant a ration-card system, by which each person was allocated 1.2 kg of bread a week. Called "war bread," it was made mainly from oat flakes and potato flour. By the next year, all food products, cleaning supplies and clothing were distributed by way of ration cards. Regulations on milk and dairy gave preference to children under the age of 12 and nursing mothers, who were allocated one liter of milk per day.¹²⁵ Farmers were prohibited to use grain for fodder and in early 1915 pigs were killed en masse, to both counteract the meat shortage and free up grain and feed for human consumption. "Ersatz" products soon became the norm; Jakub

¹²³ Mendel, 208.

¹²⁴ Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 362.

¹²⁵ Jakub Grudniewski, "Rejencja opolska podczas I wojny światowej w świetle zarządzeń administracyjnych," in *Górny Śląsk a I wojna światowa*, ed. Jarosław Raciński and Michał J. Witkowski (Katowice: Muzeum Śląskie, 2015), 70.

Grudniewski notes, “Tea was replaced with dried fruit, leather shoes with wooden clogs...When no yarn was available, human hair was used.”¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly, a black market soon flourished in the region.¹²⁷ Trade on the Black Market only increased as the war waged on and even rationed goods could not be found in the shops. Conditions worsened still in late 1916, as Upper Silesia could not escape the “Turnip Winter” that caused mass suffering throughout Germany. Potatoes, which people depended on as their main source of food, were scarce; rations were cut to 1/4kg per person. In conjunction with the wildcat strikes, women took to the streets to protest the ration system, which was clearly failing.¹²⁸ By the fall of 1917 women had formed a network of informal councils, which organized shopping efforts so women could both work and procure food. These councils soon expanded to include day-care centers, orphanages and basic primary education.¹²⁹ The region was saved from utter disaster by the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early 1918, after which foodstuffs could be imported from newly-acquired Ukraine.

While never the site of any actual fighting, Upper Silesia was nonetheless greatly affected by the First World War. Like the rest of Germany, it sent young (and, as the war went on, not so young) men to the fronts; women filled the vacant spots in the mines and war industries; and the region experienced deprivation and starvation as the food supply became more and more scarce. In addition to these common wartime experiences, Upper Silesians, especially those who identified strongly as Poles, looked with great interest at the evolving German policy towards establishing a new Polish state. Even if Upper Silesia was not to be a part of Poland, its

¹²⁶ Grudniewski, “Rejencja opolska podczas I wojny światowej,” 73.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Czapliński, “Dzieje Śląska,” 343-7. Grudniewski notes that by the beginning of 1916, potato consumption in Germany was up 2.5 times that of pre-war levels, forcing the government to establish the *Reichsverteilungstelle für Kartoffelversorgung* (Reich Distribution Office for Potato Supply). Grudniewski, 70.

¹²⁹ Crago, 246.

reconstitution would nevertheless have an impact on their lives – as did the other changes brought about by the end of the First World War. While the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and subsequent Armistice ended both the German Reich and the First World War, chaos and confusion still remained, especially in Central Europe. As Germany and Poland sought to reestablish themselves in November 1918, Upper Silesia readied itself for an uncertain future.

2.2: The First World War in the Polish and German Press

Throughout the war, the Polish camp was divided between those who supported Napieralski and the *Katolik* camp's policy of cooperation with Germans, and those who advocated a more strident approach. Both sides viewed the war as an opportunity to promote and advance the Polish cause. Napieralski limited his goals to an independent Poland, which would exist under Germany's protection and include the territory of Congress Poland – not Posen and not Upper Silesia. Others wished to see Upper Silesia incorporated into a new Polish state. While Napieralski's *Katolik* camp never went this far, a subtle change in tone and message can be seen in his papers as the war progressed – from one of conciliation and unity during the first phase of the war, to excitement and then bitter realization after the November 1916 declaration of the Kingdom of Poland.

It is impossible to fully discuss or analyze any publication during the war without considering censorship. The publication of military information was banned; because of the region's proximity to the front, there was a real concern that newspapers could easily fall into enemies' hands.¹³⁰ More than that, though, papers had to scrubbed of any hint of disloyalty to the German state or cause. The same went for the politicians representing the region; while the Polish Party representatives in the *Reichstag* opposed the war, they, like their Social Democratic

¹³⁰ Grudniewski, 78.

colleagues, voted unanimously for war credits to avoid suspicion. Unable to fully douse their anti-German sentiments, many National Democrats in Posen and Upper Silesia either emigrated out of the region or joined the *Koło Międzypartyjne* (Interparty Circle), a clandestine group which coordinated communication between local Polish leaders.¹³¹

Napieralski and other Catholic-Centrists, however, took a position of conciliation towards the German war effort. Within a month of the war's outset, Napieralski had reached a mutually beneficial agreement with the German authorities – in exchange for publishing pieces supporting the German war effort and cooperating with censors, Napieralski's papers would be distributed in the newly-conquered territory in Congress Poland; he would also receive breaking war news. The German authorities viewed pro-German messaging in the Polish-language press as a vital component for winning Polish support for the war effort. Meanwhile, the arrangement allowed Napieralski to extend his publishing empire into occupied territory.¹³²

It might be easy to assume Napieralski's conciliatory agreement was simply to turn a profit during the war. It appears, however, that he truly did believe the best way to promote the Polish cause was through cooperation with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Napieralski judged the Central Powers most likely to not only win the war, but also support an independent Polish state. In a September 1915 article, he appealed to his fellow Poles to support the German and Austrian war effort: "[F]or fundamental and opportunistic reasons, putting Poles on the side of the Central States is necessary for the good and future of our nation."¹³³ Early support for the war effort would gain the Central Power's trust, and give Polish nationalists "ultimately, a

¹³¹ James Bjork, "A Polish *Mitteleuropa*?": Upper Silesia's Conciliationists and the Prospect of German Victory," *Nationalities Papers* 29, no. 3 (2001): 478.

¹³² Bjork, "A Polish *Mitteleuropa*?", 480-1; Bjork, Neither German nor Pole, 178-9.

¹³³ "Na straży dobra narodowego," *Górnoślązak*, 11 September 1915.

serious voice” in the shaping of a new Polish entity. Napieralski concluded, “In this way, in our opinion, we will best protect the national good of Poland and all Poles.”¹³⁴ Thus, it was not so much censorship that blunted Napieralski’s pen, but rather the belief that currying German favor during the war would promote the best possible outcome for Poland after. Again, it must be stressed that Napieralski and others in his camp were not advocating for a completely independent Poland, nor did they think Upper Silesia would become a part of this new Poland, in-keeping with pre-war expectations. The best-case scenario for their region would be greater linguistic and cultural autonomy.

A few weeks after the outbreak of the war, *Katolik* ran an article stressing conciliation and cooperation with Germany. “Germany today, just like Poland, takes up the Polish cause,” it announced.¹³⁵ This war would be fought “mainly on the lands of ancient Poland,” and each side had made plans and promises for what would happen to this territory after the war. Focusing mainly on the German and Austrian war efforts, it noted, “Everything that happens is in hope that an Austrian and German victory will bring freedom to the Poles, who until now have belonged to the Russian state.”¹³⁶ This phrase “belonged to the Russian state” should be highlighted. *Katolik* is discussing the future only of those Poles living in Congress Poland. It does not include the Poles of Prussia or Galicia; these people, after all, are citizens and subjects of Germany and Austria-Hungary, respectively, and would remain so even after the war. Still, the tone of the article is striking in its neutrality. No longer were the Germans scheming H-K-T Protestants whose goal is to tear down the Polish banner. Now, Germans and Poles, in Upper

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ “Sprawa polska w obecnej wojnie,” *Katolik*, 25 August 1914.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Silesia and beyond, were fighting for the same purpose. Interestingly, the article ended with the assertion that an independent Poland “would be a bulwark against pan-Slavism and would constitute a great guarantee for European peace.”¹³⁷ Here, *Katolik* seemed to be removing Poland and Poles from the Slavic world, even though they are, indeed, Slavs. Most likely, this condemnation of pan-Slavism stemmed from Russia’s involvement in the Balkans on behalf of Serbia, as this was one of the leading reasons for Russia’s mobilization to war.

In the same issue, *Katolik* ran an article discussing the plight of Polish Upper Silesians. As is to be expected, the article praised their behavior. “The Polish people of Silesia have behaved completely calmly and dutifully towards the [German] state. Everyone recognizes this.”¹³⁸ Interestingly, the remainder of the article detailed the arrest and release of “several” Polish Upper Silesians, yet the tone, again, remains strikingly neutral. There is no ire that these men were arrested preemptively and without cause. Instead, the article simply reported that the men feel no ill will towards their [German] captors, as well they should not; as the [German] officer at the jail declared, there is no reason to take the arrest badly, since in a time of war everything must be sharply examined and taken as a warning. As further proof of the jailors’ benevolence, this statement was even translated into Polish, so that those without a solid command of German could also understand.

Perhaps more so than the previous article, this one represents Napieralski’s conciliatory tone. It is easy to support the German side when it is promising a dream that is contingent on an uncertain future; it is not so simple to brush over the unwarranted arrests of one’s neighbors. Among those arrested were Napieralski’s fellow editors, publishers and journalists. Napieralski

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ “Polacy na Śląsku,” *Katolik*, 25 August 1914.

himself was not arrested, due to his agreement of cooperation with German authorities. Had the article been more strongly worded, Napieralski would probably have joined his colleagues in jail. Instead, he remained free and continued to publish, even as others' newspapers were shut down.

The tone in the Polish-language papers shifted from neutral to joyous after the November 1916 declaration from the Central Powers of the establishment of an independent Kingdom of Poland. Germany and Austria-Hungary hoped the announcement would drum up support among their own Poles, as well as encourage them and their compatriots in Russian Congress Poland to volunteer in the Central Powers' armed forces. Upper Silesia was not to be a part of this independent Poland. Still, the papers greeted this news with much fanfare, running numerous articles about the announcement and the future of Poland for more than a week after the proclamation. "Poland rises," proclaimed one such article, entitled "Towards a Free Poland."¹³⁹ "Generations of people were waiting for her with eagerness and longing and, before her return, sadly laid down in the grave. We happily watch her with vivid eyes and welcome her... We open our hearts to Poland and cry, 'Welcome, our beloved, welcome, living homeland!'"¹⁴⁰ The article mentions its "joyous heart," and that is the best way to describe the tone of the article: joyous. The article also makes clear that the future of Poland is linked to the future of the Central Powers. It is only with their victory that an independent Poland will arise.

Before the First World War, independent Poland was a dream. But with Germany's November 1916 declaration, the idea of a Polish state suddenly became real. Poland was no longer an amorphous idea, but an actual state that would need concrete boundaries. The *Katolik* press welcomed back its "Homeland" – but where, exactly would that Homeland be? Who would

¹³⁹ "Wobec wolniej Polski," *Katolik*, 14 Nov. 1916.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

be allowed to join it? After a little over a week of soaring elation, the newspapers began to question Germany's true motives and intentions. Appearing in *Górnoślązak* on 16 November (eleven days after the proclamation), "New Situation for Poles in Prussia" began by bluntly stating, "The autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland was announced, but we Poles in Prussia don't belong to this. This, which in the souls of thoughtful Poles in Prussia stuck as an ideal, to which their hope and effort clung to, has come true, but not for us. We must look this truth in the eyes."¹⁴¹ This new Poland would mean "the development of new relationships for Poles, for us and for the Prussian state, to which we remain citizens."¹⁴² This last sentence pointed out what the previous articles had, almost willfully, ignored: Upper Silesians, and their Posen brethren, were Prussian citizens. They belonged to the German state. What good was an independent Poland, what use were the rights granted to its people, if nothing were to change in Prussia? Here, *Górnoślązak* seemed to be placing Upper Silesian Poles in a very interesting position, between the Poles of Poland proper and the Prussian/German state. Linguistically, religiously and culturally, they belong to the former; legally, they are a part of the latter.

The question of Poland's borders and Upper Silesia's place in them was further complicated by the work of Dmowski. Since the outbreak of the war, he and his National Democrats had sided with Russia, believing it to be the best bet for Polish linguistic and religious autonomy. By 1916, however, it was clear the war was not likely to end with a Russian victory, and Dmowski and his cohort regrouped in Lausanne, Switzerland, before settling in Paris in the fall of 1917; here, they established the Polish National Committee, which would be the officially recognized Polish body during the post-war treaty negotiations. Having lost faith in Russia,

¹⁴¹ "Nowa Sytuacja Polaków w Prusiech," *Górnoślązak*, 16 Nov. 1916.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Dmowski now placed his hopes of an independent Poland with the western Allied states. Great Britain and France, however, were not willing to discuss the Polish question, for fear of upsetting their Russian ally; Russia had declared Poland an internal, domestic matter. Meanwhile, famed pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski arrived in the United States in fall 1915, hoping to convince President Woodrow Wilson to support the cause of Polish independence. As the United States were not an official ally in the war, Paderewski hoped Wilson would be more willing to push Russia towards granting Polish independence.¹⁴³

1917 brought two important changes that would ultimately prove vitally important for the question of Polish independence. The first was the Russian Revolution, which brought the anti-war Bolsheviks to power, and their sudden exit from the war. With Russia no longer an ally, or even a combatant, Britain and France now had the freedom to discuss Poland's future. That same year, the U.S. entered the war, and in January 1918 Wilson delivered his Fourteen Points speech to Congress. In it, he laid out the United States' major war aims. Point 13 called for an independent Polish state, "which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations." Again, this raised the issue of Poland's future borders. For the first time, however, these borders would not be confined to the old Congress Poland; Austrian Galicia, Prussian Posen and Upper Silesia were now opened as possible territories to belong to the new Poland. Dmowski himself claimed these areas, as well as a corridor to the Baltic Sea, in his meeting with Wilson on 8 October 1918.¹⁴⁴

In what would prove to be the last year of the war, Napieralski's press abandoned its conciliatory tone and returned to its old, pre-war standbys: religion and language. In the spring

¹⁴³ Louis L. Gerson, *Woodrow Wilson and the Rebirth of Poland, 1914-1920: A Study in the Influence on American Policy of Minority Groups of Foreign Origin* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972), 67.

¹⁴⁴ Gerdon, *Woodrow Wilson and the Rebirth of Poland*, 98.

of 1918, *Górnoślązak* published a piece about “Religious Instruction in Upper Silesia,” in which the paper once again called upon the Upper Silesian clergy, who “love and cherish the German language,” to conduct religious instruction in Polish.¹⁴⁵ “In Upper Silesia seventy percent of the people speak Polish. The child learns it from his mothers’ prayers in Polish, he goes to church and there listens to a Polish sermon.”¹⁴⁶ In order to be truly immersed in the Catholic faith, a child needed to receive religious instruction in the language he best understood. To instruct him in German before he has attended school, and thus does not completely understand the language, stunts his religious growth. Here, again, the importance of the mother is stressed. The Pole (a young boy) learns his prayers from his mother; she is his first religious instructor.

The *Katolik* press did not redefine Polishness during the war; Polish Upper Silesians were still Catholic, still supported the Polish national cause. But, at the beginning of the war at least, it was stressed that they were also citizens of Germany; Napieralski himself argued this in his 1915 appeal, stating Poles had the “formal obligation arising from state citizenship”¹⁴⁷ to support the German war effort. In this time of upheaval, ethnic differences had to be put aside so that a unified Germany could defeat its Russian foe. Berlin paid for this loyalty, in part, by promising the establishment of a future Polish state – a promise it seemed to keep with the 1916 declaration of the new Kingdom of Poland. But this new Poland only served to highlight for Poles the slights committed against them, the cultural and religious grievances that had been swept away in the name of wartime solidarity. Dmowski’ campaign for an independent Poland and Wilson’s Fourteen Points made possible what Upper Silesian Polish nationalists had never truly

¹⁴⁵ “O naukę religii na Górnym Śląsku,” *Górnoślązak*, 10 March 1918.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ “Na straży dobra narodowego,”

considered – the chance to truly becoming a part of a Polish nation-state. Before, Upper Silesians might ethnically identify as Polish, but they accepted that they were German citizens – after all, there was no Poland to which they could belong. But as the war ended and the new Poland secured its place in Central Europe, Upper Silesians suddenly had another option, on which, unbeknownst to them at the time, they would soon be asked to decide.

The German-language press differed from its Polish counterpart in several important ways. First, there was no equivalent to Napieralski; the publishing landscape was much more diffuse, with no one editor or press group dominating the region. Second, the German-language press was much less concerned with defining Germans and Poles. This is not a surprise. Upper Silesians were all German citizens, and, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, laws regarding language and education usually favored German-speakers. Whereas Polish activists constantly felt that their backs were against a wall, fighting for linguistic and cultural rights, German nationalists did not perceive Polish-speakers to be too great of a threat. This is in part evidenced by the lack of a strong Eastern Marches Association presence in the region until right before the outbreak of the First World War. Instead of a full-throated attack on Germanism, as appeared in the *Katolik* press, publications like the daily *Kattowitzer Zeitung*¹⁴⁸ and the monthly *Oberschlesien*¹⁴⁹ were much subtler in their slights against Polish-speakers before the war. This continued during the first phase of the war as well, as the papers basically ignored their Polish-speaking neighbors and addressed their German audience. It was only as the

¹⁴⁸ The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* was founded in 1869 in Kattowitz by Gottfried Siwinna, who served as editor until 1914, when his son, Carl, took over. Circulation grew steadily for the national conservative paper, growing from 4000 in 1901 to 12000 in 1914; it reached its peak in 1917, when circulation was between 21000 and 25000. Gröschel, 113-5.

¹⁴⁹ *Oberschlesien* was founded in 1902 and published in Kattowitz. Many of its pieces, which tended to be much longer than those found in the daily or tri-weekly papers, were written by its editor, Prof. Dr. Paul Knötel. Gröschel, 120-1.

war reached its end, and a new Polish state had been founded, that the papers began to pay attention to and deride Polish-speaking Upper Silesians as foreign and “others.”

German nationalist sentiment was unlikely to appear in articles deriding the Polish Party. Instead, the attitude can be found threaded through pieces in a much subtler way. Take, for example, the joke that appeared in the May 1914 edition of *Oberschlesien*, under the heading, “Upper Silesian Humor:”¹⁵⁰

“At the inspection assembly, the command is called.
Lieutenant: All men with an ‘O,’ report!
Onderka! ‘Here!’ Owczarczyk! ‘Here!’ etc.
‘Is there anyone here with an ‘O’ who wasn’t called?’
‘I wasn’t, Sir!’
‘What’s your name?’
‘Klepitko!’”¹⁵¹

The three men who respond – Onderka, Owczarczyk and Klepitko – all have Polish or Slavic last names. Presumably, the lieutenant is German, as he is the one in a position of leadership and power. Regardless, the punch line of the joke is that Polish Upper Silesians would not understand the simple instructions of a roll call. Klepitko is so simple-minded that he believes he should be included with the other “O” men, as his name also contains the letter. The joke does not argue that Upper Silesians should only speak German, or that Polish nationalists are insidiously causing agitation in the region. Instead, it pokes fun at Polish Upper Silesians’ intellect. Much like the American “How many [insert ethnicity/gender/occupation] does it take to screw in a light bulb?”, this joke is based on one group’s assumption that another is intellectually inferior to them.

¹⁵⁰ “Oberschlesien Humor,” *Oberschlesien*, May 1914.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. Bold in original.

It is interesting that *Oberschlesien* could publish the above joke, and yet, not even two years earlier, publish an article that highlighted the unity of Upper Silesians. Appearing in the November 1912 edition, the article, entitled, “Local History and Local Cultivation in Upper Silesia: Opinions and Suggestions,”¹⁵² examines the cultural history of Upper Silesia. It is written in first person plural; the author frequently uses “we,” “us,” and “our,” connecting to and including the reader. For example, he writes, “The Silesian periodicals and newspapers bring more and more accounts of *our* area.”¹⁵³ The uniqueness of Upper Silesia is also emphasized; the region “has its own poets, writers and artists.”¹⁵⁴ Still, this Upper Silesia could be essentially German; assumedly only Germans would read *Oberschlesien*, and so they would be the ones to whom the writer is speaking. It is the closing lines of the article that make this piece truly stand out: “I speak German, and you speak Polish; but we were born in the same land, and are therefore brothers. Our fight comes to an end!”¹⁵⁵ This is one of the very few expressions of an Upper Silesian identity that is not tied to either Germanness or Polishness. That is, while other articles might call on “Upper Silesians,” they are really directing their message at either German- or Polish-speakers; the “other” is not included in the term “Upper Silesian.” Yet here, in the German national *Oberschlesien*, appeared an article that highlighted Upper Silesian-ness and separated it from any language. It did not matter if one spoke German or Polish; one was an Upper Silesian by virtue of being born in the region. That is, language was not taken to be the deciding factor in determining one’s ethnicity. This position, as will be discussed below, would be completely reversed in an article appearing near the end of the war.

¹⁵² “Heimatkunde und Heimatpflege in Oberschlesien: Ansichten und Vorschläge,” *Oberschlesien*, Nov. 1912.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

When the war began the German-language press, like its Polish-language counterpart, stressed the unity and resolve of the people, specifically the German people. The tone in these articles ran the gamut from resigned acceptance of the war to full-scale jingoism. In its August 1914 edition, *Oberschlesien* noted, “Germany did not want this war. Our Kaiser is endeavoring to preserve peace.”¹⁵⁶ The war would “demand an immense sacrifice, a sacrifice of goods and blood.”¹⁵⁷ But even though Germany did not ask for this war, her “sons, brothers and fathers...will be absolute in their duty,” as will those left behind in Upper Silesia, where, in spite of all the hardships to come, “the mood is superb, the enthusiasm tremendous.” Days after the declaration of war, the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* issued an “Appeal to Germany’s Men, Women and Young!,”¹⁵⁸ in which “hard-working and industrious German people”¹⁵⁹ were encouraged to stand together during the war.

The more bombastic rhetoric was reserved for the poems issued by both publications within a month of the start of the war. Again, German unity in the face of war is stressed. *Oberschlesien*’s “Faith” opened with, “From East to West, from North to South/ All of Germany surges in flames!...We blaze and thunder together/ We hold each other hand in hand/ and shout: Kaiser and Fatherland!”¹⁶⁰ All Germans, be they from Bavaria, the Rhineland or Upper Silesia, are united in the war effort; they all “blaze” for Germany. In “To the Germans,” the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* also encouraged Germany to rise up and take hold of its victorious destiny: “O German Eagle, once more wave/ yourself over the European Empires!/ Your roaring wings resound, ring

¹⁵⁶ “Monatschronik Juli 1914,” *Oberschlesien*, Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ “Aufruf an Deutschlands Männer, Frauen und Jugend!,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 6 Aug. 1914.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ “Zuversicht,” *Oberschlesien*, Sept. 1914.

out/ And go to the sun and sing and sing/ A storm song with no equal.”¹⁶¹ In a time of war, religious and national differences are swept aside, if not forgiven then, for the time being, at least ignored. While addressed “To the Germans,” the theme of this and the above poem was unity. The poem was not excluding national minorities, but rather bringing them into the German fold. In the face of war, everyone was German.

Interest in Congress Poland appeared in 1915, when the Central Powers first established control over Congress Poland and set up governments in Warsaw and Lublin. The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* ran short articles in January and February 1915 regarding the German management of the region and German and international relief efforts being taken on behalf of the Russian Poles.¹⁶² The information in these articles was reported in a clear-cut and detached manner. More interesting is the March 1915 account of “The Hardship in Poland!”¹⁶³ Here one finds what appears to be genuine sympathy for the residents of Congress Poland. “Hardly a land suffers so under the turmoil of war as Russian Poland,”¹⁶⁴ the article claimed, and the “inevitable destruction of home, farm and land” has meant disaster for millions, especially those living in the cities, exposing them to hunger and disease. However, it is not only out of the goodness of their hearts that Germans must help their new Polish charges. Diseases can spread quickly, and epidemics do not care what language one speaks. Not only are the borderlands in danger, but more importantly so are “our brave troops fighting there, who are in constant contact with the

¹⁶¹ “An die Deutschen!,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 5 Aug. 1914.

¹⁶² “Die deutsche Verwaltung in Russisch-Polen,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 8 January 1915; “Hilfsaktion für die Bevölkerung im besetzten Polen,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 9 February 1915.

¹⁶³ “Die Not in Polen!,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 7 March 1915.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

population.”¹⁶⁵ It is not just a matter of “humanity,” but “an obligation of self-preservation,”¹⁶⁶ the article reported, that should compel Germans to aid the Russian Poles. Even charity and aid must be viewed through the lens of what is best for the German nation. The Poles of Russia are depicted as destitute, although through no fault of their own, and this is not reflected back onto Polish-speaking Upper Silesians; that is, the article’s main goal is to justify German aid to the region, not disparage Poles.

As the war dragged on, however, some anti-Polish articles began to appear in the papers, although these were still relatively rare. Most likely spurred by the rise in Polish nationalist rhetoric as the war drew to a close and the rebirth of Poland seemed imminent, articles in the German-language press began to present Polish-speaking Upper Silesians as foreign elements. In 1912, as discussed above, *Oberschlesien* had produced an article that stressed one’s birthplace over language as determining ethnicity: “I speak German, and you speak Polish; but we were born in the same land, and are therefore brothers.”¹⁶⁷ In January 1918, no such sentiment could be found in the pages of *Oberschlesien*. Entitled “The Power and Impotence of Language” and written by Prof. Dr. Paul Knötel, the editor himself, the lengthy article advocated for German’s supremacy over Polish.¹⁶⁸ The article began by stating, “The power and impotence of a thing can be seen especially in comparison with others of its kind. This also applies to languages. We recognize their power or powerlessness especially where there are other languages, such as in a mixed language area.”¹⁶⁹ What followed was a long and winding article that included a

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ “Heimatkunde und Heimatpflege.”

¹⁶⁸ “Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache,” *Oberschlesien*, Jan. 1918.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

discussion on the Roman Empire and the power of the Latin language. Of Upper Silesia, Knötel argued that German immigration law, with regards to Slavic-speakers, “broke down the barriers” between Germans and Slavs and led the latter, “imperceptibly and without external coercion, to the adoption of the German master language [*Herrensprache*].”¹⁷⁰ Slavic languages, particularly Polish, should not be allowed, as their use weakened the German language. Knötel pointed to Austria-Hungary and Switzerland as places where multilingualism had forced the German language to go on the defensive. Such a thing could not be allowed to happen in Germany. He concluded, “Language strengthens the will, and in the future it will hopefully strengthen and make powerful the German will, for the salvation of our people [*Volk*].”¹⁷¹ Language is the key. No longer can Upper Silesians be allowed to speak anything but German, least this cause the downfall of the German nation. Upper Silesians who do not speak in the same tongue are no longer brothers.

In the German-language press, then, Polish-speaking Upper Silesians were only seen as a threat to the German nation as the war reached its end and an independent Poland became a reality. Before the war and in its early stages, these Poles were largely ignored, and Germanness was largely defined by one’s loyalty to the Fatherland. In the war’s opening months, German unity was placed above all else, and non-German elements, such as Upper Silesia’s large number of Polish-speakers, were ignored. Besides, most understood and spoke German, albeit to varying degrees, and all the inhabitants of Upper Silesia were German citizens. Only as the First World War came to a close, and a new Polish state appeared on the map of Europe, did the German-

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

language press begin to view Upper Silesia's Polish-speakers as a foreign threat to the integrity of the German nation.

On the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the First World War ended, and Europe found itself in a very different world than it had been in only four years earlier. This was especially true for Central Europe. Some Polish nationalists had hoped that a Russian victory would ensure new measures of autonomy for Congress Poland. But in 1918, Russia was embroiled in the Bolshevik revolution, whose red menace threatened to sweep across the continent. Others had held out hope that Germany would keep its promise of an independent Kingdom of Poland. But in November 1918 Germany, too, was mired in revolution, and the imperial government that had issued this claim no longer existed.

In the middle stood Upper Silesia. The Armistice ended the war, but not its many questions. What would this new Germany look like? Would Poland arise again? And if so, where did Upper Silesia belong? With Germany, with Poland – or perhaps on its own? Upper Silesians suddenly found themselves at a crossroads, down which lay many options for their future – a future that, on the eleventh of November 1918, was anything but clear.

**PART TWO:
“DOWN WHICH ROAD?”:
THE MYRIAD PATHS FOR UPPER SILESIA IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF
THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

When the guns fell silent on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1918, Europe, and the world, found itself much transformed. Four years of horrific fighting had left land and lives destroyed. An entire generation of young men – almost ten million – had disappeared, and an additional six million civilians could also be counted as casualties of the war. Put another way, an average of 1306 German citizens died each day during the course of the war. France and Great Britain had considerably less losses, although their own daily losses were still a staggering 881 and 582, respectively.¹ But while all was, for the most part, finally quiet on the Western Front, in the east the fighting did not stop with the declaration of the Armistice. As three empires fell, new nation-states scrambled to fill the void left behind, often with violent results. Revolutions, uprisings and civil wars would continue to occur in the lands of East Central Europe for the next several years.² In the wake of the war, the multiple national and social

¹ John Horne, “Introduction,” in *A Companion to World War I*, ed. John Horne (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), xix.

² For literature on the Russian Revolution and Civil War, see: Orlando Figes, *Peasant Russia, Civil War: The Volga Countryside in Revolution, 1917-1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Lars T. Lih, *Bread and Authority in Russia, 1914-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000); Don Raleigh, *Experiencing Russia's Civil War: Politics, Society and Revolutionary Culture in Saratov, 1917-1922* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002) and *Revolution on the Volga: 1917 in Saratov* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For literature on the Hungarian Revolution, see: Bela Bodo, “Paramilitary Violence in Hungary after the First World War,” *East European Quarterly* 38, (2004): 129-72, and “Militia Violence and State Power in Hungary, 1919-1922,” *Hungarian Studies Review* 33, (2006): 121-67; Oscar Jaszi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (London: P.S. King, 1924); Rudolf L. Tökes, *Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic; The Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: Praeger, 1967). For Central Europe, see: Robert Gerwarth,

questions raised during the fighting were left largely unanswered, and even the peace settlement that followed failed to enact concrete solutions. In the midst of all this uncertainty and upheaval, the people of East Central Europe found themselves at various crossroads.

This was especially true for the residents of Upper Silesia. Historians such as Peter Holquist have called the immediate post-war years a continuum of crisis. He notes, “Throughout much of central and eastern Europe, the war wound down in an extended convulsion of revolutions and civil strife...Rather than viewing these civil wars [...] as distinct episodes in their own right, we might instead think of them [...] as a ‘continuation and transformation’ of the world war.”³ Upper Silesia’s continuum of crisis lasted at least until October 1921, when the League of Nations gave its recommendation for the region’s partition, and at latest mid-1922, when the partition was enacted. In those years the region witnessed an upswell of violence – three bloody revolutions, a series of strikes, both organized and wildcat, in the mines, unrest over food shortages, and a general rise in “banditry.” According to historian T.K. Wilson, “Between 11 November 1918 and 30 June 1922 there were an estimated 2,824 violent fatalities in Upper Silesia” and “12.39 violent deaths per 10,000” residents.⁴

“The Central European Counter-Revolution: Paramilitary Violence in Germany, Austria and Hungary after the Great War,” *Past and Present* 200, (2008): 175-209. For the Finnish Civil War, see: Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Tuomas Hoppu and Pertti Haapala, eds., *Tampere 1918: A Town in the Civil War* (Tampere: Tampere Museum, 2010); Jason Lavery, “Finland 1917-19: Three Conflicts, One Country,” *Scandinavian Review* 94, no. 3 (2007): 6-14. For the Ukrainian Civil War, see: Mark von Hagen, *War in a European Borderland: Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine, 1914-1918* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2007); Serhy Yekelchuk, “Bands of Nation Builders?: Insurgency and Ideology in the Ukrainian Civil War,” in *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and John Horne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 107-25.

³ Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution*, 3-4.

⁴ T.K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5. It is important to note, however, that 62 percent of these fatalities occurred during the Third Silesian Uprising in May-June 1921 (post-plebiscite). Wilson, 17.

And yet, in the wake of this violence, the people of Upper Silesia attempted to return to the prewar electoral order, even as the political, social and national orders were all being debated and remade. Within a year of the German Revolution and declaration of the Armistice, Upper Silesians were asked to participate in three elections that, aside from some nationalists' grumblings, were democratic, open and free. The first of these – electing representatives to the German National Assembly, to be held in Weimar – took place a mere ten weeks following the downfall of the *Reich* and the end of the war. In that time political parties – and their newspapers – mobilized their voters, urging them to vote for their party or, in the case of the Polish parties and press, to boycott the election wholesale. To use historian Margaret Anderson's term, Upper Silesians very quickly returned to "practicing democracy."⁵ The year following the end of the war, then, was a crucial one for the region. Upper Silesians attempted to make order from chaos. Through their participation, and abstention, in the elections they made their own will known – even if they were not always successful.

The situation Upper Silesians found themselves in during 1919 is best expressed by the title of the 14 January 1919 *Gazeta Robotnicza* article, entitled "Down which Road?"⁶. Although specifically about the new Polish republic, the question raised in the article's headline was one that confronted Upper Silesians of all national and political stripes. As 1918 came to a close, new roads suddenly appeared, and Upper Silesians now faced various options for their future. German and Polish nationalists attempted to steer Upper Silesia towards one of these two new nation-states, which both laid claim to the region. Socialists hoped to make real gains in the region and found themselves again trying to navigate national (in the case of the SPD) and

⁵ Margaret Anderson, *Practicing Democracy: Elections and Political Culture in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁶ "Po jakiej drodze?", *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 14 January 1919.

religious (for PPS) political minefields. And some Upper Silesians, buoyed by the actions of their new neighbor to the south, decided to advocate for autonomy, if not outright independence. This part will examine the myriad paths now open for Upper Silesians, as well as how the decision for their future was ultimately taken away from them.

The first chapter explores the situation in Germany and Poland at the end of the First World War, and how the changes played out in and affected Upper Silesia. Two days before the Armistice, the *Kaiserreich* collapsed and the new German Republic, governed at first by a coalition of Majority and Independent Socialists, emerged. On the day of the Armistice, Józef Piłsudski marched into Warsaw and claimed control over a newly reborn Poland. Both these events are important in understanding the climate of Upper Silesia and the position in which it now found itself throughout 1919. It will end with an analysis of the 19 January elections to the National Assembly, in which some Upper Silesians voted for the new Republic and others used a boycott to demonstrate their loyalty to Poland.

The second chapter explores how, in the midst of this national and social upheaval, the three main options advocated their individual agendas and laid out their own visions of Upper Silesia's future. Socialism, in various forms, was sweeping across East Central Europe, and was a major tenet of both Weimar Germany and Poland. But German and Polish Socialists, represented in Upper Silesia by the SPD and PPS, respectively, did not view each other as comrades; especially on the Polish side, there was a substantial dose of mistrust and apprehension towards the other. Upper Silesians also had national options. Immediately after the war the region was still a part of Germany; this was indisputable. However, very soon after the war's end, speculation (or the fantasy) that Upper Silesia could join the new Poland appeared in the press. The question of where the area belonged "historically" was raised, with both German

and Polish advocates searching the distant (sometimes mythical) past to argue for Upper Silesia's place in either nation. Finally, the third path led to an autonomous or independent Upper Silesia, although what exactly this meant (a fully independent nation, an autonomous region in either Poland or Germany) was debated even among the promoters of an "Upper Silesia for Upper Silesians."

In the last chapter, the decision of Upper Silesia's immediate future is determined – but not by the Upper Silesians. Instead, hundreds of miles away in Paris, the leaders of the Victorious Powers decided the fate of a territory most had never seen. After examining the Versailles Treaty and its declaration of a plebiscite to be held in the near future, the chapter returns to Upper Silesia. As summer turned to fall, we find two of the clearest examples of Upper Silesia's balancing act between violence and order. In August, in part as a reaction to a new wave of strikes, the First Silesian Uprising shook the region and highlighted just how fragile any peace there was. Less than three months later, on the first anniversary of the declaration of the German Republic, Upper Silesians – both Germans and Poles – returned to the polls for a third time. Both sides viewed the municipal elections as a pre-plebiscite for the region, and the Polish party experienced unparalleled success here. Yet once again, the region's attempt to assert its own authority over its future was taken away, as the arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission and its troops in early 1920 took control of the region until the plebiscite, over a year later.

1. Revolution and Rebirth: Germany, Poland and Upper Silesia After the First World War

The second week of November, 1918, was a momentous one for Central Europe. On 9 November, Kaiser Wilhelm II was forced to abdicate the throne and the German Republic declared. Two days later, on the day of the Armistice on the Western Front, Józef Piłsudski

made his triumphant return to Warsaw, and Poland once again regained its independence. Few things, however, are as simple as that. In the weeks that followed, both these new states would experience intense birthing pains as revolutionary leaders debated and fought over the future of these new nation-states. In Germany, infighting between the SPD and the Independent Socialists (*Unabhängige Sozialistische Partei Deutschlands*, or USPD)⁷ reached a fever pitch by December, as they argued over just how far to take the German Revolution. Meanwhile, Piłsudski had to navigate between forces on the Left, who wanted a full social revolution, and those on the right, particularly the National Democrats (ND, or Endeks), who refused to acknowledge Piłsudski's authority and had the ear of the Victorious Powers in the west. Both republics also struggled with the issue of borders – where to place them, and how to keep them secure. This was especially true for Poland, which was trying to stitch together a nation-state from parts of three disparate empires. In American President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, the thirteenth called for a Poland “which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations.”⁸ Just what constituted “indisputably Polish populations” and where they could be found would be determined at the upcoming peace conference. Until then, Piłsudski's and Dmowski's supporters would compete to make the newly reborn Polish state into their own vision. Posen/Poznan⁹ proved especially troublesome for both Germany and Poland.

⁷ The USPD was formed in April 1917 and comprised of left-wing Socialists, including the *Spartakusbund* (Spartacist League). After the split, the SPD was commonly referred to as the Majority Socialists (Mehrheits SPD, or MSPD). For more, see: Abraham Joseph Berlau, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1914-1921* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949); Pierre Broue, *The German Revolution, 1917-1923*, trans. John Archer (Boston: Brill, 2005); A.J. Ryder, *The German Revolution of 1918: A Study of German Socialism in War and Revolt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917: The Development of the Great Schism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955); Eric Waldman, *The Spartacist Uprising and the Crisis of the German Social Movement: A study of the relation of political theory and party practice* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1958).

⁸ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), 496.

⁹ While the region did not officially become a part of Poland until the Versailles Treaty, from this point forward it will be referred to by its Polish name – *Poznan* – instead of the German *Posen*.

Still a part of the German state, Poles there staged an uprising in late December, demanding to join the Polish Republic; the region, however, was an Endek stronghold, and as such did not support Piłsudski or his nascent government in Warsaw.

All these events affected the situation in Upper Silesia in late 1918 and early 1919. The Poznań-led *Naczelna Rada Ludowa* (Supreme People's Council, or NRL), established a subcommittee in the region, intent on advancing the Polish national cause and bringing Upper Silesia into newly-reconstituted Poland. Decisions made in Berlin, about the revolution in general and the situation in Upper Silesia specifically, had an even greater impact on the region. Nowhere was this more evident than in the 19 January election for the German National Assembly. For Germans, but especially Socialists, the election was a chance to break with the old political order and chart a new course in the region. Pro-Polish forces, meanwhile, hoped to use their boycott to prove to the Victorious Powers that Upper Silesia belonged to Poland. This chapter, then, will examine the initial weeks of the German and Polish revolutions and explore their impact on Upper Silesia, culminating in the election to the German National Assembly.

By early fall 1918 it was clear to almost everyone that Germany was on the verge of losing the Western Front. Despite its crushing victories in the East, capped by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, and the initial success of its spring initiatives in the Somme, the Western Entente powers, now joined by American armed forces, had driven the German Army to the brink. On 28 September Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff were forced to admit to the Kaiser that the war was lost and left it to the civilian government, practically paralyzed during the war, to negotiate the armistice. As Ludendorff retorted, "They can make the peace that has to be made."¹⁰ But seeking an armistice would not prove easy. As U.S. Secretary of

¹⁰ Martin Kitchen, *A History of Modern Germany: 1800 to the Present*, 2nd edition (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 194.

State Robert Lansing made clear, nothing less than a complete restructuring of the German Empire would suffice. Throughout October, the Reichstag, under the leadership of Prince Max von Baden, passed a number of constitutional reforms that would have transformed Germany into a parliamentary monarchy had they been enacted. Then, on 26 October, Berlin received Wilson's third note, which stated negotiations would only continue if Germany laid down her arms and those responsible for the conduct of the war were removed from power. This was too much. While Ludendorff resigned in anger a few days later, Hindenburg and other like-minded military commanders remained. In an attempt to stop armistice negotiations, as well as, most likely, end the war in a blaze of glory, Navy Admiral Reinhardt Scheer ordered his fleet to attack the British Royal Navy. Realizing they were about to embark on a suicide mission, the sailors mutinied, first in Wilhelmshaven on 28 October, then in Kiel on 4 November.¹¹

From here the revolution, inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution a year earlier, spread throughout Germany. Workers' and Soldiers' Councils took control in a majority of cities, for the most part in a bloodless manner. The SPD called for the abdication of Wilhelm II, something the USPD had been advocating for throughout October. Both von Baden and Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the SPD, intended to establish a regency council in the Kaiser's wake; neither man was a republican. But it was already too late. On 9 November workers took to the streets in a general strike, amid reports that Karl Liebknecht, one of the founders of the far-left Spartacists, was about to declare Germany a socialist state. Hoping to preempt Liebknecht, von Baden

¹¹ For more on the start of the German Revolution and the founding of the Weimar Republic, see the classic works by Eberhard Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, trans. P.S. Falla (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of the Weimar Republic*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1989); Detlev K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987). See also: Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Erich Eyck, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, trans. Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G.L. Waite (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962); Dietrich Orlow, *Weimar Prussia, 1918-1925: The unlikely rock of democracy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986); Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

announced Wilhelm's abdication, even though the Kaiser had not yet replied to the request from his headquarters in Spa. This was followed by SPD leader Phillip Scheidemann's speech from the balcony of the Reichstag, during which he exclaimed, "That old and rotten thing, the monarchy, has collapsed. Long live the new! Long live the German republic!"¹²

What followed was nearly ten weeks of turmoil and chaos. Von Baden resigned and, without Reichstag approval, simply handed the chancellorship to Ebert. Ebert then formed the Council of People's Representatives (*Rat der Volksbeauftragten*), designed to guide Germany through its transition into a republic and comprised equally of Majority (Ebert, Scheidemann and Otto Landsberg, a native Upper Silesian born in Rybnik) and Independent Socialists (Hugo Haase, the USPD Party Chair, Wilhelm Dittmann and Emil Barth). He also negotiated with Wilhelm Groener, who had replaced Ludendorff as quartermaster general of the Supreme Commander, to secure the military's loyalty. In exchange for their support, Ebert assured the officers that he would check the new government from drifting too far to the left and devolving into a Bolshevik-style of revolution.¹³ In the first days of the revolution, then, one can already find the major fissures between the two Socialist parties. For the Majority Socialists, the revolution was already done; it had been completed by the October constitutional reforms. The USPD, however, viewed the revolution as just beginning and hoped to push Germany even farther to the left, establishing a Soviet Germany similar to Bolshevik Russia.

As Germany underwent its revolution, Poland began to rise from the ashes. In September 1917 the Central Powers had granted some semblance of autonomy to a Regency Council. The council controlled only Congress Poland; Austrian Galicia and Prussian Poland were not

¹² Anthony McElligott, "Political Culture," in *Weimar Germany*, ed. Anthony McElligott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

¹³ William Mulligan, "The Reichswehr and the Weimar Republic," in *Weimar Germany*, 80.

included in the Central Powers' post-war Polish plans. As the war came to its end in the West and a truly independent Poland became a foregone conclusion, however, various factions began to maneuver themselves into positions of power. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire dissolved, Wincenty Witos and Ignacy Daszyński, members of the Austrian *Reichsrat* (Parliament), formed the Polish Liquidation Committee (*Polska Komisja Likwidacyjna*, or PKL) in Krakow on 28 October, in an attempt to fill the void left by Vienna and govern Galicia.¹⁴ Then, on 6-7 November 1918, just days before the Armistice, left-wing and Socialist supporters, again led by Daszyński, declared a People's Republic in Lublin. The People's Republic stood in direct opposition to the Regency Council, still under German control. Two days later, as discussed above, revolution broke out in Germany. In the wake of this, the new German government released Piłsudski, who had been imprisoned in Magdeburg since mid-1917, on 10 November. He immediately took the train to Warsaw.¹⁵

Piłsudski, as historian Norman Davies states, was “the one man whose reputation was big enough to save the situation.”¹⁶ As a military commander, he was able to negotiate with the German Command troops who were still technically in charge in Warsaw. As Davies wryly puts it, “He proposed the German Command that they should simply lay down their arms and take the first train out, before civil commotion erupted. The Germans readily agreed.”¹⁷ With his pre-war Socialist bona fides, Piłsudski could exert his influence over Daszyński and the other leaders of the People's Republic. He would support some of their policies, but would not allow Poland

¹⁴ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland in Two Volumes: Volume II, 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 390; Hans Roos, *A History of Modern Poland*, trans. J.R. Foster (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 40.

¹⁵ Davies, *God's Playground*, 391; Roos, *A History of Modern Poland*, 41.

¹⁶ Davies, 391.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

to become a Soviet Republic, a la Russia. As he told Daszyński, “We travelled a long way together in the socialist team; I got out at the stop called “independence.”¹⁸ For Piłsudski, socialism was always a means to Polish independence; that being achieved, he was not about to jeopardize the new Polish state by continuing down a socialist/soviet revolutionary path. To underscore this break, Piłsudski did not accept his power from the People’s Republic, but rather from the more conservative Regency Council.¹⁹ Within a week, Piłsudski was both the Polish Head of State and Commander in Chief. Together with the socialist Jędrzej Moraczewski, whom he named Prime Minister, he passed a number of reforms aimed at securing the support of the workers and peasants.²⁰

A continent and an ocean away, however, Dmowski and the National Democrats had been hard at work shoring up Entente and American support for an independent Poland under the leadership of the Polish National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy Polski*, KNP). More than a year before the end of the war, Ignacy Paderewski, the famed pianist living in the United States, had met with Wilson to convince the latter of the need for an independent Poland under the leadership of the National Democrats. In September 1918, Paderewski and Dmowski presented their envisioned borders of the new Poland to Wilson, arguing in particular for Polish control over Danzig and Poznań, as well as Upper Silesia.²¹ When the war ended, it was not

¹⁸ Roos, 42.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

²⁰ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 192-5. See also: Norman Davies, *God’s Playground*; Aleksander Gieysztor, *History of Poland*, trans. Krystyna Cękalska (Warsaw: PWN, Polish Scientific Publishers, 1979); Titus Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of Europe, 1914-1920* (London: William Heineman Ltd., 1957); Paul Latawski, *The Reconstruction of Poland, 1914-23* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992); William Rose, *The Rise of Polish Democracy* (London: G. Bell, 1944); Richard Watt, *Bitter Glory: Poland and its Fate, 1918-1939* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).

²¹ Kay Lundgreen-Nielsen, *The Polish Problem at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Policies of the Great Powers and the Poles, 1918-1919*, trans. Alison Borch-Johansen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1979), 32-47.

Piłsudski's leftist government in Warsaw, but rather the exiled National Democrats of the KNP in Paris whom Wilson and the other Entente leaders recognized as the legitimate representatives of the new Poland.

It was to Dmowski that most of the political leaders in Prussian Poland, particularly Poznań, also looked for leadership. Belonging primarily to the ND or other moderate parties, politicians in the region had more in common with the members of the KNP than they did with the Socialist government in Warsaw; in fact, they refused to even recognize Piłsudski's government.²² Poznań posed a further problem for the new Polish state – it was not yet an incorporated territory, despite the declarations and actions of the Polish representatives in the German Reichstag. On 15 October, almost a full month before the Armistice, the Polish delegates declared themselves citizens of a Polish state that did not yet exist. The person chosen to deliver this speech was none other than Wojciech Korfanty, the former leader of the Upper Silesian Polish Party, brought back from his political exile by a special election some four months earlier.²³

Three days after the Armistice, the Poles in Poznań formed the Supreme People's Council (*Naczelna Rada Ludowa*, NRL), which was to serve as a sort of provisional government for the region. Technically, the area was still a part of Germany, although the NRL did not acknowledge this. Korfanty, as one of the representatives of Silesia, traveled to Posen, where he took his seat as one of the NRL's three commissars, highlighting the importance of both Upper Silesia and Korfanty's firebrand reputation to the Polish national cause. In one of its first

²² Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic*, 241.

²³ Ibid, 240; Bjork, 191-2. After the death of Augustin Warlo (Center), Lublinitz-Tost-Gleiwitz held a special election in the late spring of 1918. Korfanty, with aid from the Socialists, defeated the pro-German Center candidate, Benno Nehlert, with 63 percent of the vote. For more, see: Edward Mendel, *Polacy na Górnym Śląsku w latach I wojny światowej* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk," 1971).

messages to Upper Silesia, the NRL urged Polish soldiers to “return, after years of hardships and drudgery, to your native land” and work towards “the creation of a New Poland.”²⁴ The appeal simultaneously called for the establishment of a new political order while reinstating the traditional gender one. The men were told to “join the organizations and societies that you belonged to before the war,”²⁵ to return to their old lives as much as was possible. The returning men were again expected to take up their place as the head and protector of their families. In their return journey, men should “not stop on the way back, just aim for your family’s side.”²⁶ Despite just returning from years at war, the NRL asked these men to “get into the people’s guards, which we’ll start in the counties, so that your families and property can be saved.”²⁷ All this was in the service of their families, but also the “New Poland.” As will be seen in the plebiscite propaganda, men’s role as protectors of their family was often translated as protectors of the nation. A Silesian branch of the NRL was founded in Beuthen by mid-December; it was headed by Józef Rymer, an activist for the Polish Trade Union.²⁸

While all this was occurring across the border in Poland, or across the ocean in the United States, the German Revolution continued to play out on the ground in Upper Silesia. As in the rest of the Reich, Workers’ and Soldiers’ Councils had also been established. Unlike other Councils in Germany, however, in Upper Silesia the USPD played a relatively minor role,

²⁴ “Żołnierze Polacy,” *Górnoślązak*, 20 November 1918.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Czaplński, “Dzieje Śląska,” 357; Bjork, 193; Komarnicki, 240-1; Archiwum Państwowy w Katowicach (APK), Polski Komisariat Plebiscytowy (PKP), syg. 1.

controlling only the smelting center of Hindenburg/Zabrze.²⁹ Pro-proletarian and pro-Polish supporters of the Majority Socialists comprised the main members of the Councils established in other industrial counties, while in the major cities, such as Oppeln, Gleiwitz, Kattowitz and Tarnowitz, the SPD was joined by members of the Center and Democratic parties and included trade unionists, teachers, bureaucrats, lawyers and others from the middle classes; as historian Wolfgang Schumann has noted, “only a few” Council members from these cities were “workers or ordinary soldiers.”³⁰ These Councils promoted peace and gradual, less radical, change.

The old Reich governmental leaders were also promoting peace and order in the early days of the Revolution. On 14 November, the President of the Oppeln Regency (*Regierungspräsident*), Johannes von Miquel, issued a public declaration urging the people of Upper Silesia to “all do your duty. Keep calm and in order!”³¹ Directed at “workers, employers, civil servants, business people, farmers, soldiers,” the declaration addressed what would quickly become the most pressing matters for the new German state – keeping the miners on the job, and protecting the border. On the latter point, von Miquel urged soldiers, “Be aware that you are needed to maintain order and protect the Border. Do your duty and follow the instructions of your superiors. By establishing the Soldiers' Councils, your interests are protected in every respect.” Likewise, officers were to continue with their duties “regardless of [their] private position on the political upheaval.” In this, von Miquel stated, “Your patriotism will help you.” But it was to the workers (*Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen*) that von Miquel devoted most of his

²⁹ Wolfgang Schumann, *Oberschlesien 1918/19: Von gemeinsamen Kampf deutscher und polnischer Arbeiter* (Berlin: Rüttern & Loening, 1961), 73. Zabrze had been renamed Hindenburg in 1915.

³⁰ Schumann, *Oberschlesien 1918/19*, 71; T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 54; James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 193.

³¹ APK, Landsamt Kattowitz, syg. 383.

appeal. “Complete the tasks required of you,” he implored. “Do your work! The new Reich government [*Die neue Reichregierung*]³² has enacted laws that will bring about a substantial improvement in your situation in a short time.” In other words – *Do not, under any circumstances, go on strike*. “Do not let yourself be tempted to work stoppage.”³³ Do not let “unauthorized persons mislead you into anything that might harm the interests of the general public and the Fatherland.”³⁴ It was imperative to the new Germany that the mining and distribution of Upper Silesian coal remain undisturbed and uninterrupted.

Von Miquel’s warnings were not heeded. When it became clear to the predominantly Polish-speaking workers in the industrial region that their working and living conditions were not going to quickly improve, wildcat strikes again engulfed the region. The movement began on 14 November in Antioninehütte, where workers demanded significant wage increases in order to keep up with the inflated price of food and other essentials.³⁵ In response, representatives of the German trade unions, the Polish ZZZ and the *Berg- und Hüttenmännische Verein* (Upper Silesian Coal and Metal Employers’ Association) met in Kattowitz. On 18 November, the three groups announced the Kattowitz Agreements, which were to reorder labor in the region. Workers were to receive a pay raise, and an eight-hour day was to be imposed. However, the pay increase was still not sufficient to cover the rising cost of food, and the eight-hour day did not include the time it took the workers to enter and exit the mine. Both of these concessions

³² While Germany was no longer technically a *Reich* – it was missing a Kaiser, after all – sources during the Revolutionary period continue to refer to the central or federal government in Berlin as the *Reich*. This was also used as a way to distinguish *Reich*/federal ministers from their Prussian counterparts.

³³ APK, *Landsamt Kattowitz*, syg. 383. Employers, meanwhile, were urged to “do the utmost to satisfy the working class.”

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Schumann, 105.

were non-negotiable for the workers. As a result, on 21 November thousands of miners went on strike. Within two days, 24 pits and more than 30,000 miners were on strike.³⁶

The wave of strikes deeply troubled Berlin. On 21 November the Council of People's Representatives devoted much of their meeting to solving the Upper Silesian problem. The debate revolved mainly around the decision to send troops to secure the region, and if so, where to find such troops. Haase argued sending armed forces would not only turn Polish labor leaders against Berlin, but would also tarnish Germany's image in the upcoming peace negotiations; besides, there were no troops to send. August Müller, State Secretary of the Reich Economic Office, disagreed, arguing, "There is nothing more important than securing the Upper Silesian coal region, otherwise there is no gas and no electricity in Berlin."³⁷ Later in the meeting, he declared, "If we lose the Upper Silesian coal, then Germany will fall apart completely."³⁸ Reich State Secretary of Labor Gustav Bauer proclaimed, "At all cost, we must send troops to the east."³⁹

Finally, it was decided that Haase would travel to Gleiwitz the next day to sort out the matter on the ground. On 22 November Haase met with representatives of the Workers' Councils and industry in Gleiwitz, as well as representatives of the *Berg- und Hüttenmännische Verein* in Kattowitz. Once again, securing the eastern border was a top priority. In both meetings, the Upper Silesian representatives stressed that the current *Grenzschutz* was

³⁶ Ibid, 105-107.

³⁷ Susanne Miller and Heinrich Potthoff, eds., *Die Regierung der Volksbeauftragten 1918/19*, v. 1 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1969), 117.

³⁸ Miller and Potthoff, 120.

³⁹ Ibid, 122.

“insufficient” and in need of “disciplined troops.”⁴⁰ In the Kattowitz meeting, the “consensus view” was that the strikes were spontaneous and wild, although there did appear to be some communication between the mines, and were not supported by the union leaders, who had negotiated the Kattowitz Agreements.⁴¹ This sentiment was in fact echoed in a *Górnoślązak* article printed the same day as the meetings. Citing the concessions made in the Kattowitz Agreements, the paper argued, “The Upper Silesian worker won *through* the organization”⁴² – that is, through the negotiations of the ZZP. The organization would continue to “look after the workers’ every need, and they will make more and more improvements for them,”⁴³ but the strikers had to trust the Union to speak for them.

The meetings must have given Haase some measure of reassurance, however; he telegraphed Dittman that “things in Upper Silesia are much more favorable than was to be expected,”⁴⁴ and when he returned on 23 November he reported having calmed the situation by promising Council support to the workers’ claims, thereby postponing the need to send troops to the region.⁴⁵ Yet still the strike continued. In some places the miners had the support of their local Workers’ and Soldiers’ Council; in Kochlowitz, for example, members of the Soldiers’ council occupied the mine so as to prevent anyone from entering.⁴⁶ However, because the strikers did not have the backing of the unions, they could not put forth a cohesive and consistent

⁴⁰ Ibid, 131 and 133.

⁴¹ Ibid, 133.

⁴² “Zwycięstwo robotników górnośląskich,” *Górnoślązak*, 22 November 1918, emphasis mine.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Miller and Potthoff, 124.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 139, and Tooley, *National Identity*, 27.

⁴⁶ APK, Landsamt Kattowitz, syg. 169; Schumann, 109.

list of demands. This eventually allowed the owners to negotiate with their own mines individually. On 28 November there were 20 mines on strike; by 30 November, it was down to 11 pits and 8000 workers. By 2 December all mines were operational once again.⁴⁷

Up until now, the SPD and USPD in Berlin had held a tenuous alliance. Again, for the former, the revolution was complete, while the latter wished to push for a social revolution in the Bolshevik model. In December, these differences proved to be untenable and led to the splintering of both the German Revolution and the German Left. On 29 November, the Council of Peoples' Representatives proclaimed elections to a constituent assembly be held, in which all German citizens, men and women, would be allowed to vote; the date for the elections was set a few weeks later, at the National Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, for 19 January 1919. For the left-wing of the USPD, which had opposed the calling of a national assembly since the Revolution began, this decision was just one more way in which the Majority Socialists and right-wing USPD members were hijacking the Revolution. On 29 December, under pressure from those on the left, the three USPD members of the Council withdrew. Two days later, extreme leftists in the party, including the *Spartakusbund*, broke off from the USPD to form the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD).

The extreme left now attempted to wrestle back control of the Revolution from the Majority SPD. On 5 January, partially in response to the dismissal of Berlin Chief of Police Emil Eichhorn, workers took to the streets in protest to Ebert's "counter-revolutionary" government. The leaders of the *Spartakusbund*, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, prepared to challenge the SPD government. Their plans proved premature. As historian Eberhard Kolb stated, the Spartacist Uprising was "without a strategic plan, was hopelessly

⁴⁷ Schumann, 110.

mismanaged and to some extent half-hearted.”⁴⁸ The government sent in the *Freikorps* to put down the revolt, and on 15 January Liebknecht and Luxemburg were captured and executed.

As the USPD was splintering in Berlin, so it was in Upper Silesia. Leftists formed the Communist Party of Upper Silesia in late December and quickly joined it to the KPD.⁴⁹ Strikes began again in December, and after the violence of the Spartacist Uprising Berlin was no longer willing to hold back the troops. Defense Minister Gustav Noske, who had been in charge of the *Freikorps* that quelled the uprising in Berlin, now issued a call for volunteers to become part of the *Grenzschutz* (Border Security). Echoing this call – and providing substantial financial backing – was the *Berg- und Hüttenmännischer Verein*. Gustav Williger, one of the Association’s leaders, issued a call for volunteers on 6 January, proclaiming, “Great danger threatens our Upper Silesian homeland! Upper Silesia urgently needs protection against the Polish enemy, who threatened it from the outside and in...If we don’t want to meet the same fate that Posen has suffered, haste is urgently needed.”⁵⁰ The *Grenzschutz* needed men “for whom the protection of Upper Silesia against Polish domination is a matter of heart.”⁵¹ Appealing to their sense of masculinity, Williger argued these men would be saving “their wives and children, parents, brothers and sisters from the hardships, poverty and misery”⁵² that would befall the region if it fell into Polish hands. By late January, Noske reported he had 22,000 men at the government’s disposal.⁵³ At the same time, Otto Hörsing, the SPD’s regional party secretary,

⁴⁸ Kolb, *The Weimar Republic*, 16.

⁴⁹ Schumann, 113; Czapliński, “Dzieje Śląska,” 353.

⁵⁰ Abschrift Oberschlesischer Berg- und Hüttenmännischer Verein, APK Landsamt Kattowitz, syg. 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Tooley, *National Identity*, 37.

was promoted to State Commissar for the *Regierungsbezirk* Oppeln, effectively dismissing the imperial leaders.⁵⁴

This concern for the border was compounded in late December by the events in neighboring Poznań. The initial Armistice agreement had called for German forces to retreat back to territory held before August 1914, allowing German troops to remain in Poznań, whose fate would be determined at the upcoming Peace Conference. The NRL, though disappointed with this decision, nevertheless urged peace among Poles in the region and placed all their faith in Dmowski and his KNP in Paris to secure the land for Poland. For the younger generation, however, waiting for a decision hundreds of miles away, and made by men who had never visited the region, was too much to ask. On 27 December, Paderewski stopped in Posen on his way from London to Warsaw. Inspired by his patriotic speech, young Poles spontaneously took up arms against the German troops stationed in the city. When Warsaw could not send troops to aid in the insurrection, Polish volunteer units formed and held off German troops arriving from other areas of the Prussian east. Fighting continued until mid-February, when the renewal of the Armistice at Trier redrew the lines of demarcation, placing Poznań outside German influence but keeping Upper Silesia within its boundaries.⁵⁵ Hoping to avoid another Posen in Upper Silesia, a coalition of *Grenzschutz* and *Freikorps* units attempted to keep the peace; within a few months they numbered between 70-80,000 strong, while the Polish response, the Polish Military Organization of Upper Silesia (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa Górnego Śląska*), soon counted about 12,000 members.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid, 65.

⁵⁵ Komarnicki, 241-6.

⁵⁶ Czapliński, "Dzieje Śląska," 358.

With Poznania in a state of war and the Victorious Powers intent on negotiating only with Dmowski's KNP in Paris, Piłsudski now tried to broker a compromise between his left-wing factions and the Endeks. He removed Moraczewski from power and named Paderewski Prime Minister on 18 January 1919; Paderewski also held the position of Foreign Minister and shortly thereafter returned to Paris to represent Poland in the peace talks. A week later, on 26 January, Poland held its first elections for the *Sejm* (Parliament). The result was a parliament split almost evenly between the Endeks, the Center and the Left. In February, the *Sejm* passed what became known as the "small" constitution, and by the end of the month the new Polish Republic was officially recognized by the Entente powers.⁵⁷

Despite this semblance of political security, in reality the situation in Poland was still chaotic as Piłsudski, Paderewski and others attempted to forge a new nation out of three disparate pieces. Industry was at a stand-still; multiple currencies were in circulation; those who had survived the war found themselves homeless, wandering the countryside and spreading disease.⁵⁸ Compounding the internal strife, Poland found itself engaged in several conflicts along its borders. In addition to the insurrection in Poznania, fighting had been occurring in Eastern Galicia since the beginning of November, when the Ukrainian National Council took control of Lwów and subsequently proclaimed the area part of the West Ukrainian People's Republic. Polish forces recaptured the city at the end of the month, although fighting continued until January 1919.⁵⁹ But the question of Poland's eastern border would soon provide the young nation an even greater challenge. In mid-February Poland and the Soviet Union blundered into

⁵⁷ Lukowski and Zawadzki, 196.

⁵⁸ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 23.

⁵⁹ Roos, 49-50.

war.⁶⁰ The fighting would continue until 1921 and included the famed “Miracle on the Vistula,” during which Piłsudski and his troops stopped the advancing Soviet forces at the gates of Warsaw. As will be discussed in the next part, German propaganda used the Polish-Soviet War to highlight Poland’s uncertainty and instability during the plebiscite period.

Meanwhile, in the wake of strikes, inter-party strife and violent uprisings, Germany was preparing for the elections to the National Assembly, set to be held on 19 January; elections to the Prussian *Landtag* were scheduled for the following week, on 26 January. The voting age was lowered from 25 to 20 years of age, and, for the first time, women were also granted the right to vote. The election was meant to mark the end of the chaos of revolution and a return to order. In Upper Silesia, the election was both an affirmation and a rejection of the new German Republic.

Before discussing the election in Upper Silesia, it is important to know its results on the national stage. National voter turnout was 83 percent, with the SPD carrying 38 percent of the electorate – enough to be the largest party, but not nearly enough to be the majority party, even if combined with the 7.5 percent won by the USPD. The Center and the newly-formed German Democratic Party (*Deutsche Demokratische Partei*, DDP) won 20 and 18.5 percent, respectively, making them the second and third largest parties represented in the Assembly; the successors of the old conservative nationalist parties, the German National People’s Party (*Deutschnational Volkspartei*, DNVP) and the German People’s Party (*Deutsche Volkspartei*, DVP), combined for a meager 15 percent.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Davies notes, “There was no declaration of war... It was more than a year before the combatants realized they had launched themselves into a major military conflict.” *White Eagle, Red Star*, 22.

⁶¹ Ruth Henig, *The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933* (London: Routledge, 1998), 12. The DNVP earned 10 percent to the DVP’s 4.5 percent.

The vast majority of voting Upper Silesians – over 80 percent – also voted for either the Catholic Center (which had renamed itself the Catholic People’s Party [*Katholische Volkspartei*, KVP])⁶² or SPD, although in different proportions than the national scale. But the key word here is *voting*. Only 59 percent of eligible Upper Silesians participated in the election.⁶³ The main reason for this low turnout was the Polish boycott of the election, called for by the NRL in Poznań. In a confidential meeting on 13 December, the NRL passed a unanimous declaration "that the Polish population of the Prussian partition would not participate in the elections to the German constitution."⁶⁴ Again, it must be pointed out that while Poznań had been a part of the Prussian partition in the late eighteenth century, Upper Silesia was not. Still, the resolution, when it was made public about two weeks later, included Upper Silesia. County election committees were ordered to “completely abstain from all electoral activities” and to hold meetings, in order to educate the Polish populace about why they should boycott the election.⁶⁵ The *Polska Powiatowa Rada Ludowa* (Polish County People’s Council) in Pleß reported back to the NRL on 5 January that they were ready to “begin agitation for abstaining from the German constitutional elections.”⁶⁶

The day before the election *Katolik* urged Poles to stay home, claiming, “[W]e want to belong to Poland and we will choose our representatives then.”⁶⁷ In another article printed the

⁶² Bjork, 208.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Edmund Klein, “Wybory do konstytuancy niemieckiej w styczniu 1919 r. na Górnym Śląsku,” *Studia Śląskie* 14, (1969): 53.

⁶⁵ Klein, “Wybory do konstytuancy niemieckiej,” 56.

⁶⁶ Za Polską Powiatową Radę Ludową, APK, Polski Komisariat Plebiscytowy, syg. 13.

⁶⁷ “O wyborach,” *Katolik*, 18 January 1919.

same day, the paper responded to a meeting, run by Catholic priests and Center Party leaders, designed to convince Polish Upper Silesians to vote Catholic in the election. One priest argued, “Even if the Poles had a grudge against German Catholics from earlier times, today it is their Christian duty to rush to the rescue when the neighbor's house is burning.”⁶⁸ To which the paper asked why this was always presented as a one-way street, with Poles expected to help the Germans in their hour of need, but no one admonishing the Germans for anti-Polish policies and actions. It was akin to “blow[ing] one’s fist through someone’s eyes... and then call[ing]: and now help me, because others want to beat me.” One the eve of the elections to the Prussian Landtag, from which the NRL also called on Poles to abstain, *Katolik* examined the morality of the boycott, asking, “Is it a sin to not vote?” The answer, according to the article, was an unequivocal “No.” While the NRL had not listed its motives for the boycott in its declaration, they are clearly examined here. Participating in the election “would give the Germans a dangerous weapon”⁶⁹ to use against the Poles. Germans could hold up Polish electoral participation at the Peace Conference as a sign that they wished to remain in Germany. A high voter turnout in Upper Silesia would not only give legitimacy to the vote for the National Assembly, but would also legitimize Germany’s claim that Upper Silesia should remain a part of Germany. While “Poles do not want to harm German Catholics,”⁷⁰ their participation in the election would be detrimental to what should be, in *Katolik*’s eyes, the primary goal of all Polish Upper Silesians – joining themselves and the region to Poland.

⁶⁸ “O wyborach do konstytuanty,” *Katolik*, 18 January 1919.

⁶⁹ “Czy Polak grzeszy, gdy nie idzie na wybory?,” *Katolik*, 25 January 1919.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

In the end, the Center and the SPD emerged as the dominant parties, winning 48 and 33 percent of the vote in the Oppeln Regency; the USPD, DDP and DNVP split the remaining electorate.⁷¹ But the more important aspect of the election is who did not vote, and where. Upper Silesia's 59 percent of voter turnout was 25 percentage points less than the national turnout.⁷² The discrepancy in participation is close to the percentage of those who voted for the Polish Party in the 1912 election (35 percent), indicating that the boycott was more or less successful. Proof of this can be found by looking at the results of individual counties and cities. For example, in Pleß and Rybnik, two Polish strongholds, voter turnout was a dismal 22 and 26 percent, respectively, while several counties, including Kreuzburg, which had consistently voted for German conservatives before the war, had voter turnout on par or better than the national average.⁷³ Also striking is the divide between city and county. Kattowitz, the city, had a turnout of 73 percent, while Kattowitz county registered a participation rate of 42 percent.⁷⁴ This trend of higher voter turnout in the large cities and lower in the surrounding counties held true for most of the industrial region, and was a sign of things to come. As will be seen in the plebiscite, the cities tended to vote to stay in Germany, while the counties largely went for Poland.

Convincing a quarter of likely Polish voters to abstain from participating in a German election is no mean feat. Still, almost 60 percent of Upper Silesians did vote – even though, according to the 1910 language census, this same percentage of the population was Polish. Even

⁷¹ Klein, "Wybory do konstytuancy niemieckiej," Table 1. Both the DDP and the DNVP received 7 percent of the vote, while the USPD earned 5 percent.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. Kreuzberg's turnout was 87 percent. Other districts recording turnout at or above the national average were Ratibor town, Oppeln town, Neustadt, Neisse county, Falkenberg, Grottkau and Leobschütz.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Hindenburg was the only town in which the USPD received the most votes, winning the election with 45 percent.

assuming that the entire 40 percent of eligible voters who did not cast a ballot were Polish, at least 20 percent of Polish Upper Silesians *did* decide to participate. As will be seen, 60 percent of Upper Silesians would also vote to stay with Germany in the 1921 plebiscite, indicating that a substantial part of the Upper Silesian community might consider themselves to be linguistically, culturally or even ethnically Polish, but preferred to remain German citizens.

“Poles! The war is coming to an end. The old world is dying, a new one is born.”⁷⁵ So proclaimed *Górnoślązak* on 17 November 1918. Indeed, it was a new world, one in which empires fell and new nation-states arose. As the revolutionary period came to an end in late winter 1919, it was not yet clear what the future held for Upper Silesia. While a considerable percentage of Polish Upper Silesians had boycotted the German Constituent election, indicating that they, given the chance, might prefer to become a part of the new Polish state, the number of Poles supporting the boycott was less than those who had voted for a Polish candidate in the last election, from 35 percent to 25 percent. A substantial portion of the Polish-speaking population still chose to vote in the German election. While the Catholic Center still reigned in Upper Silesia, it was the SPD that made the most gains, suggesting that the party, which never really had a strong foothold in the region, had finally acquired some traction. Meanwhile, the borders of the new Poland – and, by extension, the borders of Germany – were being debated in Paris, where Dmowski and Paderewski were working tirelessly to convince the Allied Powers there that Poznania, Pomerania and especially Upper Silesia were historically and ethnically Polish. Over the next twelve months, Upper Silesians would wrestle with the options for their future brought forth by this new world.

⁷⁵ “Polacy!”, *Górnoślązak*, 17 November 1918.

2. The Different Roads: Options for and Reactions to the Future of Upper Silesia

In the year after the end of the First World War, Upper Silesians found themselves faced with a myriad of options for their future. With the SPD leading the November Revolution and establishment of a new German state, and Piłsudski and his PPS leading the way in Poland, socialism finally appeared to be viable in the region – although Upper Silesians would have to pick between two competing national branches. While the ultimate decision about the region's fate would be made at the Versailles Peace Conference, nationalists worked to convince their supporters that Upper Silesia was undeniably German or Polish. For some, neither one of these new states were satisfying, and instead argued that Upper Silesia should be independent. As 1918 turned to 1919, Upper Silesians of all national and political stripes would have to decide down which road they wished to see their region go.

2.1: The Socialist Alternative(s)

“The Social Democrats, alone of all the parties, energetically fought the pernicious system of rule that led us into the abyss. The Social Democrats were the sharpest opponents to the war and sought to prevent it by all means.”⁷⁶ These were the opening remarks of an article appearing in *Volkswille*, an organ for the SPD, in early January 1919. Two weeks later, the *Gazeta Robotnicza* piece, “Down which Road?”, referenced at the beginning of this Part, would also extol the virtues of socialism. “We, as a party, as an organized working class, chose the hardest of the many possible roads, but at the same time the one which gives the greatest chance to undo all the issues standing before the Polish working class, as well as the entire nation.”⁷⁷ Both present the socialists as the only party which can lead the people to prosperity and safety.

⁷⁶ “Warum ich sozialdemokratisch wähle,” *Volkswille*, 5 Jan. 1919.

⁷⁷ “Po jakiej drodze?”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 14 January 1919.

“Because who actually could fulfill this role of national leader?”⁷⁸ asks *Gazeta Robotnicza*. For both it and *Volkswille*, the answer is clear: the socialists.

The newspapers, however, were not referencing the *same* socialism. There was not a unified socialist movement in Upper Silesia; instead, the parties of the left were fractured along national and, especially after December 1918, political lines. While the socialist movement writ large is international in its outlook, for the SPD and PPS in Upper Silesia, socialism was colored and influenced by national considerations. The German SPD, unlike the Spartacists, was looking to build social democracy in Germany and in the German context only. They advocated for a political, rather than social, revolution, and believed they had achieved that through the November Revolution. Likewise, the Polish PPS believed socialism, as opposed to the conservative Edneks, was the best path forward for Poland. Echoing Piłsudski, the PPS got off the socialist train at independence.

Socialism had never been strong in the region. Polish Upper Silesian workers were suspicious of the SPD, believing it to only represent German interests, and likewise distrusted the PPS for their previously close connection to the SPD. More importantly, these industrial workers were almost uniformly Catholic, and thus chose to cast their votes for the Center and place their trust in the ZZP, which was viewed as more patriotically Polish. The SPD was also small, for similar reasons; again, most German Upper Silesians also voted Center, and those Germans who did work in the industrial sector typically held management jobs; they toiled in the office, not in the mine shafts. Historian Petra Blachetta-Madajczyk places the number of members in the Upper Silesian SPD in 1907 at 600, while the PPS could claim only 500.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Petra Blachetta-Madajczyk, *Klassenkampf oder Nation?: Deutsche Sozialdemokratie in Polen 1918-1938* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1997), 29.

While Upper Silesia's future remained unknown, it was difficult for either the SPD or PPS to build a strong, functioning organization on the ground. However, by 1921 the SPD had grown to 8000 members, while the PPS positively exploded, boasting 40,000 members.⁸⁰ As was discussed above, the SPD made large gains in the 1919 election, winning a third of the votes cast in the boycotted election. This was more than double the 15 percent of total votes the socialist parties received in 1912. There are several possibilities for this upsurge. One is that, after over four years of war, Upper Silesians were looking to break with the old, conservative, Prussian system of government. The SPD, as leaders of the revolution, offered just that. On the Polish side, the workers who had gone on strike in November and December had done so in protest to the Kattowitz Agreement, which had been negotiated in part by the ZZP. This could have caused some of their faith in the Union to falter, making the PPS appear more attractive. While Catholicism and the Center still reigned supreme in Upper Silesia, socialism at last appeared to be a viable option for the region. The question facing Upper Silesians in early 1919 was not only whether they wanted the socialist alternative, but what kind of socialism.

In early 1919, the SPD and, to a lesser extent, the PPS aimed at recruiting new supporters to the socialist cause. This was especially true of the SPD, which was focused on the 19 January election of the National Assembly, the results of which were discussed above. *Volkswille* (*People's Will*) quickly became, as Blachetta-Madajczyk notes, the "mouthpiece of the SPD in Upper Silesia."⁸¹ First published in 1916 under the leadership of Otto Braun, *Volkswille* would not truly make its mark on the region until 12 December 1918, when Karl Okonsky began serving as editor. The daily was published in Kattowitz and soon reached a circulation of

⁸⁰ Blachetta-Madajczyk, *Klassenkampf oder Nation?*, 31.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 38.

70,000; its high-water mark would come in early 1921, with 250,000 subscriptions.⁸² *Gazeta Robotnicza*, the organ of the PPS, had a longer history, but its impact on the region, it can be argued, was less than that of its German counterpart. Founded in 1891 in Berlin, the newspaper moved its center of publication to Kattowitz in 1900.⁸³ Initially the paper had been subsidized by the SPD, although circulation of the paper was so low that, by 1912, these funds had become quite limited.⁸⁴ This coincided with increased tension between the SPD and PPS, which resulted in the PPS fully separating itself from the SPD and turning more towards Polish nationalism. This change is evident in *Gazeta Robotnicza*, which after 1913 was decidedly pro-Polish in its outlook. Circulation increased throughout the plebiscite period, peaking in 1921 with upwards of 40,000 subscriptions.⁸⁵

With little over a month between Okonsky assuming editorial responsibilities and the election to the National Assembly, *Volkswille* inundated its readers with articles aimed at convincing them to vote for the SPD. The SPD leadership during the November Revolution, while well-intentioned and comparatively benign, had been an undemocratic seizure of power. The Constituent elections, then, would be a return to the normal process of democracy. In order to truly shape Germany's future, the SPD would need a strong showing in the Constituent election. Upper Silesians needed to be convinced that the SPD best represented their interests, in order to mobilize support around the party. Referenced above, the 5 January article "Why I vote Social Democratic" listed the many virtues of the SPD. "Social Democracy represents the

⁸² Ibid, 39 and Bernard Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1945: Dokumentation und Strukturbeschreibung* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1993), 129. Okonsky would remain editor of *Volkswille* until 1924; the following year, he took over the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*.

⁸³ Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens*, 334.

⁸⁴ Tooley, *National Identity*, 19-20.

⁸⁵ Gröschel, 334.

interests of all working men;” this included those who toiled not only with their hands, but also with their minds – not just “workers in a strict sense, [but] employees, clerks, craftsmen, farmers, traders, etc.”⁸⁶ Freedom of thought and expression, as well as equal educational opportunities, are among the promises Social Democracy makes. “Therefore I vote Social Democratic,” the article concluded, “because Socialism means happiness, prosperity, satisfaction, higher morality, and personal freedom for all.”⁸⁷ In another short blurb, printed two days later, the paper asked its readers “In which party do you belong?” and warned them not to be fooled by the “new” parties which will appear on the ballot; these are, after all, simply the same old Reich parties, masquerading under new names.⁸⁸ The DVP “was mainly the previous National Liberal Party;” the KVP “was previously the Center.” “You belong in the Social Democratic Party (the only one that didn’t need to change its previous name). In this party men and women together belong.”⁸⁹

The reference to the inclusion of both men and women in the party is no doubt an obvious appeal to the new constituency of female voters. The National Assembly was the first election in which women could also participate, and the Socialist press worked hard to capture their vote.⁹⁰ Pre-war, the SPD was the only party which had advocated for women’s suffrage, and in the 1919 election argued that therefore the other parties were undeserving of their votes. Women owed their right to vote to the social democrats, and they were expected return this favor by voting for the party in the election. In the days leading up to the election, a number of articles

⁸⁶ “Warum ich sozialdemokratisch wähle,” *Volkswille*, 5 January 1919.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “In welche Partei gehörst Du?,” *Volkswille*, 7 January 1919.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ For a wider view of courting women’s votes, see: Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women’s Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

geared directly at women appeared in *Volkswille*. On 8 January, the paper explicitly linked women's rights with the other social rights gained in the revolution. The Socialist rebellion had defeated the "Junker economy" and "military monarchy"; "That they never rise again must be the work of women and mothers."⁹¹ Women, according to the piece, owed their right to vote exclusively to the SPD. The article claimed, "Their first act was the awarding of political suffrage to women."⁹² Because the SPD helped women, women must now help the SPD, mainly by becoming disciples of the party. "[Female] Comrades!" the article ended. "Recognize where your place is, clarify for all women, that they don't unknowingly help the enemies of freedom and lead them to us in the Social Democratic Party! Women, on!"⁹³ Another declared, "Use your right to vote, you women, which Social Democracy has made for you through revolution."⁹⁴

Quid pro quo was not the only appeal Socialists made to women. This last article, entitled "To the Mothers!", invoked the losses German women had experienced during the war. "Hark, you widows and mothers in mourning! Shake off your dark veil and brighten your face to life!"⁹⁵ Yes, their husbands and sons had died during the war, but the time for sorrow was over. The monarchy that had begun and waged the terrible war had been "swept away. Now the young Republic needs the shepherding power of mothers and women."⁹⁶ The horrors experienced during the war would never again occur in a social democratic republic – but to ensure this future, the party needed the support of the wives and mothers who had already sacrificed so

⁹¹ "Frauen heran!", *Volkswille*, 8 January 1919.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ "An die Mütter!", *Volkswille*, 5 January 1919.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

much. Indeed, the very fate of the party in the election depended on women and their votes. Another article argued, “That the Social Democratic Party should receive the majority in the National Assembly is in the hands of the women, and it is in their interest... Women, working women! The election comes to you.”⁹⁷ This piece again ended with a call to action for working women, emphasizing their importance to the new Germany: “Women are to help in the construction of the socialist Republic. Fulfill your duties, you working women, and help design the future of the people.”⁹⁸ Women are not only necessary for the establishment and success of the new German Republic; they have an almost sacred duty to support the SPD, both to repay the party for securing their right to vote, and also because, as mothers and wives, it was the best way to ensure the horrors of the war would not be repeated.

While it, too, participated in the boycott and was therefore not immediately preparing for an election, the PPS also attempted to draw Upper Silesians to the socialist cause. The PPS looked forward to the day Upper Silesia would be a part of Poland, and thus able to take part in Polish elections. Building a strong base now would enable the party to make a good showing in future Polish elections, whenever that may be. The biggest hurdle the party faced was reconciling Socialism with the vast majority of Polish Upper Silesians’ Catholic faith. This had been the main division in the pre-war years, as newspapers like *Katolik* had claimed it impossible for one to be both Catholic and Socialist. Now, though, it seemed there might be room for a détente between the two camps. On 18 January, *Gazeta Robotnicza* printed the open letter sent from Father Euzebiusz Stateczny to the paper’s longtime editor, Józef Biniszkiewicz. Stateczny’s letter places Catholicism above Socialism and argued that the former is inextricably

⁹⁷ “Frauen! Arbeiterinnen!”, *Volkswille*, 4 January 1919.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

ted to Polish nationalism. Still, he encouraged Catholics and Socialists to work together towards a new Poland. “Polish Socialism,” he wrote, “cannot be disconnected from our Polish nationality and Catholic faith.” He imagined a Poland in which “Poles live and work beside Germans and Jews, Socialists beside Catholics... Poland is Catholic, but it is not only Catholic, but also tolerant.”⁹⁹ There is room in the new Poland, according to Stateczny, for both Catholics and Socialists, although his emphasis on the ties between Catholicism and Polish nationalism, and the subtle equivalence of Germans and Jews to Socialists suggests that he views Socialism as a foreign element – one which can be tolerated and even welcomed in Poland, but never truly considered Polish. It is interesting, then, that his last line in the letter stated, “Let us be brothers of one mother!”¹⁰⁰ The letter was reprinted unabridged, with Biniszkiewicz offering only a short post-script: “The above letter by a living Catholic priest shows clearly that a good Catholic can be a Socialist.”¹⁰¹ This, of course, was not quite what Stateczny was arguing; it was, however, the message Biniszkiewicz wanted and needed. In order to draw more Polish Upper Silesians to the PPS, they must be assured that their Catholicism would not be threatened. A letter of endorsement from a member of the Catholic clergy would, presumably, go a long way in accomplishing this goal.

The PPS urged Socialists and Catholics to come together in order to further the Polish national cause, which was given precedence. Reaching across national lines to their fellow German Socialists, however, was out of the question; it seems nationalism trumped class politics for the PPS. Articles in *Gazeta Robotnicza* and in the non-Socialist press present German

⁹⁹ “Niech żyje Polska,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 18 January 1919.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Socialism as anti-Polish, or allied with the far-left Bolshevik and Spartacus movements.

“Bolshevism and Poland” claimed that it is “in Bolshevik Russia’s interest to form a close alliance with Revolutionary Germany, to help the Spartacus [Movement] gain power.”¹⁰²

Górnoślązak, in “The Polish Socialist Party in Upper Silesia,” urged Polish Upper Silesians to leave the PPS, which was tainted by its former connection with the SPD, and join the ZZP instead.¹⁰³

German Socialists, in contrast, were much more willing, at least in the press, to stress the connection between the SPD and the PPS. In “Poles and German Socialism,” *Volkswille* quoted the Polish newspaper *Dziennik Bydgoski*, whose article claimed Germans aimed to keep Poles “at bay,” and that the SPD “may not dream of ever gaining broad masses of Polish workers for their ideas.”¹⁰⁴ Not true, asserted *Volkswille*. “The ideas of German Socialist workers are no different than those of the Polish Socialists could be, if they want to be regarded as true disciples of Socialism.”¹⁰⁵ It should not matter the nationality, because Socialism is international in its outlook. By placing the nation above class, Polish Socialists were not acting as “true disciples.” In fact, the article even offered a glancing blow against the PPS, noting, “The strong inclination of Polish comrades to national goals has obscured this fact.”¹⁰⁶ Now that a new Polish state will be formed, though, hopefully they will drop these nationalist goals and “German and Polish workers will again unite in Socialism.”

¹⁰² “Bolszewicy a Polska,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 25 January 1919.

¹⁰³ “Polska partya socjalistyczna na Górnym Śląsku,” *Górnoślązak*, 9 January 1919.

¹⁰⁴ “Polen und der deutsche Sozialismus,” *Volkswille*, 1 August 1919.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

This difference in national acceptance is not surprising. It was the German SPD which needed the Poles, not the other way around. That is, the SPD needed to stress that German and Polish Socialism were united, in order to persuade Upper Silesian Poles to join the SPD. Though perhaps culturally or ethnically Polish, these workers were still citizens of Germany, and thus could be used to bolster the strength of the SPD, sieving off votes from the Catholic Center, not to mention serve as proof that Upper Silesia wished to remain German. Of course, they had to do this while still appealing to the German-speakers who already supported them. As the above article illustrates, the way around this potential problem was to present the Poles' faith in the PPS as misplaced and naïve. The SPD would show them the right way to be socialist – something the Germans in the party already knew. The PPS, however, could win more support by pointing to the SPD as an opponent, if not an out-right enemy. Especially with a new Polish state established, Polish Socialists were looking to close ranks and nurture a strong Socialist movement that served the specifically Polish national cause.

The Socialist movement in Upper Silesia, then, was split along national lines, with the SPD and the PPS each looking to expand their base and influence in the region. Especially in the opening weeks of 1919, the SPD was concerned primarily with winning votes for the election to the National Assembly. Both the SPD and the PPS had to contend with the strength of the Catholic Center, or the KVP, as it was now known. For the SPD, this was a political contest, while the PPS strove to prove Poles could be good Catholics *and* good Socialists; these identities were no longer exclusive. With the dominance of the SPD on the German national scale, and the rapid growth of both the SPD and PPS in Upper Silesia, a Socialist path was a definite alternative for Upper Silesians.

2.2: The National Choice

While the Socialists looked towards the future, those in the German and Polish nationalist camps focused on the past – ironic, given that the old German *Reich* no longer existed, and the new Polish republic was still being born. Both sides turned to the past, often wading deep into history, in order to justify Upper Silesia staying with Germany or being incorporated into Poland. Arguments about future economic prospects, which would play a large role in the plebiscite, were not cited in the newspaper articles which appeared in late 1918 and early 1919. Instead, both the German and Polish national press seemed to take it as a given that Upper Silesia belonged to their respective national camps. The Peace Conference in Versailles, where the actual decision regarding Upper Silesia’s future was to be made, was rarely mentioned.

Already in its December 1918 edition, when both the new German and Polish governments were still being established, the monthly magazine *Oberschlesien* asked whether Upper Silesia was Polish or German: “This is the question: Should Upper Silesia remain with the German *Reich* or become incorporated into the new Polish state?”¹⁰⁷ The question, of course, was facetious; the answer, made painstakingly obvious in the seven-page article, was that Upper Silesia clearly belonged with Germany.

The article dove deep into the region’s history, attempting to discern whether the original inhabitants of the area were German or Polish. Poles claim their ancestors were the first settlers, and thus “this gives them the right to demand the Polish Earth of Upper Silesia for themselves.” The article immediately refuted this idea: “Let’s look closer at this point. Were Poles really the first residents of our land? History knows otherwise.” This history stretched back to the “fourth or fifth century,” as both the “meager notes of Greco-Roman writers” and “numerous grave

¹⁰⁷ “Oberschlesien polnisch oder deutsch?”, *Oberschlesien*, December 1918.

sites” supported the claim that the first inhabitants were, indeed, “Germans, originally Luggii, later Vandals.” While these were “probably [a] plain, simple people,” they were “no crude barbarians, as they earlier wanted to make us believe.” The “they” to whom the article refers are likely Polish nationalists, trying to down-play the importance of civility of these early Germans.

From here, the article lays out the history of the region, admitting that while Poles did live in Upper Silesia in the Middle Ages, after Frederick the Great annexed the region, “a new immigration of Germans began” who were responsible for the great cultural and industrial accomplishments of the area. Now, citing the Wilsonian principle of national self-determination, “the Poles today require the annexation of Upper Silesia to the Polish kingdom. Do they have a right to do so? The history says no.” In what will be a repeated sentiment throughout the plebiscite period, the article claimed, “What Upper Silesia is today, it owes, as we have seen, to Germanism, and it alone.”

Only in its closing lines did the article refer to the new Polish state, calling it “unstable” and declaring Upper Silesia should not be “plunged into this chaos” in which “countless victims [would] be sacrificed.” This was a reference to the violence still occurring in Poland’s eastern borderlands. After a centuries-spanning history lesson, the article returned to its initial question: “And the question, which we put forth at the beginning of this essay: Upper Silesia, Polish or German? Can only be answered: German!”

Several months later, the magazine would again return to using ancient history to support Germany’s claim to the land, this time in an article written by Gustaf Kossinna, one of Germany’s premier archaeology professors.¹⁰⁸ In “The German Eastern Marches, an ancient

¹⁰⁸ For more on Kossinna, his nationalistic reading of archaeology, and how this was used by the Nazis, see: Bettina Arnold, “The Past as Propaganda,” *Archeology* 45, no. 4 (July/August 1992): 30-37.

homeland of the Germans,”¹⁰⁹ which *Oberschlesien* printed in its March 1919 edition, Kossinna argued the Eastern Marches, which he lists as including “West Prussia, Posen [and] Silesia” had Germans as “ancient occupants.” These lands were not conquered by “militarism and imperialism;” Kossinna called these “lying slogans.” Instead, ancient Germandom won them “only by virtue of its purely peaceful operation, its purely culture-bringing creativity.” This “cultural creativity” would have a lasting impact on the region, one which could not be swept away even after “500 years of Slavic rule,” which Kossinna dismissed as only “an episode” in the region’s history.

What is most interesting about Kossinna’s article is that it introduced two important arguments that would be used by the German side during the plebiscite period. The first, which was echoed in “Upper Silesia, Polish or German?”, is the importance of German culture in the region. As will be discussed below, the German representatives at Versailles would make this argument when presented with the first draft of the peace treaty, claiming that all of Upper Silesia’s “cultural and industrial accomplishments,” to again quote from the *Oberschlesien* article, were German in nature. Without the ancient Germans, Upper Silesia would be a rural backwater, not a thriving industrial center.

Second, Kossinna was also adamant that these lands were taken through a peaceful spread of culture, not “militarism and imperialism.” In the immediate post-war period and especially during the plebiscite period, the new Weimar Republic would work hard to distance itself from these two terms, often directly associated with the old, warmongering *Kaiserreich* and Prussianism. Instead, plebiscite propaganda would depict the new Germany as a social republic, at peace with itself and the world. Polish propaganda, however, would continue to brand

¹⁰⁹ “Die deutsche Ostmark, ein Urheimatboden der Germanen,” *Oberschlesien*, March 1919.

Germany with the sins of “militarism and imperialism;” Germans in cartoons and other illustrations were often identified by their military dress.

The Polish nationalist camp, spearheaded by *Katolik*, also used history and the subsequent cultural contributions of Silesia’s inhabitants to prove that the land was naturally Polish. In early January, the newspaper took on Germany’s historical claims directly, in “Did Silesia Belong to Germany for 600 Years?” “No one,” the article began, “who knows the history of Silesia will, with conscientious conviction, claim that Silesia has belonged to Germany for six hundred years.”¹¹⁰ That Germans claim otherwise, either in newspapers or at rallies, proves that “either they don’t know Silesian history, or they don’t write or speak the truth.” The article proceeded to give a history of the region in the Middle Ages, particularly the fourteenth century, when Silesia was ruled by Polish princes. To claim otherwise, the article concluded, has been done “in order to deceive the people.” A follow-up appeared in *Katolik* sixteen days later, on 18 January. Almost double the length of the original article, this one offered a more in-depth history of the region in the 1300s, including a detailed discussion of Kazimierz the Great. While some German papers might claim that Silesia was no longer Polish after 1163, *Katolik* argued that, while true that Silesia had its own princes, it still belonged to Poland. In fact, the article argued, even after the region had become a part of the Bohemian kingdom, “even the Czech kings sometimes called it Polish.”¹¹¹

The titles of these articles are a bit deceiving, and likely were selected because of the controversy they would cause. In reading the articles, it becomes clear that “the German newspapers and rallies” – exact quotes are never included – were not so much claiming that

¹¹⁰ “Czy Śląsk należy od 600 lat do Niemiec?”, *Katolik*, 2 January 1919.

¹¹¹ “Czy Śląsk należy od 600 lat do Niemiec?”, *Katolik*, 18 January 1919.

Silesia had belonged to the German *Reich* for over six hundred years, but rather that the territory had not been a part of the Polish kingdom since the Middle Ages. Silesia had been passed first from the Bohemians to the Habsburgs, with Frederick the Great claiming it in 1742. “On Polish Silesia,” published 1 March, finally seemed to recognize this, tacitly admitting that Silesia was not always a part of Poland. “But even if,” it proclaimed, “one for a thousand years has someone else’s property, it will not become his rightful property.”¹¹² That is, even though Silesia might not have been an official part of it, its historical and cultural roots still connected it to Poland. Most curious, the article conceded, “No unprejudiced researcher can deny that all of Silesia was a Polish country, and that a great part has been Germanized.” However, “most of Upper Silesia was miraculously saved from Germanization.” In the previous articles discussed, and in most of the others from this time period, Silesia is referenced as a whole; distinctions are not made between Lower, Middle and Upper Silesia. Yet here, *Katolik* divided the area. This was likely done with an eye towards the Paris Peace Conference and the decisions being made there. While Lower and Middle Silesia might have been lost to Germanization, Upper Silesians remained true to their Polish roots; this was, after all, the “Polish Silesia” to which the title referred.

The Polish papers also directly addressed the German claim that they were responsible for the area’s culture. “Germany claims...that without them, Silesia would be, if not entirely, at least a half-wild country, as we would be without education, without morals, without science, without property, without almost anything,”¹¹³ declared the 11 January article, entitled “Some things about our and German culture.” Of course, the article scoffed, this isn’t true: “No, a hundred times no!” It was the Poles, not the Germans, who first settled Silesia, who built the

¹¹² “O Śląsk polski,” *Katolik*, 1 March 1919.

¹¹³ “Niecóż o kulturze naszej i niemieckiej,” *Katolik*, 11 January 1919.

towns and cleared the fields. “It was the first and most important culture of this land, and the lives of the people on it. Therefore, this land henceforth rightfully belongs to the Poles.” Again, we see the importance of history in determining “rightful” ownership of the land. Much as Kossinna referred to the five hundred years of Polish rule as “an episode,” so, too, does *Katolik* downplay the importance of German rule in the region. “Germany can never say that the whole culture was theirs exclusively; the culture of Silesia’s first centuries...is exclusively Polish.” The article almost immediately contradicted itself, stating, “Henceforth, we have in Silesia two cultures, German and Polish,” but “the Polish population still retains its good old Polish culture.”

“Retaining Polish culture” had been a common cry among the Polish nationalists in the late nineteenth century, when Polish parents were urged to “teach [their] children to read and write in Polish.” Such sentiments returned immediately after the war’s end and during the plebiscite period. In an article printed in both *Katolik* and *Górnoślązak*, parents were again implored to raise their children as good Poles. This included not only language – “Remember that when your child learns to read and write in Polish, only then will they become a child of the Motherland and a member of the Polish nation,”¹¹⁴ – but also raising the children as Catholics. “Polish parents! Show that you are Poles, by way of your mother tongue, by way of your Holy Faith.”¹¹⁵ Downplayed during the war, the connection between Polishness and Catholicism came back with a vengeance in the immediate post-war period.

Both German and Polish nationalists appealed to a deep sense of history. With no clear line of continuity, both sides looked to the ancient past to justify their claims in the present. Cultural contributions were also stressed, with nationalists on either side claiming their people

¹¹⁴ “Do rodziców polskich,” *Katolik*, 1 February 1919.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

had made the most lasting impact on the region and its inhabitants. Arguments of history and culture would again be used during the plebiscite period. In many ways, these arguments were ‘preaching to the choir.’ It is unlikely that neither German nor Polish nationalists believed they could turn the opposition to their side. Instead, the papers were more interested, to use a horribly 21st century term, in firing up their base. By encouraging their supporters to agitate for either Germany or Poland, the papers hoped to convince the Victorious Powers in Versailles that Upper Silesia belonged to them, for it was there that any real decision about their region’s fate would be made.

2.3: “Upper Silesia for Upper Silesians”: The Autonomist Movement

In the fall of 1918, centuries-old borders were suddenly in flux. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed eight months early on 3 March, had transferred a vast swath Eastern Europe from Russian to German control, and would be undone in the aftermath of the Western Front’s Armistice. A full two weeks before the Armistice, on 28 October, Czechoslovakia declared independence, and, as discussed above, Poland returned to the map on 11 November. But neither of these new countries – one reconstituted, one entirely new – had definitively established borders. These would eventually be set – in many cases a few years down the road, in rooms hundreds of miles away, by men who had never visited the region – but in the immediate weeks and months after the end of the First World War there was a kind of heady chaos in East Central Europe. If old nations could be brought back to life, and new ones created whole-cloth, if U.S. President Woodrow Wilson himself was advocating for national self-determination, then who was to say that a small area of mixed ethnicity could not also declare its own independence?

The Upper Silesian autonomous movement – movements, really – was a messy affair. Historian Andrea Schmidt-Rosler has noted that it “remained largely inhomogenous, without a

firm political program and without structure.”¹¹⁶ Indeed, it is hard to pin down a set program, as the goals of autonomy (*Autonomie/autonomia*) and independence (*Selbstständigkeit/samodzielność*) ranged from cultural autonomy (mainly allowing the Catholic Church to maintain its preeminent position in the region), political autonomy (separating Upper Silesia from Prussia and establishing it as its own province (*Bundesstaat*) within Germany) or outright political independence (the establishment of new Upper Silesian state). Self-preservation, in addition to or rather than self-determination, was the leading motivation behind the cause. Fear of both the new Polish state and the revolutionary unrest in Berlin led the Breslau *Volksrat*, dominated by the MSPD and DDP, to consider separating from Germany and forming, along with some southern German states, an independent confederation. Paul Löbe, the chairman of the Silesian SPD, went so far as to declare on 24 November, “If a coup were to take the Spartacusists in power, we would have to make ourselves independent.”¹¹⁷ The announcement a few days later, that a date had been set for elections to the National Assembly, indicated that, for the time being, the revolution would not tip over into radical Bolshevism, allaying the fears of most of the members of the Breslau *Volksrat*.

Simultaneously, another group also began to advocate for Silesian – and specifically Upper Silesian – autonomy and independence, and it was this movement, of the various calls for separatism and autonomy, that would have the largest and most lasting impact on the region. The movement’s earliest supporters were the Catholic land barons and titans of industry, who looked at the choice of rule from Berlin (Socialist) and rule from Warsaw (Socialist and Polish)

¹¹⁶ Andrea Schmidt-Rösler, “Autonomie- und Separatismusbestrebungen in Oberschlesien 1918-1922,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 48, (1999): 9.

¹¹⁷ Günther Doose, *Die separatistische Bewegung in Oberschlesien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg (1918-1922)*. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 13. See also: Edmund Klein, “Niemieckie plany separatystyczne na Śląsku w listopadzie i grudniu 1918r.” *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* 138, (1971): 3-45.

and found them both to be lacking. The movement received a boost on 13 November, when Adolf Hoffmann, the Prussian Minister of Culture and leading member of the USPD, issued his decrees for separation of church and state; school prayer and religious holidays were to be outlawed, as were compulsory religious courses and religion as an examination subject. The Catholic Center immediately decried these decrees as a second *Kulturkampf*; historian Edmund Klein notes that the centerpiece of the Center's program in late November was devoted to defending the Catholic faith and church from the "atheistic socialist Berlin government."¹¹⁸ The separatists were also quick to use the decrees to rally support behind their own agenda, arguing that only through autonomy or independence could Upper Silesians guarantee that their cultural peculiarities – in particular the Catholic Church – would remain intact. It was a message targeted at the Polish-speakers in the region, who associated the Catholic Church and religious education with Polish national rights. By the end of November, the two main groups advocating autonomy – the Loslau group, led by Ewald Latacz, and the Gliwice group, led by the Reginek brothers – had come together to form one movement that, for the moment at least, had the same singular goal in mind.¹¹⁹

Both Latacz and the Regineks came from the same milieu – Catholic, well educated, culturally and linguistically German, but with a healthy disregard for the politics in Berlin. Born in 1885, Latacz, as historian Rudolf Vogel puts it, "came from an old Upper Silesian family."¹²⁰ His father, a school teacher, rose to serve in the Prussian Landtag – the first Upper Silesian of his

¹¹⁸ Edmund Klein, "Miarodajne czynniki niemieckie a sprawa Górnego Śląska w grudniu 1918 roku," *Studia Śląskie* 13, (1968): 63.

¹¹⁹ Rudolf Vogel, "Deutsche Presse und Propaganda des Abstimmungskampfes in Oberschlesien" (PhD diss., Philosophie Fakultät der Universität Leipzig, 1931), 54-60; Ralph Schattkowsky, "Separatism in the Eastern Provinces of the German Reich at the End of the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 29, (1994): 305-324, esp. 305-7; Doose, 13-18.

¹²⁰ Vogel, 55.

profession to do so. Latacz attended the University of Breslau, earning a law degree from there in 1908. During the war he worked in the Office of Wartime Economy in Rybnik, where he cultivated the ties with Upper Silesia's economic leaders he would later need to support his autonomous movement. When revolution broke out in November 1918, Latacz became the Chairman of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council in Loslau.¹²¹

The Reginek brothers, Jan (born 1879) and Tomasz (born 1887), were two of ten children born to a farmer in a small town roughly ten miles north of Oppeln. While both were educated in the German gymnasium system, the Regineks, unlike Latacz, were more inclined towards Polish nationalism and culture. Jan, a schoolteacher, became the Chairman of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Ratibor. Tomasz, a priest, had served as an army chaplain in a prisoner of war camp near Stettin/Szczecin, and had recently returned to Beuthen.¹²² Of the two, Tomasz seems to have cast a larger shadow and played a more influential role in the autonomous movement than his brother.

Roughly two weeks after Hoffmann's decrees, on 26 November, the Regineks met with two representatives of Upper Silesia's large industry, two men whose, as Tomasz would later recall, "exemplary social reforms [...] made them fit for the Upper Silesian popular movement [*Volksbewegung*]."¹²³ Shortly after securing their financial support, Father Reginek and a few others travelled to Prague, seeking to gain international support for the movement. Highly-industrialized Czechoslovakia could possibly prove to be an important consumer of Upper Silesian coal, but more importantly, the Regineks wanted to determine Czechoslovakia's own

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Mieczysław Pater, *Słownik Biograficzny Katolickiego Duchowieństwa Śląskiego XIX I XX Wieku* (Katowice: Księgarnia Św. Jacka, 1996), 345.

¹²³ Tomasz Reginek, *Die oberschlesische Frage: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer Geschichte und Lösung* (1921), 4.

designs on the region. A small portion of southeastern Upper Silesia, known as Cieszyn, was already being eyed by both Poland and Czechoslovakia. In late November, there was a real fear that either one of these new nations might take the Upper Silesian coal fields by force.

Independence was seen as a safe-guard against this. Father Reginek notes that “one must be astonished...at how much interest”¹²⁴ Prime Minister Karel Kramar showed in the idea of an independent Upper Silesia. According to Father Reginek, Kramar expressed a desire for the “newly established small states”¹²⁵ to economically align and promised to take the case to the Victorious Powers in Paris. A week later, a second group travelled back to Prague, this time meeting with President Tomas Masaryk. In both cases, Father Reginek’s recollection of the meetings seem to be rosier than the reality. While the Czechs might have politely entertained the Upper Silesians, they were never going to promise anything without thorough consultation with the Victorious Powers. Realizing that international support was unlikely to materialize, the Regineks’ Gliwice group officially met with Latacz’s Loslau group in early December and began a grassroots effort to shore up local support.

In the first week of December, brochures and placards advocating Upper Silesian independence began to appear in newspapers and towns throughout the region. One, appearing on 9 December in Beuthen in both German and Polish, was reprinted the next day in *Katolik*; the paper snidely noted it is “giv[ing] [it] verbatim, with all the mistakes in the Polish version.”¹²⁶ “Silesia, an independent Republic!” it announced. Perhaps most importantly, the placard

¹²⁴ Ibid, 5-6.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ “Ostatnie wiadomości: Śląsk dla siebie?”, *Katolik*, 10 December 1918.

declared that “the relationship between church and state cannot be shaken,” again stressing the need for an independent Upper Silesia to protect its relationship with the Catholic Church.

It was becoming clear to Berlin that the situation in Upper Silesia could easily spiral out of control. A meeting on 28 December was called specifically to discuss “the Upper Silesian question.” Friedrich Ollendorf, representing the Breslau *Volksrat*, began the meeting by stating, “The situation in Upper Silesia has intensified in the last week” and that the Catholic center had “strongly exploited” the separation of church and state.¹²⁷ In the wake of this, the autonomous movement had begun to gain traction. The Breslau *Volksrat* was scheduled to hold a meeting in two days, on 30 December, to discuss this as well as the Polish and Czechoslovak designs on the region. Ollendorf stated that the presence of a member of the Council, as well as a member of the Prussian government, at the meeting might go a long way to dissuade the people that autonomy or independence was a viable option. Ebert agreed that “something must be done to keep Upper Silesia in the empire [*beim Reiche*]” and decreed that representatives from the Council and Prussian government would attend the Breslau meeting.¹²⁸

Two days later, Father Reginek and Latacz argued their case for an autonomous Upper Silesia. Father Reginek stated that, while most Upper Silesians did not wish to join with Poland, they were “averse” to Germany – mainly Prussia. Should the populace be made to vote, the fear was they would choose Poland.¹²⁹ For this reason, some kind of split was necessary to protect Upper Silesia from falling to Poland.

¹²⁷ Miller and Potthoff, 55.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 72.

¹²⁹ Speeches found in Klein, “Miarodajne,” 144-5.

Latacz made a similar point in his speech. “Gentlemen,” he began. “I would like to state from the outset that I am a native Upper Silesian, a genuine Upper Silesian, grown from Upper Silesian earth. I want to state that I can speak Polish, but I am fully German-minded and want to further state, that I am decidedly against any separation.”¹³⁰ Strange words, from the leader of the separatist movement. But Latacz would go on to spell out exactly why some kind of separation from Germany and Prussia was imperative for Upper Silesia’s survival. To start, Latacz claimed that if Upper Silesia were to vote on its fate, of “the part right of the Oder – that is, the essential and important part, the Industrial region – at a minimum 80 percent would speak out for joining with Poland...[I]t could possibly be 90 percent.”¹³¹ It is doubtful these stats were ever accurate, and in fact, the future plebiscite would prove Latacz to be wrong about this, but both he and Father Reginek stressed that the majority of the population would betray Germany/Prussia and vote for Poland. Latacz leaves little room for arguments here, repeating throughout that he is a native Upper Silesian and that those outsiders from Berlin, and even Breslau, do not know enough to have a firm understanding of the region. He went on to explain that Upper Silesians are a mixed people [*Mischvolk*], a combination of their Slav, German and Czech heritage,¹³² but that “Upper Silesia owes its entire well-being to Germany. This...will have to be acknowledged by any rational, thinking person in Upper Silesia. But it has been said that the greater part of Upper Silesians is not rational, and the unreasonable ones are the great masses of the Upper Silesian people.”¹³³ These people will allow their hatred of the past forty

¹³⁰ Ibid, 145.

¹³¹ Ibid, 146.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid, 148.

years of “Hakatist and Germanization politics”¹³⁴ to cloud their judgement and will vote for joining with Poland. Warned Latacz, “As soon as an *Anschluss* with Poland occurs, Upper Silesia will be ruined.”¹³⁵ Separating Upper Silesia from Germany, then, was “self-defense.”¹³⁶ It was the only to ensure Upper Silesia did not fall to Poland, and could maintain its close ties to and orientation towards Germany.

These arguments did not sway the Breslau *Volksrat* completely, but a consensus was reached that something had to be done to appease the region. The main source of upset for most was the Hoffmann Decrees, and so the *Volksrat* issued the Breslau Resolutions, essentially undoing them in the region. There would be no separation of church and state; religious instruction in one’s mother tongue would continue. Other concessions, such as filling governmental positions with Polish-speaking Catholics, were also included, although ultimately ignored.¹³⁷

What the Breslau Resolutions did do, though, was take a bit of the wind from the separatists’ sails. Moderate Catholics, satisfied that the Catholic Church and religious instruction would be protected, pulled their support for outright Upper Silesian independence. Still, Latacz and the Regineks formed the Upper Silesians’ League (*Bund der Oberschlesier*) in January 1919. The League would remain a presence in the region up until the plebiscite, and even beyond, but outright independence was never truly an option for the region. But, in the closing weeks of 1918, when anything seemed possible, autonomy and independence was yet another road down which Upper Silesians could have travelled.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 146.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 149.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 116-7.

3. The Path Determined: The Allied Decision and its Impact on Upper Silesia

In the immediate weeks and months following the Armistice, Upper Silesia found itself faced with several options for its future. Socialists, Polish and German nationalists, even autonomists, all vied for support among the populace. By summer, however, it was clear that it did not really matter which of the above choices most appealed to the majority of Upper Silesians. Their future had already been decided for them, almost one thousand miles away, at the Paris Peace Conference. At a Conference attended by hundreds of men from dozens of nations as far-flung as China, Cuba and Australia, the Polish question, and its important corollary, the Upper Silesian conundrum, would become one of the most heavily contested debates. Initially given outright to Poland, in the final draft of the Versailles Treaty the future of the region was to be made in one of several plebiscites held throughout East Central Europe.

The decision pleased no one – not the Germans to whom the land currently belonged, not the Poles to whom it had been promised. In Upper Silesia this delayed decision allowed tensions between German- and Polish-speakers, already at a strong simmer, to boil over completely. By mid-August the region was engulfed in violence as striking Polish miners and German security authorities clashed, resulting in the First Silesian Uprising. Peace returned by the end of the month, but it was fragile and fraught with tension. Then, in November, Upper Silesians would return to the polls once more, in an election that both German and Polish advocates framed as a prelude to the plebiscite. Once again, though, decisions were taken out of the Upper Silesians' hands, as Inter-Allied Commission troops, comprised mainly of French soldiers, arrived in early 1920. They were charged with protecting the peace until the plebiscite – the date for which had not yet even been set.

3.1: The Peace Treaty at Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles, according to David Lloyd George, Britain's Prime Minister and one of the primary authors of the document, was "the most absurd and least perused document in history."¹³⁸ Ostensibly a series of five peace treaties ending the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference redrew the maps of East Central Europe, Africa and the Middle East, tearing down old empires and giving rise to new nations. History has not looked fondly on the Treaty, remembering it mainly for establishing a Europe in which the radical right was able to co-opt power. But for six months in 1919, the Big Four – Wilson, Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau and Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando – attempted to create a new world order, one guided by Wilson's own idealized version of liberal democracy. They would soon discover, as Clemenceau complained, "It is much easier to make war than peace."¹³⁹

The Paris Peace Conference and the resulting Treaty of Versailles have their own extensive historiography, and as such the details of the overall conference will not be discussed here.¹⁴⁰ Instead, the focus will remain on establishing the borders of the new Poland. In this respect, negotiations started well before the Conference began – indeed, even before the end of the war. In March 1917, in the aftermath of the February Revolution in Russia, Dmowski had approached British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour about Poland's place in post-war Europe. In order to provide a bulwark against Bolshevik Russia and to keep Germany sufficiently weak, Dmowski wrote, Poland "must be economically independent of Germany, especially with regard

¹³⁸ Ferdinand Czerin, *Versailles, 1919: The Forces, Events and Personalities that Shaped the Treaty* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1964), v.

¹³⁹ MacMillan, xxx.

¹⁴⁰ For literature, see: Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour, eds., *What Really Happened at Paris: the Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919, by American Delegates* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976); Klaus Schwabe, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany and Peacemaking, 1918-1919: Missionary Diplomacy and the Realities of Power*, trans. Rita and Robert Kimber (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

to access to the sea and *possession of the Silesian coal mines.*”¹⁴¹ Dmowski did not call for a return of Poland’s 1772 borders, as these both included lands in which Poles were now a minority, such as the eastern borderlands that would eventually become the Baltic nations and Belorussia, and excluded areas where Poles were in the majority – namely the Prussian east and Upper Silesia.¹⁴² In August 1918 he joined Paderewski in the United States, and the two met with Wilson on 13 September to discuss Poland’s future borders. In the meeting and in discussions afterward the two Poles stressed the importance of Prussian Poland, including especially the Silesian coalmines, for the economic future of the new Polish state.¹⁴³

The Peace Conference officially opened on 18 January 1919, although the Big Four had already started informal discussions during the past month.¹⁴⁴ As elected officials from democratic nations, Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau all agreed on the importance of promoting liberal democracy and the new doctrine of national self-determination. It was over how these lofty ideals were to be executed that they argued. The European leaders held no small resentment towards Wilson, the first sitting American president to visit Europe, and the American delegation, who seemed to have arrived just in time to save Europe from itself. The issue of Germany’s treatment also divided the men. Clemenceau was the most vocal proponent of meting out harsh punishment and supported moves to cripple Germany economically, advocating for the Saar and the Rhineland to be placed under French occupation. A strong Poland would help to counter Germany’s presence in the east, and to this end he also supported Dmowski’s borders. According to historian Piotr S. Wandycz, “Security on the Vistula

¹⁴¹ Lundgreen-Nielsen, 33. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴² Ibid, 33-4.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 37-9.

¹⁴⁴ See MacMillan, 3-53.

complemented security on the Rhine, and the more Germany was weakened in the east, the less menace she offered on the west.”¹⁴⁵ Lloyd George, however, was less inclined to reduce Germany to a second-tier power only to have France assume hegemonic control over the Continent. While he wished for Germany to suffer for the war it had unleashed, Lloyd George also wanted to one day welcome it back into the fold of European nations. To this end the British delegation urged moderation on the issue of reparations and, as will be seen, were the main impetus behind a series of plebiscites held to determine the German-Polish border.¹⁴⁶

After the official opening, the Big Four returned to their respective homes for a few weeks before gathering again in late March and setting to work on drafting the peace treaty with Germany. Entwined with this were the borders of Poland, as this would determine how much territory would be taken from Germany. Dmowski and Paderewski had already successfully convinced the Victorious Powers that Upper Silesia belonged to Poland. Now they needed to resolve Wilson’s promise to give Poland access to the sea, which would not only require an area of Prussian Poland to be ceded to the new state but also separate East Prussia from the rest of Germany. On 21 March the Polish Commission, presenting to the Big Four, advocated that Danzig be given outright to Poland, while the fate of Allenstein/Olsztyn would be determined by plebiscite. Lloyd George noted that Marienwerder/Kwidzyn, with a majority German population, had also been given outright to Poland and asked if some other arrangement could be made.¹⁴⁷ He brought up the issue again in a meeting among the Big Four on 1 April, arguing to make Danzig a free city under the League of Nations and returning Marienwerder and her

¹⁴⁵ Piotr S. Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies 1919-1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 29.

¹⁴⁶ MacMillan, 188-191; Czernin, 208-10.

¹⁴⁷ Czernin, 208-10.

420,000 Germans back to East Prussia. When Wilson suggested another plebiscite, Lloyd George agreed. Clemenceau quickly replied, “We cannot decide anything definite unless the Poles are present,” to which Lloyd George retorted, “It is vain to hope that we can ever satisfy the Poles....After all, we do not owe the Poles a great deal. They fought against us as much as for us during the war. What we have to avoid is to make it difficult for the Germans to sign the treaty.”¹⁴⁸

Unfortunately, the Victorious Powers had already made it challenging for the Germans to agree to the peace. Germany was not privy these early rounds of negotiations, and were not even invited to Versailles until mid-April. When the German delegation finally did arrive on 29 April, they were made to wait another week before they received the draft treaty. The draft provided for plebiscites to be held in Allenstein and Marienwerder, as well as in North Schleswig (on the Danish border) and the Saarland, but Upper Silesia was to be incorporated outright into Poland. The German delegation then had but fifteen days to present their observations, written in both English and French.¹⁴⁹ They submitted their counterproposals on 29 May, in which special attention was paid to Upper Silesia. Not only did the separation of the territory violate Wilson’s much lauded principle of national self-determination, but it also “constitute[d] a quite unjustifiable inroad into the geographical and economic structure of the German Empire.”¹⁵⁰ The Germans argued, “There are no national Polish traditions or memories in Upper Silesia. The

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 216-7.

¹⁴⁹ Tooley, *National Identity*, 46.

¹⁵⁰ Alma Luckau, *The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 333.

Upper Silesian knows nothing about the past or the history of Poland...The districts of Upper Silesia demanded for Poland are not inhabited by an indisputably Polish population.”¹⁵¹

In addition to this ethnic argument, the German delegation claimed that the separation of the region from Germany would prove economically disastrous for both the German state and the people of Upper Silesia. “Germany cannot dispense with Upper Silesia...The cession of Upper Silesia to Poland would not only result in the industrial decline of Upper Silesia, but entail also very serious economic disadvantages for Germany.”¹⁵² The chief concern, of course, was the loss of the region’s coalmines, which, as discussed above, supplied almost a quarter of Germany’s coal. Not only would the loss of Upper Silesia hurt Germany, it would prove detrimental to the residents of the region. “Upper Silesia owes all her intellectual and material development to German activity,” the delegation argued. “Living conditions in Upper Silesia, especially in the field of health and social precautions, are incomparably better than those in the adjoining Poland.”¹⁵³ This two-pronged approach, combining ethnic and economic arguments, would be echoed in the plebiscite propaganda.

Lloyd George had already proven himself reticent in simply handing Dmowski and Paderewski whatever territory they claimed in Poland’s name, and now, having read the German counter-proposals, he called for an additional plebiscite to be held in Upper Silesia as well. He did not necessarily question the validity of Poland’s claim to the region, but was concerned that simply ceding the region to Poland would give German nationalists and irredentists fuel for decades to come. After all, the Germans had written, “[F]rom the first hour of separation the

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid, 334.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

recovery of the lost territory [Upper Silesia] will be the burning desire of every German.”¹⁵⁴

Without a plebiscite, Germany would always be able to claim the territory had been unlawfully stolen from them; the plebiscite would legitimate the Victorious Powers’ decision, as the region, Lloyd George was sure, would vote Polish.¹⁵⁵

Preventing German retaliation was a reason Lloyd George could assert in public; his other primary motive for securing an Upper Silesian plebiscite was to keep France out of the Central European coal fields. Though ostensibly France’s ally, Britain was less than eager to see the French gain more influence in the region; Poland and France had historical ties, and the French, like the Americans, were among newly reconstituted Poland’s staunchest supporters. Stripping Germany of her eastern coalmines would severely weaken the new republic, allowing France to become the hegemonic power on the Continent.¹⁵⁶

Lloyd George expressed his concerns of German irredentism to Wilson and Clemenceau in a meeting on 3 June. Both the American and French leaders opposed the idea of an Upper Silesian plebiscite, insisting that the region was “indisputably Polish.” Besides, the region had already been promised to Dmowski and Paderewski. To this Lloyd George replied that the Treaty had not yet been ratified, and thus could still be amended; besides, he argued, “We could never have been thinking of giving Poland a province which has not been Polish for nine hundred years.”¹⁵⁷ Two days later the three met with Paderewski to hear the Polish case for not amending the draft treaty. During the interview, in which Paderewski claimed that the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Wandycz writes that Lloyd George made this claim “with tongue in cheek,” having asserted a different stance at meeting with British delegates. Wandycz, 44.

¹⁵⁶ Tooley, *National Identity*, 49-50. Wandycz argues that “the French preoccupation with security was mistaken for a desire of hegemony in Europe.” Wandycz, 29.

¹⁵⁷ Tooley, *National Identity*, 50.

agricultural communes would vote German but Poland would carry the vote in the eastern, industrial areas, Lloyd George asked, “If you took the opinion of Silesia, as a whole, it would be German?” Paderewski replied, “Yes, as a whole it would be German.”¹⁵⁸ The Polish Prime Minister then tried to backtrack, but it was too late. Wilson had been swayed and now agreed to the plebiscite – but only with the caveat that the commission could declare the plebiscite null and void if it felt undue pressure had been exhibited before the voting occurred.¹⁵⁹

Article 88 of the Versailles Treaty addressed the terms and conditions of the Upper Silesian plebiscite. Several *Kreise* to the west of the Oder River were left to Germany without subjection to a plebiscite, as 1910 statistics showed them to be between 85 and 97 percent German-speaking. Part of a southern *Kreis* was ceded without plebiscite to Czechoslovakia, per prior agreement. The remaining participating territory covered 4,150 square miles and included 2,280,000 people. All German troops, as well as non-natives, were required to leave Upper Silesia within fifteen days of the Treaty coming into force. The territory was placed under the rule of an International Commission, whose authority was supported by Allied troops. Any Upper Silesian over twenty years of age, regardless of sex, could vote in the plebiscite, thus opening the vote to women. Participation in the plebiscite also included those born in the region, and those who had lived there since 1904.¹⁶⁰ Perhaps most important, Point Five of the Annex of Article 88 delineated the role the Allied Powers would play after the plebiscite. Point Five read:

On the conclusion of the voting, the number of votes cast in each commune will be communicated by the Commission to the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, with a full report as to the taking of the vote and a recommendation as to the line which ought to be adopted as the frontier of Germany in Upper Silesia. In this recommendation regard

¹⁵⁸ David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace, Vol. II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 646.

¹⁵⁹ Tooley, *National Identity*, 50.

¹⁶⁰ See Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*. 2 vols. (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), Vol. I, 206-218.

will be paid to the wishes of the inhabitants as shown by the vote, and to the geographical and economic conditions of the locality.¹⁶¹

In other words, the Allied Powers could invoke the right to interpret the results of the plebiscite however they chose. And, indeed, this is precisely what they eventually did. Not surprisingly, neither Germany nor Poland were pleased by the prospect of a plebiscite. Poland, especially, felt betrayed by the Allied Powers, who had promised them the whole of Upper Silesia only a few weeks before. Germany had anticipated the possibility of a plebiscite since the Armistice. During the 21 November 1918 meeting of the Council of People's Representatives, Bauer had declared, "In Upper Silesia the majority of the population is, of course, German. Even most of the coal workers want to stay with Germany. We don't need to fear any plebiscite here."¹⁶² At a meeting held on 28 December, Landsberg echoed this sentiment, provided the plebiscite was free of Allied or Polish interference. Germany, then, though confident that the majority of Upper Silesians would vote German, feared the Allied Power's interpretation of the results. Most in the government knew that some sort of division of the region was unavoidable; they could only hope that the coalmines remained part of Germany.

3.2: Violence and Order in Upper Silesia in Late 1919

"At the last moment...German newspapers are reporting that Versailles has given major concessions to the Germans, and in Upper Silesia a plebiscite is supposedly to be held."¹⁶³ So reported *Katolik* on 14 June 1919. But, the article scoffed, this is preposterous. "We think that this is only a silent wish of the German newspapers."¹⁶⁴ Still, the paper felt duty-bound to

¹⁶¹ *Treaties of the Peace 1919-1923, Vol. I.* Compiled by Lt. Col. Lawrence Martin (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924), 66.

¹⁶² Miller and Potthoff, 122.

¹⁶³ "Plebiscyt na Górnym Śląsku?", *Katolik*, 14 June 1919.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

prepare its readers for the impossible, and reprinted the plebiscite procedure that would be followed in East Prussia.

Unfortunately for *Katolik*, this “silent wish” came true. Five days later, on 19 June, the paper reported the highlights of the Allied Coalition’s peace with Germany. The Eastern border would be determined by plebiscite. Danzig would become a free city. And, in large, bold type, the paper proclaimed, “Whether Upper Silesia will stay a part of Germany or be Polish will be decided by popular vote. [...] For now, we are refraining from any comments, waiting for closer details and explanations.”¹⁶⁵

Gazeta Robotnicza, however, showed no such restraint, lambasting the Allied Coalition for not coming down harder on Germany. The greatest of the paper’s ire, however, was directed at the Polish Delegation at Versailles, in particular “the Endek Dmowski.” “The Polish Peace Delegation consists mostly of right-wing individuals, backward individuals, who did not enjoy any trust in radical and socialist French democracy.”¹⁶⁶ The article seemed to argue that it was not Paderewski’s fault, “dilettante as a politician” though he was, that Upper Silesia would now be subject to a plebiscite, but rather the conservative nature of the delegation, which failed to win over the French. The Germans, meanwhile, according to the article, “mask[ed] their retrograde face” and sent numerous Socialists and “only one count,” thus impressing the Socialist French. That it was Paderewski who misspoke in a meeting with the Allied Coalition leaders, as discussed above, or that it was the French who were eager to grant Poland the entire Upper Silesian region without question, were not mentioned. There was only one fact which

¹⁶⁵ “Odpowiedź koalicyi,” *Katolik*, 19 June 1919.

¹⁶⁶ “Plebiscyt na Górnym Śląsku,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 26 June 1919.

concerned the article: “Now on our land there will be a plebiscite.”¹⁶⁷ It ended with a call to arms: “We must now stand ready for a new fight under different circumstances and fulfill our duty to the nation.”¹⁶⁸ The Polish Socialists, expecting to be a part of the new Poland, had thought their main mission would be “raising the working masses’ awareness and preparing them to vote”¹⁶⁹ in Polish elections. The decision undertaken in Paris had thrown these plans in disarray, as the Socialists now stood to fight a national battle.

But while, throughout the summer of 1919, *Gazeta Robotnicza* and *Katolik* would return again and again to discussions of the plebiscite, and while both claimed with certainty that the vote would fall easily in favor of Poland (“For us, there is only one desirable settlement [...] – to be connected with Poland. We do not doubt it will eventually happen.”¹⁷⁰), they advocated for a specific kind of Upper Silesian future. *Gazeta Robotnicza* continued to place the blame on the “Endek” Poles who had represented Poland at Versailles, writing the day the Versailles Treaty was signed, “Let what our Polish representatives in Paris and Versailles and politicians of the coalition did not accomplish be carried out by the vigilance, zeal and dedication of the working class in Polish Upper Silesia.”¹⁷¹ In other words, the right-wing Endeks may have gotten Upper Silesia into this mess, but the members of the working class would get them out of it and deliver Upper Silesia to Poland.

Meanwhile, *Katolik* invoked the legacy of the *Kulturkampf* and advocated for a Catholic vision of the future. In an early August article, Upper Silesian Catholics, be they of German or

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ “Sprawa górnośląska w obecnej chwili,” *Katolik*, 10 July 1919.

¹⁷¹ “Pokoj czy walka?,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 28 June 1919.

Polish extraction, were urged to consider three questions before deciding how to vote: “1) Where is the Catholic Church, the faith of our people, better ensured, in Protestant Prussia or in Catholic Poland? 2) Where is my nationality, my mother tongue, better assured – in Prussia, the homeland of HKTism, or in free Poland, where Poles and Germans will be equal citizens?”¹⁷² (The third question asked Upper Silesians to consider the economics of living in Germany (“close to bankrupt”) or Poland.) The paper seemed to have enjoyed taking these (not so) subtle jabs against the HKT and the *Kulturkampf*. Earlier in the summer, *Katolik* had explained the rights of national minorities – Germans specifically – in the new Poland, which would “provide them with freedom of religion and the right to speak as well as the right to teach children in their mother tongue.”¹⁷³ Then, in a line that can only be read with one’s nose in the air: “They will not experience any of the persecution that Poles in Germany experienced.”¹⁷⁴ Both *Katolik* and *Gazeta Robotnicza*, then, urged Upper Silesians to vote for Poland in upcoming plebiscite (the date of which, at this point, was still to be determined), while also advancing their own social and religious causes. As summer turned to fall, though, the plebiscite receded into the background, as Upper Silesians faced two new fights – the First Silesian Uprising in mid-August, and the communal elections in November.

The First Silesian Uprising was the result of long-simmering tensions that suddenly bubbled over in the wake of a large-scale mining strike. One of the main causes of this tension was the presence of *Freikorps* troops in the region. With the dissolution of the old German Empire’s army, and the limits placed on the new *Reichswehr*, the new Republic found it

¹⁷² “Obowiązek sumienia,” *Katolik*, 7 August 1919.

¹⁷³ “Przyszłość Górnego Śląska,” *Katolik*, 24 June 1919.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

necessary to supplement its numbers with *Freikorps* – volunteer units, which had mainly served in the East and Baltics during the First World War – in what one historian called “a huge subcontracting out of security by the metropolitan state.”¹⁷⁵ While most Upper Silesians, Polish and German alike, had no love lost for the old German Empire, members of the *Freikorps* were notoriously right-wing and anti-Republic, fighting, in the words of Karl Hoefler, for their “betrayed homeland.”¹⁷⁶ Used as a blunt instrument against Communist, or simply unwelcomed left-wing, agitation throughout the German Republic, the *Freikorps* units in Upper Silesia took on an additional anti-Polish bent.

In early May, Polish demonstrations and strikes resulted in the dissolution of the Upper Silesian NRL; many of its leaders fled across the border into Poland. In the weeks that followed several thousand more Polish Upper Silesians would join them, many fleeing arrest and persecution by German authorities. These men would make up the core of the Polish fighters in the Uprising. Strikes again broke out in the mines in July, as Polish workers agitated for higher wages in order to afford rising food costs. These individual strikes might have been successfully dealt with if not for two changes to the situation, arriving in quick succession. In early August, unemployed workers – still predominantly Polish – from mines and factories that had been recently closed joined the fray, demanding the mines be reopened and their jobs reinstated. State Commissar Hösing’s attempt to break up the strikes failed when, on August 15, the electrical power and railway workers – who were predominantly German – also went on strike. Now numbering 200,000, the workers issued a list of ten demands, including reopening the closed

¹⁷⁵ Wilson, 80.

¹⁷⁶ Karl Hoefler, *Oberschlesien in Aufstandszeit, 1918-1921: Erinnerungen und Dokumente* (Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1938), 20.

mines, reinstating all workers who had been fired in the course of the strike, a wage increase, opening the Polish border to alleviate food shortages, and releasing all political prisoners.¹⁷⁷

As often happens in a fast-paced and ever-changing situation, facts began to give way to rumor and innuendo. Talk of men being rounded up and sent to France for work spread through the towns and villages of the eastern industrial area. In Myslowice, as they waited to collect their pay, miners were ordered by *Grenzschutz* volunteers to form into groups of ten. The men, who feared this meant they were on the verge of being deported, refused. According to *Katolik*, “Suddenly a shot was fired, it is not known from whose hands, and wounded one of the soldiers. The officer in charge then ordered the men to shoot into the crowd.”¹⁷⁸ The “Massacre at Myslowice” resulted in ten deaths and more injured, and was the spark that finally caused the region to explode. By morning, the “rattling of machine guns and rifles could be heard,”¹⁷⁹ and the First Silesian Uprising had begun.

What followed was a week of bloodshed and mayhem as fighting spread from the eastern borderland and into Pleß and Rybnik. Those men who had fled into Poland in the previous months now returned, 9000 strong, in hastily-organized POW units. They were met by the *Reichswehr* and *Freikorps*, and as the fighting went on it became clear that Berlin was not in control of the latter. To be sure, the presence of the *Freikorps* raised the level of violence in the uprising. The German forces used artillery, machine guns and even gas against the Polish insurgents, whom they outnumbered nearly 7-to-1. Civilians, mainly the wives and children of those fighting, were targeted, with some 22,000 escaping into Poland. While most Poles chose

¹⁷⁷ “Der Streik in Oberschlesien breitet sich aus,” *Volkswille*, 15 August 1919; “Więc strejk powszechny,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 16 August 1919.

¹⁷⁸ “Krwawe dni na G. Śląsku,” *Katolik*, 19 August 1919.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

death over surrender, those who did were often executed anyways. At Janów, *Freikorps* volunteers tied hand grenades around prisoners' necks; this, according to historian Peter Leśniewski, was "one of the *Freikorps* volunteers' favorite method of execution."¹⁸⁰ By 24 August the fighting was over, save for a few skirmishes in border villages, and on 25 August Berlin touted the re-establishment of order and the return to work of all strikers in the area. State Commissar Hörsing, however, was quick to point out in a 28 August Reich Cabinet Meeting that this peace was by no means permanent; it was, he stated, "a peace after the storm and before the new storm."¹⁸¹

As summer turned to fall, a new storm did emerge, in the form of municipal and communal elections. Those holding office in local governments – mayors, city councilmen, magistrates – had been elected under the old, pre-war three-tiered Prussian system. These new elections would replace them with leaders chosen by the new direct and universal suffrage system – which would include women for the first time. Initially scheduled in January to occur later in the spring, strike activity and general animosity and uncertainty in the region caused authorities to postpone the elections until 9 November – the first anniversary of the declaration of the German Republic.¹⁸²

From the beginning, but especially after the Versailles Treaty established the need for a plebiscite, the elections were contentious, starting with a debate about whether now was a smart time to hold them. For Hörsing and other Social Democrats, it was imperative to hold these

¹⁸⁰ Peter Leśniewski, "The 1919 Insurrection in Upper Silesia," *Civil Wars* 4, no. 1 (2001): 43. Leśniewski notes, "[T]he tactics and practices of the *Freikorps* and other reactionary-militarist 'security organisations' described here, were later meted out just as ruthlessly to German workers in, for example, Berlin, Saxony and the Ruhr."

¹⁸¹ Tooley, "German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919-1921," *Central European History* 21, no. 1 (Mar. 1988): 64.

¹⁸² Edmund Klein, "Wybory komunalne na Górnym Śląsku z 9 listopada 1919r. a sprawa polska," *Studia Śląska* 5, (1962): 16; Tooley, *National Identity*, 116.

elections before the region was ceded over to the Inter-Allied Commission, which was set to control the area starting in early 1920 in order to ensure the plebiscite was carried out in an orderly and just manner. This decision to hold elections before 1920 was, according to historian Edmund Klein, “directed against the Polish population...The Germans’ main goal was to control the governments in the municipalities and create favorable conditions for the plebiscite.”¹⁸³ Hörsing and others also expressed the hope that these elections would be a sort of pre-plebiscite; a strong German showing could help convince the Allies that Upper Silesia was, and wanted to remain, German. These elections, while local, were an important component of the larger national scheme to keep Upper Silesia in Germany. The local officials would be in a position to help the German organizations in their plebiscite campaign, thus ensuring the region remained German.¹⁸⁴

Not all Germans agreed with this plan, however. Joseph Bitta, a senior Center leader who, thanks to the Breslau Resolutions, found himself President of the Oppeln Regency, argued the plan could backfire spectacularly and lead to the election of Polish nationals in key communal and municipal positions. Like a modern-day Cassandra, Bitta spent the summer trying to convince Prussian authorities not to hold elections in the fall. After learning about Hörsing’s plan through the newspaper, he sent a report to Wolfgang Heine, the Prussian Interior Minister, on 26 June, urging him not to grant Hörsing’s election request. Bitta wrote, “Conducting elections on the basis of the new electoral law before the actual vote of the population on the future of Upper Silesia is a serious threat to the plebiscite to be held. Using the

¹⁸³ Klein, “Wybory komunalne,” 28-9.

¹⁸⁴ Tooley, *National Identity*, 116-7.

election as a trial plebiscite is very dangerous.”¹⁸⁵ When Heine, on 1 August, ordered him to announce the elections, Bitta responded by again pleading for a reconsideration. In a letter dated 7 August, he argued the elections “will contribute to the creation of a Polish majority in municipal councils in the lands inhabited by a mixed, mainly Polish population...It would be the first step to disconnecting Upper Silesia from the Prussian state...In the countryside, by democratic suffrage, it would not be the German worker who would be included in the local councils, but the national Poles.”¹⁸⁶ Not only would the elections result in a Polish victory, casting doubt on the German assertion that Upper Silesia should remain theirs and putting the Poles in a better position to advocate for their own national interests in the plebiscite, but, Bitta argued, the electoral campaign would fracture Germans along political lines – just as they most needed to present a unified front. In a meeting of the Central People’s Council on 4 July, all the German parties, save the USPD, had dedicated themselves to fighting Polishness together.¹⁸⁷ Now, the elections threatened to “destroy [this] unanimity [...] and lead to a fierce struggle of the individual parties,” which would surely lead to “a complete failure of all efforts to bring about a favorable outcome for the plebiscite for Prussia.”¹⁸⁸ The results of these local elections would greatly impact the broader national agenda.

Despite these warnings, Heine again ordered Bitta to publically announce the election on 16 September. The selected date was 26 October, which would give the political parties enough time to sufficiently campaign, but also occur well before the Inter-Allied coalition troops arrived. Polish nationalists immediately rejected this date, claiming it would not give those who fled

¹⁸⁵ Staatstelegramm, 26 June 1919, reprinted in Klein, “Wybory komunalne,” 25.

¹⁸⁶ Reprinted in *ibid*, 27; in full, 58-60.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

during the August uprising enough time to return and establish the necessary residency in order to vote. But German authorities magnanimously agreed to register all the returnees, pushing the date of the election to 2 November before finally settling on 9 November. Klein notes that some of these postponements may have been the work of Bitta, who was in Berlin and met with Heine shortly before the elections. But even this last-minute effort could not stop the elections from happening.¹⁸⁹

While Polish nationals had concerns about fairness of the elections and would have preferred to have had them held while under Inter-Allied control, there was never any doubt that Polish Upper Silesians would participate, even though they had boycotted the January elections. In a letter dated 2 February and published on 5 February in *Górnoślązak*, the Upper Silesian Subcommittee of the NRL explained this change of heart. “We did not vote in the Prussian and German constitutional elections, because we know that the peace conference will separate us from Prussia, and because we want to belong to our Polish state. But we want to stay and will stay in our municipalities, and there we must have our influence, as soon as possible.”¹⁹⁰ The elections for the German and Prussian constitutional assemblies did not concern the Poles; they were matters for another country, another state. But these municipal and communal elections would affect the very places in which they lived. Polish Upper Silesians did not want to move to Poland – they wanted to move Upper Silesia into Poland. They “want[ed] to stay and [would] stay” in their homes. They, therefore, had a very vested interest in the results of the election. As Klein writes, “The decision on the Polish participation in municipal elections was decided by their local character...In the position of mayor, village leaders and members of the magistrate

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 28.

¹⁹⁰ “Wybory do rad miejskich i gminnych,” *Górnoślązak*, 2 February 1919.

[...] Polish society wanted to see its own kind of people [*ludzi sobie*].”¹⁹¹ But this local character would have national consequences. Like the Germans, Poles hoped that having “their own kind” in positions of power would allow them to more successfully prepare and campaign for the plebiscite.

This sentiment was repeated throughout the fall in *Katolik*. “What interests do we Poles have in the municipalities? What should be the program for all of us who are focused around the Polish flag?”¹⁹² the paper asked on 21 September. The answer: “We embark on an electoral battle as Poles to defend Polishness in towns and villages.”¹⁹³ Only Polish municipal leaders would ensure that the Polish language and, more importantly, the Catholic faith were protected from the godless German Socialists: “Socialists everywhere strive to go to school without faith, so we must fight them in the municipal elections. It is a matter of conscience.”¹⁹⁴

Socialists, particularly German Socialists, bore the brunt of *Katolik*’s fury in the run-up to election day. German conservative parties had never really fared well in Upper Silesia, and while *Katolik* gave a glancing blow at the Catholic Center (which “would like to cover up the need for nationalism under the guise of defense of religion”¹⁹⁵ – i.e. using its Catholicism to cover-up the fact that it was a German party), it was the Socialists who the paper viewed as its main opponent in the electoral campaign. On 9 August, just after news of the elections, *Katolik* urged “every Pole, male and female, [*każdy Polak i każda Polka*] take part in the elections so that we remove the menace of the German Socialists, who in the short time of their reign have proved

¹⁹¹ Klein, “Wybory komunalne,” 17.

¹⁹² “Program polski wobec wyborów gminnych,” *Katolik*, 21 September 1919.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

that they hate us and our faith and our language...[T]hey are worse enemies than the Hakatists.”¹⁹⁶ Given the vitriol the paper had spewed at Hakatists only a few years earlier, this was quite the damning pronouncement. Again, we see the twin pillars of Polishness – language and religion – presented as needing protection – protection only Polish leadership could provide. “There is no other rescue for our Upper Silesian community, except joining Poland, where religion and religious education will be ensured!”¹⁹⁷ the paper proclaimed less than a week before the election. In its last edition before the 9 November vote, it again implored *każdy Polak i każda Polka* to vote for the “national, Catholic-Polish list”¹⁹⁸ – *katolicko-polską*. These are both nouns; one word is not modifying the other. To be a Pole is to be a Catholic, and to be Catholic is to be against the godless German Socialists. Only in Poland would Upper Silesians have the freedom to truly express their Polishness and Catholicism – and electing like-minded Poles into municipal leadership positions would help ensure they got there.

Polish Socialists also looked to the elections as a way to rid themselves of their enemy – “the government of the bourgeoisie.”¹⁹⁹ While nationality is implicit in the text, *Gazeta Robotnicza* also framed the election primarily as a battle between classes. It did so quite explicitly roughly two weeks before the election, proclaiming, “Electoral struggle is also class struggle, so try to win for the Polish Socialist Party.”²⁰⁰ Repeating the sentiment expressed shortly after the announcement of the plebiscite, the paper claimed, “The greatest hindrance of the workers’ movement is the unconscious and indifference of the worker, so we should

¹⁹⁶ “Przyspieszenie wyborów komunalnych na Górnego Śląska,” *Katolik*, 9 August 1919.

¹⁹⁷ “Wiadomości,” *Katolik*, 4 November 1919.

¹⁹⁸ Banner Headline, *Katolik*, 6 November 1919.

¹⁹⁹ “Towarzysze i Towarzyszki! Dalej do walki wyborczej!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 21 October 1919.

²⁰⁰ “Co złe, to w gruzy...”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 28 October 1919.

enlighten the workers so that they do not choose new enemies of their own and do not make a new whip for themselves.”²⁰¹ Those already loyal to the cause were urged to “bring all those who sleep”²⁰² from their slumber and show them justice for the working class would only be possible through the Polish Socialist Party. This was an important distinction. *Gazeta Robotnicza* was advocating for the working class and proletariat to “remove the enemies of the workers,” but this movement was to be “centered under the PPS banner.”²⁰³ Not all Socialisms, after all, were created equal. In an area in which class lines largely followed national ones, voting for the German SPD was anathema to the cause. Germans held the managerial positions in the mines; they were the “capitalist ministers” the PPS was trying to bring down. As the paper proclaimed on 11 October: “Down with the traitors of the Polish working people.”²⁰⁴ The Polish proletariat could not be expected to find safe harbor with the German socialists; they needed, to steal from Klein, to stay with “their own kind.” But neither did the PPS want voters to vote for the Polish national candidates. They did not advocate specifically for the workers, and could not be expected to promote the working-class agenda if in office. Still, at the last minute – the day before the elections – the paper did concede that “in places where our own lists have not been submitted, vote on the Polish list!”²⁰⁵ Even for the PPS, when push came to shove, nationality mattered more than class.

For *Volkswille* and the SPD, the focus was much more on keeping their coalition intact – and that meant worrying particularly about women splitting off and voting against the party. In

²⁰¹ “Towarzysze i Towarzyszki! Dalej do walki wyborczej!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 21 October 1919.

²⁰² “Co złe, to w gruzy...”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 28 October 1919.

²⁰³ “Czy chcecie mieć nadal wrogów robotniczych w zarządach gminnych?”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 23 October 1919.

²⁰⁴ “Potrzeba nam czynów!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 11 October 1919.

²⁰⁵ “W ostatniej chwili!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 8 November 1919.

January, some areas of Germany had used different ballots for men and women, allowing the parties to break down their electorate by gender. To the SPD's shock and disappointment, women preferred to vote for conservative or religious parties.²⁰⁶ This apparently happened again, as on 22 October, roughly two and a half weeks before the election, the paper reported that women in Köln had voted for the Center instead of the SPD in their local election, allowing one to "determine precisely the influence of women's suffrage on the strength of the individual parties."²⁰⁷ "It turns out," the paper mused, "the women's right to vote has not been used by the workers, but by their opponents. The women, who are still very weak in their political convictions, often don't have the capacity to appreciate political programs for their importance, but rather become victims of a shrewd electoral campaign."²⁰⁸ These "irrational women" are unable to comprehend the SPD's political platform and are instead swayed by fancy words and empty promises. *Volkswille* points specifically at the Center and Catholic priests as the worst offenders. While any reading of *Katolik* would lead one to believe that all Socialists are godless, religion-hating heathens, here *Volkswille* directly addresses the question of faith. "Many women have a keen desire to preserve their children's religiosity. This is their right, which no one is to take from them."²⁰⁹ First, it must be pointed out that, according to the article, only women are concerned with their children's religious upbringing and education; their fathers, no doubt true Socialist men, have no use for this. Religion, education, and, as we have seen on the Polish side, language, all fall under the purview of the mother; it is she who is responsible for these aspects of her child's life. We will see the importance of language and religion as it relates to children

²⁰⁶ Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes*, 54.

²⁰⁷ "Wie wählen die Frauen?", *Volkswille*, 22 October 1919.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

play out quite strongly in the plebiscite propaganda. Here, *Volkswille* is feminizing religion, placing it squarely in the domestic sphere. Still, these women have the right to be wrong. But, the paper warned, this freedom of religion will only be possible under German leadership. “Once Polish imperialism dominates the country, then the German schools, the German spirit, will be gone, and there is no longer a place in life for religiosity.”²¹⁰ This is quite an interesting argument for a socialist newspaper to make. It is almost an inverse of the popular claim found in *Katolik*, except here it is the Poles who will take away one’s rights to religion. It could be that the paper was addressing the Protestant faithful here, but given that the vast majority of Upper Silesians were Catholic, this would not have resonance for a very wide audience. Instead, the paper’s main concern was not religion at all, but the loss of “the German spirit” in Upper Silesia. Unspoken, but implicit, is the fear that, under Polish leadership, German language and culture would be treated as a second-class other – i.e., how Polish language and culture was viewed under German leadership. Socialist men, of course, already knew these dangers, but the women needed to be shown the way. That is why, the paper declared, “It is a serious duty for all our comrades to pay the greatest attention to the women problem.”²¹¹

The results of the elections were exactly as Bitta feared – the Polish parties were immensely successful, claiming municipal and communal seats throughout the region. Of the 8434 seats, Poles claimed 6251, or just shy of 75 percent.²¹² These gains were not equal throughout Upper Silesia, however. In what could be a precursor for the plebiscite, the Polish Party made most of its gains in the rural county communes, while the cities still voted strongly

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Klein, “Wybory komunlane,” 42.

for German parties. For example, across Kattowitz county (*powiat / Land*), Poles claimed 219 of the 291 seats, amounting to 75 percent. But in the city of Kattowitz (*miasto / Stadt*), they won only 8 of 42 seats – or 19 percent. Similar results can be found in the other cities and counties of the Industrial Triangle; Poles won 76 percent of the seats in Beuthen county, but only 31 percent in Beuthen city, while the split between Gliwice county and city was 80 percent to 39 percent. Poles did best in the southeastern counties of Pleß (89 percent), Rybnik (85 percent) and Ratibor (81 percent) – although, again, the county/city divide is stark, as they won only 10 percent of seats in Ratibor city.²¹³ These figures, again, serve as a precursor of things to come. Compared to the January elections, we do see a rise in voter turnout, especially in those counties when Poles did especially well. For example, around 65 percent of the electorate of Beuthen county voted in the November election, compared to 42 percent in January; Kattowitz county witnessed a similar jump.²¹⁴ Given the Polish boycott in January and the large gains made by the Polish parties in these counties, it is safe to assume that the increase in votes came from Polish Upper Silesians. Still, overall turnout in the whole region was around 50 percent.²¹⁵ It would seem that this was due to a depressed German turnout, the reasons for which could be a feeling that, with the Inter-Allied Commission set to take control in a few short months, the local elections did not matter, or simply voter fatigue, as this was the third election in which Germans had participated in less than a year.

As a result of this electoral thrashing, Hörsing issued his letter of resignation on 24 November.²¹⁶ Representatives of the Polish parties prepared to take their seats on the various

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ “Ilu wyborców głosowało?”, *Katolik*, 13 November 1919.

²¹⁵ Tooley, *National Identity*, 117.

²¹⁶ Tooley, *National Identity*, 120.

municipal councils. But, once again, the future of the region was not completely in the hands of the Upper Silesians. In February 1920, the Inter-Allied Commission took control of the plebiscite area, removing the previous Prussian and German authorities from power. Headed by French general Henri LeRond, the Commission was tasked with keeping the peace in Upper Silesia until the plebiscite. Control of the region was supposed to be shared between the Allied Powers – but the U.S. opted out of participating altogether, and Britain was reluctant to provide a large contingent, only sending their four battalions a few weeks before the plebiscite.²¹⁷ The lion's share of the troops charged with supporting the Commission, therefore, were French.²¹⁸ The twenty plebiscite *Kreise* were divided among the French, British and Italians, to be headed by a Controller; the French controlled the whole of the Industrial Triangle, with Controllers established in Kattowitz Land and Stadt, Beuthen Land and Stadt, Königshütte, Hindenberg/Zabrze and Gleiwitz.²¹⁹ While the Inter-Allied Commission was supposed to maintain the peace and ensure the plebiscite was carried out in a fair and orderly manner, in reality the opposite occurred. This was in no small part due to the over-representation of French troops on German soil; Tooley notes, they “would have been less than human if they had not compared their stay to the four-year occupation of northern France.”²²⁰ LeRond himself followed the French line of vengeance against Germany and support for the Polish cause. While the Inter-Allied Commission was supposed to take over all aspects of government, save legislation and taxation, the reality of the situation proved this to be impossible. Thus, many

²¹⁷ Bjork, 216.

²¹⁸ Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 121. Of the 13,000 troops in the region, 11,000 were French.

²¹⁹ Wambaugh, 223.

²²⁰ Tooley, *National Identity*, 143.

aspects of the German bureaucracy – such as currency, police officers, and teachers – remained in place.²²¹

The end of the First World War did bring, as the *Górnoślązak* article said, a new world – one which was chaotic yet full of possibilities. In the fifteen months following the end of the war, Upper Silesia underwent the German Revolution, witnessed the establishment of a new Polish state, and experienced multiple strikes, an uprising and three elections. As in the rest of East Central Europe, the end of the war did not mean automatic peace, but rather a period of continued violence and unrest. But in Upper Silesia, there was an attempt to return to the normal electoral order. The elections for the National Assembly were to provide stability and legitimacy to the new German Republic – a legitimacy a large number of Polish Upper Silesians denied through their boycott. Both Germans and Poles viewed the November municipal elections as a pre-plebiscite, the results of which they could hold up to the international community as evidence that Upper Silesia truly belonged to them. Throughout 1919, Upper Silesians of all political and national stripes attempted to make their will known, only for outside powers to intercede – culminating in the Inter-Allied Commission’s occupation of the region.

Now, all eyes turned towards the plebiscite. In February 1920, the date for the plebiscite had not yet been set. It would be over a year before Upper Silesians returned to the polls, during which the region was inundated with propaganda. Upper Silesians were now tasked with “practicing democracy” in perhaps its purest form – one person, one vote, one answer to a deceptively simple question: Do you wish to stay in Germany, or become Polish?

²²¹ Ibid; Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, 121.

**PART THREE:
“STAY IN GERMANY” OR “BECOME POLISH”?:
THE UPPER SILESIAN PLEBISCITE PROPAGANDA**

In 1919 Dr. Paul Michaelis wrote a small pamphlet, entitled *German or Polish?* In it, he “described the situation in the East as unbiased as possible.”¹ Such a statement usually indicates that the exact opposite is true, but in Michaelis’ case, it appears that he truly tried to remain as impartial as possible. He described the Polish people as “chivalrous, of dignified behavior, hospitable and helpful”² and freely acknowledged the “numerous imperfections” and “detrimental effects”³ of Germany’s transition from *Reich* to Republic. His argument hinged not on the ethnic superiority of the Germans (although he could not help but claim that “before the war Germany was the first *Kulturland* on the world”⁴), but rather on the economic uncertainties and obligations awaiting the new Poland. It is because of these that Michaelis claimed the answer to his question – German or Polish? – to be, “We want to be and remain German!”⁵

Roughly two years later, in 1921, an untitled pamphlet argued the case for Poland on almost entirely ethnic, national and historical grounds. “Silesia has remained under German rule for seven centuries, and for seven centuries Germany has been trying to convert the faithful sons

¹ Paul Michaelis, *Deutsch oder polnisch?* (Verlag Hans Robert Engelmann, Berlin, 1919), 16. Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach (APK), Landratsamt (LA) Kattowitz, Syg. 383.

² Michaelis, 7.

³ Ibid, 6.

⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵ Ibid, 16.

of this ancient Piast district into Germans, to suppress their native speech, their Polish faith, their Polish customs!”⁶ This played a bit fast and loose with the real history of the region – Prussia only took control in 1742 – but the overall message was clear: Upper Silesia had been and remained a true Polish land, despite having been snatched away by Germany for centuries. Now, with the plebiscite approaching, it was time for the “Silesian people, who never stopped being Polish, as one man, [to cry] out loudly: *To Poland! to Poland!!!*”⁷

When the Inter-Allied Commission took control of Upper Silesia in February 1920, the date for the upcoming plebiscite had not yet been set. Article 88 of the Versailles Treaty stipulated that the vote would be held no earlier than six months and no later than eighteen months after the arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission. This put the date any time between 11 August 1920 and 11 August 1921. It was not until February 1921 that the final, official date was declared: 20 March 1921, Palm Sunday.

In the thirteen months leading up to the plebiscite, Upper Silesia was inundated with propaganda – posters, leaflets, pamphlets, stamps, stickers, newspaper articles and satirical magazines, all produced to convince Upper Silesians to “stay in Germany” or “become Polish.” Germans and Poles on the ground, but with significant influence and input from Berlin and Warsaw, scrambled to form Plebiscite Commissariats – the central organizations involved with everything from disseminating propaganda to setting up polling places – and other, less official organizations to generate and distribute propaganda materials. For the Germans, the result was an, at times, unwieldy constellation consisting of several distinct organizations. For Poland, all

⁶ “Od siedmiu wieków,” 1921, 1. Biblioteka Śląska [B.Śl.], U.Śl. 2.

⁷ Ibid, 4. Emphasis in original.

plebiscite material flowed from one monolith, headed and completely controlled by Wojciech Korfanty.

The two pamphlets discussed above are but a sampling of the propaganda produced, but they represent two of the strongest and most prevalent themes found in both the German and Polish propaganda – economics and ethnicity. German propaganda typically argued it was ancient Germans who first brought culture and civilization to Upper Silesia, marking it forever as German land. Broadly speaking, however, the strongest German pieces centered around Germany’s economic might and social security system. While Polish propaganda highlighted Poland’s lack of war debts and new agricultural reforms, its most effective arguments focused on returning the lost Polish brotherhood of Upper Silesians to the Motherland, stressing the historical ties between Upper Silesia and a medieval Poland. German propaganda asked Upper Silesians to “stay” or “remain with Germany,” to maintain the status quo. Upper Silesians did not have to be Germans; they just needed to remain what they already were – German citizens, regardless of their national or ethnic background. Polish propaganda, then, had the harder sell. It had to entice Upper Silesians to join a completely new country, one which was still, in 1920, struggling with its own afterbirth. In voting for Poland, Upper Silesians would become Polish – a choice that required a leap of faith. For this reason, much of the Polish propaganda is much starker in tone than the German offerings.

All of this propaganda was highly gendered – an aspect historians have largely overlooked. Examining this material through a gendered lens provides a much richer and deeper understanding not only of the plebiscite propaganda, but also to the ways in which the two nations experimented with reinventing themselves in a post-war world. Representations of men, women and the family reflected the strength of the German or Polish national family. By 1921,

Upper Silesian women had had the opportunity to vote in three elections, but they were still a new electorate, one which the propagandists appealed to directly. On both sides, women were depicted primarily as mothers, who vote for the safety and security of their children, and thus the nation; especially in the Polish propaganda, it was the women who kept the Polish language and Catholic faith alive in the face of Prussian Protestantism. In the German propaganda, German men were presented as middle-class husbands and fathers, while Polish men were destitute or drunkards, unable to provide for their families. Conversely, the Polish propaganda depicted German men as weak, unfit, or part of a bygone era, while Polish masculinity was represented by the Polish worker – young, strong and vigorous.

The majority of this part will be devoted to analyzing the German and Polish plebiscite propaganda. After describing the origins and structures of their propaganda apparatus, the part will examine the role of the German and Polish press played in spreading the Plebiscite Commissariats' messaging. This includes the newspapers previously discussed in this work, as well as two satirical magazines founded in the summer of 1920 – the Polish *Kocynder* and the German *Pieron*. Finally, the part ends with an analysis of the various posters, pamphlets and other materials produced during the plebiscite period. I argue that the plebiscite propaganda provided a new arena in which German and Polish nationalists could experiment with and define and redefine perceptions of themselves and each other.

First, though, this part explains the historical context in which the propaganda was produced, particularly the summer of 1920. While this year was, overall, more stable than the tumultuous 1919, there were three events which occurred in the summer of 1920 which must be addressed: the Marienwerder and Allenstein plebiscites, the Polish-Soviet War, and the Second Silesian Uprising. It is to these separate, yet interconnected, events that this paper now turns.

1. The Summer of 1920: Another Plebiscite, Another War, Another Uprising

By late spring 1920, both the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats were fully and firmly established and well on their way to churning out the materials that would fuel the propaganda campaign right up until the last moment. The Plebiscite Commissariats were the central organizations presiding over all plebiscite matters and were the official bodies with which the Inter-Allied Commission communicated; of special importance was coordinating messaging with the various press organs. However, with the summer heat came a heightening of tensions. From July to August and into September, three major events would transpire, each influencing the next, with the result being yet another August uprising in the Industrial Triangle.

The Polish-Soviet War had begun almost a year and a half earlier. During the First World War, German forces had held the eastern borderlands after March 1918. As the armistice went into effect, these troops withdrew, creating a power vacuum in the area that Polish and Soviet forces now rushed to fill. On the morning of 14 February 1919, Polish forces (57 men and five officers) entered the Byelorussian town of Bereza Kartuska, only to find that Soviet soldiers were already there. In the ensuing engagement eight Bolshevik soldiers were taken captive, and the two new countries were plunged into war.⁸ Indeed, when the war began there was not even an official Polish army; the soldiers who started the war were, in historian Norman Davies' words, "a rag-bag of units left over in Poland from the World War."⁹ Only two weeks later, on 26 February, did the new *Sejm* pass the necessary legislation to create a Polish army. In mid-April, Piłsudski captured Wilno. At the same time, Polish troops pushed into East Galicia,

⁸ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920* (London: Macdonald, 1972), 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

reaching the River Zbrucz in July. This advancement meant the front, which had run for 300 miles through Byelorussia, was now stretched to 500 miles.

Polish forces advanced eastward, slowly but steadily, that fall and winter. In the spring of 1920, however, Piłsudski set his sights on Kiev. After a month's long advance, Polish troops took the city on 7 May 1920.¹⁰ Ironically, the fall of Kiev proved most beneficial to the Soviets, allowing the state to send out an appeal for all to support the defense of Russia. Even Alexei Brusilov, former Russian Commander-in-Chief and the general behind to most successful Russian campaign in the First World War, sent out an appeal to his former subordinates: "Forget the wrongs you have suffered. It is now your duty to defend our beloved Russia with all your strength."¹¹ By the end of May, Soviet forces had regrouped and launched their own counter-offensive in Ukraine. On 10 July the front had been pushed back to its position from nearly a year earlier.¹² This attack was coordinated with Soviet gains in the north, as the Red Army took both Wilno and Grodno in mid-July. General Mikhail Tukhachevsky ordered the Red Army to advance beyond the Curzon Line and march on Warsaw.¹³

The Polish retreat took place just as another German-Polish borderland was preparing to vote in their own plebiscite. The East Prussian lands to the south and East of Danzig/Gdańsk, around the Masurian Lakes, were ethnically mixed, historically ambiguous and strategically important for both Germany and Poland. Comprised mainly of sand, marshes and moors, Allenstein/Olsztyn and Marienwerder/Kwidzyn were almost the polar opposites of Upper Silesia;

¹⁰ Jacek Arkadiusz Goclon, *1920: "Ojczyzna w niebezpieczeństwie."* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Palmapress, 2000), 55-62.

¹¹ Davies, 135.

¹² Ibid, 126.

¹³ Ibid, 148.

here, the main economic driver was agriculture, with the chief products being fodder, to feed livestock, and cattle. The whole of the area was part of the Polish Piast kingdom in the Middle Ages, but was separated between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Warmia and all of Allenstein) and East Prussia (half of Marienwerder and the Masurian Lakes) by 1466. With the First Polish Partition in 1772, the entire area was under Prussian rule, where it remained until the end of World War I. Thus, while Polish national advocates could claim a close tie to Poland for some of the region, they were still reaching far into the past for the other half.¹⁴

Complicating matters were the unique ethnic, linguistic and religious divisions among those who lived in the area. In the Marienwerder plebiscite zone, the 1910 language census listed 136,359 German-speakers (85 percent), 22,588 Polish-speakers (14 percent), and roughly 1800 speakers of other languages; German-speakers were the overwhelming majority in every town save Stuhm/Sztum, where they still accounted for 54 percent of the population.¹⁵ In Allenstein, the same census reported 292,534 German-speakers (52 percent), 72,031 Polish-speakers (13 percent), and 172,318 speakers of Kassubian, Mazurian or Lithuanian (31 percent).¹⁶ By some quirk of history, the Mazurs converted to the Lutheran faith during the Protestant Reformation, but kept their Polish dialect, making them the rare Poles who were not Catholics. As such, they were neither targeted nor affected by Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*, during which, as has been discussed, anti-Catholic legislation took on a decidedly anti-Polish bent in the east. Elsewhere in region, Polish was not allowed in schools or in civil service, and Poles were

¹⁴ Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*. 2 vols. (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), Vol. I, 99-100.

¹⁵ Wambaugh, 101. Seventeen people were reported to speak either Kassubian, Mazurian or Lithuanian; 117 spoke "Other Languages"; and 1639 were bilingual in German and a second, unspecified, language.

¹⁶ Ibid. "Other language" was listed for 1093, while 20,270 were bilingual in German and a second, unspecified, language.

allowed to enter only the very lowest level of government.¹⁷ The Polish national movement was confined to the city of Allenstein and its surrounding area, which was inhabited by Catholic Poles. While the largest – and only – city in what would become the plebiscite zone, in 1910 Allenstein had a population of only about 40,000.¹⁸ Thus, the area with the largest number of Polish speakers was also the area in which Polish national sentiment was lowest. This was confirmed in the 1912 Reichstag elections. Across the entire *Regierungsbezirk*, Polish Party candidates received only 12 percent of the vote; the strongest showing for the party was in the towns of Stuhm and Marienwerder, where it garnered 35.2 percent of the vote.¹⁹

Still, at Versailles the Polish delegation claimed the area for itself, arguing to return the 1772 Partition to Poland. It added to its claim Allenstein city and its surrounding country (*Stadt* and *Land*). The Protestant Mazurians spoke Polish, and therefore, according to the Polish delegation, were “Polish in sentiment or, if not, their national awakening would be rapid.”²⁰ As with Upper Silesia, the French were quick to give the Poles everything they wanted, especially if it was at the expense of Germany. But the British and American delegations were not so convinced that the whole of the *Regierungsbezirk* should be given out-right to Poland, citing the Mazurians’ Protestant faith. In a report dated 12 March 1919, the subcommittee suggested that Marienwerder be given to Poland, but that a plebiscite would be held in Allenstein. A week later, David Lloyd George, as he did with Upper Silesia, objected to ceding Marienwerder to Poland. His public reason was the 1910 language census, which showed German-speakers to be the clear majority throughout most of the area, and his concern over Germany’s unwillingness to

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 99.

¹⁹ Ibid, 101.

²⁰ Ibid, 103.

sign the treaty if it included such a loss; privately, it is likely Lloyd George wished the thwart any plans France had for controlling the Baltic Coast alongside Poland. Thus, in the 7 May 1919 draft treaty presented to the Germans, plebiscites were ordered for both Allenstein and Marienwerder. Poland gained a small victory in demanding that the ballots read “East Prussia” instead of “Germany,” to highlight the ties to the old German Empire.²¹

As with the Upper Silesian plebiscite, men and women who were twenty years of age by a set date could vote – in Allenstein and Marienwerder, 10 January 1920. If not native-born, residency must have been established by 1 January 1905 in Allenstein, and 1 January 1914 in Marienwerder.²² All who were born in the region, even if they had moved away, could vote, and native non-residents were encouraged to return for the vote. Poland initially pushed, here and in Upper Silesia, to allow these “outvoters” the right to vote, believing emigrants from Germany or even America would make the trip “home” and vote for Poland. As will be seen, both here and in Upper Silesia, the overwhelming majority of outvoters who returned cast votes for Germany.

The plebiscite occurred on 11 July 1920 – in the midst of the Polish retreat – and, according to historian Sarah Wambaugh, “absolute order prevailed in both areas.”²³ By midnight, telegraph operators made results known as they came in over the wires, and the Inter-Allied Commission, here headed by the Italians, released the official results over the next two days.

The Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscites were a crushing defeat for Poland. In Marienwerder, out of 396 voting districts, East Prussia/Germany carried the majority in 368. Of

²¹ Ibid, 103-106.

²² Ibid, 121.

²³ Ibid, 132.

the 28 districts that went for Poland, all but five were in *Kreis* Stuhm. Over 105,000 voters participated in the plebiscite, and 92 percent of them voted for Germany.²⁴ The results of the Allenstein plebiscite were even more lop-sided. There, East Prussia/Germany garnered 97.86 percent of the vote; Poland, a scant 2.14 percent. Only nine of the 1704 voting districts had a Polish majority; four of them were in the *Kreise* of Allenstein and Rössel, but these were so far from the Polish border it was impossible to justify joining them to Poland. Poles tried to blame the outvoters for their loss, but a look at the numbers proves this to be false. In Allenstein, 112,152 outvoters participated in the plebiscite; removing them from the overall vote tallies still gives Germany an electoral victory of 94 percent.²⁵

“To be sure, it was foreseen that the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the voting area would opt for Germany,” boasted *Volkswille* four days later. “It cannot be denied that the current political situation has influenced the vote very much in favor of Germany. The young Poland has not introduced itself particularly well in world history.”²⁶ The results of Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscites placed that much more importance for the Poles on the Upper Silesian plebiscite, while giving the Germans a boost of confidence that they again would carry the region. The general consensus was that whichever nation was perceived to be the strongest and most stable would win out – and, in the summer of 1920, things were not looking particularly well for Poland, in large part to its on-going war with Russia. “More reckless and unprepared a military adventure has never been started,” scolded *Volkswille*. While blunt, this assessment was correct. The Inter-Allied Commission’s report on the Allenstein and

²⁴ Ibid, 133. Of 125,090 registered voters, 105,071 cast votes, or 84 percent. Votes for East Prussia were 96,923; for Poland, 8018.

²⁵ Ibid, 134. Out of a total of 371,734 votes, the results were East Prussia, 363,209; Poland, 7980; Void, 545. The total number of outvoters who made the trip was 157,074, yet only 112,152 cast ballots on the day.

²⁶ “Oberschlesien und die Abstimmung,” *Volkswille*, 15 July 1920.

Marienwerder plebiscites cited the war as one of the determining factors for Poland's utter defeat at the polls.²⁷ In July 1920 Soviet forces continued to push back into Polish territory, taking Wilno on 14 July and Grodno on 19 July.²⁸ It did appear, as *Volkswille* wrote, that "the dream of a Greater Poland is suddenly over."²⁹ Avoiding a military defeat would take a miracle.

The Red Army approached the gates of Warsaw in mid-August 1920. The resulting battle has become known as the "*Cud nad Wisłą*" ("Miracle on the Vistula"). Norman Davies writes, "It was an act of faith that Piłsudski could have considered this operation feasible; that in the main it was effected, was a miracle."³⁰ A more thorough account of the battle can be found elsewhere.³¹ For these purposes, the important points are these: The Red Army attacked the city on 12 August. The Polish Army, exhausted after its long retreat, found the strength to hold them off. The Red Army retreated on 18 August, with the Polish Army chasing it back to Grodno. The Miracle on the Vistula saved not only the war for Poland, but the future of the Polish state itself.

Throughout the Polish-Soviet War, but especially once the Red Army had crossed the Curzon Line and was thus officially "in Europe," the German government had found itself between the proverbial rock and a hard place – back the Soviet Union, and thus Bolshevism, or send aid to Poland, which could strengthen the country's position in the upcoming plebiscite. Opting for the middle road, the German government's stance was one of neutrality, and it

²⁷ Wambaugh, 136.

²⁸ Norman Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star: The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-20*. (London: MacDonald, 1972), 147-8.

²⁹ "Oberschlesien und die Abstimmung."

³⁰ *Ibid*, 199.

³¹ See: Davies, *White Eagle, Red Star* and "The Soviet Command and the Battle of Warsaw," *Soviet Studies* 23, no. 4 (April 1972): 573-585; Thomas C. Fiddick, *1920: Russia's Retreat from Poland, From Permanent Revolution to Peaceful Coexistence*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); Goclon, *1920*.

announced that neither war material nor troops could be transported across German territory – including Upper Silesia. The *Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* took advantage of this policy by stopping all trains bound for Poland. On 14 August, just as the Battle of Warsaw was raging, the Inter-Allied Commission decided to transport French and Italian troops from Teschen to Oppeln. Mistaking them for troops meant for Warsaw, railway workers in Ratibor and Gleiwitz, acting under orders from their union leaders, stopped the trains. While the troops did eventually reach their destination, the German unions announced a twelve-hour strike to commence at noon on 17 August, during which time rallies would be held to protest this violation of German neutrality.³² The day before, on 16 August, a rumor spread throughout Kattowitz that Warsaw had fallen and Poland was days away from utter defeat.³³ Thus, on the afternoon of 17 August, Germans throughout the Industrial Triangle came out to both celebrate Poland's loss and participate in the protest demonstrations.

For the most part, these gatherings were peaceful. But around five in the afternoon in Kattowitz, an Inter-Allied controller stationed French and Sipo (*Sicherheitspolizei*, or Security Police) troops around an orderly crowd of around ten to twelve thousand protestors. Seeing the troop presence was what actually incited the crowd, which began to push the troops down the street towards the Inter-Allied Commission's headquarters in the city, then on to the hotel housing the local Polish Plebiscite Commissariat. There, the mob started a fire in the hotel's lower floor. At least three people were killed, and all the Commissariat's files were destroyed.³⁴

³² T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 187; Tooley, "German Political Violence and the Border Plebiscite in Upper Silesia, 1919-1921," *Central European History* 21, No. 1 (March 1988): 56-98, here 73-4.

³³ F. Gregory Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919-1921," *The Journal of Modern History* 42, No. 3 (Sept. 1970): 361-385, here 365.

³⁴ Tooley, *National Identity*, 187-8; "Krwawa noc w Katowicach," *Katolik*, 21 August 1920.

On 19 August, Korfanty and the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat called on Poles to “take up arms against marauding German bands.”³⁵ Korfanty claimed this was necessary, as the violence on the night of the 17th had shown the Inter-Allied troops were unable to keep Polish Upper Silesians safe. Karl Hoefler, a retired German general who fought in the Silesian Uprisings, claimed “the conflict” that occurred that night “was a welcome excuse for Korfanty to have his armed, volatile organization attack the unarmed Germans of Upper Silesia. He staged a big strike and, disguised by it, began the Second Uprising!”³⁶ The truth, as is often the case, is likely somewhere in the middle. To call an event in which three people are killed and a building burned down a “conflict” is quite the understatement, and Polish Upper Silesians certainly had the right to feel concerned about their safety in the wake of the 17 August riot. However, Hoefler is not entirely wrong to blame Korfanty for manipulating a situation to his best advantage. It was what he had done as an upstart politician before the First World War, and what he had continued to do as the Polish Plebiscite Commissioner.

Polish miners heeded Korfanty’s call, going on strike and taking up arms. Those Upper Silesian Poles who had previously fled across the border now returned, alongside members of the *Polska Organizacja Wojskowa* (Polish Military Organization, or POW) and even members of the Polish Army. The next day, 20 August, as many as 50,000 Polish paramilitary troops seized control of the Industrial Triangle, meeting very little resistance. The Sipo, comprised mainly of Germans, had been undergoing a process of downsizing since the spring, in anticipation of replacing the organization with the *Abstimmungspolizei* (Plebiscite Police, or Apo). As such, by August the Sipo’s numbers were greatly reduced and they had been issued only light arms.

³⁵ Tooley, *National Identity*, 188.

³⁶ Karl Hoefler, *Oberschlesien in Aufstandszeit, 1918-1921: Erinnerungen und Dokumente*. (Berlin: Mittler & Sohn, 1938), 78.

While they attempted to resist, they were simply out-manned and out-gunned. Meanwhile, the French Inter-Allied troops – the ones charged with keeping peace and order in the plebiscite zone – mainly turned the other way where Polish violence was concerned.³⁷ A “reliable reporter” claimed to see small hand grenades passed out to Polish insurgents “in the presence of a French officer in the police station...Any intervention of the French against the Polish terror did not occur.”³⁸ In at least one instance, French troops helped the Polish POW disarm and imprison members of the Sipo.³⁹ By 23 August, the whole of eastern Upper Silesia was under Polish control.

The Polish insurgents focused their wrath on those who represented German authority in the region. This included business leaders, local officials, and school teachers – members of the conservative classes and free professions, who had most strongly supported the national movements, like the H-K-T, at the turn of the century. School teachers were especially targeted, as one of the main causes of the Polish nationalists was the teaching of Polish in schools. The Kattowitz *Landrat* reported to Colonel Blanchard on 22 August that “Polish gangs have formed in Zalenze and are plundering homes by force of arms. For example, the teacher’s apartment was broken into and robbed. The teacher had to flee.”⁴⁰ In Groß-Weichsel, one report claimed “40-50 Polish bandits attacked the local school...[They] surrounded the school property and opened fire with rifles, hand grenades and revolvers.”⁴¹

³⁷ Tooley, *National Identity*, 188.

³⁸ Report from 24 August 1920, APK, Landratsamt Kattowitz, syg. 217.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Report from 22 August 1920, APK, Landratsamt Kattowitz, syg. 217.

⁴¹ Report from 22 August 1920, APK, Landratsamt Kattowitz, syg. 217.

After the initial burst of fighting, the situation did begin to calm down after 23 August. Polish insurgents, however, still refused to lay down their arms to the Inter-Allied Commission, although it is unclear just how hard the French troops tried to enforce this demand. Korfanty, operating from a position of power, decided to bargain for peace. In a meeting with the German Plebiscite Commissariat on 27 August, he offered to hand in all weapons, provided the German authorities disband the Sipo immediately and entirely. What Korfanty did not know was that the Germans had already internally decided to do exactly this, as well as ensure the Apo was comprised equally of Germans and Poles. The two sides published the terms on 28 August, and formally signed them on 2 September in Beuthen.⁴² In an appeal to the insurgents, Korfanty wrote, “Now that we have reached the goal, you should immediately listen to our call to restore peace and order in Upper Silesia.”⁴³ Both Commissariats issued a joint statement, listing the terms of the agreement and calling for all to “lay down your arms and return to quiet work.”⁴⁴ In their own papers, however, the German Plebiscite Commissariat asked “the people to name all persons who have become insurgent in the last few days... We will see to it that all criminal offenses go through the court for investigation.”⁴⁵

The result of the Second Silesian Uprising was a reversal of fortune for both the German and Polish causes. Riding high after the results of the Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscites, defeat in the Second Uprising had brought the Germans low. Both sides believed Upper Silesians would vote for the nation which held the most power – and in September 1920, that was no longer Germany, which lost much of what administrative and security power it had left in

⁴² Tooley, *National Identity*, 190.

⁴³ “Górnicy! Rodacy!”, *Katolik*, 28 August 1920.

⁴⁴ “Do ludu górnośląskiego!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 3 September 1920.

⁴⁵ “Plebiszit-Kommissariat für Deutschland,” *Volkswille*, 29 August 1920.

the wake of the Second Uprising. In addition to this, one of the major reasons for the German victory in the eastern plebiscites – the Polish-Soviet War – had become an advantage for the Polish plebiscite cause. Poland had survived the Red Army invasion and repelled it back; an armistice was reached by mid-October, with the official signing of the Peace of Riga eventually occurring on 18 March 1921 – two days before the Upper Silesian plebiscite. For the Poles, the Second Silesian Uprising finally placed them in a position of power. The German Sipo disbanded, and Poles made up half of the newly-formed Apo. Le Rond had proven that he and the French Inter-Allied troops were firmly in the Poles' corner, a position that would cause friction between Le Rond and his British and Italian counterparts. Le Rond now openly took a harder line against German harassment and discrimination. For the Poles, this was seen as a reckoning; after centuries of suffering under Prussian cruelty, justice had arrived. For the Germans, this new world order was cause for panic. After the Second Uprising, Berlin would funnel even more funds and material into the plebiscite campaign.⁴⁶

The summer of 1920 was a critical one for the region. These three events – the eastern plebiscites, the Polish-Soviet War and the Miracle at Warsaw, and the Second Silesian Uprising – highlight the interplay between and influence of events outside and inside the Upper Silesian plebiscite zone. Despite the Polish victory at Warsaw, Germany would continue to use the Polish-Soviet War in its propaganda, attempting to shed its own reputation for militarism by making Poland out to be a war-mongering nation. Especially with regards to the Second Uprising, we see again the balance between violence and peaceful politics. Upper Silesian Poles did not dream to take the region by force during their insurgency; that decision would and could only be made at the ballot box. But they could use the Uprising as a show of strength vis-à-vis

⁴⁶ Tooley, *National Identity*, 190-4; James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 217-8.

the Germans, and gain a better position in the region's political standings. The plebiscite would not take place in a vacuum; Upper Silesians would look to the situations in both Poland and Germany, as well as in Upper Silesia, and weigh their options carefully. It was the job of the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats, as well as various organizations, to see to it that Upper Silesians chose wisely.

2. The Upper Silesian Plebiscite Campaign

“Countrymen!” Korfanty proclaimed in the 26 February 1921 issue of *Katolik*. “The day of the great battle for our happiness and freedom, for the future of our children, grandchildren and all our following generations, has finally been decided.”⁴⁷ A little over a year after the arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission, and halfway through the appointed time period, Upper Silesia finally had its plebiscite date – 20 March 1921. But the pro-German and pro-Polish forces had not been sitting idly by, waiting for a date. While some groundwork had been laid out in late 1919, it was in the spring of 1920 that both sides began their propaganda initiatives in earnest. By April, both Plebiscite Commissariats were up and running; the summer saw the publications of *Kocynder* and *Pieron*. Throughout 1920 and up until the very day of the plebiscite, Upper Silesians were caught in a great deluge of plebiscite propaganda, all designed to entice them to “stay in Germany” or “become Polish.”

2.1: The German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats

While both were tasked with securing the vote for their respective countries, the German and Polish plebiscite campaign organizations could not have been more dissimilar. The German side was a byzantine, bureaucratic maze, as no less than three major organizations jockeyed for supremacy and funds. Every major political party, save the USPD and KPD, wanted a say in

⁴⁷ “Rodacy!”, *Katolik*, 26 February 1921.

how the propaganda campaign would be run. The Commissariat, once it was finally established, often clashed with the more conservative, nationalist VHO/VVhO (described below); while the former focused on luring Polish Upper Silesians to Germany with economic arguments, the latter's campaign was aggressively anti-Polish. Funds were shuffled from Berlin to Breslau and then to various ground organizations which actually operated in the plebiscite zone. The central *Reich* and Prussian governments argued over who should have to pay for what, and how much. Meanwhile, the Polish propaganda campaign can be summed up in just one name: Wojciech Korfanty.

The first iteration of a German campaign organization formed in mid-December 1918, under the leadership of Walther v. Stoephasius, a leader on the Oppeln Chamber of Commerce. The war had been over for barely a month, yet the titans of Upper Silesian industry were not about to take any chances. Stoephasius, along with other industrial leaders, met in Oppeln in early December and formed a secret agency to produce pro-German propaganda. It did not stay secret for long; *Gazeta Opolska* reported on this secret plot, forcing Stoephasius to officially announce, on 15 December, the founding of the *Freie Vereinigung zum Schutze Oberschlesiens* (Free Association for the Protection of Upper Silesia, or FV). The organization quickly set up offices throughout Upper Silesia, financially backed by the major industrialists.⁴⁸ Most members, however, came from the middle class: civil servants, business, and, above all, school teachers – the same professions and class which had supported the *Ostmarkverein* before the war. While the FV claimed to be separate from the politics of the H-K-T, its actions proved otherwise. It did not help matters that the FV focused its resources on the cities in which

⁴⁸ Waldemar Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda während der Volksabstimmung in Oberschlesien, 1919-1921* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 2002), 37-8.

Germans were already in the majority, instead of trying to make in-roads in those areas which were more ethnically or linguistically mixed.⁴⁹

After the Versailles Treaty established a plebiscite, as well as ordered the region to be placed under Inter-Allied control, the FV moved its headquarters to Breslau. As will be seen, several of the plebiscite propaganda organizations chose Breslau as their base of operations. Outside the plebiscite area, and thus not under the auspices of the Inter-Allied Commission, Breslau allowed the organizations more freedom. In November 1919, the FV reinvented itself as the *Vereinigten Verbände heimattreuer Oberschlesier* (United League of Patriotic Upper Silesians, or VVhO), denouncing the FV as a “hakatist” organization. It was difficult to believe this distancing, however, as the upper level organizers and managers remained the same.⁵⁰ It is at this point that things began to get complicated.

As the FV was making to move to Breslau and rebranding itself as the VVhO, *Staatskommissar* Otto Hörsing decided the region needed a central plebiscite organization that could coordinate messages and distribute funds to the myriad groups in the region, some devoted specifically to plebiscite propaganda, others which were not but whose actions helped the German cause. Shortly after setting up this Silesian Committee, Hörsing resigned from his position as *Staatskommissar*, following the disastrous results of the November 1919 municipal elections. Hans Lukaschek succeeded Hörsing as the head of the Silesian Committee. Lukaschek was young – only 35 years old in 1919 – but already a well-established figure in the

⁴⁹ Grosch, *Deutsche und polnische Propaganda*, 38.

⁵⁰ Grosch, 39; Tooley, *National Identity*, 102-3.

region, having served as mayor of Rybnik during the war; he was a Catholic with strong ties to the Center Party.⁵¹

At the same time, the VVhO split into two parallel organizations. The VVhO remained in Breslau and mainly focused on the outvoter program, raising funds and awareness, as well as helping organize transportation and lodging, for those non-resident Upper Silesians to “return home” to vote in the plebiscite. The second group, now named the *Verband heimattreuer Oberschlesier* (League of Patriotic Upper Silesians, or VHO) moved back to Oppeln and was concerned with issuing propaganda materials on the ground in the region. The VHO was ultimately responsible for the lion’s share of the propaganda produced – everything from posters to pamphlets to postcards. The VHO had over 100 local groups and between 10-12,000 agents. But even with the multiple name changes, the organization could not shake its association with the *Ostmarkverein*. Once again, most of its members were civil servants or school teachers. While its propaganda did include an economic message, the focus was Germany’s historical right to the region, and much of its materials contained a sharp anti-Polish bent. Korfanty made for an easy and frequent target.⁵² In addition to this, while its members were called “*Heimattreuen*” – “Home Loyalists” or “Patriotic” – its leaders were not even from Upper Silesia. For example, the head of the VHO, Heinz Quester, was from the Rhineland.⁵³

The outsiders made easy targets for the Polish propagandists; in large part because of this criticism of the VHO, the Germans formed yet another plebiscite organization. The Germans needed an official organization to represent them in front of the Inter-Allied Commission, as well

⁵¹ Tooley, *National Identity*, 155-6.

⁵² Władysław Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda plebiscytowa na Górnym Śląsku*. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1972), 60; Grosch, 39-40; Tooley, *National Identity*, 157-8.

⁵³ Tooley, *National Identity*, 158.

as take care of the more mundane tasks involved with the plebiscite, such as voter registration and local preparations for the vote. Lukaschek did not want his own Silesian Committee to be this entity, fearing doing so would place the organization under more scrutiny from the Inter-Allied Commission and jeopardize its funding from Berlin.⁵⁴ Instead, he helped form the German Plebiscite Commissariat in April 1920 – “quite late,” according to historian Waldemar Grosch.⁵⁵ Like the Silesian Committee itself, the German Plebiscite Commissariat was comprised of and represented the major German parties, except the USPD and KPD, who declined to participate. The first person put up as Plebiscite Commissioner was Carl Ullitzka, but the Poles spoke out against him, citing his close ties to the Center Party. The second choice, Georg Brüning, the Center mayor of Beuthen, was also dismissed by the Poles, who complained to the Inter-Allied Commission; LeRond was more than willing to give into the Polish wishes. Finally, a compromise candidate emerged: Kurt Urbanek, the relatively unknown Center mayor of Roßberg, a suburb of Beuthen. The Center, SPD, DDP and DNVP were all represented in the Commissariat’s Executive Committee, but given Urbanek’s ties to the Center, and his choice of DDP-member Otto Ullitz as his assistant, the Center and DDP dominated the Commissariat. He established their headquarters in Kattowitz, in the Hotel *Goldener Stern* (Golden Star).⁵⁶

The German Plebiscite Commissariat had four main tasks. The first was to craft a unified message among the various German political parties and interests, and disseminate this message throughout the region. Second, as mentioned above, it was to deal with the technical aspects of the vote. Third, the Commissariat was charged with securing transportation, lodging and food

⁵⁴ Ibid, 159.

⁵⁵ Grosch, 48.

⁵⁶ Ibid; Tooley, *National Identity*, 159-60; Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 61.

for all the returning outvoters. Finally, the Commissariat communicated directly with the Inter-Allied Commission about all plebiscite matters, which meant, in the words of German historian Rudolf Vogel, “neutralizing the Polish and French wishes to bend the electoral provisions in their interest.”⁵⁷

Thus, the German plebiscite propaganda campaign was comprised of a constellation of organizations, sometimes working in concert with each other, sometimes at odds. The VHO, along with its sister organization, the VVhO, was responsible for most of the actual, printed propaganda, and maintained its nationalist, anti-Polish bias. The Silesian Committee acted as an overseer to the entire enterprise, collecting money from Berlin and then doling it out as it saw fit. The German Plebiscite Commissariat handled the day-to-day tasks of preparing for the plebiscite. While it did produce some propaganda, it was limited in its number and scope. The Commissariat faced competition on several fronts. It often clashed with the VHO, which insisted on highlighting ethnic differences among Upper Silesians just as the Commissariat, with this Center and DDP leadership, was attempting to resolve and minimize these tensions. Internally, the various political parties each tried to place their agendas front and center, even though all had agreed to promoting a unified German front for the plebiscite. Because of this in-fighting and organizational fracturing, the German Plebiscite Commissariat was not nearly as strong as its Polish counterpart.

In contrast, the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat – indeed, the entire Polish plebiscite operation – was run under one single, and single-minded, entity – Wojciech Korfanty. Vogel referred to him as “the Polish dictator of the vote. With sole power over the financing of Polish propaganda and the command of the apparatus of the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat,” he

⁵⁷ Rudolf Vogel, “Deutsche Presse und Propaganda des Abstimmungskampfes in Oberschlesien” (PhD diss., Philosophie Fakultät der Universität Leipzig, 1931), 83-4.

“brought all the Polish organizations together in one fist.”⁵⁸ In December 1919, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the Polish Republic tapped Korfanty to establish and lead the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat, although Piłsudski did not sign the official act of nomination until 20 February 1920, after the arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission to the region.⁵⁹ By then, Korfanty had been running the Commissariat out of its headquarters in the Hotel Lomnitz in Beuthen for nearly two months. On 11 February, Korfanty issued an appeal to the people:

Compatriots! The moments ahead are decisive for the future happiness and prosperity of Upper Silesia. [...] According to the provisions of the Versailles peace treaty, the inhabitants of Upper Silesia...are to determine whether they want to be joined with a free and popular Poland in the future, or still belong to Germany, to be a slave to the brutal Prussian persecutor. We do not doubt for a moment that the people of Upper Silesia, after seven centuries of separation, suffering and slavery, will hurry, in a triumphant procession, to embrace the Motherland [*Matka Ojczyzna*] and connect with her forever...The struggle for the conquest of Upper Silesia for the Polish people and for Poland has begun. **Its fate is in your hands.** With peace, work, stability and faith in the good cause, we will win and join Upper Silesia with Poland forever.⁶⁰

In his appeal, one can find what would become the hallmarks of Polish plebiscite propaganda: the “brutal Prussian;” a longing to “return to the Mother/Fatherland” even after a separation of seven hundred years; and the absolute certainty that Poland would carry the vote.

Indeed, the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat was established and organized with the understanding that Upper Silesia would become a part of Poland. The ties of the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat to the Polish state were much stronger than those of their German counterpart. The Commissariat not only represented the interest of Upper Silesian Poles, but also those of the Polish government in Upper Silesia. The Commissariat intended to pave the

⁵⁸ Vogel, “Deutsche Presse und Propaganda,” 82.

⁵⁹ Grosch, 64; Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 54.

⁶⁰ Quoted in: Władysław Zieliński, *Ludzie i Sprawy Hotelu Lomnitz*. (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1984), 50-1. Bolded in original.

bureaucratic way for Upper Silesia's seamless transition into Poland.⁶¹ The Polish government, preoccupied with the Polish-Soviet War for much of 1920, could not devote all its resources and attention to Upper Silesia. However, after the loss of Allenstein and Marienwerder, and especially after the signing of the armistice with the Red Army on 12 October, the Upper Silesian plebiscite became of serious interest to the Polish government.⁶² To promote political peace, Korfanty selected three men from three different parties as his deputies, with all of whom he had served on the NRL. The Commissariat employed nearly 1000 people working in 27 different departments, covering every imaginable aspect of political, social, economic and administrative life in Upper Silesia; the last was the Church Department, added in October 1920.⁶³ Wrote Grosch, "[T]he German accusation that the PKP [Polish abbreviation for the Commissariat] was already a veritable government appears perfectly justified."⁶⁴

Among the various departments in the Commissariat were the Diplomatic Department, which liaised with the Inter-Allied Commission and the Polish Government; the Legal Department, which provided aid to Poles in trouble with German authorities; and the Housing Department, which managed the Commissariat's finances, the bulk of which consisted of funds from the Polish government and donations from Poles from abroad, mainly the United States. While the German VHO focused on those Upper Silesians already likely to vote for Germany, the Polish Department of Domestic Policy targeted passive voters, hoping to convince them to vote for Poland. Propaganda was produced among several different departments, including the

⁶¹ Grosch, 64.

⁶² Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 58.

⁶³ Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 56-7; Grosch, 64-5.

⁶⁴ Grosch, 65.

Press Department, the Publication Department, which printed brochures, and the Department of Culture and Education, which promoted Poland through theater, music and lectures.⁶⁵

At the center of all this was Korfanty. He was the Polish plebiscite personified. Every decision and action was overseen or approved by him. Because of this, the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat was able to put forth a singular, central message throughout the campaign. Despite the bureaucratic tangle of departments, all roads led to Korfanty. This was the opposite of the disjointed German Plebiscite apparatus, and as such the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat was the stronger of the two.

2.2: The German and Polish Plebiscite Press: Newspapers and Satirical Magazines

For both the German and Polish Plebiscite Commissariats, one of the most important missions was to consolidate and control the various press organs in order to present a unified message to the public. On the German side, both the VHO and the Silesian Committee, working in concert with the German Plebiscite Commissariat, had their own, separate press departments. The VHO published its own papers, such as *Der Schwarze Adler* (*The Black Eagle*, a counterpoint to the Polish *Der Weisse Adler*) and *Dzwon* (*Bell*).⁶⁶ Under the Silesian Committee, the region's various German newspaper editors held monthly meetings, during which the events of the region were discussed and a single, unified message was crafted. In return for their cooperation, the Silesian Committee provided substantial financial support to the papers. According to Vogel, "Every German Upper Silesian newspaper publisher received assistance, either in the form of cash, equipment, paying of staff wages, or purchase of subscriptions;"

⁶⁵ Ibid, 65-9.

⁶⁶ Tooley, *National Identity*, 158.

Volkswille received “a fully equipped printing plant.”⁶⁷ The Polish Press Department was spread across five sections in the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat. Korfanty, again, was at its center, and by summer 1920 controlled all but two of the region’s Polish newspapers. In addition to this, the Commissariat published its own papers, including *The White Eagle (Der Weisse Adler)* and *Strzecha Śląska*.⁶⁸

The press departments, and their output, were vast, and it would be impossible to discuss every publication here. Instead, we will focus, first, on the papers which have already been introduced and analyzed throughout this paper; and second, on two satirical magazines: the German *Pieron* and the Polish *Kocynder*. The newspapers’ central messaging was largely dictated by the Plebiscite Commissariats in order to present a unified, national front to the residents of Upper Silesia. Even here, though, the various organs found a way to insert and promote their own political agendas as well. Especially in the German press, a message of unity and cooperation was highlighted; the papers tried to avoid ethnic strife or rhetoric denigrating Poland. The opposite is true of the magazines, which were much more stridently nationalist in tone. Largely illustrated, the cartoons and images in *Kocynder* and *Pieron* emphasized the “innate” differences between Germans and Poles, with a focus on class and gender.

The German and Polish Press

On the eve of the plebiscite, two articles appeared. The first, printed 18 March 1921, urged its readers to remember, “You have to choose between bondage and freedom! We want a free and happy Upper Silesia!”⁶⁹ The second, printed the next day, heralded the plebiscite as the

⁶⁷ Ibid, 157; Vogel, 92.

⁶⁸ Grosch, 67-8.

⁶⁹ “Arbeitsbrüder!”, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 18 March 1921.

day in which “you, the Upper Silesian people, are to throw off the eternal chains of captivity.”⁷⁰ While using comparable language and rhetorical tropes, the two articles were, in fact, arguing for the exact opposite outcome. The first, printed in the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, stated that the answer to a “free and happy Upper Silesia” was to “vote for Germany!”⁷¹ The second appeared in *Gazeta Robotnicza*; once the “eternal chains of captivity” had been shed, Upper Silesia would “finally join the ancient Polish motherland.”⁷² This small example illustrates just how similar the German and Polish propaganda were in terms of arguments. Economic arguments featured heavily on both sides. Both regularly ran appeals or announcements from their respective Plebiscite Commissariats. While it appeared more frequently in the Polish press, both sides did employ a national/historical argument as to why Upper Silesia should remain German or become Polish. As such, the same themes that would appear much more blatantly in the propaganda posters and pamphlets are also found here.

⁷⁰ “Rodacy! Rodaczki!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 19 March 1921.

⁷¹ “Arbeitsbrüder!”

⁷² “Rodacy! Rodaczki!”

In the German press, the main economic argument was that Poland was a land of ruin, of poverty and depravation, a failed state that would never prosper, at war with its eastern neighbor. In June 1920, as Soviet forces were marching towards Warsaw, *Volkswille* ran an advertisement, financed by the major German political parties, which referred to Poland as state “whose existence is even now questioned by the bloody struggles with Russia.”⁷³ In another ad, a skeleton dressed as a soldier shoveled coal into a cannon – an almost literal depiction of cannon fodder. Its caption read, “Upper Silesians! This is your fate, if we vote for Poland!”⁷⁴ The date of this advertisement was 9 March 1921,

demonstrating that, even though the war had, for all practical purposes, already ended, German plebiscite still stressed the specter of Polish war in its propaganda. Joining with Poland would mean a return to war and, with it, certain death. The press also played into the tropes of the East as a desolate wasteland, an image brought back to Germany by soldiers stationed on the Eastern Front. “Ask your comrades who saw Poland in the war, what it looks like,” advised the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*. “Dirty



Figure 4: Advertisement, *Volkswille*, 9 March 1921

houses, villages and towns, poor people who for the most part cannot read and write.”⁷⁵

Volkswille was not quite as harsh in its assessment of its eastern neighbor, but did comment that

⁷³ “Oberschlesier!”, *Volkswille*, 8 June 1920.

⁷⁴ Advertisement, *Volkswille*, 9 March 1921.

⁷⁵ “Arbeitsbrüder!”

“agriculture in Poland, apart from perhaps a few larger estates, is not yet beyond the beginnings of agricultural technological development,” compared to Germany, “which has – and this is its privilege – an extraordinarily increased intensive soil culture, which is almost unique in the world.”⁷⁶

Of most concern was the lack of social services and security in the new Poland. “There is no old age and disability insurance in Poland!” exclaimed *Volkswille*. Even forgetting the other hard-won workers’ rights in Germany – an eight-hour day, legal protections for workers – (undoubtedly included as a reminder of exactly what they could lose should the vote not go Germany’s way) the article implored its readers, “[Y]ou have to vote for Germany because of social security.”⁷⁷ This is raised up as the most important of workers’ rights, one which cannot ever be risked or lost. Such sentiment was echoed in the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* article quoted above. “In Poland, there is no health insurance, no accident and disability insurance as in Germany. In Poland there is no labor protection legislation like ours. In Poland, there are no workers’ councils like in Germany. In Poland, there is no right to organization for the workers...In Poland the workers are without political influence.”⁷⁸ Such language is expected in a socialist paper like *Volkswille* – but the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* was a conservative, national organ. Such an article would have been nearly impossible to find in this paper prior to or during the war. That the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* would so boldly and proudly extol the accomplishments of the workers’ movement demonstrates just how in sync the press was with each other. While not totally free of political in-fighting, the German Plebiscite Commissariat and the Silesian

⁷⁶ “Was hat die Polen dem deutschen Arbeiter zu bieten?“, *Volkswille*, 18 May 1920.

⁷⁷ Die Sozialversicherung in Polen und in Deutschland,” *Volkswille*, 25 February 1921.

⁷⁸ “Arbeitsbrüder!”

Committee worked to create a central, unified message for the people of the region. In this case, at least, it appears to have been successful.

In addition to social security, the German press also worried about taxes and the value of currency. In Poland, a cow was taxed 200M; a pair of horses, 600M. “And even a bike is taxed 10M. If you don’t want to carry these loads, then vote German.”⁷⁹ The German Mark might have plummeted in the aftermath of the war, but *Volkswille* found a silver lining a month before the plebiscite, writing that “for about ten days, the market value of the German Mark...has been steadily increasing.” For example, on 4 February, 63M was equal to one U.S. dollar – but on 14 February, the rate was 56.75M:\$1, a gain of ten percent. The Polish Mark, in the meantime, “is constantly sinking and has slowly but surely climbed back down to the value of 7.5 German pfennigs...The catastrophic situation of the entire Polish economy will ensure that the value of the Polish Mark continues to decline.”⁸⁰ Poland would never be able to make good on its economic promises to Upper Silesia when its own internal finances were in such disarray. The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* made this point clear in an advertisement appearing on the day of the plebiscite. A young boy blows bubbles. “Polish promises are like soap bubbles. Vote German,” read the caption, as bubbles labeled with Polish promises pop around



Figure 5: Advertisement, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 20 March 1921

⁷⁹ “In Polen,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 18 March 1921.

⁸⁰ “Die deutsche Mark steigt, die polnische Mark fällt,” *Volkswille*, 17 February 1921. This same message was also conveyed in posters.

him. One such promise was the infamous “Korfanty Kuh” – a promise by Korfanty to provide a cow to farmers.⁸¹

The Polish press scoffed at Germany’s repeated economic arguments, even as it made the same claims for Poland. “Upper Silesia is the cash cow for the German state,” stated *Gazeta Robotnicza*; the Germans took everything of value from the region for themselves, leading Upper Silesia into “misery and poverty.”⁸² When Germany “pleads” for Upper Silesia, *Katolik* complained, “it is mainly about coal. We Poles are talking about human souls.” Of course, this indignation is ruined by the next sentence: “But at the same time, you should be aware of the economic importance of the plebiscite districts.”⁸³

While the German press focused on Germany’s economic security and material well-being, and what that would mean for Upper Silesians, the Polish press stressed the importance of Upper Silesia to Poland. *Gazeta Robotnicza* bluntly stated, “Without Silesia, Poland cannot live.”⁸⁴ Perhaps Poland could have survived in the old, agricultural world, but “young, industrial Poland” cannot. “Without Silesia, it will not live, it will not succeed its rebirth.” “The Polish currency depends on” Upper Silesian coal, and all the profits it would bring with it.⁸⁵ *Katolik* noted that, should Poland win Upper Silesia, it would then be the third largest European coal producer, behind Britain and Germany. Thus, “the entire economic future of the Polish state

⁸¹ Advertisement, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 20 March 1921.

⁸² “Czemu chcemy do Polski?”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 5 February 1920.

⁸³ “Znaczenie Górnego Śląsk dla Polski,” *Katolik*, 30 March 1920.

⁸⁴ “Górny Śląsk a był Polski,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 17 February 1920.

⁸⁵ “Górny Śląsk a był Polski.”

depends on the results of the plebiscite.”⁸⁶ Here, the Polish press stressed the material well-being of the Polish state, not just its people.

The Polish press appealed to national sentiment as well, arguing that Upper Silesia’s historic ties, though in the distance past, lay with Poland; as *Katolik* wrote, the region was an “ancient Piast land, which for hundreds of years groaned under the [Prussian] yoke.”⁸⁷ Its time as a Germany possession was simply, as *Gazeta Robotnicza* wrote, a “600-year old captivity” which “will end for the people of Upper Silesia, who will unite with their mother forever.”⁸⁸ The paper repeated this language on the eve of the plebiscite, writing, “The hour is approaching in which you, the Upper Silesian people, are to throw off the eternal chains of captivity and finally join the ancient Polish motherland.”⁸⁹ *Katolik* lamented, “We have been waiting for more than 750 years to unite with Poland. Neither our ancestors nor we have ever lost hope that the moment will come when, after an age of wandering, we will return to our Motherland [Macierz]!”⁹⁰ Such articles argued that Upper Silesians carried within them a latent Polish identity, one that simply needed to be awakened. The idea of Upper Silesians as wandering Poles, lost in the German wilderness, is repeated in another *Katolik* article. “The Fatherland [Ojczyzna] calls to each of us! It calls its best sons and daughters to finally return to the bosom of a loving mother, to the Motherland [Macierz] – Poland – after a long wandering.”⁹¹ Both Fatherland [Ojczyzna] and Motherland [Macierz] are used in the articles, sometimes even, as

⁸⁶ “Znaczenie Górnego Śląsk dla Polski.”

⁸⁷ “Rodacy!”, *Katolik*, 25 February 1920.

⁸⁸ “My a oni,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 15 April 1920.

⁸⁹ “Rodacy! Rodaczki!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 19 March 1921.

⁹⁰ “Plebiscyt na Górnym Śląsku,” *Katolik*, 16 October 1920.

⁹¹ “Ojczyzna woła nas!”, *Katolik*, 18 November 1920.

seen here, together, in a mixing of gendered metaphors. As will be seen in the posters, the Polish plebiscite propaganda stressed the importance of Poland as a family – specifically, a young family. Framing Upper Silesians as lost children being called home by their Father and/or Mother fits into the trope of the nation as a family. *Gazeta Robotnicza* stated this very clearly: By voting for Poland in the plebiscite, Upper Silesians would become a part of the “happiness of a great Polish family.”⁹²

But the centuries of separation from this “great Polish family” had real consequences that Upper Silesians would need to overcome in order to fully return to the family fold. Greatest among these was the lack of formal Polish education. “Poland will be what we build,” claimed *Katolik*. “Poland will not be how they build us, but how we build ourselves...The miracle will be the education of the people!”⁹³ But who would take the lead in this education? According to *Gazeta Robotnicza*, the Polish workers themselves must take control of this initiative. “We will not wait for the help of the intelligentsia, but must raise our own workers’ intelligence ourselves,” the paper declared. “Every conscious worker must understand this it is his duty to learn to read and write well in the coming months...Everybody must learn Polish.”⁹⁴ This push for Upper Silesian Poles to learn to read and write – and correctly speak (centuries of German rule had “caused many Upper Silesians [to] speak Polish poorly”)⁹⁵ – Polish was not about preparing for the plebiscite, but for what would come after. Upper Silesians could only be integrated into Polish society if they were fluent in the language. A Polish victory was a

⁹² “Dwóch kandydatów,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 5 February 1920.

⁹³ “Jaką będzie Polska,” *Katolik*, 20 January 1920.

⁹⁴ “Uczmy się po polski!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 24 March 1920.

⁹⁵ “Uczmy się po polski!”

foregone conclusion in the Polish press; the papers, much like the Polish Plebiscite Commissariat, was already planning for the future.

While they both espoused the party line set by Korfanty, *Katolik* and *Gazeta Robotnicza* still managed to promote their own, individual points of view. For *Katolik*, this meant stressing the connection, once again, between Catholicism and Polishness. “Every Silesian should vote for Poland, not only as a Pole, but also as a Catholic,” it argued. It conceded that parts of Germany were Catholic, but “the government was and is Protestant, and now socialist, without religion. Since time immemorial, Catholics have been persecuted and tormented in Germany”⁹⁶ – a clear reference to the *Kulturkampf*, which Polish propaganda made a point of frequently mentioning even as their counterparts attempted to separate their “New Germany” from this recent past. Again focusing on the importance of education, the paper argued that in Germany, Upper Silesian children would attend non-denominational schools: “Catholic, Protestant and Jewish children are supposed to go to school together. Consider what a great danger this is for your children, for the faith and for the Catholic Church!”⁹⁷ In Poland, they would be taught with “Catholic books” and “only Polish books and newspapers would be used, in the Catholic spirit.”⁹⁸ Joining with Poland meant preserving the Catholic faith, and becoming a part of a Catholic nation would save the Polish culture and language of Upper Silesians. The article ended with a dire warning: “If Silesia stays with Germany...in a hundred years, Silesia will be Germanized.”⁹⁹ Were that to happen, the region would be lost not only for Poland, but for the

⁹⁶ “Głosować za Polską,” *Katolik*, 15 April 1920.

⁹⁷ “Głosować za Polską.”

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Catholic faith. Polishness and Catholicism were so intertwined in the views of *Katolik* that one could not survive without the other.

Gazeta Robotnicza, meanwhile, continued to stress the importance not only of socialism, but of differentiating between German and Polish versions of socialism. As it had done the previous year, the paper noted repeatedly that German socialists were anything but. “German socialists do not deserve a socialist name. They are fighting Polish national interests in Upper Silesia, while participating in capitalism.”¹⁰⁰ In advancing the German cause, these so-called socialists had revealed themselves to be, in actuality, nationalists. The paper argued, “German socialists say that Upper Silesia must be preserved to the Germans, because its German industry would disappear with its loss and the German proletariat would suffer. Such a statement is sincerely nationalistic and is not socialist. *We do not recognize German socialists as socialists.*”¹⁰¹ The Germans are not thinking of what is best for the workers, the proletariat, but what is best for the German *nation*.

Here, though, *Gazeta Robotnicza* had to tread carefully, lest it, too, be accused of advancing a national agenda. The paper reconciled this by claiming that, for Upper Silesian Poles, class and nation were linked. “The class struggle here in Upper Silesia is identical to the national struggle, and must then be directed against Germany as a state. The common interest of the proletariat...speaks for joining Upper Silesia to Poland.”¹⁰² In this, the paper argued, even the German workers should agree, as they, too, have “suffer[ed] under the yoke of German

¹⁰⁰ “Nasza walki o Górny Śląsk, to walka Socjalizmu przeciw kapitalizmu,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 21 January 1920.

¹⁰¹ “Górny Śląsk a walka klasowa,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 7 April 1920. Emphasis mine.

¹⁰² “Górny Śląska a walka klasowa,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 4 March 1920. It was not uncommon for different articles, printed months apart, to have the same or similar headline.

capital.”¹⁰³ It was these nationalistic and capitalist German state policies which *Gazeta Robotnicza* and Polish socialists opposed, not necessarily the German people or, especially, German workers. Because these policies combined class and national discrimination, the Polish socialists justified their own support of Poland. “Polish workers should not only vote for Poland for national reasons... We must vote for Poland for social reasons, as socialists... A Silesian worker in Poland will be a decisive force; in Germany, he would remain a second-class citizen forever.”¹⁰⁴ In Poland, the Silesian would be welcomed as both a worker and a Pole; in Germany, he would be forever discriminated against for being these.

Both papers spoke often of this German – or Prussian – persecution. It seems that the period of Prussian rule over the region was conflated with the 600-750 years of separation from Poland, even though Upper Silesia only became a part of Prussia in 1742. The papers spoke of the region’s “misery under Prussian rule;”¹⁰⁵ “captivity” and “yoked” frequently appeared in the articles. The day before the plebiscite, *Katolik* asked, “Do you remember! Persecution by the Prussian government, which treated you as a second-class citizen?”¹⁰⁶ But now, “the Polish people will free themselves from Prussian-capitalist slavery.”¹⁰⁷

The culmination of all these threads – economic, Polish nationalism, Prussian persecution – can be found in a series of snippets published in both *Katolik* and *Gazeta Robotnicza* starting in late January 1921. Each began with a call: “Remember, Upper Silesians! How the Germans hurt

¹⁰³ “Górny Śląska a walka klasowa.”

¹⁰⁴ “Plebiscyt bliski,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 27 April 1920.

¹⁰⁵ “Plebiscyt na Górnym Śląsku,” *Katolik*, 16 October 1920.

¹⁰⁶ Banner on the bottom of Front Page, *Katolik*, 19 March 1921.

¹⁰⁷ “Rodacy!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 20 March 1921.

you!”¹⁰⁸ After an airing of grievances, the articles concluded, “Remember this, Upper Silesians, when you vote!” Many of these snippets centered around unequal pay, Poles’ blocked access to civil service jobs, and other examples of anti-Polish discrimination. *Katolik* claimed, “The Prussian government has spent over 1.5 million marks on the Germanization of Poles from 1898 to the end of the war.”¹⁰⁹ After taking into account taxes paid and some back-of-the-napkin calculations, the paper determined, “Every Polish father, therefore, has had to pay 2800PLN for Germanizing his own children.”¹¹⁰ “Around 3770 officials work in Upper Silesia,” noted *Gazeta Robotnicza*. “There is not a single Pole among the 170 higher positions. Out of 2250 midlevel officials, there are only 350 Poles, i.e. 13.46%.”¹¹¹ Extrapolating from the “falsified official Prussia statistics,” the article concluded that Poles should hold at least 100 of the high-level positions and 1534 of the lower. “Is this justice?”¹¹² the article asked. The post office employed 59 senior officials, not one of them Polish. “Is this justice? Why should you always deal with German officials? You are Poles!”¹¹³ Unequal pay also featured heavily in the articles. Upper Silesian workers, according to *Katolik*, produced 22.81 percent more coal than German workers in Dortmund, but were paid 28.51 percent less.¹¹⁴ Women and minors in Upper Silesia earned 85 percent of their Dortmund counterparts. “Why are our women and children so abused and

¹⁰⁸ “Pamiętajcie Górnoślązacy!”, *Katolik*, 22 January 1921. In *Gazeta Robotnicza*, the headline stated, “Remember workers and farmers, how the German government hurt you.” “Pamiętajcie robotnicy i chłopi jak Was krzywdził rząd niemiecki,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 15 February 1921.

¹⁰⁹ “Pamiętajcie Górnoślązacy!”, *Katolik*, 22 January 1921.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Pamiętajcie robotnicy i chłopi jak Was krzywdził rząd niemiecki,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 15 February 1921.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “Pamiętajcie robotnicy i chłopi jak Was krzywdził rząd niemiecki,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 16 February 1921.

¹¹⁴ “Pamiętajcie Górnoślązacy!”, *Katolik*, 29 January 1921.

exploited?” asked the paper. “Because they are Polish!”¹¹⁵ For all these reasons and more, the Polish press argued Upper Silesians must vote for Poland.

One of the last of these snippets, published on 19 February in *Katolik*, recalled the sacrifices Upper Silesians made during the First World War. “For all these injustices and persecutions, the enemy rushed you to war, where you shed blood for ‘Kajzer’ and Prussian militarism and imperialism...56,200 Upper Silesians died in a war caused by German imperialism.”¹¹⁶ Upper Silesians were forced to fight for a country that did not value them, indeed, one which had persecuted them at every turn. The Polish propaganda consistently stressed the old Prussian militarism, as will be seen below. This “new” Germany might try to distance itself from this militaristic past, but *Katolik* knew better: “The German monarchists and imperialists will raise their heads again and prepare a new war against the world.” For the Poles, the First World War was the height of Prussian imperialism and militarism. Did Upper Silesians wish to continue to live in such a society? “Do you want to spill blood again for the enemy?”¹¹⁷ The answer, of course, must be a resounding no.

Not surprisingly, the German press’ view on the First World War, and those who had died fighting in it, was quite different than that of the Polish press. In the latter, Upper Silesians served only as cannon fodder, forced to die for “the enemy.” In the former, the fallen soldiers are heroes of the nation, whose memories must be preserved and sacrifices honored. In a poem published the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, Hedwig Mira laid out how this was to be accomplished, and who would be responsible for it.¹¹⁸ The poem begins with an old woman, silver-haired, “back

¹¹⁵ “Pamiętajcie Górnślązacy!”, *Katolik*, 10 February 1921.

¹¹⁶ “Pamiętajcie Górnślązacy!”, *Katolik*, 19 February 1921.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ “Mutter geht zum Wahl,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, attributed to Hedwig Mira, 18 February 1921.

bent under the weight of her years,” walking to the cemetery to visit the graves of her husband and two of her sons. Her third son, Heinz, “the youngest, her darling,” is far away in Flanders fields, but at least his two older brothers had been brought home; “now they rest in German soil.” These boys were “loyal [*treudeutsch*] and brave to the last breath.” But now, the old mother thinks, “Others are stretching out their greedy hands again, after our Silesia.” How can she lose her homeland, after sacrificing so much for it? No, she tells her sons, “German you are and German you shall stay...In German soil she, too, wishes her grave.” Two of her three sons have been brought home – but now this home is once again threatened, and there could come a time when her boys no longer rest in German soil. “The old woman grasps her staff more firmly;” now it is time for the old mother to do as her sons did – defend the German homeland. “Sleep well,” she tells her sons. “Mother is going to vote! [*Mutter geht zum Wahl!*]”¹¹⁹ Women were still a new electorate in 1921, but a powerful one. As will be seen in more detail below, the propaganda appealed to them not as voters, or as women, but specifically as mothers. Usually, they were mothers of young children, and the propaganda begged them to consider their children’s future when voting. This poem stands out because it concerns an old mother, a widow, made childless by the war. Even now, though, she is still protecting her sons’ futures, voting to ensure that their graves remain in the German homeland.

The nationalist argument, while present, was nowhere near as strong in the German press as it was in the Polish. This was largely due to the fact that the papers’ messages were coordinated through the Silesian Committee and the German Plebiscite Commissariat, both of which wished to downplay the national divide. The more stringently nationalistic propaganda was produced by the VHO/VVhO, which did run ads in the papers. One such ad, appearing early

¹¹⁹ “Mutter geht zum Wahl.”

in the propaganda campaign, urged “all German-minded Upper Silesians” to support the local Königshütte VHO office. “In the interest of our dear German fatherland...it is necessary to harness everyone’s strength in order to prevent Upper Silesia from coming under Polish rule.”¹²⁰ Illustrations also encouraged Upper Silesians to remain loyal to their Silesian *Heimat*. In one, a miner stands proud and true, his pickaxe at his feet. His heart glows – literally. “Our heart belongs to the *Heimat*,” states the caption. “And the *Heimat* is German!”¹²¹ Another ad, consisting only of text in an eye-catching design – declares, “To all! Remain true to the *Heimat*! Vote German!”¹²²

What sets these messages apart from their Polish counterparts is that they are not calling on all Upper Silesians to become German. They ask Upper Silesians to remain true to their *Heimat* – but the *Heimat* is Upper Silesia, not Germany. The best place for Silesia is within the German *state*, but Upper Silesians themselves are not expected to all belong to the German *nation*. They are asked to “remain” – remain in Germany, remain loyal. It is, in a way, the passive option, maintaining over a century-long status quo. This is contrasted with the Polish press, in which one *became* Polish by living in the Polish state, by speaking correct Polish, by living amongst fellow (Polish) Catholics; becoming Polish required one to push past the centuries of Germanization and tap into one’s dormant sense of Polishness. It was an active choice, one much harder to make. It is for this reason, as has been shown above and will be discussed below, that the Polish propaganda was much starker, especially in its nationalism, than its German counterpart.

¹²⁰ “An die Oberschlesier,” *Volkswille*, 9 May 1920.

¹²¹ Ad, “Unser Herz,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 1 March 1921.

¹²² Ad, “An Alle!”, *Volkswille*, 25 February 1921.

The Satirical Periodicals: Kocynder and Pieron

Founded within six weeks of each other, the Polish *Kocynder* and German *Pieron* operated along parallel tracks. Both were satirical magazines that couched their sharp critiques of the other in humor. Subtlety had no place in either; the opposing nation was presented in broad strokes and heavy caricature. The protagonist, for lack of a better word, of each was an Upper Silesian worker who made pithy insights about the world around him. The magazines were published in what each thought was the “Upper Silesian dialect,” although *Kocynder* was more successful at this trick. While both fell under the purview of their respective Commissariat press departments, the magazines were much starker in tone than the newspapers, holding little back when it came topics both mundane (the amount of national debt) and scandalous (allegations of murder).

Kocynder appeared first, on 10 June 1920, and ran three issues a month. Initially published by Karl Miarka in Nikolai/Mikołów, by Number 5 (17 August) the magazine had moved to Beuthen, where Karol Koźlik took over as publisher, with Franciczek Miądowicz serving as editor-in-chief. Illustrators included Antoni Romanowicz, Waclaw Lipinski and, above all, Stanisław Ligoń, who worked for *Kocynder* under the pseudonym “Karlik;” Romanowicz and Ligoń especially were heavily involved in the production of plebiscite posters. In the periodical, Prussians appeared as pompous and arrogant, often wearing the spiked *Pickelhaube* or a sash bearing the letters HKT; those labeled “*Heimatstreuer*” were viewed as loyal not to their homeland, but only to their own self-interests. *Kocynder* proved immediately popular in the plebiscite region, with a circulation of 20,000.¹²³

¹²³ Grosch, 135; Bernard Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens von den Anfängen bis zum Jahre 1945: Dokumentaion und Strukturbeschreibung*. (Gebr. Mann Verlag, Berlin: 1993), 230-1; Józef Krzyk, *Wojna Papierowa: Powstania śląskie 1919-1921*. (Wrocław: Agora SA, 2018), 27.

A little over a month later, on 17 July 1920, the weekly German *Pieron* appeared to act as a countermeasure against the *Kocynder* – although, as historian Waldemar Grosch points out, such a quick publication indicates that the project had been in preparation for some time.¹²⁴ Credited to Hans Pilot, a teacher, who served as editor-in-chief of the periodical, *Pieron* was actually the brainchild of Karl Spiecker. The Deputy of the State Commissar for the Supervision of Public Order, Spiecker arrived in Upper Silesia in 1919 and made a name for himself by building a network of informants. His recruits, mainly school teachers, were tasked with what was known as “quiet” or “secret propaganda” – hyping the German cause at work or on trains. By mid-1920, Spiecker was receiving funds from the Silesian Committee, but otherwise working independently from it. It was with the Silesian Committee’s help and cooperation that he founded three periodicals in the summer of 1920, including *Pieron*.¹²⁵ And it was because of this relationship that *Pieron* quickly proved problematic. As discussed above, the Silesian Committee, along with the German Plebiscite Commissariat, sought to downplay any ethnic and national strife in the region. *Pieron* did the exact opposite, portraying Poles as dumb primitives at best and dangerous threats at worst.

Especially controversial was the “Upper Silesian Dialect” in which Pilot wrote. *Kocynder* also featured stories written in the Upper Silesian dialect of Polish – pejoratively known as “*Wasserpölnisch*” – but, as is often the case, did it first and did it better. In his dissertation, Rudolf Vogel quotes Pilot as claiming, “There are still some fools in Upper Silesia...who reject the Upper Silesian dialect...This is the splendid merit of *Pieron*, that it “discovered” the Upper Silesian dialect and raised it to the level of literature, and through it

¹²⁴ Grosch, 136.

¹²⁵ Tooley, *National Identity*, 165; 179.

saved tens of thousands of souls for Germany.”¹²⁶ To which Vogel writes, “We do not hesitate to count ourselves among the ‘fools’ who reject the so-called Upper Silesian dialect of Pilot.”¹²⁷ He argues that there is no such thing as German Upper Silesian dialect, only a Polish one, “which *Kocynder* brilliantly mastered.”¹²⁸ Such language in *Pieron* only served to mock poor German-speaking workers, driving an unnecessary wedge in the German camp.

Despite all this, *Pieron* was a success in the region, with a peak publication of 45,000 copies sold. To avoid problems with the Inter-Allied Commission, the “official” publisher was listed as the Gutenberg Verlag in Gleiwitz. In reality, the periodical was produced in Berlin under Rudolf Dammert, who had assembled a team of well-known Berlin caricaturists and journalists.¹²⁹ They produced a periodical defined by, in Vogel’s words, “relentlessly bitter satire, cheeky mockery and cynical worldly wisdom.”¹³⁰

The periodical’s favorite target for satire and mockery was Korfanty, who embodied the Polish plebiscite campaign. In a cartoon by Berlin artist Paul Halke, Polonia dresses a young – but still mustachioed – “Woitek.” Polonia is an old woman, hunched over and thin; she’s dressed in rags, and her shoes are simply soles strapped over her socks. A spider web has claimed a corner of the room, while the dirty floor, broken window, dead plant and bare table speak to her abject poverty. In spite of this, she dresses Korfanty in a sharp suit, bearing only a small patch on the legs. His shoes are clean, his bowtie appears new. Polonia tells him, “And if the Germans ask you what it’s like for us, then you say: Everything is velvet and silk, and finely

¹²⁶ Vogel, 131.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Gröschel, *Die Presse Oberschlesiens*, 98-9; Grosch, 136-7.

¹³⁰ Vogel, 130.

set tables, and servants, and there's meat three times a day, every day, to eat!"¹³¹ Poland's only chance to win the plebiscite is to lie about its material well-being. In another illustration, also by



Figure 6: "Woitek geht auf Abstimmung," *Pieron*, No. 3, 31 July 1920

Halke, Korfanty is puffed up like a balloon, waving his hands and shouting. His pants trail behind him like a hose, at the end of which is a figure labeled "Piłsudski," who blows into the tube. "Why is Korfanty roaring so loud?" the caption asks. "Because he inflates from behind."¹³² Both suggest Korfanty is, as the title of the second cartoon states, "the Mouthpiece of the East," doing whatever

Poland and Piłsudski order him to do to help Poland win the plebiscite. This included, as the first cartoon demonstrates, lying about the conditions in Poland to make it seem more appealing to Upper Silesian voters.

The magazine also gleefully mocked "Korfanty's Kuh" – the cow Korfanty had promised every farmer. It came to represent all the empty promises made by the Polish campaign. A poem in the fifth issue asked, "What haunts every association house? About whom do you hear in speeches?/ And who is promised in full halls/ to each and every Pole?/ Moo, Moo, Moo/ Korfanty and his cow!"¹³³ This magical cow, the poem went on, was known throughout Upper

¹³¹ "Woitek geht auf Abstimmung!", *Pieron*, No. 3, 31 July 1920.

¹³² "Das Sprachrohr des Ostens," *Pieron*, No. 5, 14 August 1920.

¹³³ "Die Kuh," *Pieron*, Number 5, 14 August 1920.

Silesia, even by its dung, and its milk filled the bellies of children on the first pump of the udder. Of course, the poem concludes, no one has actually ever *seen* Korfanty's cow. This "Immortal Cow" was the subject of a joke elsewhere in this same issue. "Korfanty," someone asks. "Where is that cow you promised so long ago?" "I don't know of you'll ever see her!" Korfanty answers. "Because Piłsudski has now drafted her into the Polish army!"¹³⁴ This joke did double-duty, lampooning "Korfanty's Kuh" while also alluding to Poland's on-going war with Soviet Russia. This issue appeared just as the Battle of Warsaw was waging; *Pieron* very likely believed the war would soon end with Polish defeat.

This gleeful derision of Korfanty took on a much more sinister tone as summer turned to fall. In July 1920, Polish journalist Teofil Kupka had a falling out with Korfanty over the former's support for the separatist movement, although historian Władisław Zieliński hints that dissatisfaction with his salary was also a contributing factor.¹³⁵ Kupka formed the short-lived separatist organization, and then fully defected by joining the German Plebiscite Commissariat, where he founded the paper *Wola Ludu* (*The Will of the People*). Korfanty could not abide. On the evening of 20 November 1920, Henryk Myrcik, a locksmith and member of the POW, knocked on Kupka's door under the pretense of looking for work. He then shot him eight times.¹³⁶

The German plebiscite press capitalized on Kupka's murder. In the 11 December issue, *Pieron* ran a series of illustrations mocking Polish "sports." The last frame depicted a

¹³⁴ "Die Unsterbliche Kuh," *Pieron*, Number 5, 14 August 1920.

¹³⁵ Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 78-9; Zieliński, *Ludzie i Sprawy Hotelu Lomnitz*, 152.

¹³⁶ Zieliński, *Polska i Niemiecka Propaganda*, 79; Zieliński, *Ludzie i Sprawy Hotelu Lomnitz*, 154; Sigmund Karski, *Albert (Wojciech) Korfanty: Eine Biographie* (Dülmen: Laumann-Verlag, 1990), 292-298; Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 128.

fictionalized version of Kupka's murder, as he is attacked by three men armed with knives and truncheons. The caption read, "This is the only sport in which the Poles are better than us!"¹³⁷ While never definitively proven, the German press was quick to claim Myrcik had committed the murder on behalf of Korfanty. The end of 1920 witnessed a slew of brutal attacks on Korfanty's character. The 18 December edition featured an illustration of Korfanty hanging lifelessly from a Christmas tree while a band plays merrily in the background. The caption read, "The gift Upper Silesians wish for most of all: Hang for us Korfanty from the Christmas tree!"¹³⁸ In this same issue, an illustration showed Korfanty walking alone; snow swirls around him. As he passes a grave marked "Kupka," he thinks, "Rest gently." A voice from grave replies, "On the day of eternal judgment, we will meet again!"¹³⁹ Finally, the Christmas edition was a special "Korfanty Issue," and from the very first page *Pieron* pulled no punches. The frontispiece, illustrated by Willi Steinert, depicted Korfanty's arrival in Hell. Red flames fill the cavern as demons laugh and grotesque creatures slither and crawl on the floor. The Devil, with crown and pitchfork, casts Korfanty out of hell: "Get out! You cannot go to Heaven, Purgatory has not taken you. You! You are too bad even for Hell!"¹⁴⁰ A "profile" listed his mouth as "3m opened wide" and eyes as "always turns a blind one." His "Special Features" are "incites Upper Silesian Poles against *heimattreuer* Upper Silesians, instead of letting both live side by side in peace."¹⁴¹ Lastly, Korfanty is shown meeting with a band of ruffians in a dark room. The three men wear tattered clothing and have raggedy beards. One wears a rifle across his back, and a bottle of

¹³⁷ "Polnischer Sport," *Pieron*, Number 22, 11 December 1920.

¹³⁸ "Das schönste Geschenk," *Pieron*, Number 23, 18 December 1920.

¹³⁹ "Korfantys Weihnachtsspaziergang," *Pieron*, Number 23, 18 December 1920.

¹⁴⁰ "Korfanty in der Hölle," *Pieron*, Number 24, 25 December 1920.

¹⁴¹ "Steckbrief," *Pieron*, Number 24, 25 December 1920.

spirits rests on a nearby table. Korfanty, despite his fine coat and bowler hat, seems at ease in such a world. As he places money on the table, he says, “Kupka or me – both of us are too much for the world! Here, Ladislaus, I’ll pay you forty thousand Marks – because you have such beautiful eyes!”¹⁴²

Korfanty was not just the face of the Polish plebiscite campaign – he *was* the campaign. No one else in the Polish apparatus came close to him in leadership or influence. By mocking, and then outright attacking, Korfanty’s promises and character, the German press hoped to defame the Polish cause by proxy. In presenting him as a murderer, a liar, a mouthpiece of Piłsudski, the German press asked the Upper Silesian people: Can you support the Polish cause, when it is led by such a man?

Due to its complex system of organization, as discussed above, the German constellation of plebiscite organizations had no such central figure equal to Korfanty. *Kocynder*, then, was at a disadvantage in this regard. Instead of Korfanty’s Kuh, *Kocynder* presented Urbanek’s Goat. In a cartoon illustrated by Ligoń, Urbanek, in checkered coat, striped trousers and top hat, leads a goat to overlook Upper Silesia. According to the caption, Urbanek has promised to supply Upper Silesian workers with goats, in order to provide milk for their children. He plans to show off such a goat at a *Heimattreuer* rally, but stops first to show the goat her new home. “See, this is Upper Silesia, which you, Goat, have to save for Germany. You’re our last hope!” To which the goat replies, “Too laaaate!”¹⁴³

This cartoon does not quite measure up to the levels of wit or malice seen in *Pieron*’s strikes against Korfanty. It does, however, serve as a good example of *Kocynder*’s bilingualism.

¹⁴² “Im Verbrecherkeller,” *Pieron*, Number 24, 25 December 1920.

¹⁴³ “Comitat plebiszczytowy hinter Deutschland,” *Kocynder*, Number 13, 20 November 1920.

Whereas *Pieron* was written exclusively in German, *Kocynder* often sprinkled German words and phrases into its stories and captions. Here, Urbanek takes his “*deutsche Ziege*” to town, although elsewhere it is referred to as a “*niemiecka koza*.” When the goat speaks, she does so in German, bleating, “*Zu sp-ä-ä-ä-ät!*” Perhaps most interesting, “*heimatstreuer*” appears as if spelled phonetically in Polish: “*hajmatstrojów*.”¹⁴⁴ *Kocynder* expected its readers to be bilingual, having grown up speaking Polish at home but learning German in school. Prussian caricatures often speak *auf deutsch* as a way emphasize their foreignness and highlight the differences between “true” Upper Silesians and the German interlopers. This is a continuation of the pre-war rhetoric, which lumped Germans, Jews and Socialists as foreign conspirators.

The near-exclusive use of German language in education was heavily attacked by *Kocynder*, which viewed the practice – correctly – as the forced Germanization of Upper Silesian children. Early in its run, *Kocynder*’s front page featured a classroom of boys demanding Polish instruction, as their rotund German school teacher sweated with fear; above the fray, a portrait of Kaiser Wilhelm II looked down in dismay.¹⁴⁵ The entire 10 December edition was a special “School Issue.” A common theme throughout the issue was (Polish) children fighting back against their (German) teachers, insisting on being taught Polish. In a small image, a matronly schoolteacher – one of the few female teachers depicted – stands sternly in front of the chalkboards and scolds a young girl. “You, Głagła, want to learn Polish? But your father is a civil servant!” “But a clever man,” replies the girl.¹⁴⁶ Here, again, *Kocynder* employs both German and Polish. The teacher speaks first in Polish, then in German, and Głagła answers in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ “Precz z niemiecką szkołą – chcemy nauki polskiej,” *Kocynder*, Number 4, 29 July 1920.

¹⁴⁶ *Kocynder*, Number 15, 10 December 1920.

German. This, combined with the information that her father is a civil servant (*Beamte*) indicates that the girl herself is German. And yet, she still wishes to learn Polish. Her father, a “clever man,” knows Upper Silesia is on the verge of becoming a part of the Polish state, and wants his daughter to be prepared. *Kocynder*’s message is clear: Even Germans believe Poland will win the plebiscite!

In another image, a sinister-looking teacher, balding and bespectacled, rebukes his students: “Don’t you know, you *polnischer Hund*, that you can’t speak Polish in school? How much longer will I need to remind you of that?” “Not much longer,” is the cheeky reply. “Only until the plebiscite!”¹⁴⁷ A full-page cartoon, illustrated by Romanowicz, shows an elderly German teacher holding copies of *Dzwon* and *Der Schwarze Adler*. A handsome young Polish boy rips up the German newspapers, while a young girl looks on approvingly. In the caption, these Upper Silesian children (*Dzieci górnośląskie*) proclaim, “We want Polish instruction, not German politics! Away with the Prussian teacher!”¹⁴⁸

But all will soon be set to right, as the three-panel cartoon, entitled, “The Moment of Justice is Approaching!”¹⁴⁹ made clear. The first panel shows how Germans “teach” their Polish students, as two teachers, in separate rooms, beat down and wrestle students to the ground. “This was the teaching of Polish children in Upper Silesia in a Prussian school. No wonder everyone hates the German teacher and remembers school as an institution of physical and spiritual torture.” But, “after the plebiscite, more than one Upper Silesian municipality will arrange a ‘farewell party’ (*Abschiedsfest*).” Here, Upper Silesians send their Prussian schoolmaster off in

¹⁴⁷ “Niedługo już!”, *Kocynder*, Number 15, 10 December 1920.

¹⁴⁸ “Nauczyciel agitator plebiscytowy,” *Kocynder*, Number 15, 10 December 1920.

¹⁴⁹ “Zbliża się chwila sprawiedliwości,” *Kocynder*, Number 15, 10 December 1920.

a wheelbarrow, to the delight of others in the town. Finally, the town rejoices as the new Polish schoolteacher arrives. He is greeted by Upper Silesians dressed in their finest clothing, carrying the Polish flags and a banner which reads, “Long Live the Polish School!” Children gather around him and gaze up in adoration. They have been “waiting for centuries” for such a teacher; “he will teach in Polish, he will love children...Then there will be children willing to go to school, they will become smarter and better and Upper Silesia will be better.”¹⁵⁰

For Polish Upper Silesians, victory at the polls would indeed be a “moment of justice,” a chance to right all the wrongs committed against them after centuries of Prussian rule. One small blurb involved a conversation between two friends. Zeflik states, “Germany claims that Silesia has belonged to it for 700 years.” Francek replies, “Then it’s about time for it to go back to Poland again.”¹⁵¹ This echoes the language used in the Polish newspapers – although, again, Prussia only took control of Upper Silesia in 1742. Likewise, *Kocynder* also used terms such as “slavery” and “yoked” to describe Upper Silesians’ lives under Prussian/German rule. On the day of the plebiscite, *Kocynder* ran a special “Plebiscite Issue.” The last page featured an image of a strong, masculine worker set against the backdrop of the Polish flag. He holds the remains of his newly-broken chains in his hands and says, “Under the sign of the White Eagle, we will free ourselves from the Prussian yoke and gain independence. Long live Poland, and Upper Silesia connected with it!”¹⁵² With the plebiscite, Upper Silesians would finally break from their Prussian bondage; they would liberate themselves by voting for Poland.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ “Naturalnie,” *Kocynder*, Number 3, 8 July 1920.

¹⁵² “Dzień Wyzwolenia,” *Kocynder*, Number 26, 20 March 1921.

Visually, *Kocynder* often portrayed Germans as old-guard Prussians, dressed in military garb and the ever-present *Pickelhaube*. In fact, ‘German’ and ‘Prussian’ were used almost interchangeably, as in the Polish newspapers, evoking memories of Prussian persecution of Polish Catholics and its militarism. This is exactly the depiction seen on the front page of the magazine’s first issue – a giant, mustachioed Prussian, in full military uniform, being over-run by a mob of Upper Silesians carrying Polish flags.¹⁵³ So prevalent were these famous helmets that *Kocynder* turned them into the punchline of a joke. “What is the difference between a devil and a Prussian? The devil has two horns, and the Prussian only one! (*Pickelhaube*).”¹⁵⁴ Prussian demons abound in the periodical. For example, in a frontispiece illustrated by Ligoń, a demonic Prussian monkey threatens two Upper Silesian children. The demon, grotesque in his movements and features, sports a *Pickelhaube* with the letters “H-K-T” balanced on its spike. The innocent children, dressed in smart, traditional clothing, run to St. Nicholas for protection. The “German Krampus” growls, “Your children belong to me, because Upper Silesia is German [*Oberschlesien ist deutsch*]!” St. Nicholas responds, “Ho, Ho, Prussia demon! Upper Silesian children are Polish, because their parents are Polish and speak Polish in prayers. Whether Upper Silesia is *deutsch*, you’ll soon find out at the plebiscite.” He then turns to the children, and offers these comforting words: “And you, dear Silesian children, do not be afraid of this German Satan, because soon one big word – Poland – spoken by your parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends will drive this devil from Upper Silesia.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ “Niech żyje Polska!”, *Kocynder*, Number 1, 10 June 1920.

¹⁵⁴ “Różnica,” *Kocynder*, Number 4, 29 July 1920. The parenthetical “*Pickelhaube*” is included in the original text, which begs the question – if you have to explain your joke, is it really all that funny?

¹⁵⁵ “O dusze dzieci górnośląskich,” *Kocynder*, Number 15, 10 December 1920.

If not a war-mongering Prussian, then Germans usually appeared as a *Heimatstreuer*, a catch-all term for any German whose main motivation was stamping out any and all aspects of Polishness in Silesia; he was often denoted as such by the letters “H-K-T” somewhere on his person. Physically, these men were either obese fat-cats or skinny weaklings, with thinning hair and glasses; either way, neither met the strong, masculine ideal. Both such men were found in a two-panel cartoon printed in the 29 July 1920 issue. A thin man with glasses opens a tanker, from which water spills out onto a plowed field. In his arms, he carries a package, marked, “Germanize as soon as possible.” In the background, a fat man throws seeds from a bag marked “H-K-T.” Both look smug. All that changes in the next panel. Instead of a crop of Germanized Upper Silesians, their harvest has only yielded happy, smiling Polish faces, each wearing a *rogatywka*, the Polish four-cornered hat. Despite, or perhaps in spite of, the forced Germanization of the region – through education, through language policy, through the *Kulturkampf* – Polish culture remains, and, indeed, has flourished. Upper Silesia remains a Polish land, according to this cartoon. As the caption concluded, “That’s the curse of the evil deed.”¹⁵⁶

While Germans were denoted by their sharp military uniforms or posh suits in the Polish press, the portrayal of Poles in the German press occurred at the opposite end of the spectrum. Playing again into the stereotypes Germans held of Eastern Europe, Poles in *Pieron* were poor, dirty and stupid. In the same vein as the stereotypical American riddle, the magazine joked, “The Pole is very stupid. He looks around and around the electric light, and yet still can’t figure it out – Why can’t he light a cigar with it?”¹⁵⁷ In the 28 August 1920 issue, “Pieron” takes his

¹⁵⁶ “Posiew/Żniwo,” *Kocynder*, Number 4, 29 July 1920.

¹⁵⁷ “Oberschlesier Bilderbogen,” *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

uncle, visiting from Norway, on a tour of Upper Silesia. As they drive down a city street, two groups of residents are seen. On the left, the people are neatly dressed; the men are in suits and ties, while the woman dons a fashionable hat. All is neat and orderly. On the other side of the street, however, a drunken brawl breaks out. The people are dressed in tattered clothes; a man takes a heavy swig from a bottle. “So two nations of people [*Völkerschaften*] live here in Upper Silesia?” the uncle naively asks. “Yes, Uncle,” answers “Pieron.” “The Upper Silesian and the Pole. The differences are small, as you can see!”¹⁵⁸ The Upper Silesian is an upstanding citizen of Germany; the Pole is a buffoon who only drinks and causes trouble. It should be noted, however, that *Pieron*, a week before the plebiscite, did concede that it was painting Poles with a rather large brush. Under the faces of five ragged and sinister men, the magazine admitted, “Not all Poles look like this. There are also decent and smart people among them. And they vote for Germany.”¹⁵⁹

This depiction of Poles occurred again in three “Polish Fairy Tales” retold in *Pieron*. In “Hansel and Gretel,” they are dirty little thieves, whom even the witch will not take into her house until they are deloused. In “Sleeping Beauty,” a Polish prince comes the castle of the slumbering princess – and proceeds to steal not a kiss, but her gold ring, her necklace and her earrings, before emptying the king’s safe and pickpocketing the rest of the court. Finally, in “Littler Red Riding Hood,” the “Polish wolf,” stops the maid on her way to grandmother’s house. Upon hearing she carried only “a little bit of cornmeal cake and a pot of cocoa,” the wolf exclaims, “What? No wine, no schnapps? Are you crazy?” He then hits her in the face with his tail, causing her to drop the basket, and runs to town, where he “broke into a brandy tavern.”

¹⁵⁸ “Auf der Straße der Industriestadt,” *Pieron*, Number 7, 28 August 1920.

¹⁵⁹ “Nicht alle Polen,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 11, 12 March 1921.

Alone in the woods, Little Red Riding Hood weeps, “Oh, if only we were rid of these Polish wolves!”¹⁶⁰

Depicting Poles as wolves is a minor trope found both in *Pieron* and the plebiscite posters. It was the first image readers of the magazine saw, appearing on the front page of the initial issue. Here, a happy family tends to their farm; featured prominently is a mother holding an infant. Just outside the fence, however, five large black wolves are on the prowl. Two of the wolves wear a *rogatywka*, and a third hat lies abandoned on the ground. The Polish wolves search menacingly for a way into the farmyard, looking to break in – but “they shall not succeed!” the caption stated.¹⁶¹ In this same issue, a cartoon panel showed the Big Bad (Polish) Wolf, again wearing the *rogatywka*, opening his jaws as he threatens Little Red Riding Hood. In her basket, marked *Oberschlesien*, the girl carries a bag of money (1000M) and what appears to be two smoke stacks, representing the industry of the region. “The Polish wolf wants to eat Little Red Riding Hood,” claimed the caption. “He can’t forget Upper Silesia’s goods.”¹⁶² In all these instances, the Polish Wolf is an interloper, a thief looking to take that which is not rightfully his – Upper Silesia. The region, like Little Red Riding Hood, must be protected from these wolves by those true Upper Silesians, who will vote to stay in Germany.

Pieron dedicated the entire 7 August 1920 issue to what exactly would happen to Upper Silesia should the Polish wolf succeed. The opening illustration imagined the day Polish forces would arrive in Upper Silesia – “31 February 1921” – to “a cheering crowd greet[ing] the invasion of the liberators!” The officer, the only clean Pole, smugly rides his emaciated horse.

¹⁶⁰ “Polnische Märchen,” *Pieron*, Number 15, 23 October 1920.

¹⁶¹ “Das bedrohte Oberschlesien,” *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

¹⁶² “Oberschlesier Bilderbogen,” *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

Around him, his men are dressed in tattered, mismatched uniforms. As they march down the street, the townspeople run into their houses; there are no open windows, no cheering crowds. Only one man welcomes the Polish Army. With his bare feet, raggedy clothes and nose red from drinking, this man is a prime example of the type of “Pole” that ‘Pieron’ pointed out to his uncle. Only he is happy to be joined to Poland. The others, the respectable “Upper Silesians,” hide in fear.¹⁶³

The trope of the dirty and destitute Pole continued throughout the issue. As part of a series of single-panel cartoons, a man vigorously scratches his head as lice flock to him; “The Poles have no goods, except these!”¹⁶⁴ the caption exclaimed. Polish farms are equipped “with the latest Polish achievements,” stated another, as in the accompanying image a woman pulls a plow in place of a horse.¹⁶⁵ “Polish Cleanliness” is depicted in a stark illustration. Under a sickly, yellow sky, Death looks down from his wagon at the dead who lie prone on the street. Crows flock and pick at the dead flesh. “If Upper Silesia becomes Polish,” the caption warned, “cholera from Poland will arrive. That would be the bane of Polish filth!”¹⁶⁶ “What would happen if Upper Silesia became Polish?” asked the magazine. The answer: nothing good. “Your business: broken...The mines: overexploited. Your health: threatened by epidemics. Your new money: worthless...And you? What are you? Disenfranchised. Worthless. “Only” Upper Silesian. Let this evil dream pass you by!”¹⁶⁷ Luckily, as the last page of the issue made clear,

¹⁶³ “Einzug der Befreier,” *Pieron*, Number 4, 7 August 1920.

¹⁶⁴ “Oberschlesier Bilderbogen,” *Pieron*, Number 4, 7 August 1920.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ “Polnische Sauberkeit,” *Pieron*, Number 4, 7 August 1920.

¹⁶⁷ “Wenn Oberschlesien polnisch würde - !”, *Pieron*, Number 4, 7 August 1920.

this future would never happen. As a new day begins, a strong and sturdy (German) Upper Silesian awakes and says, “I had a bad dream. Upper Silesia, Polish? It shall never happen!”¹⁶⁸

It is impossible to cleanly separate *Pieron*’s anti-Polish rhetoric and its economic arguments that Germany was the sounder, safer choice for Upper Silesians. As seen in the image of the poor Polish farmwife pulling her husband’s plow, the two went very much hand-in-hand. Poland suffered economically *because* its people were stupid, lazy and uncultured; poverty and destitution were essential elements of what it meant to be Polish, according to the Germans. Poland may argue that it needed Upper Silesia – and its coal – to survive; Germany’s counter to that claim was that, even if Poland had this wealth, it would squander it and drag Upper Silesia down. Polish “intelligence” was on display in an illustration featuring two miners on a break. “Listen,” one tells the other. “If you choose Germany, you’ll work seven hours and get fifty German Marks. If you choose Poland, you’ll only work thirteen hours, but you’ll get twenty Polish Marks for it. Understand? [*Rozumisz?*]”¹⁶⁹ “Are you crazy?” his friend asks. The implication is clear – Poles are so dim-witted they will take less money to do more work. In another issue, Poland’s poverty is made into a joke, as *Pieron* presented “recipes” from a “Polish Cookbook.” These included a recipe for bouillon: “Take half a liter of water, put in half an earthworm, and let it boil for fifteen minutes.” Or another, for “spinach with egg”: “Grind a few large pieces of bark into powder and add five or six large pebbles.”¹⁷⁰ Here again, poverty is, quite literally, baked into Polish culture. It is a defining characteristic, according to *Pieron*, of

¹⁶⁸ “Alles nur ein Traum!”, *Pieron*, Number 4, 7 August 1920.

¹⁶⁹ “Unter Tage,” *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

¹⁷⁰ “Polnisches Kochbuch,” *Pieron*, Number 24, 25 December 1920.

what it means to be Polish, and nothing, not even the acquisition of Upper Silesia, could change this.

In touting Germany's economic might over Poland, *Pieron* turned to the two aspects also found in the newspapers: the strength of Germany's currency (at least, vis-à-vis the Polish Mark), and its strong social security. To the first point, the magazine pointed out that "If someone buys a cigarette with Polish money... To pay, he would need half a pound of paper!"¹⁷¹ In an almost full-page illustration, a poor elderly man and his son work on a home-improvement project, of sorts, together. Both are dressed in dirty clothing that is torn and patched; the son stares into the distance, unthinking, with his finger up his nose. According to the caption, the farmer has won the Krakow lottery, but "because he cannot buy anything with the worthless Polish money," he has decided to use it as wallpaper in his outhouse.¹⁷² Poles were shown to covet the German Mark. For example, in one such illustration, a buffoonish, possibly drunk, Pole offers a neat, clean (German) Silesian woman a bouquet of flowers. He sighs, "My dear Fraulein! I love and adore you! The sun of my emotions is not as big as the sea of my passions! I cannot be happy without you. You or nothing! Be mine!" She fixes him with an icy glare and asks, "Do you mean me, or my German Mark? Off with you!"¹⁷³

Germany's strong social security was also highlighted in the periodical. In "The Buried," the aftermath of a mining accident emphasized the importance of this system. A man lies on a stretcher, horribly injured, while his wife weeps. The miner's friend soothes her: "Don't cry, Barbara! Soon your husband will be well again, and then he will get a pension from the state. If

¹⁷¹ "Oberschlesier Bilderbogen," *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

¹⁷² "Wozu die polnische Mark gut ist!," *Pieron*, Number 1, 17 July 1920.

¹⁷³ "Die Werbung," *Pieron*, Number 2, 24 July 1920.

Upper Silesia were to be Polish – from the Poles, he would get nothing!”¹⁷⁴ This sentiment was repeated in a later issue. Two panels, presented side-by-side, displayed how an injured worker is treated in Germany and in Poland. In the first, a German worker in a neat suit and clean shoes, with his arm in a sling, approaches a bank of windows. “I injured myself at the machine. What can I do?” The helpful German clerk responds, “Go to that counter.” In the second panel, the man, now a Polish worker, again asks for help – but this time his clothes are dirty and torn, his hair unkempt. Instead of a row of eager clerks, ready to help, he has only one Polish clerk at a cluttered desk. The injured man repeats his question, and this time is told, “Go to the Devil!”¹⁷⁵ Miners and other workers would fare better in Germany, where the pay was greater, the Mark stronger, and a system of social security in place to ensure the miner and his family were taken care of in the event of injury. While the worker in the second cartoon was clearly identified as “German” and “Polish” in each panel, the grieving wife and miner in the first example were not defined by nationality. Given that the majority of miners working underground were Polish or Polish-speaking, it can be assumed that Barbara and her friend were not ethnically German. Thus, one did not need to belong to the German *nation* to reap these economic benefits – only the German *state*. The German propaganda did not ask Upper Silesians to *become* German, only to *stay* in Germany.

Kocynder could not strongly counter *Pieron*'s economic arguments; Poland was still trying to knit together a country out of three disparate empires while, for most of 1920, fighting an expensive war with Soviet Russia. The best the Polish satirical magazine could hope to do was cast doubt about the might of the German economy. In doing so, it focused on two main

¹⁷⁴ “Die Verschüttete,” *Pieron*, Number 2, 24 July 1920.

¹⁷⁵ “Hüben und drüben,” *Pieron*, Number 20, 27 November 1920.

issues: Germany's war debts and taxes. "Germany wants to pay its debts/With Silesian work and treasures," began the poem "Plebiscite Thoughts." "It will lose the war for a second time/Because Silesians are not fools."¹⁷⁶ Kaiser Wilhelm himself appeared in a four-panel comic, dressed in his finest military garb, complete with spiked helmet and flowing cape. He stands next to his strong man, Michel – a "Hercules." "He'll lift anything I give him," the Kaiser boasts as he hands more and more weight to Michel; each one is labeled "War Debt" or "War Loans." Michel holds strong, but eventually collapses under the weight of this enormous debt, much to the dismay of the Kaiser: "Oh, damn [*Donnerwetter*!]! Victory was certain!"¹⁷⁷ The levity of this comic is juxtaposed with the pathos of Germania in a later issue. Here, a sobbing Germania sits atop a wagon carrying sacks of debt. Her poor mule has collapsed with exhaustion, and her wagon has lost a wheel – labeled, "Upper Silesia." She cries, "Upper Silesia, save me, because my Michel can no longer pull the cart with German debts."¹⁷⁸ Her plea is written in both German and Polish, again highlighting *Kocynder's* use of both languages to appeal to readers.

The burden of these war debts would fall to the working people, in the form of taxes. *Kocynder* made this very clear in its presentation of "Two Urns." The first voting urn bears the image of the black German eagle and is filled with papers marked "Taxes!" [*Podatki!*] Chains spill over the top, and a gloved hand pushes out of the urn, brandishing a whip marked "H-K-T." In contrast, the Polish urn is overflowing with industrial tools and wheat, with the bright flame of freedom towering above it all. Instead of taxes, Poland offers "Freedom, Education, Work and

¹⁷⁶ "Myśli Plebiscytowe," *Kocynder*, Number 25, 13 March 1921.

¹⁷⁷ "Michel-hercules," *Kocynder*, Number 1, 10 June 1920.

¹⁷⁸ "So siehst du aus!," *Kocynder*, Number 24, 6 March 1921.

Prosperity.” The caption warned, “Upper Silesians, choose. A vote for German will give you further slavery, national and social oppression, and misery for you and your descendants, because you will have to pay Germany’s war debts. A vote for Poland will give you independence, happiness and prosperity. You will be the masters of your own land.”¹⁷⁹

Kocynder made clear that the cost of Prussian war-mongering was not just monetary; the human cost was even higher, as the “War Invalid” made clear. A poor veteran teeters on one leg, precariously balanced between his wooden prosthetic and a box on a stand. His poem is entirely in German. “*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,*” he says. “But I’m without everything./ For my foot, fortune, life/ I was given a hurdy-gurdy./ In Germany there’s nothing to be found./ That’s why I’m voting for Poland!”¹⁸⁰ But at least this man is still alive to vote. The 10 November 1920 issue marked the two-year anniversary of Germany’s defeat with a striking illustration of Kaiser Wilhelm sitting dejectedly on a mountain of skulls and bones. No longer the military leader, “Willy” is dressed in a suit and coat, his top hat cast to the side. “Here rests the Upper Silesian cannon fodder. Fallen for Kaiser and *Reich,*” reads a sign in German. In Polish, “Willy” asks the bones, “Ghosts of my loyal Upper Silesians, what will happen with Upper Silesia?” The ghosts reply, “For Germany, a flop like two years ago. Polish victory will avenge our blood and our lives lost here in forced war.”¹⁸¹

This imagery and language, particularly referring to the fallen Upper Silesians as “cannon fodder,” is also found in the German propaganda. While it could not simply brush its defeat in the First World War away, Germany did try to present itself as a new nation, no longer

¹⁷⁹ “Dwie Urny,” *Kocynder*, Number 25, 13 March 1921.

¹⁸⁰ “Inwalida wojenny,” *Kocynder*, Number 24, 6 March 1921.

¹⁸¹ “W rocznicę plajty niemieckiej,” *Kocynder*, Number 12, 10 November 1920.

associated with the Prussian militarism that had started the Great War. Instead, the propaganda pointed repeatedly to the fact that Poland was now embroiled in a war with Soviet Russia – a war that, as the first issues of *Pieron* were released, Poland appeared to be on the verge of losing. Instead of a mountain of skeletons, *Pieron* produced a field of crosses, the land littered with skulls, bones and broken swords. This was the “graveyard of fallen Upper Silesians, who fell for the Polish state!”¹⁸² More than the loss of life, *Pieron* argued that Poland did not respect and would not keep its promises to those Upper Silesians who fought on its behalf. One cartoon showed two Polish officers chatting in a room filled with shoddy clothing and old boots; empty bottles litter the table and floor. “What’s all this crappy stuff for?” asks one. The other answers, “These are the uniforms for the Upper Silesians, if they vote Polish, Sir! For them, the worst is just good enough!”¹⁸³ But Poland’s supposed anti-Silesian bias had graver implications than old uniforms; *Pieron* contended that Poland would not pay pensions to the families who lost members in “the Polish War.” In a two-panel cartoon, an Upper Silesian is drafted into the Polish army, and dies fighting the Russians. But when his widow tries to collect his pension, “she learns that the Polish state gives nothing to dead Upper Silesians.”¹⁸⁴ Poland has failed in its obligations to the family; it could not keep the husband safe at war, and now refused to protect his widow. Circling back to its economic argument, the German state was able to provide pensions to the wives and children left behind, as seen in the illustration of Barbara, the miner’s wife. These illustrations, then, confronted both men and women with the question of which state would keep their family, and thus the nation, safe.

¹⁸² “Von der Ostfront,” *Pieron*, Number 2, 24 July 1920.

¹⁸³ “Zu Warschau in der Kammer,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 1, 1 January 1921.

¹⁸⁴ “Der polnische Krieg,” *Pieron*, Number 5, 14 August 1920.

The role of gender, and from that, the ways in which men, women and families were depicted in the propaganda, is a vital, albeit seldom discussed, aspect of the plebiscite propaganda. More will be said in discussing the plebiscite posters, but it is important to examine the gendered representations and presentations in the satirical magazines. Images of German and Polish men are found in both periodicals, but in depicting women they tended to stay within their national lines – that is, with a few exceptions, *Pieron* included only German women, while Polish women were almost exclusively the domain of *Kocynder*. Two broad statements hold true for both the posters and the magazines: first, that each nation presented their opponent's men as unmanly and their own men as the masculine ideal – although they differed on what exactly constituted this ideal; and second, women appeared almost exclusively as wives and mothers.

As discussed above, German men in *Kocynder* were either militaristic Prussians, fat-cat capitalists, or scrawny weaklings – none of whom were viewed as positively masculine. The school teachers are either violent towards their pupils or cower in fear as the students demand Polish education. Often seen sporting the letters “H-K-T” somewhere on their person, these men were craven and shallow, thinking only of themselves. As for the Prussian military man, he was viewed as a disgrace, a character for a time now past, with no place in the post-war future. He was usually overweight, his rotund belly emphasizing that he was no longer a fighting-fit soldier, but a relic. Polish men, on the other hand, were strong, young and handsome, often sporting a thick mustache. Their masculinity was strongly tied to their class. While some did appear in suits or coats, most often the Polish man appeared dressed simply in a white shirt and dark pants, carrying a pickaxe. Mining tools appeared on his belt buckle.¹⁸⁵ The Polish Upper Silesian was a worker, fit in health and firm in his convictions. He was solid, both physically and morally,

¹⁸⁵ For examples, see: “Pruski pypeć podatkowy,” *Kocynder*, Number 3, 8 July 1920; “Dzień wyzwolenia,” *Kocynder*, Number 26, 20 March 1921.

working to protect his family and his nation from the villainous Prussians. Here, being a worker is equated with manliness, while being a member of the middle or professional classes, as most “*heimatstreuer*” Germans were, was associated with physical fragility and moral turpitude.

Polish women did not appear with the same frequency as did their male counterparts, and never without a man also present. Women were wives and mothers, such as the farmer’s wife who worries about protecting the harvest from “those thieves in uniforms.” She is older, with a plain face, and literally looks up to her husband for guidance and protection. He provides this easily, reassuring her that the German security forces are no longer a threat.¹⁸⁶ When a Polish man was not present to provide protection, however, Upper Silesian women were forced to defend themselves. In a three-panel cartoon, a lecherous Prussian, dressed in military garb from his pointed helmet to his polished boots, approaches a beautiful, young Silesian woman as she sweeps. With her full skirt and flowered apron, she is perhaps not dressed for housework; instead, her traditional outfit signals that she is a representation of the region – Silesia personified. “Give me a kiss, my darling,” the Prussian demands. But Silesia will have no more of these “Prusaks.” “Out, you Prussian bastard!” she shouts, beating him away with her broom.¹⁸⁷ Upper Silesia’s honor must be preserved from the Prussians who seek to exploit her, and virtuous Polish women would have to play a large role in achieving this.

Women have a larger presence in *Pieron*, in which they again appear predominantly as wives and mothers, although the role they played in the magazine depended on their class and, by extension, their ethnicity. As working class wives, women were used to highlight Germany’s economic and social security – Barbara, for example, the woman who will soon receive a

¹⁸⁶ “Po żniwach,” *Kocynder*, Number 6, 5 September 1920. This was the first issue after the Second Silesian Uprising and the agreement to disband the Sipo.

¹⁸⁷ “‘Zołety’ Prusaka,” *Kocynder*, Number 23, 1 March 1921.

pension after her husband's accident in the mines, or the unnamed widow who will not collect such funds after her husband dies fighting against Soviet Russia.¹⁸⁸ But it is important to note that the widow is defined as Polish, while Barbara's ethnicity is ambiguous. These women are poor, helpless creatures whose (Polish) husbands, by accident or choice, are no longer present to support them – an indictment against Polish masculinity. The only place these women can turn to for protection is the German state. While passive figures, Polish women were at least depicted as largely blameless victims, unlike Polish men, whom *Pieron* presented as drunken fools. Barbara and the widow are clearly poor, but their simple clothing is clean. Polish men, on the other hand, are almost exclusively dressed in dirty rags and tatters.

German women and men, on the other hand, were depicted as members of the ideal middle class family – father, mother, their children, and, usually, a member of the older generation, all living comfortably together. Three generations of Upper Silesians appeared in an image found in the 16 October 1920 issue, which was a special edition devoted to “The Upper Silesian.” It is a snapshot of what middle class life should be, with the family gathered around the dining table. The father reads the paper while the mother, beautiful and elegant, rocks their youngest; an older woman, likely her mother, leans down to coo at the infant. Another child finishes his meal, while a third plays with the family dog. This is, as the title stated, the “Upper Silesian Family Happiness.” The caption declared, “What the Upper Silesian desires: Quiet, Happiness and Peace.”¹⁸⁹ The cover of the 18 December 1920 issue showcased another perfect middle class family as they prepare for Christmas. Again the image included a father, mother and three young children, including an infant; here, the role of the older family member was

¹⁸⁸ “Die Vershüttete,” *Pieron*, Number 2, 24 July 1920; “Der polnische Krieg,” *Pieron*, Number 5, 14 August 1920.

¹⁸⁹ “Oberschlesisches Familienglück,” *Pieron*, Number 14, 16 October 1920.

played by a kindly grandfather, who smiles from the sofa as he watches the family decorate the tree.¹⁹⁰ Neither of these families are excessively rich, but they are financially secure; the children are well-fed and healthy; and, most importantly, all are happy and loved. This is the future all Upper Silesians could achieve in Germany; it would not be possible if the region fell to Poland.



Figure 7: "Und Eure Kinder -?", *Pieron*, No. 21, 4 December 1921

A German mother, according to these images, was beautiful, kind, and always put her children above herself. Such a mother was memorialized on the frontispiece of *Pieron's* 4 December 1920 issue. A mother places her hand lovingly on her son's head as she looks down at him, apparently deep in thought. "The plebiscite nears," her son says. "Mother, think of me!"¹⁹¹ Women were still a new electorate in 1920, and both Commissariats worked hard to appeal to

them. When they did, however, it was not to women as individuals, but specifically women as mothers. It was for her child – usually a son – that a mother cast her vote for Germany; her thoughts were not of herself, but of her children, and thus the future of the nation.

Every rule, however, has an exception that proves it, and that exception appeared in the 29 January 1921 issue. A young woman, probably in her early 20's, stands tall in a field, a basket of potatoes in her hands. She is no middle-class wife; instead, she is a farmer, dressed in

¹⁹⁰ "Oberschlesische Weihnachten," *Pieron*, Number 23, 18 December 1920.

¹⁹¹ "Und Eure Kinder - ?", *Pieron*, Number 21, 4 December 1920.

a simple dress and sensible shoes. Behind her, another woman, perhaps her mother, digs for potatoes. The girl smiles broadly and addresses the reader: “Do you think I want Korfanty’s rotten potatoes? I’m an Upper Silesian and I am as smart as four Poles [*Großpolen*] from Warsaw put together! I vote for Germany!”¹⁹² In all the material presented here – in the magazines, in the posters and pamphlets to be analyzed below – she is the only woman who appeared solely as a woman. She is not a mother, she is not a wife; she does not follow a man’s lead nor need his protection. Instead, she stands tall, confident in her own mind, and casts her vote for herself. It is an amazing image because it is the only one of its kind, a propaganda image depicting an individual woman as just that – an individual.

Taken together, *Kocynder* and *Pieron* held a vital, yet under-examined, place in the plebiscite propaganda landscape. In them we find the sharpest depictions of Germans and Poles, and each often defined the other in the basest terms possible. As will be seen below, in German posters Poles are also depicted as destitute – but in *Pieron*, they are also drunken fools who have engineered their own downfall. Likewise, the Prussian officer is a disparaged figure across the Polish propaganda; in *Kocynder*, however, he is even more devious, a literal devil out for Upper Silesia’s women and children. Even more so than other forms of propaganda, these satirical magazines eschewed any attempts to reach a broad audience and instead focused exclusively on stirring up passion in their respective bases.

2.3: The German and Polish Plebiscite Propaganda: Posters, Pamphlets and Other Materials

Like *Pieron* and *Kocynder*, the posters, pamphlets and fliers produced as plebiscite propaganda covered a wide range of topics, many of which intersected with one or more of these themes. Historian Waldemar Grosch, in his statistical analysis, divided over 450 propaganda

¹⁹² “Die Oberschlesierin wählt deutsch,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 5, 29 January 1921.

pieces into such categories as economics, ethnic belonging, religion, and fear of war. He found that almost a third of all German and Polish propaganda espoused an economic argument, while the issue of ethnic or national belonging appeared more frequently in the Polish propaganda.¹⁹³ This tracks with the main arguments found in the newspapers and satirical magazines, and it is these two themes which will be the main focus of the analysis here. However, Grosch fails to consider the role gender played in the plebiscite propaganda. Germany was breaking away from its Prussian past and forging a new identity in the post-war world; Poland was piecing itself back together, attempting to make one cogent nation out of three disparate imperial pieces. For both, the plebiscite propaganda provided a laboratory of sorts, in which the countries could experiment with how they wished to both present themselves to their people and be perceived by the outside world. Gender, the roles and representations of men and women, played a large part in this experimentation. Women were depicted solely as wives and mothers, who voted on behalf of their children. For men, their masculinity depended on how well they could provide for their family, and by extension the nation. But, again, German and Polish propaganda put forth differing ideals when it came to masculinity; more so than with women, this was explicitly tied to class, especially on the Polish side.

“This is how we will fare”: Ethnicity and Economics

As discussed above, Germany had the easier role in the plebiscite, in that its propaganda was really arguing for the maintenance of the status quo. German propaganda did not try to convince Upper Silesians to be Germans, per se. They were, after all, already residents of Germany. While posters, leaflets and pamphlets did stress the ethnic and historical legitimacy of Germans and Germany in the region, their primary argument was that, economically, Upper

¹⁹³ Grosch, 360-7; Table on 365.

Silesians would fare better in Germany than in Poland. Posters urged Upper Silesians to not only “vote for Germany,” but also to “stay in Germany.” The Polish offerings, meanwhile, had a much harder task: convince Upper Silesians to leave and become a part of Poland – a country that had not even existed for the past century. Thus, though Polish propaganda contained similar ethnic and economic themes, its posters and leaflets were starker and more aggressive than those produced by Germany. German propaganda, more so than its Polish counterpart, recognized that the voters were actually choosing the live in Germany or Poland, and not necessarily to become Germans or Poles. Thus, their propaganda highlighted the dismal economic conditions Upper Silesians would face in the new Poland.

“This is how we will fare in Poland!” warned one such poster.¹⁹⁴ Below the words a small family attempts to plow rocky, infertile soil. The father, a tired man with a gaunt face, steers the small plow while his wife and young son pull; the family, apparently, is too poor to afford a horse. A similar image appeared in *Pieron*, but there it was meant to be the punchline of a joke, a jab at Poland’s great “agricultural technology.” Here, in a much more life-like illustration, there is nothing at which to laugh. All three are thin, almost emaciated. Their clothing hangs on their bodies like rags, and the woman’s eyes are dead. This is the life that awaits the Upper Silesian farmer in Poland. For this reason, the poster proclaimed, “We farmers vote for Germany!”¹⁹⁵

The theme of desolate Poles was a common one in these German propaganda posters. Fritz Gottfried Kirchbach, who created the poster described above, produced another along the same lines. The top half of the poster depicted a prosperous German, looking almost debonair as

¹⁹⁴ Fritz Gottfried Kirchbach, “So würde es uns bei Polen ergehen!” (Berlin: Rotophot AG, 1920). Library of Congress Reproduction Number: LC-UZSC4-11701.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

he poses in front of his two-story house. Next to him, the text read, “In Germany constant prosperity.”¹⁹⁶ This sentiment was juxtaposed with the image below. A small family (again consisting of a father, mother and young son) wanders the countryside, heads bowed in desperation. The accompanying text reads, “In Poland poverty and emigration.”¹⁹⁷

Likewise, Adolf Münzer’s 1919 poster highlighted the poverty of Polish emigrants, who were fleeing Poland in hopes of finding better economic prospects elsewhere. The poster depicted what appears to be the curved roof of a peasant house. Closer inspection, however, reveals that this roof actually consists of a large Polish family. Three men are clustered in the center of the family, while two older women sit off to the side, obviously exhausted. A young woman holds the hand of a young child (her daughter), while carrying an infant strapped to her back. Just as the Poles described above, their clothing is ragged and worn (although much more colorful than in the other drab posters). “So look the Polish emigrants,” the poster warned. “And so will you also look, if Silesia goes to Poland.” At the bottom the poster cried, “Upper Silesians! Stay with the new Germany!”¹⁹⁸ Continuing to stress that this was a “new Germany,” a 1920 stamp, produced by the VVhO, told voters to “choose the German Republic.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Fritz Gottfried Kirchbach, “Bei Deutschland dauernder Wohlstand.” (Berlin: Rotophot AG, 1920). Library of Congress Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-11696.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Adolf Franz Theodor Münzer, “So sehen die polnischen Auswanderer aus.” (1919). Library of Congress Reproduction Number: LC-USZC4-11702. The same poster in Polish may be found at: APK, Polski Komitet Plebiscytowy [PKP], Syg. 281.

¹⁹⁹ “O.S., Wähle die Deutsche Republik,” 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl 96.

This “new Germany,” like the old, desperately needed Upper Silesia and its coal just as much, if not more so, than the Upper Silesians needed Germany. While careful not to stress this too heavily, the region’s economic importance for Germany’s economic future was featured in posters and pamphlets. In one of the most striking posters, a German Red Riding Hood (complete with rosy cheeks, blonde hair and the German eagle emblazoned on her cap) is chased by a Polish wolf. Her basket, labeled “Upper Silesia,” contains a large coal mine, with three smoking chimneys.



Figure 8: "Mein Körbchen liegt Dir wohl im Sinn?" APK, PKP, Syg. 281

Above her read the following poem: “My little basket draws you near?/ Well, it holds my Silesia dear!/ In one piece with me it shall stay;/ With you it would wither and waste away.²⁰⁰ Here, again, we find the trope of the Polish wolf, hungering for Upper Silesia and all its treasure, while the region itself is depicted as a young, defenseless maid in need of the protection only Germany can provide. But Germany also needed Upper Silesia, and its coal, in order to pay back its war reparations. This fact is implicit in the poster but not stressed, as it would be a sign of German weakness to show such dependence on Upper Silesia. After the plebiscite, however, the German press stressed its need for Upper Silesian coal as a way to convince the Allied Powers to grant Germany the lucrative Industrial Triangle.

²⁰⁰ “Mein Körbchen liegt Dir wohl im Sinn?” APK, PKP, Syg. 281. Translation from Tooley, 225.

Indeed, all of Upper Silesia's successes could be credited to Germany. In one poster, an Upper Silesian, smartly dressed, nears the top of a staircase – only to have a vindictive Pole, wearing a very Slavic fur hat, grab at his ankles, pulling him back down. Luckily, a German, wearing a sash of black, white and red, is also at the top of the stairs; he steadies the Upper Silesian, ensuring he will not be dragged into the poverty of Poland. “Germany has raised Upper Silesia to flourishing prosperity,” boasted the caption. “Poland wants to pull Upper Silesia back to desolate misery.”²⁰¹ The difference between the two countries was made clear by the background illustrations. At the top, the German landscape features a mine, the smoke pouring out of its three chimney stacks indicating its success, and a pair of neat houses. In Poland, however, only straw-roofed huts can be found. At the bottom of the stairs, a desolate mother cries as she cradles her infant on a bed of hay; they are too poor even for proper sheets.

“What Upper Silesia has become is thanks to the German spirit, German work and German tenacity. Upper Silesia is not only by political right, but also by holy natural law, a German land,” declared *Die Drei Fragen des Oberschlesiens* [*The Upper Silesian's Three Questions*],²⁰² a pamphlet produced in Berlin in 1920. It was the Germans who were actually responsible for first settling the region, the pamphlet argued; “The ancient Silesians were Germans.”²⁰³ Another pamphlet, entitled *Oberschlesien am Scheidewege* [*Upper Silesia at the Crossroads*] and produced in Kattowitz, also claimed ancient Germans were responsible for the establishment of civilization in Upper Silesia. In 750, “blonde” Germans entered Silesia,

²⁰¹ F. Markau, “Deutschland hat Oberschlesien,” 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl 2091; also: APK, PKP, Syg. 281.

²⁰² *Die Drei Fragen des Oberschlesiens*. (Berlin: Zentralverlag G.m.b.H., 1920), 14.

²⁰³ Ibid.

carrying with them their livestock, farming tools and “a lot of good will.”²⁰⁴ Though the “brown-haired” Slavs of the region were at first wary, the two groups soon came together. The Germans were more adapt at fieldwork and raising livestock than the Slavs, as well as better at building houses, churches, canals and factories. According to the pamphlet, “The Blondes also taught the Brunettes to read, write and do math.”²⁰⁵ Regardless of which group arrived in Silesia first (and *Upper Silesia at the Crossroads* claimed it to be Germans, who initially arrived there 2000 years ago), it is clear that the newer, “blonde” German settlers were responsible for Upper Silesia’s culture and infrastructure.

As in the press publications, Germany’s plebiscite posters and fliers stressed their nation’s economic might vis-à-vis Poland, as well as its social securities. “The *Deutschemark* rises!” exclaimed one such poster. “The Polish Mark falls!”²⁰⁶ The German is a happy, almost elfish man, while the Pole wears a *rogatywka* that covers his eyes; all that is visible is his wiry hair sticking out from under the cap, and his thick, unkempt mustache. In another example, a leaflet depicted two men, each saddled with a large burden – “the national debt that falls to each person.” The man from German will need to pay 3346 M to cover his share – a hefty sum, to be sure. But this is nothing compared to the Pole’s portion, which the leaflet declared to be 11,600 M.²⁰⁷ In addition to its stronger currency and smaller debt, the German state was also more capable of caring for its inhabitants. In a series of panels, life in Germany was contrasted with life in Poland. “Compare and choose!” the title ordered. In Germany, a sick worker is well cared for in a hospital; in Poland, he must fend for himself. In Germany, an elderly German can

²⁰⁴ *Oberschlesien am Scheidewege*. Gebrüder Böhm, Kattowitz, 3. APK, PKP, Syg. 267.

²⁰⁵ *Oberschlesien am Scheidewege*, 3.

²⁰⁶ “Die deutsche Mark steigt!” APK, PKP, Syg. 281.

²⁰⁷ “Długów państwowych,” 1921. B.Śl., U.Śl. 958.

look forward to a comfortable retirement; in Poland, he is forced to beg in order to survive. In both Polish pictures, the image of the Pole is ghoulish. The sick man resembles a skeleton, collapsed on the ground under a tree, while the retiree has a large bandage wrapped around his face; with his sunken eye and bared teeth, his visage like that of a modern-day zombie.²⁰⁸

For their part, Poles claimed to be the better choice for the economic and material well-being of Upper Silesians, pointing specifically at Germany's defeat in the war and its subsequent war debts. A label declared, "In Poland there's *Speck* and bread. In Germany, debt and hardships. Therefore, Vote for Poland!"²⁰⁹ Another cried, "In Poland you will eat bread and sausage, in Germany 'ersatz'."²¹⁰ And a third stated, "In Germany, only the air is tax-free!"²¹¹ Visually, Polish propaganda used the same techniques employed by the Germans. Just as was described above, one leaflet showed two men holding sacks, which contained the national debt of both states. But the numbers used here tell a completely different story. The German carries a sack worth 4,761 billion Marks. So weighed down is he that he cannot even stand, but simply crawls along. The Pole, meanwhile, holds his satchel of debt neatly in the palm of his hand; it "weighs" only 17 billion Marks.²¹² Also like the Germans, Polish posters and flyers used two-panel illustrations to contrast life in both states. In German-run Silesia, one poster read, there is "compulsion, misery and infertile land." The image is that of a poor worker digging fruitlessly for potatoes while the German capitalist looms over his shoulder. The next frame depicts life in

²⁰⁸ "Porównaj i głosuj!/Vergleiche und wähle!", APK, PKP, Syg. 277.

²⁰⁹ "In Polen giebt's Speck," 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl. 2628.

²¹⁰ "W Polsce," 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl. 55, U.Śl. 428, U.Śl. 460.

²¹¹ "In Deutschland," 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl. 2584.

²¹² "4 761 000 000 000?" APK, PKP, Syg. 267.

Silesia under Polish rule. Here there is “agrarian reform and prosperity.”²¹³ Sacks of food cluster at the proud Pole’s feet. The implication is clear: Starve in Germany, or thrive in Poland.

More so than in the German productions, in the Polish propaganda the ethnic depiction of Poles and Germans were tied to a specific class distinctions. The Poles primarily appeared as members of the working class – that is, the miners of the Industrial Triangle. Germans were portrayed as corrupted capitalists – “fat cats” with large bellies and an eye for profit at any cost. In one leaflet, two Germans sit in fancy restaurant, a glass of undoubtedly fine wine and a stack of bills on the table. “For us gold, food, for us the best wine/ And the trash for the Polish swine!” they say. Outside, an honest, hard-working Polish miner waves his pickaxe in anger. “Hey, workers!” he yells. “Let’s kick out these guests!”²¹⁴ In keeping with the bilingual nature of much of Polish propaganda, the Germans’ lines are written *auf deutsch*, while the Pole delivers his *po polsku*. Another leaflet (also bilingual) lists the four types of people who will vote for Germany: the Jew, with his large nose; the Capitalist, donning a top hat and monocle and carrying a walking stick; the Junker, holding a riding crop and wearing black riding boots; and the Idiot, who appears to have just escaped from the cabinet of Dr. Caligari. “Upper Silesians,” the leaflet asked, “will you follow their example?”²¹⁵ These are all German figures, and all appear as gross caricatures (especially the Idiot).

The above image is one of the few – on either the German or Polish side – to explicitly reference Jews. Upper Silesian Jews accounted for about one percent of the region’s population, and they resided predominantly in the (German) cities. Depictions of Jews are almost unseen in

²¹³ “Tu gwałt, nędza, brak ziemi.” 1921, B.Śl. U.Śl. 1310.

²¹⁴ “Kapitalista niemiecki,” APK, PKP, Syg. 267.

²¹⁵ “Kto głosuje za Niemcami?/ Wer stimmt für Deutschland?” APK, PKP, Syg. 267.

the German propaganda. In the Polish propaganda, while, again, Jews are not explicitly labeled as such, images do appear that fall into familiar anti-Semitic tropes – the pronounced nose, the glasses, the weak frame. An example of this can be found in the *Kocynder* cartoon discussed above, in which a teacher, bearing anti-Semitic traits, berates a student for speaking Polish. As in the pre-war press, Jews were placed next to Germans as a “foreign” element in the region.

Winning the plebiscite would, for the Poles, be the ultimate form of revenge against their Prussian-German oppressors. This is clearly presented in a leaflet depicting Polish workers mocking a fat German (specifically, Prussian) capitalist in a butcher’s shop. They cry, “You ate us out of hearth and home, you Prussian scoundrels. Now we will eat meat, and you can eat the entrails!”²¹⁶ Escape from exploitive German rule proved to be a potent theme in the plebiscite posters. In one, a young man, dressed a worker, kneels in front of an industrial landscape. On his back he supports three men who are clearly representatives of the Germans already encountered here: there is the “fat cat” capitalist, again with monocle; the militaristic Prussian officer; and a prosecutor. “Free yourself from your oppressors!”²¹⁷ the poster declared. “Vote for Poland!” In another, an eagle, the symbol of Poland, emerges from a chimneystack. “Vote for Poland, and you will be free,”²¹⁸ the poster read. “Vote for Germany, you’ll remain a ‘Pole and Pig’ [*Pollack und Schwein*]!” warned a label. “Only in Poland will you be a person!”²¹⁹ Poland held Upper Silesians’ only hope for salvation.

It was against Prussian militarism and imperialism that Polish propaganda most frequently railed. It was a convenient way of reminding Upper Silesians not only of the war,

²¹⁶ “To wam się należy! / Das habt ihr redlich verdient!” APK, PKP, Syg. 267.

²¹⁷ Antoni Romanowicz. “Wyzwól się od Twych gnębieli!” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 867, U.Śl. 873.

²¹⁸ “Głosuj za Polską.” Poznań: Drukarnia i Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1921. B.Śl. U.Śl. 1311.

²¹⁹ “Stimmst du für Deutschland,” 1920. B.Śl., U.Śl. 2621.

which Germany had just lost, but also of the Prussian persecution of the late nineteenth century, particularly the *Kulturkampf*. A flier printed in Kattowitz in early 1921 reminded Upper Silesians of what they had lost in the war: “70,000 Upper Silesian War Invalids [and] 50,000 widows and orphans of the fallen sons of Upper Silesia... You, who were exposed to the murderous fire of guns, machine guns and grenades and devastating poison gas. You, whose blood has flowed so that the insatiable German imperialism dominates the whole world!” Only Poland offered a reprieve from such “German baseness.”²²⁰ A small label, printed in green and navy blue, asked Upper Silesians, “Do you want to go again to the world slaughter? If so – vote for the Prussians.”²²¹ In another placard, a Prussian officer vomits papers labeled with names of lost German territory: Alsace, Posen, Schleswig, and so on. The man is fat and balding, his helmet cast to the side. The image captures him at the moment in which he chokes on the paper marked, “Upper Silesia.” Below, the text read, “The Prussian gorged himself on others and cannot digest them. He spewed Alsace, Schleswig, Poznań and Pomerania. You must return Silesia, you greedy wolf.”²²²

Upper Silesia and Poland, a pamphlet written by Vincent Rzymowski in 1921, argued, “The German occupation of Upper Silesia is an unceasing threat to the peace of Europe. On the other hand, the incorporation of Silesia into Poland would be one of the permanent guarantees of peace.”²²³ During the First World War, Germany had relied heavily on Upper Silesia’s coal and metallurgic industries; Rzymowski claimed these resources allowed Germany to carry on the war

²²⁰ “Do Was/An Euch,” 1921. B.Śl. U.Śl. 74, U.Śl. 255, U.Śl. 256, U.Śl. 257, U.Śl. 491.

²²¹ “Chcesz iść znów,” 1921. B.Śl. U.Śl. 58, U.Śl. 439, U.Śl. 463.

²²² “Obżarł się Prusak,” APK, PKP, syg. 267.

²²³ Vincent Rzymowski, *Upper Silesia and Poland*. Trans. Harriette E. Kennedy. (Warsaw: International Publication Society, 1921), 33.

for an additional two years. Thus, the war could only truly be declared a defeat for Germany when “they finally lose Upper Silesia, for then they will lose the means to their revenge.”²²⁴ This “fall of Prussian militarism” would be “the greatest aim of this greatest of wars! To free the civilized world from the curse of that iron vampire...German militarism was overset at the Marne. But it can only be torn up by the roots in Upper Silesia, by taking that province away from Germany and returning it to Poland.”²²⁵ By voting for Poland and against Prussian militarism, Upper Silesians would be ensuring a future of “permanent peace.”²²⁶



Figure 9: "Nur die allerdümmsten Kalber wählen ihre Schlächter selber," *B.Śl., U.Śl.* 887

Prussian militarism would lead to Upper Silesia’s downfall; only fools would choose to stay with Germany after decades of persecution and a devastating war. Stanisław Ligoń, of *Koczynder* fame, made that clear in his works. In a postcard, a Prussian butcher, so designated by his *Pickelhaube*, prepares to slaughter an innocent calf, which stands calmly beside him. The poster illustrated how Prussian aggressiveness (and, by extension, militarism) would destroy the defenseless Upper Silesians. An interesting aspect of this poster is that its message

(“Only the dumbest calves vote for their own

²²⁴ Rzymowski, *Upper Silesia and Poland*, 35.

²²⁵ *Ibid*, 36-7.

²²⁶ *Ibid*, 37.

butchers”) was written exclusively in German.²²⁷ While German propaganda appeared primarily in German, pro-Poland texts could be written exclusively in Polish, in both German and Polish, or, sometimes, even exclusively in German. As discussed above in the Polish press, one of the major projects for the new Poland would be to teach Upper Silesian Poles to read and write in Polish; many had received a German-language only education, speaking, but not reading, Polish at home. A pro-Polish poster written in German could therefore be used to appeal to and awaken the latent Polishness inside these Upper Silesians, inspiring them to follow their national consciousness and vote for Poland. Another Ligoń poster depicted a donkey standing up-right, dressed in high boots, a military jacket, and proudly wearing the Iron Cross. “I vote for Germany,” he proudly declares.²²⁸ Again, the text was written in German, but the message was clear: Only Asses vote for Germany and their Prussian militarism.

Germany’s response to this line of attack was to stress that it was now Poland, not Germany, which was engaged in a bloody war. It had set aside that old Prussian militarism; it was Polish aggression which now posed the greatest danger to Upper Silesians. In an especially grisly poster Death, carrying a sword and riding a black horse, looks out on a distant Silesian town. “Upper Silesian!” the poster warned. “Poland needs you for cannon fodder!”²²⁹ One leaflet (printed in both German and Polish) called this “the Polish War Specter.” While “Germany can think no more of decades of war,” Poland is engaged “again with the Bolsheviks in a struggle of life and death.”²³⁰ In the series of two-panel cartoons comparing life in the two

²²⁷ Stanisław Ligoń. “Nur die allerdümmsten Kälber wählen ihre Schlächter selber.” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 887. See also: APK PKP Syg. 271.

²²⁸ Stanisław Ligoń. “Ich stimme Deutsch.” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 870.

²²⁹ “Oberschlesier!” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 2075. See also: APK PKP Syg. 281.

²³⁰ “Das polnische Kriegsgespenst!” APK, PKP, Syg. 277.

states, described above, one such pair showed Germans heading to work, while Poles march off to war.²³¹ In one leaflet, a mother hugs her adult son tight, as the text warned, “Mothers, consider: Poland has conscription!”²³² In another, fathers are explicitly addressed. If they vote for Poland in March, “In April, your son will be drafted into the Polish military! Then he has to go to the new war! Fathers, do you want to give your sons to the Poles as cannon fodder??”²³³ Germany may have fought, and lost, the Great War, but that was in the past; now, it was Poland which was marching off to war and asking its young men to die for the nation.

Economic arguments featured heavily in the propaganda, with Germany touting its economic might and social systems, and Poland focusing on its opponent’s war debts and taxes. But even the most straight-forward economic argument could not be divorced from ethnic and class considerations. Upper Silesians would fare better in Germany – because, according to the German propaganda, being poor was an essentially Polish trait. In the Polish propaganda, the mix of these themes was even more striking. Upper Silesia needs to become Polish so it can kick out the fat-cat capitalists – who value profit over people – and the militaristic Prussians – who sacrifice human lives in the name of German imperialism. Both these groups had long persecuted Polish Upper Silesians, and only by removing them would the workers – who were always Polish in the propaganda – have the freedom to control their own economic interests.

“Mother, remember me”: Gendered Representations

The above analysis of the economic and ethnic concerns gives one a good overview of the main arguments put forth by both sides during the run-up to the plebiscite. Examining these

²³¹ “Porównaj i głosuj!/ Vergleiche u. wähle!“ APK, PKP, Syg. 277.

²³² “Mütter bedenkt!” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 905.

²³³ “Dla wszystkich Ojców!/ An Alle Väter!” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 283.

sources through a gendered lens, however, allows for a deeper understanding of the plebiscite period. The plebiscite propaganda provided a space in which the two countries could experiment with new national images of themselves. Gender played a vital role in this, laying out not only the roles men and women would play individually, but also how they would come together to form a new, national family. This was especially true of the Polish propaganda, as the country attempted to stitch together three disparate parts, with different customs and histories, to form a unified Polish nation. Sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit, gendered representations of men and women reflected how Germans and Poles viewed themselves, and each other.

Unlike in *Pieron*, German women do not appear in the propaganda posters of either side, and German men rarely feature in the German propaganda. Instead, these posters and leaflets focused on disparaging Polish men and women, painting them as unfit husbands and mothers. On the Polish side, German men were cast as one of two stereotypes: militaristic Prussians, with their medals and *Pickelhaubes*, or capitalist fat-cats, who only cared about profits. Polish masculinity stood in direct opposition to this; Polish men were workers, strong where the Germans were weak, morally sound where the Germans were bankrupt. Polish women appeared exclusively as wives and mothers; as the former, she needed her husband's protection to keep her safe and secure; as the latter, she stood firm in defense of her children.

When German men did appear in the German propaganda, it was to directly contrast them with their Polish counterparts – such as the debonair man in the Kirchbach poster described above, who lives in “constant prosperity” with his cozy house, while a Polish family is forced to wander the countryside in search of work and food.²³⁴ Or the young, blond German in a fashionable grey suit, who helps pull the Upper Silesian up a literal staircase of success, saving

²³⁴ Kirchbach, “Bei Deutschland dauernder Wohlstand.”

him from the Polish grasp.²³⁵ These men were respectable members of the German middle class, just as pictured in *Pieron*. They were not rich, but they made enough to provide their family with a comfortable life, never wanting for food or shelter.

In contrast to this prosperity, in the German propaganda Poland was financially weak and backward. Women were forced to perform hard labor in the field, as seen in the above Kirchbach poster, in which a mother and son pull the plow. The starving son works alongside his parents in the field, his bones clearly visible.²³⁶ In Münzer's poster of Polish emigrants, the young mother has two small children and no food to give to them.²³⁷ At the base of the staircase that leads to the German Promised Land, another young mother cradles her emaciated infant. None of these women were the traditional beauties found in *Pieron*. Instead, they are poor, beaten down by life. The mother pulling the plow has a gaunt face; the mother on the straw is dressed in rags, with short, unkempt hair. Not only did they not meet conventional standards of beauty, but, more importantly, they had failed at their primary purpose – they had failed as mothers. These Polish mothers were viewed as irresponsible for having children for whom they could not provide. Here again the implication was that Poland could not provide for her children.²³⁸

Viewed from another angle, however, these posters can also be read as harsh critiques of Polish masculinity. In the iconography, men are expected to defend and provide for their family, and, by extension, the nation. None of the Polish men here were able to do so. The farmer cannot afford a horse; several of the fathers are unable to find work. They are unable to provide food, shelter, or security for their families. As men, they have failed to protect their families and,

²³⁵ Markau, "Deutschland hat Oberschlesien."

²³⁶ Kirchbach, "So würde es uns bei Polen ergehen!"

²³⁷ Münzer, "So sehen die polnischen Auswanderer aus."

²³⁸ "Deutschland hat Oberschlesien zum blühenden Wohlstand emporgeführt." APK, PKP, Syg. 281.

therefore, the nation. The emasculated Polish man represents the emasculated Polish nation – both are economically incapable of providing for their families.



Figure 10: “Wyzwól się od Twych gnębieli!”
B.Śl. U.Śl. 867, U.Śl. 873

As is to be expected, the exact opposite was true in the posters produced for Poland. In these, Polish masculinity was set apart from and above its German counterpart. Just as class and ethnicity were intertwined in the Polish propaganda, so, too, gender intersected with class. Even in the most crudely drawn cartoons, German were presented as “unmanly” – old, obese, or physically weak. The Pole, in contrast, was a strong, virile young man, ready and willing to fight to defend his homeland. It is worth returning to a previously discussed poster to examine the contrast between German and Polish

masculinities.²³⁹ Here, three Germans balance on the back of a worker. The capitalist is quite rotund, his jacket straining to cover his ample belly. The Prussian officer stands in his fully imperialistic, military glory, sword in hand. And the prosecutor, a thin, elderly man, stares out at the viewer through his owlish glasses. None of them could be considered paragons of masculinity. In contrast, the Pole on whose back they stand is strong and steady; not a foppish rich man, but a worker. This is the type of man who made Upper Silesia an industrial power, and it is he who will carry the region to further success as a part of the new Poland.

²³⁹ Romanowicz, “Wyzwól się od Twych gnębieli!”

This new Polish, Socialist masculinity would triumph over the stagnant, Prussian militarism that has oppressed Poles of decades. This criticism of German masculinity was perhaps most evident in a poster portraying the Poles' victory over a Teutonic Knight. Three (Polish) men stand over the knight's dead body. One of the Poles is dressed in the uniform of an officer, brandishing a sword, but he is placed in the back. The other two men are dressed simply – black pants and white, unbuttoned shirts – and wield large hammers, the symbol of the workers. “The Teutonic Knight lies in the dust. Let him never arise,” announced the poster.²⁴⁰ Dead is the Prussian, militaristic masculinity of Germany. It has been defeated by the Poles, and their new, Socialist masculinity. Taken together, these two posters argued that German masculinity was weak; it was on the strength of the new, Socialist man that Poland will rise again.

If the ideal Upper Silesian Polish man was strong, young and virile, then his counterpart was the young, active caring woman, often seen as the mother of a small child. Indeed, motherhood was the only way women entered into the propaganda materials. Women in plebiscite posters were rarely, if ever, seen without a child. That is, according to the posters, all women were mothers of young children. Elderly, childless or unmarried women were all but ignored.

This is not to say, however, that these posters were trying to target only current mothers. Rather, these images speak to the *potential* of all women to become mothers. As in other gendered representations of European nations, the woman/mother was expected to be the primary bearer of national culture, which she then passes on to her children. But this notion took on special significance in the Polish case. Remember that for over a century Poland had been a

²⁴⁰ “Krzyzak leży powalony.” Kraków: Zakł. Ski Akc. „Ryngraf” Litogr. Kranikowski, 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 869, U.Śl. 1820.

“nation without a state.” Thus, it was even more important in this context that women played out their roles as carriers of culture to the fullest extent.

According to a flier addressed to “Polish Upper Silesian Women” [*Polki Górnośląskie*], this is exactly what they had done.²⁴¹ Referring to the plebiscite, the text read, “You have already won one [battle], now you will win another! And what was this first victory? That you saved the Polishness of Silesia. It is to your merit, Polish Women and Mothers, that Upper Silesia remained Polish!” How did women accomplish this? By speaking to their children in “the unblemished speech of our ancestors,” teaching them to sing and pray in Polish. This was the first battle; now the Polish women of Upper Silesia faced another. “In the fight for your home country, you will not stand idly by. And you will get a weapon in your hand, and it is ballot card.” The flier concluded by reminding women that, if they saved Upper Silesia for Poland once again, their “descendants will repeat these great words: In the fight for Upper Silesia, the Polish woman's heart won!”

Not surprisingly, women in the Polish propaganda were seen as loving, caring mothers, who vote on behalf of their children. Indeed, this was the only reason for which a woman could vote, according to the posters. It was for her children – and thus the future of the nation – that she votes for Poland. In one flyer, a man and woman both cast their ballots of Poland into the voting urn (embossed with the Polish seal and set atop the helmet of a Prussian soldier). The man appears middle age or older, with a thick handle-bar mustache; behind him industrial chimneys pump out thick smoke. The backdrop on the woman's side is much more agrarian – rolling hills and a small farmhouse, and a crucifix hangs round her neck. A small child clutches the young woman's skirt; as she votes, the woman places a loving hand on the child's head. The man votes

²⁴¹ “Polki Górnośląskie!,” date unknown, likely 1920. APK, PKP, Syg. 267.



Figure 11: “Matko pamiętaj o mnie,” *B.Śl. U.Śl.*, 875

for himself; the woman votes to protect her child.²⁴² A plebiscite bond depicted motherly protection in a much more frightening way. Here, a Prussian soldier threatens a family with his bayonet, as the two small children run into their mothers’ arms. “We won’t give up Silesia,” the bond read, and indeed the emotion in the mother’s eyes is at once frightened and determined.²⁴³ Finally, in one of the more well-known posters of this time, a small child with tousled blonde hair and light eyes stares out longingly at the viewer. He drags a toy of some kind behind him and clutches a Polish flag in his small hand. “Mother,” he entreats.

“Remember me.”²⁴⁴ This poster was the Polish version of the *Pieron* frontispiece, in which the son begs his mother to “think of me” when voting. Again, a woman could not think only of herself, but had to also consider what was best for her children.

²⁴² “Głosujcie za Polską!” APK, PKP, Syg. 268.

²⁴³ “Nie damy Śląska.” 1920. *B.Śl. U.Śl.* 102, *U.Śl.* 1610.

²⁴⁴ “Matko pamiętaj o mnie,” Poznań: Drukarnia i Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1920. *B.Śl. U.Śl.*, 875.

Unlike Polish women in the German propaganda, who were predominantly passive figures, in the Polish propaganda they were much more active. While in the former they simply suffer, in the latter Polish women help to save the nation – by voting. Propagandists appealed to them directly. “Polish women!” a sticker read. “The fate of Upper Silesia is in your hands!”²⁴⁵ Another flyer portrayed women as the “swing vote” in the election. It asked, “Do you know, what will decide the greatest battle of Upper Silesia? Not bullets nor guns, not bayonets nor poisonous gas, not Prussian tricks nor violence, but the invincible moral strength, that is found in the warm heart of a Polish woman!”²⁴⁶ The illustration

shows the plebiscite as a scale, and it tips heavily in Poland’s favor, weighed down by the Polish heart. Behind the scale stretches a line of women that fades in to far background. And, of



Figure 12: “Polki Górnośląskie!” APK, PKP, syg. 267

course, next to the lead woman is a small child waving the Polish flag. Even though the flyer calls to women in general, the implicit understanding is that they are mothers.

Taken together, we can see that the images of the Polish man and woman complement each other. Combined, they represent the future of the Polish national family. It is a family headed by a father who is a strong and steady worker. At home, the children will be well-cared

²⁴⁵ “Kobiety Polski.” 1920. B.Śl. U.Śl. 46, U.Śl. 412, U.Śl. 451.

²⁴⁶ “Polki Górnośląskie!” APK, PKP, syg. 267.

for by a loving, doting mother, who will teach them the language and culture of their Polish homeland. Both men and women have a duty in securing the future of the national family: the man protects them from the Prussian intruders, and the woman ensures that their Polish traditions are passed down to the next generation. Both will provide for Upper Silesia's future by participating in its most important fight yet – the battle at the ballot box.

On 9 March 1921 – eleven days before the plebiscite – *Volkswille* noted the importance of the vote in deciding the region's future, and asked, "Should our home stay German or become Polish?"²⁴⁷ Finally, after thirteen months – longer, really – of intense propaganda efforts by the German and Polish sides, the day of decision had arrived. Efforts to sway or convince Upper Silesians to vote a certain way continued up to the very day of the plebiscite; *Gazeta Robotnicza* warned its readers, "Whoever votes for the Germans or stays home is a traitor! Every Pole votes for Poland!"²⁴⁸ But now, on Palm Sunday, the process fell out of the hands of the myriad plebiscite commissions, organizations and publications. It was now up to Upper Silesians to decide their own fate, to answer, after over two years of deliberation, the very question put forth by *Volkswille*: Would they stay German, or become Polish?

²⁴⁷ "Werkstätiges Volk Oberschlesiens!", *Volkswille*, 9 March 1921.

²⁴⁸ "W ostatnej chwili!", *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 20 March 1921.

PART FOUR: TO THE POLLS: THE UPPER SILESIAN PLEBISCITE AND ITS AFTERMATH

On 20 March 1921 – the last day of winter – Upper Silesians finally went to the polls. Voting was open all day, from eight in the morning until eight at night,¹ and many went on their way to or from Palm Sunday mass. The *New York Times* reporter covering the plebiscite noted that the event had “elements of a gigantic picnic, a Sunday school treat and a general election.”² After over two years of living in limbo, the day had come for Upper Silesians to cast their vote for Germany or Poland. The *Times* reporter mused, “What will come of this bewildering mélange of racial instincts and economic interests?”³

The answer to that was a muddled mess. The three previous plebiscites concerning German territory – Allenstein, Marienwerder, and Schleswig – had resulted in clear majorities, as high as 97 percent for Germany in Allenstein. But while Germany again carried the vote in Upper Silesia, it did so by a much slimmer margin. Of the nearly 1.2 million votes cast, 707,605, or 59.6 percent, went to Germany; Poland garnered 479,359, or 40.3 percent.⁴ It was as Paderewski had said – taken as a whole, the region would go for Germany. Based on this, Germany immediately declared victory. There were, however, two key issues to consider. The

¹ “Zwölf Gebote für die Abstimmungsberechtigten,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 20 March 1921.

² “Picnic Atmosphere in Upper Silesia,” *New York Times*, 21 March 1921.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*. 2 vols. (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933), Vol. I, 250. Of 1,220,514 registered voters, 1,190,846 did vote; 3,882 ballots were voided.

first was that, while Germany had won the overall vote, its victory was not evenly dispersed throughout the region. Most of the German votes came from the agricultural districts west of the Oder and from the large cities. In the communes of the industrial east, however, Poland was the clear victor. Second, section 5 in the Annex of Article 88 in the Versailles Treaty stipulated that “the number of votes cast in each commune”⁵ would be reported, indicating that carrying a majority of communes was as or more important than the total vote. Especially in the east, Poland carried the majority of communes – and, thus, also declared victory. Further complicating matters was the presence of so-called ‘outvoters’ – those born in Upper Silesia but living elsewhere – who Polish nationalists claimed tipped the scale unjustly in Germany’s direction. From this thorny knot of voting results, the Allied Powers would have to form the new border of Germany and Poland. It is perhaps no wonder they eventually passed this decision off to the newly formed League of Nations as soon as possible.

This final part will analyze the plebiscite results, examining the impact of outvoters while comparing the returns from the (German) cities and (Polish) communes. In the press, both Germany and Poland claimed they had won the plebiscite, using much of the same language and tropes found in the material produced in the run-up to the plebiscite. Now, however, their audience was not the residents of Upper Silesia, but rather the foreign leaders who would ultimately decide the region’s fate. Wojciech Korfanty and the Poles accepted the likelihood that the region would be divided, and so focused their efforts on securing as much territory, especially the lucrative Industrial Triangle, as possible for Poland. Meanwhile, Kurt Urbanek and the Germans instead campaigned to keep the region undivided and under German control, emphasizing the region’s cultural unity. In May, in an attempt to secure his own line, Korfanty

⁵ Treaty of Versailles, Article 88, Section 5, found in: *The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1923*, compiled by Lt. Col. Lawrence Martin (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924), 66.

ordered the launch of the Third Upper Silesian Uprising – by far the longest and bloodiest of the three. Finally, this part will discuss the ultimate decision for the division of Upper Silesia.

1. The Results of the Plebiscite

The day of the plebiscite, in the words of Sanford Griffith, assigned to cover the event by the *North American Review*, “passed off with a calm and correctness which might well be copied in elections anywhere.”⁶ Despite claims of intimidation by both Germans and Poles after the fact, such incidents were largely unconfirmed, and, in spite of fears, the day proceeded calmly. Upon entering a polling place, the Upper Silesian received an envelope and two cards, one marked “Deutschland – Niemcy,” the other “Polska – Polen.”⁷ On the day of the plebiscite, *Gazeta Robotnicza* warned its readers that cards labelled “Polen – Polska” were invalid, “given out by Germans,” in an effort to annul these votes later.⁸ It advised its readers not to be fooled into accepting these sham ballots, although, in the course of this study, no evidence of such German deception was found. For their part, the German papers had run advertisements in the days for the plebiscite, urging Upper Silesians to “supply yourselves with German ballots!”⁹ from their local German Plebiscite Subcommissariats or newspapers, in order to ensure they, indeed, had the correct, official ballot.¹⁰ From there, he or she would enter the voting booth, where they would place the country of their choice in the envelope, and destroy the second card. “You must tear the Polish ballot into very small pieces and leave the shreds in the voting booth,”

⁶ Sanford Griffith, “An Onlooker in Upper Silesia,” *The North American Review* 214, no. 788 (July 1921): 1.

⁷ Karty, B.Śl., U.Śl. 927.

⁸ “Ostatnia przestroga przed głosowaniem!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 20 March 1921.

⁹ “Zwölf Gebote für die Abstimmungsberechtigten.”

¹⁰ Strange as it sounds, it appears Upper Silesians could pick up their own ballots and bring them to the polling places. Given that each vote was put in a sealed envelope, available only at the time of voting, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to stuff the ballot box with previously obtained ballots.

advised the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*. The Upper Silesian then placed the sealed envelope in the voting urn. “Remember that voting is secret, and only God and you will know how you voted,” urged *Gazeta Robotnicza*. “So that you won’t be tormented by remorse and cursed by your children and grandchildren, Vote for Poland!”¹¹

By the end of the day, 97.5 percent of eligible Upper Silesians had voted in the plebiscite. Of these, 81 percent were born in and had remained residents of Upper Silesia. Those eligible to vote based on their residency in the region since 1904 made up 3.5 percent, while those born in Upper Silesia but no longer residents – the so-called “outvoters” – constituted just shy of 16 percent of eligible voters.¹² As stated above, Germany carried the vote for the region over all, earning 59.6 percent of the vote to Poland’s 40.3 percent. The votes, however, were not evenly dispersed. A large portion of Germany’s vote total came from the agricultural lands west of the Oder River, where it amassed enormous wins over Poland. In the city of Leobschütz/Głubczyce, for example, only 60 of 9,968 votes were cast for Poland. In the whole of Leobschütz county, only 259 votes were cast for Poland – out of a total of 65,428 votes; Germany carried the county with 99.6 percent.¹³ In Kreuzburg – long the home of the region’s sole German national party representative in the Reichstag – Germany earned 96.1 percent of the vote, with some of the smaller villages, such as Brinitze/Brynica and Frei Tschapel/Wolne Czaple, recording no Polish votes whatsoever.¹⁴ Germany won 95 percent of the vote in the city of Oppeln, and 69.4 percent

¹¹ “Ostatnia przestroga przed głosowaniem!”

¹² Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War*, 250. Wambaugh gives the following figures: 987,000 were born and still lived in Upper Silesia; 41,000 qualified based on domicile; 191,154 were outvoters. Wambaugh, 250.

¹³ “Oficjalne Wyniki Plebiscytu Górnośląskiego,” printed in Franciszek Hawranek, *Encyklopedia Powstań Śląskich* (Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1982), 687; Wambaugh, vol. 2, 247.

¹⁴ “Oficjalne Wyniki,” in Hawranek, 685. It should be noted that these truly were small villages. Brinitze had a voting population of 151; Frei Tschapel had 37.

of the surrounding Oppeln *Land* vote.¹⁵ These vote totals were on par with the Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscite results, and assured Germany, at the very least, that it would retain the territory west of the Oder.

The Polish stronghold, meanwhile, was in the south, stretching from Pleß to Rybnik and west to Ratibor, on the Oder. While both the towns of Pleß and Rybnik returned strong German majorities (76 and 71 percent, respectively), the countryside voted Polish by almost the same margins – 74 and 65, respectively.¹⁶ These results were not a surprise. In 1903, the Polish Party *Reichstag* candidate had lost his run-off election with the Center nominee by only about 1100 votes, and in the 1907 and 1912 elections, the district had voted overwhelmingly for the Polish Party.¹⁷ Given the decisiveness of the plebiscite results, it seemed clear that the Allied Powers would grant at least this area to Poland.

The east, however, especially in the Industrial Triangle, was much more muddled, and it was this area that both Germany and Poland coveted. Here, the vote spilt along several fault lines: German/Polish, middle/working class, urban/rural. Germany carried the cities with large margins, although these were not as wide as those registered in the west. In Kattowitz, 85 percent of the city voted for Germany, while in Beuthen, Gleiwitz and Königshütte, the percentage was in the mid-to-high 70s.¹⁸ But in the industrial villages and communes surrounding these cities, where the working-class, Polish-speaking miners predominantly lived, Poland was triumphant, although, here again, the margin of victory became even smaller. In

¹⁵ Ibid, 690; “Groupement des Résultats du Plébiscite de Haute-Silésie,” in Wambaugh, vol. 2, 247.

¹⁶ “Oficjalne Wyniki,” in Hawranek, 692 and 698; “Groupement des Résultats,” in Wambaugh, 246.

¹⁷ Ilse Schwidetzky, *Die polnische Wahlbewegung in Oberschlesien* (Breslau: Verlag Ferdinand Hill, 1934), Reichstagswahlen Table.

¹⁸ “Groupement des Résultats,” in Wambaugh, 246. Germany earned 79 percent of the vote in Gleiwitz, and 75 percent in Beuthen and Königshütte.

Kattowitz *Land*, Poland carried the vote with 55 percent; in Beuthen *Land*, it won 59 percent of the vote.¹⁹ The Polish victory is more impressive if we look at the number of communes won – 21 out of 28 (75 percent) in Beuthen *Land*, 31 out of 38 (81.5 percent) in Kattowitz *Land*.²⁰

Again, these were not large cities, but rather small villages or towns; for every Rossberg/Rozbark or Bismarckhütte/Wielkie Hajduki, which each had over ten thousand votes cast, there was a Bobrek or Schomberg/Szombierki, where the number of total votes cast was less than 1000. Rokittnitz/Rokitnica had 99 votes cast, Halemba had 92, and in Brynow/Brynów, a grand total of 34 votes were cast, out of 42 eligible voters.²¹ These numbers hardly matched up to those of Kattowitz *Stadt*, where 26,715 votes were cast, or Beuthen *Stadt*, where the vote total was 40,091.²² Thus, while Poland carried the countryside, when combined with the German gains in the large cities, the entire Industrial Triangle tilted slightly to Germany, 55 to 45 percent.²³ Sarah Wambaugh notes that, when the area east of Kattowitz, which was populated by small mining villages with Polish-speaking majorities – is excluded, the German majority rises to 62.3 percent.²⁴

When recommending the new border, Article 88 of the Versailles Treaty stipulated that “regard will be paid to the wishes of the inhabitants as shown by the vote, and to the geographical and economic conditions of the locality.”²⁵ But the voting results from the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Calculated from “Oficjalne Wyniki,” in Hawranek, 677-8, 680-1.

²¹ Ibid, 677-81.

²² Ibid.

²³ This calculation was derived from adding the totals in Kattowitz *Stadt* and *Land*, Beuthen *Stadt* and *Land*, Gleiwitz, Königshütte, Tost-Gleiwitz and Zabrze, as presented in Wambaugh, 246.

²⁴ Wambaugh, 251.

²⁵ Treaty of Versailles, Article 88, Section 5, found in *Treaties of the Peace*, 66.

Industrial Triangle made such a recommendation almost impossible. Carving out individual communes which had voted for Poland would have created an unsustainable series of enclaves, a Polish archipelago in a German sea. Adding to this difficulty was not only the size of the communes – did a Polish win in a village of 100 mean the same as a German victory in a city of 40,000? – but also the closeness of the final vote. In Chorzow/Chorzów, for example, the Polish-German vote was split nearly down the middle, 57 to 56.²⁶ Instead of increased clarity, such a micro examination of the plebiscite results only served to muddy the waters further. The only certainty was that Upper Silesia would have to be divided, but just where that line should be was not yet clear.

While, as will be discussed below, the Polish press declared the plebiscite a win for their national cause, for Korfanty and the other plebiscite leaders it was little less than a disaster. The 1910 Language Census for the whole of Upper Silesia had put the percentage of Polish- or bilingual speakers at 60 percent – the inverse of the overall percentage of the plebiscite vote. Throughout the plebiscite zone, Polish returns were less than the 1910 census would have projected. The greatest differences were found in the western *Kreise*. While nearly 76 percent of inhabitants of Oppeln *Land* reported to be Polish-speakers in 1910, only 30 percent of the region voted for Poland in the plebiscite – suggesting that 60 percent of Polish-speakers voted to remain in Germany.²⁷ Rosenberg, Kreuzburg and Cosel saw similar gains, with the latter witnessing a shift of 55.6 percent.²⁸ The eastern industrial zone also witnessed lower returns, although not as egregious. Beuthen Land, for example, had a Polish-speaking population of 62.8

²⁶ “Oficjalne Wyniki,” in Hawranek, 681.

²⁷ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 250-1.

²⁸ Ibid. In Rosenberg, the 1910 Census registered 79.3 percent Polish-speakers, but the Polish plebiscite result was 31.8 percent; in Kreuzberg, the differential was 47.2 to 3.9 percent; in Cosel, 75 to 19.4 percent.

percent in the census, and voted 59 percent for Poland – a drop of only 3.8 percent. The largest drop here was in Königshütte, from 34 percent in 1910 to 25.3 in the plebiscite.²⁹ But while Poland won the industrial countryside, its margin of victory was disappointing when compared to the November 1919 municipal elections. At the time, these elections were taken by both sides to be a harbinger for plebiscite, and the Polish parties had garnered massive returns. In Beuthen *Land*, the Polish parties won 76 percent of municipal seats, but only 59 percent of plebiscite voters cast ballots for Poland. Likewise, in Kattowitz *Land*, the Polish parties had captured 75 percent of seats, but Poland only 55 percent in the plebiscite.³⁰

Korfanty and his fellow plebiscite leaders knew exactly who to blame for his discrepancy – the German outvoters. During treaty negotiations at Versailles, it was actually the Polish delegation which had pushed for the inclusion of outvoters – Upper Silesians who had been born in the region but since moved away, who were allowed to return to take part in the vote. The allowance of outvoters had originally been included in the protocols for the Allenstein and Marienwerder plebiscites. The Polish delegation believed it would be able draw back those Poles who had emigrated to America and other parts of Europe for the vote, thus tipping the scales in their direction. When it came time to finalize the Upper Silesian plebiscite, the Poles and French, reaching for this same advantage, again included the provision allowing native-born Upper Silesians to return and vote in the plebiscite. The German delegation, fearing this potential Polish advantage, had argued that only those currently or very recently domiciled in the region should be allowed to vote in the plebiscite.³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For November 1919 municipal election results and discussion, see: Edmund Klein, “Wybory komunalne na Górnym Śląsku z 9 listopada 1919r. a sprawa polska,” *Studia Śląska* 5, (1962): 7-76.

³¹ T. Hunt Tooley, *National Identity and Weimar Germany: Upper Silesia and the Eastern Border, 1918-1922* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 102-3.

The German plebiscite organizations then proceeded to turn the inclusion of outvoters to their fullest advantage. Raising funds to support the travel and lodging of traveling outvoters was mainly the purview of the VVhO (*Vereinigten Verbände heimattreuer Oberschlesier*, or United League of Patriotic Upper Silesians). In total, 191,154 outvoters returned home to vote, constituting 16 percent of all eligible voters. They did not travel alone, as many brought their families and, according to the *New York Times* reporter, “on one of these amazing pilgrim trains three babies first saw the light of day.”³² The Polish delegation at Versailles had assumed those Polish-speaking Upper Silesians who had emigrated from the region, mainly to Ruhr, at the turn of the twentieth century would return and cast a ballot for Poland. Instead, it seems their decades in the heart of the *Reich* had served to thoroughly Germanize these native-born Upper Silesians. They voted overwhelmingly for Germany.

Almost immediately after the initial results were released, the Polish press decried the presence of outvoters, claiming their votes should not be counted, that they artificially tipped the scales towards Germany. These “huge inflows into Upper Silesia of so-called emigrants...who in the vast majority voted for Germany, falsified the results of the plebiscite,”³³ claimed *Gazeta Robotnicza* on 23 March 1921. “Can the voices of emigrants be counted as well as those of the local population?” the paper asked two weeks later. The answer, of course, was no. These emigrants “are not connected with the fate of the country, and they should not have had the right to decide its fate.” In addition to this, outvoters voted only for themselves and would then again leave, whereas “the voting native Upper Silesian also represents one’s own [*swoja*] family,” so

³² “Picnic Atmosphere in Upper Silesia.”

³³ “Kto wygrał plebiscyt? Polska!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 23 March 1921.

that vote should count for “at least three or four votes.”³⁴ *Gazeta Robotnicza* also used math to prove that Poland, rather than Germany, had actually won the plebiscite. It first dismissed 90,000 German votes in the western area, claiming Poland did not even campaign in those areas. It then threw out an additional 200,000 German votes, which it claimed were from the outvoters. Once these had been “deducted from the garish 700,000 German votes,” Germany was left with “410,000 votes, mostly cast in the western counties.” Put up against Poland’s “460,000” it was easy to see, the paper claimed, that Poland was the real, indisputable winner.³⁵

While the outvoters undoubtedly added to the German vote total, they were not the deciding factor in the overall plebiscite. Even if we assume that every outvoter voted – and in Allenstein, only 71 percent of those who made the trip did³⁶ – and that they all voted for Germany, that country still would have won the majority of votes, albeit by the much slimmer majority of 52 percent. Outvoters constituted the highest percentage of eligible voters in the western cities and counties – 40 percent in Kreuzberg, 33 percent in Leobschütz, over 20 percent in both Oppeln Stadt and Land³⁷ – areas where Germany was already expected to win. Even omitting the outvoters in Leobschütz, Germany still wins the city with 99 percent of the vote.³⁸ In the south, Pleß registered only 8.5 percent outvoters, and taking them out of the equation raises the Polish percentage of votes from 74 to 81.³⁹ Again, we must look to the eastern Industrial Triangle to determine the significance of the outvoters’ impact. In Kattowitz *Stadt*,

³⁴ “Prawdziwy wynik plebiscytu,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 5 April 1921.

³⁵ “Co znaczy niemiecki jebel?,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 24 March 1921.

³⁶ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 134.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 250.

³⁸ “Oficjalne Wyniki,” in Hawranek, 687.

³⁹ Calculated from Wambaugh, vol. 1, 250, and vol. 2, 246.

outvoters were 12.5 percent of the eligible voting population. Removing them from the vote still gives Germany 83 percent of the vote – a loss of only two percentage points.⁴⁰ Removing outvoters from Beuthen *Stadt* and Gleiwitz produces a similar drop, from 75 to 71 percent and from 79 to 75 percent, respectively.⁴¹ Similarly, removing the outvoters from the surrounding communes raises the Poland's percentage, but not significantly. In Kattowitz *Land*, where outvoters constituted nine percent of eligible voters, omitting them raises Poland's percentage in the plebiscite from 55 to 61 percent; in Beuthen *Land*, where outvoters were seven percent, Poland's percentage goes up only four percentage points, from 59 to 63 percent.⁴² On the individual commune level, of Beuthen *Land's* 28, only three were affected by outvoters. That is, in three communes or villages, removing the outvoters would have resulted in a Polish, rather than German, win in that locality; in another, Miechowicz/Miechowice, removing the outvoters would have resulted in a tie – 58 to 58.⁴³

Thus, despite the Polish outrage, the outvoters did not have any great effect on the plebiscite results. Were they removed, Germany would have still won a majority of the overall votes; individual cities and villages would have had the same results, although the ultimate percentages would have been slightly higher or lower. Historian Brendan Karch also points out that between 50-100,000 Upper Silesian residents were disqualified from voting, as they moved to the region after the 1904 date stipulated in Article 88. As these residents were likely German-

⁴⁰ "Oficjalne Wyniki," in Hawranek, 680.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 677-8.

⁴² Calculated from "Oficjalne Wyniki," in Hawranek, 677-81.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 677-8.

leaning, they would have tipped the balance even further in Germany's direction had they been allowed to vote.⁴⁴

2. The Immediate Reaction in the Press

While concern over outvoters did occur in the press, by and large the majority of reporting, by both Germans and Poles, touted their victory in the plebiscite – Germany based on the overall vote, Poland on the number of communes won. Linguistically and visually, the initial days and weeks following the plebiscite were an extension of the pre-plebiscite propaganda. This was especially true in the Polish press, which continued to use the same language of oppression to describe its relationship with Germany, as well as depicting Germans in Prussian military dress. The German press, on the other hand, urged for reconciliation between the German and Polish factions of Upper Silesia, stressing the cultural unity of the region in hopes of convincing the Supreme Council – as the Allied Powers were now known – to keep the region intact and under German rule. Realizing that their plebiscite percentage alone might not be enough, the German press again returned to an economic argument, but with a twist. Whereas during the plebiscite German propaganda had stressed the material well-being of Upper Silesians in Germany, now it argued that Germany's own economic future depended on Upper Silesia, particularly its coal.

In the immediate aftermath of the plebiscite, both the German and Polish press claimed victory. A banner headline in the 22 March 1921 issue of the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* declared, "A Quarter Million German Majority! Overwhelming German victory in the cities, majorities in the

⁴⁴ Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 138.

industrial district as well!”⁴⁵ In Kattowitz, the paper reported, “Almost everyone who went to the ballot box came with the conviction to save his German Upper Silesia. On all the faces one could see the joyful excitement of participating in the sure German victory.”⁴⁶ The next day, as returns were still coming in, *Volkswille* reported German percentages of between 63 and 60 percent in one article, and 65 percent in another.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, *Gazeta Robotnicza* focused not on the overall vote, but on the number of communes won, as that was to play a significant role in the Allied Powers’ decision for the border. “Despite German lies, despite German bribery, despite the overwhelming 160,000 emigrants, we have the vast majority of municipalities and votes cast for Poland. The Germans wanted to rob us of our land, but they failed. The Polish people won!”⁴⁸ Several articles contain long lists of plebiscite statistics, showing in painstaking detail just how many villages and municipalities voted for Poland.⁴⁹ Germany may have won in the west, *Gazeta Robotnicza* conceded, but, “Above all, we won in the main plebiscite area, where the coal treasures are hidden underground... These are the counties of the proper industrial region, the economic heart of all Upper Silesia. Apart from the artificially unchallenged cities, the overwhelming majority of communes were in favor of belonging to Poland.”⁵⁰ “All German cities voted mostly for

⁴⁵ “Eine Viertel Million deutsche Mehrheit,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 22 March 1921.

⁴⁶ “Die Deutsche Sieg,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 22 March 1921.

⁴⁷ “Eine deutsche Mehrheit von 60 Prozent,” and “Die Deutsche Mehrheit in Oberschlesien: Was nun?,” both *Volkswille*, 22 March 1921.

⁴⁸ “Olbrzymia większość gmin za Polską, miasta za Niemcami,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 22 March 1921.

⁴⁹ See: Ibid; “Powiaty zdobyte dla Polski,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 23 March 1921; “W gorę serca,” *Katolik*, 24 March 1921.

⁵⁰ “Kto wygrał plebiscyt? Polska!”

Germany, but we were prepared for that,”⁵¹ claimed *Katolik*. It was known that the cities had a “German character,”⁵² and while the Polish press did not challenge the outcomes there, they did seem to dismiss them as not being representative of how “real” or “true” – read: Polish – Upper Silesians voted. “Our villages, however, did not disappoint. These people, from their grandfather’s great-grandfather settled in the local land, listened to the voice of blood, which unites them unquestionably to the Polish motherland.”⁵³ Those in the villages had lived there for generations, unlike the relative newcomers in the cities. Those were “artificial” victories; the real ones were found in the industrial countryside, which Poland had won.

In winning the plebiscite, Upper Silesia would at last be free of its Prussian oppressor. In a series of announcements, written by Korfanty and published in the papers, we see again the use of this linguistic trope. In his appeal written the day after the plebiscite, he pointed to those counties which, in voting for Poland, “shook off the yoke of Prussian captivity.” He later thanked the staff at the Commissariat, noting that they “donated their time and strength, and often life and blood to free Upper Silesia from Prussian-German bonds.”⁵⁴ The next day Korfanty wrote another address, in which he acknowledged that it was now up to the Supreme Council to draw the new border, which could result in Germany retaining part of Upper Silesia. This could not be allowed to happen. “The Polish government will do everything so that the eternal enemy of our damnation cannot, with the help of satanic whispers, deprive us of our victory and won’t impose on us again the yoke of age-old slavery and brutal exploitation... We

⁵¹ “W gorę serca.”

⁵² “Kto wygrał plebiscyt? Polska!”

⁵³ “W gorę serca.”

⁵⁴ “Rodacy!,” *Katolik*, 24 March 1921.

are liberated from the Prussian yoke.”⁵⁵ The Prussians are not simply cruel; they are demonic, “eternal enemies,” leading Polish Upper Silesians to their “damnation.” This echoes the language used in the press, especially in *Kocynder*, during the lead-up to the plebiscite.

The German press, too, realized that their victory at the polls might not be sufficient to keep the Supreme Council from dividing the region. Within a week of the plebiscite, the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* was running articles designed to convince this body that Upper Silesia must remain whole and with Germany. The paper argued that Germany was absolutely dependent on Upper Silesian coal, and would not be able to pay down its war reparations without it. “We reckon without any doubt that the Supreme Council, in the interest of a rapid recovery of the Upper Silesian situation, in the interest of the economic development of the industrial area for the supply of Europe, will draw as quickly as possible the necessary conclusion from the German victory; the administration of Upper Silesia must fall into the hands of the German government.”⁵⁶ “Economic and geographical considerations necessitate the unity of Upper Silesia,” argued another advertisement sponsored by the major German political parties.⁵⁷ The Chamber of Commerce for the Oppeln Regency, including Walther von Stoephasius, who had been instrumental in the founding of the *Freie Vereinigung zum Schutze Oberschlesiens*, penned an article as well. It argued that unity with Germany was essential for the “success of the entire Upper Silesian economic life. Upper Silesian industry was German, is German and will remain so. This is the will of the people of Upper Silesia.”⁵⁸ As in the propaganda, the German press

⁵⁵ “Rodacy!,” *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 27 March 1921. For more of this language, see: “Rodacy!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 30 March 1920.

⁵⁶ “Nach dem Siege,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 23 March 1921.

⁵⁷ “Oberschlesier!”, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 25 March 1921. See also: “Oberschlesien muß ungeteilt bleiben,” in the same issue.

⁵⁸ “Der Entscheidungskampf ist vorüber!”, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 27 March 1921.

stressed the economic importance of the region to Germany's economic future. Germany needed Upper Silesia's coal in order to pay back its war reparations; Upper Silesia needed Germany in order to assure its mines and industries remained successful. The two depended on each other for economic prosperity. As for Poland, the paper asked, "Does Poland need Upper Silesian coal?"⁵⁹ The article argued that, "with the acquisition of Galicia, Poland has become a relatively rich coal country,"⁶⁰ and thus was not as economically dependent on Upper Silesia as Germany was. Taking all these considerations together with the plebiscite results, surely the Supreme Council would have no choice but to grant Germany the whole of Upper Silesia.

Geographic and economic were not the only types of unity promoted by the German press. While the Polish papers were still demonizing their German counterparts, the latter attempted a tone of conciliation, promoting social and cultural unity among Upper Silesians of all ethnicities; again, this was done to convince the Supreme Council that Upper Silesia must remain undivided and under German control. In the above-quoted advertisement, the main German political parties stated, "[A]fter the battle of spirits with the ballot, [Upper Silesians] will all be brothers and equals for the common, peaceful construction and reconciliation of our people, divided by the ballot into two common camps. In brotherhood and unity with our fellow citizens, we want to build a new Upper Silesia."⁶¹ It was almost as if the plebiscite was a rare tiff between otherwise loving family members; now resolved, the region could return to its normal, peaceful coexistence.

⁵⁹ "Braucht Polen die oberschlesische Kohle?", *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 1 April 1921.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ "Oberschlesier!"

Even *Pieron*, in its remaining two issues, promoted this message of unity and brotherhood. The problem was never with Polish-speaking Upper Silesians, the magazine now argued, but those foreign “Polish (*Großpolen*) agitators,” who came in to stir up trouble before the plebiscite. In one cartoon, these “agitators” are “swept away with an iron broom” as they tumble over the border.⁶² They look very much like the ruffians in a previous issue, the “bad sort” who voted for Poland. These foreigners were the problem; Upper Silesians, both German- and Polish-speakers, simply wanted to live in peace, as demonstrated by the meeting between two such Upper Silesians in another illustration. These two men are both young and strong, with friendly faces, each smoking a pipe as they clasp hands. The man on the left is a miner, with his pickax and cap with the crossed mining tools, a clear indication that he is also Polish-speaking. The other man, while not a miner, is not the usual middle-class man who frequently appeared in *Pieron* prior to the plebiscite. He looks to be a farmer, with his simple hat and clothes, and thus German-speaking. He says, “So, brother Antek, now the Warsaw gentlemen have to get out of the country! And now we want to work together for our own Upper Silesia!”⁶³ The “Warsaw gentlemen” were the main obstacle; with them gone, German and Polish Upper Silesians can live in peace with each other. In this new Upper Silesia, “anyone who speaks Polish will speak Polish without fear. And anyone who speaks German will speak German without fear.” This letter, “written” by the character of “Pieron,” noted, “The bad people are disappearing from Upper Silesia on their own, and the good, who are left, will help one another. We are no longer Germans or Poles, but free Upper Silesians.”⁶⁴

⁶² “Raus!”, *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 13, 26 March 1921.

⁶³ “Nur noch Oberschlesier!”, *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 13, 26 March 1921.

⁶⁴ “Obberschlesche Wochenbetrachtung” [sic], *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 13, 26 March 1921.

Such sentiments in *Pieron* could only go so far, of course. Yes, there would be unity and brotherhood among Upper Silesians of different ethnicities – but they would all continue to be German citizens. This new Upper Silesia was to remain a German land. “Pieron’s” above letter ended with a screed against Poland. “The country of Poland, which after a few years still has no laws, the country of Poland, which has moved its Mark from sixty Pffenig to seven, the country of Poland, which has brought us to murder and manslaughter – that’s not for us! Let us save ourselves to Germany!”⁶⁵ A poem read, “They should not have you,/My Upper Silesian country/...And if, like wolves/ They shriek after you,/They shall not have you;/Because we want to be German!”⁶⁶ Poland was still portrayed as a land of destitution and poverty; the trope of the wolf again made an appearance, coveting that which does not rightly belong to him.

This was clearly illustrated in the frontispiece of the first issue after the plebiscite. A young man, labeled “Upper Silesia,” in miner’s clothing rushes into the arms of woman – “Germany.” While not overtly beautiful, she looks kind, motherly, and the light behind her casts a beatific glow. To the side, “Poland,” stands, arms akimbo. She is an old crone, with a gnarled face, dressed in rags and wearing a *rogatywka*. “Where are you going, Upper Silesia?” she demands. Upper Silesia replies, “To Mother! To my true mother!”⁶⁷ Upper Silesia truly belongs to Germany. It has turned its back on Poland and its problems. Now, with that question settled and the foreign “Warsaw gentlemen” away, all Upper Silesians can unite – but, crucially, as German citizens.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ “Sie sollen dich nicht haben, mein oberschlesisch Land!”, *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 14, 2 April 1921.

⁶⁷ “Die Stimme des Blutes,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 13, 26 March 1921.

Pieron could not resist just a few more final jabs at Korfanty. The Polish Plebiscite Commissar who had so often graced the pages of *Pieron* was brought back for a few final curtain calls. “What will Korfanty do after the Plebiscite?” asked the magazine, before presenting a few possible scenarios: selling fly catchers, clearing out the stalls alongside his infamous cow (which defecates into a milk bucket), or “rais[ing] his numerous illegitimate children.” The real answer, *Pieron* contended, was that Korfanty would end up alone and on the streets, “deaf and dumb,” begging for alms.⁶⁸ In each panel, Korfanty is depicted as a grotesque figure. In one, his open mouth, revealing numerous missing teeth, takes up more than half his face, pushing his eyes and nose under his hat; in the panel showing Korfanty as a beggar, he appears twisted and deformed.

A full-page illustration was devoted to Korfanty and his cow in the first *Pieron* issue after the plebiscite. Entitled, “The Trumpeter of Säckingen after the Plebiscite,” it was a parody of the 1884 Viktor Nessler opera of the same name. Korfanty, bedraggled and dressed in rags, plays a mournful tune on his trumpet. He sits astride his “warhorse” – his faithful cow. Emaciated, she looks tearfully at the reader as she scratches her udder, causing two flies to scurry away. Behind her sits a large cow pie. The two are on a road bound for Warsaw, but they give one last look back at Upper Silesia. “Godspeed, you beautiful Upper Silesia! I sit on my warhorse all alone,” says Korfanty, before quoting a song from the opera: “Godspeed, it would have been so beautiful/Godspeed, it was not meant to be!”⁶⁹ Korfanty had been the face of the Polish plebiscite organization but now had been driven low in defeat. Just like the other foreign agitators, his absence would ensure peace and unity throughout Upper Silesia.

⁶⁸ “Was wird Korfanty nach der Abstimmung tun?,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 14, 2 April 1921.

⁶⁹ “Der Trompeter von Säckingen nach der Abstimmung,” *Pieron*, Year 2, Number 13, 26 March 1921. Korfanty’s lines are taken from the song, “Behüt dich Gott,” from *Der Trompeter von Säckingen*.

For *Kocynder*, the plebiscite heralded the beginning of a new era. Its first issue post-plebiscite, distributed on Easter Sunday and during the first week of spring, emphasized this period as a time of renewal and rebirth not just for the world at large, but for Upper Silesia specifically. “Let the song of victory sound, the Polish song of joy./ New life is coming, Polish Spring is coming!” declared a poem.⁷⁰ Accompanying the poem was the image of a young man, dressed in his Sunday best, ringing a bell embossed with the Polish eagle and the words, “Happy Easter.” “We sing the song of freedom today,” the poem continued.

The theme of Easter rebirth was also depicted on the magazine’s frontispiece, in which the Polish eagle breaks out of an elaborately decorated Easter egg. Standing next to it is a Polish worker, with strong arms and an even stronger mustache, holding a large hammer; egg shells litter the ground at his feet. This is who broke open the egg and freed the Polish eagle – the Upper Silesian worker. It is through his efforts that Poland won the plebiscite – and in *Kocynder*, as in the rest of the Polish press, it was a Polish, not German, victory. The caption read, “The Upper Silesian ‘kroszonka’ cracked. The Polish eagle flew out of it and here he will also reign. 551 municipalities voted for Poland and 141 for Germany. What’s ours is ours – we won’t give it away!”⁷¹ In an article, the magazine declared, “We have the most communes for Poland, and we also have the majority of votes for Poland.”⁷² While it acknowledged that the region would likely be split, *Kocynder* predicted that the majority of the territory, and all of the lucrative Industrial Triangle, would go to Poland.

⁷⁰ “Zmartwychwstanie,” *Kocynder*, Number 27, 27 March 1921.

⁷¹ “Zwycięstwo,” *Kocynder*, Number 27, 27 March 1921.

⁷² “Buks Francek Frytok,” *Kocynder*, Number 27, 27 March 1921.

There is no talk of unity or brotherhood in *Kocynder*. Instead, the Germans are portrayed as they were prior to the plebiscite – militaristic Prussians, invaders, oppressors, “Hakatists.” “Germans lie, they assault and murder,”⁷³ argued the magazine. In the poem quoted above, the poet swears not to give the region’s riches to their “enemies;” “We won’t give up the land where our family comes from,/ The enemy dares not rule here any longer.”⁷⁴ Another poem ordered, “Out with you, you Hakatists.”⁷⁵ In a divided Upper Silesia, it was understood that Germans and Poles would also need to be divided, retreating to their own national corners, as it were.

The centerpiece of this issue of *Kocynder* is a two-page spread depicting the “Withdrawal of the ‘Heimatstreuers,’”⁷⁶ featuring all the characters and figures previously found in the magazine. This sad parade is led by Urbanek, riding his goat, which *Kocynder* had tried to make into the equivalent of “Korfantys Kuh.” Uliztka follows, using a walking stick but pulling a wagon; beside him, Heinz Quester, the head of the VHO, cries into his hands. Next comes a thuggish *Stosstrupp*, carrying a pistol, and five anthropomorphized German papers, including *Pieron*, and several Prussian military men. Bringing up the rear is the black German eagle, who hobbles along with a crutch and peg leg, most of his feathers picked off. Behind the border fence, a cheeky man holding a *Kocynder* tips his hat. “Say all you please about your total vote. Nothing will help you. The peace treaty was about voting with municipalities and the division of Upper Silesia. The industrial district is ours and you will march back to Germany.”⁷⁷ The parade collects all the German tropes found in the Polish press, and ships them across the border.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ “Zmartwychwstanie!”

⁷⁵ “Stoltz wehten mal die Flaggen,” *Kocynder*, Number 27, 27 March 1921.

⁷⁶ “Abzug Heimatstreuerów,” *Kocynder*, Number 27, 27 March 1921.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

In both *Pieron* and *Kocynder*, Upper Silesia needed to be rid of a “foreign” element if it were to prosper. Even in the German press, which touted unity and brotherhood, Upper Silesia was to be a distinctly German place. In the Polish press, Upper Silesia would only be secure if these “enemies” were removed entirely. The mixed results of the plebiscite meant that both sides could claim victory – Germany on the total vote, Poland for the number of communes. By proclaiming victory in the press, each hoped to persuade the Supreme Council that they deserved, if not all of Upper Silesia, then at least the lion’s share, including the all-important Industrial Triangle. After the initial few weeks, excitement over the plebiscite and its results faded, and the reality of the situation began to set in. By late April, it was clear that the Inter-Allied Commission planned to suggest the region be divided. The great unknown, as spring turned to summer, was where exactly this border would be drawn.

3. Drawing the Line: The Third Silesian Uprising and the Final Border Decision

“We would prefer it if the Upper Silesian land was not divided,” wrote *Gazeta Robotnicza* several days after the plebiscite. “The entire plebiscite area should be granted to Poland in accordance with the peace treaty.” If that proved to be impossible, though, the paper put forth its own border proposal: “The Oder would constitute the border between Poland and Germany.”⁷⁸ In the weeks following the plebiscite, numerous plans for redrawing the border were put forth. Not even the members of the Inter-Allied Commission could agree on one border, as the French and British-Italian factions each submitted their own plans to the Supreme Council.

The German and Polish plans, put forth by Urbanek and Korfanty, respectively, as might be expected, gave the lion’s share of Upper Silesia to themselves. In fact, Urbanek simply

⁷⁸ “Co znaczy niemiecki jubel?”

requested the whole of Upper Silesia, with no division, on the basis of the German overall vote totals in the plebiscite, as well as the its economic dependency on the region. Korfanty's plan did include dividing the region – but granted the entire eastern industrial zone to Poland. The so-called “Korfanty Line” skirted east of Rosenberg and south of Oppeln before largely following the Oder south to the new Czechoslovak border. The western countries, which had voted overwhelmingly for Germany, were omitted, but everything east of the Oder was to belong to Poland. Korfanty calculated that Poland had won 444,054 votes, or 52 percent, to Germany's 404,891 votes in this region, carrying 662 of the 888 communes. In addition, the Poles claimed that, since their families were larger than German ones, each Polish vote represented more people, and thus should be given more weight.⁷⁹ This was the same claim made in the Polish press, suggesting there was a still a good deal of cooperation and coordination between the papers and the Plebiscite Commissariat even after the plebiscite.

The Inter-Allied Commission, which was tasked with presenting to the Supreme Council a recommendation on the border based on the plebiscite results, similarly found itself at an impasse. At odds since the Second Silesian Uprising, the Inter-Allied Commission was split between the French, headed by Henri LeRond, and British and Italian factions, led by Henry Percival and Alberto de Marinis, respectively. LeRond, who had continuously and, his detractors might say, openly supported the Polish cause in Upper Silesia, put forth a plan that could be called “Korfanty Lite.” His plan gave Germany almost all of the Oppeln and Rosenberg *Kreise*, meeting the Oder roughly five miles north of Cosel, and then, as with the Korfanty Line, following the river south. While more of the pro-German western counties would have gone to Germany, Poland still retained the entire Industrial Triangle under Le Rond's plan.

⁷⁹ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 251.

In this territory, he estimated that a slim majority – 51.4 percent – had voted for Poland, but claimed, as did the Poles, that the outvoter vote here had artificially inflated the German totals.⁸⁰ The Percival-de Marinis Line, meanwhile, gave almost the entire Industrial Triangle to Germany, basing this decision on the fact that 60 percent of this area had voted for Germany. Poland received the whole of Pleß and Rybnik, but only a slice of the industrial area east of Kattowitz and not the city itself, which had voted strongly for Germany. In the plebiscite, Poland had won 40 percent of the vote and 42 percent of the communes in this area, but the Percival-de Marinis Line would have given the country only 23 percent of the population and 25 percent of the communes.⁸¹ Unable to reconcile the two plans, the Inter-Allied Commission was forced to submit both to the Supreme Council on 30 April 1921.

The split provided Korfanty with an opportunity. On 1 May, *Grenzzeitung*, a paper run by Korfanty, printed an article entitled, “The Diplomats have spoken!” In it, the article described the Percival-de Marinis Line as the final border decision and a Polish betrayal, kicking off a supposedly spontaneous Polish revolt. In reality, the uprising had been planned for some time. Korfanty met with leaders of the POW (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*, the Polish Military Organization) in a series of meetings from 25 to 30 April. Hesitant at first, Korfanty ultimately was unwilling to risk the loss of the eastern industrial zone, and decided to take the territory by force in a *fait accompli*. Against the wishes of Warsaw, Korfanty launched the Third Silesian Uprising – by far the largest, longest and deadliest conflict in Upper Silesia since the end of the First World War.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ibid, 252-3.

⁸¹ Ibid, 253; David G. Williamson, *The British in Inter-War Germany: The Reluctant Occupiers, 1918-1930*, 2nd edition (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1991/2017), 87.

⁸² Tooley, 255; Karch, 142; F. Gregory Campbell, “The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919-1921,” *The Journal of Modern History* 42, No. 3 (Sept. 1970): 361-385, here 376.

The day after the article, on 2 May, the Polish industrial workers' unions declared a general strike. That night, armed insurrection broke out.⁸³ The POW, 40,000 strong, stormed the industrial region, taking control of all roads and railways at the border. The Polish members of the APO deserted and joined the POW. They were met with little resistance; the British had pulled their own Inter-Allied troops out of the region following the plebiscite to deal with the trouble in Ireland, and the French troops did little to stop the Polish insurgents. Only the Italian forces attempted to subdue them, at the cost of twenty soldiers' lives.⁸⁴ By 6 May, the insurgents occupied the territory to the Korfanty Line. The Polish government dismissed Korfanty from his position as Plebiscite Commissar, as punishment for his role in launching the Uprising. Historian F. Gregory Campbell, however, notes that the Polish government did little to stop the flow of men and aid into the region, indicating that the Uprising had, at the very least, Warsaw's tacit approval.⁸⁵ Korfanty, in an 8 May proclamation, claimed that the Uprising had been entirely spontaneous occurrence, one he had been powerless to stop.⁸⁶ "I swear to it," he stated, "that these people have quite made up their minds that they would sooner the Allied Army wiped them out to the last man than that they should again put their necks under the German yoke. These people would destroy all the mines and foundries, as well as all other workshops, rather than have to capitulate."⁸⁷

The German government requested permission to send its own troops into Upper Silesia, a proposal that the Inter-Allied Commission and Supreme Council resoundingly rejected.

⁸³ Tooley, 255; Tadeusz Jędruszczak, *Powstania Śląskie: 1919-1920-1921* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk," 1972), 53-54.

⁸⁴ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 254-5; Tooley, 255; Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia," 376.

⁸⁵ Campbell, 376.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Quoted in Wambaugh, vol. 1, 254.

Undeterred, the new German Chancellor, Joseph Wirth, spoke with Lt. Gen. Karl Hoefler on 18 May – Wirth’s eighth day in office. A veteran of the First World War and previous Silesian Uprisings, Hoefler was now tasked with launching a German paramilitary operation against the Polish insurgents. In this endeavor, he was joined by other *Freikorps* units from around the country, including the Bavarian *Freikorps Oberland*.⁸⁸ The Uprising had now entered a phase of all-out war. On 21 May, German paramilitary forces launched a counteroffensive at Annaberg, where fighting lasted until 27 May.⁸⁹ The Polish insurgents now went on the defensive. Fighting continued throughout June, but by early July the Inter-Allied Commission had managed to regroup and again take control of the region, forcing both German and Polish forces to withdrawal from Upper Silesia.⁹⁰

In all, about 50,000 Polish and 35,000 German paramilitary insurgents fought in the Third Silesian Uprising, resulting in 4,000 deaths.⁹¹ It was, by far, the deadliest fighting in Upper Silesia during the plebiscite period. Historian T.K. Wilson asserts that, of all the Upper Silesian casualties between the end of the First World War to June 1922, 62 percent occurred during the Third Silesian Uprising.⁹² In it, we see again the tension between violence and the practice of democracy. The Second Silesian Uprising was fought, in part, to demonstrate Polish strength in the region, to put the Poles in a better situation for the upcoming plebiscite. It was

⁸⁸ Tooley, 256-7; Campbell, 378.

⁸⁹ Jędruszczak, *Powstania Śląskie*, 63-5.

⁹⁰ Campbell, 378; Tooley, 257.

⁹¹ Marek Czaplinski, “Dzieje Śląska od 1806 do 1945 roku,” in *Historia Śląska*, ed. Marek Czaplinski, Elżbieta Kaszuba, Gabriela Wąs and Rościśław Żerelik (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002), 363-4; Karch, 142.

⁹² T.K. Wilson, *Frontiers of Violence: Conflict and Identity in Ulster and Upper Silesia, 1918-1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 17.

never about taking control of the region by force. In the Third Silesian Uprising, we see the opposite. The plebiscite – the practice of democracy – has failed to produce a clear-cut answer to the Upper Silesian question. The only move left, in Korfanty’s view, was to take the region by force.

The Third Silesian Uprising left the main power players no closer to determining a border. Unable to agree on which Inter-Allied Commission proposal to accept, the Supreme Council, on 12 August 1921, decided instead to make Upper Silesia someone else’s problem – namely, the newly formed League of Nations. Representatives of Belgium, China, Spain and Brazil – chosen because they had no previous involvement with Upper Silesia – were now tasked with finding a solution to the Upper Silesian problem. After two months of deliberation, on 12 October 1921, the League of Nations unanimously recommended what would become the new German-Polish border.⁹³ At the time, Poland was a member of the League, but Germany had not been invited to join.

Starting north of Lubliniec, the border would sweep south, bisecting the Industrial Triangle between Beuthen and Gleiwitz (on the German side) and Königshütte (on the Polish). It would then travel south-west, to just outside Ratibor, before following the Oder to the Czechoslovak border.⁹⁴ The Polish territory amounted to just 32 percent of the overall plebiscite region but accounted for 47 percent of the population. Germany was given the largest land area, but Poland had inherited the most productive part of the Industrial Triangle – 75 percent of all coal production, all the zinc mines, and half the steel works. According to 1913 output numbers, the coal mines in the new Polish side had produced 32,500,000 tons, while the mines on the

⁹³ Tooley, 257; Karch, 143.

⁹⁴ Insert map found in Wambaugh, vol. 1, between 258-9.

German side had produced 10,500,000 tons. In area ceded to Poland, roughly 510,000 votes had been cast in the plebiscite, with Poland earning 56 percent of the vote.⁹⁵ Naturally, neither Germany nor Poland were satisfied with this outcome, but both nations had no real recourse. Negotiations concluded in May 1922, when the treaty was signed in Geneva on 15 May. The Polish Sejm ratified it on 24 May 1922. The German Reichstag – “draped in mourning” – did the same on 30 May 1922.⁹⁶

On 20 and 22 June 1922, the *Kattowitzer Zeitung* and *Górnoślązak* each ran an article, bearing the same title, covering the same event: “The Entrance of the Polish Military into Kattowitz” – now the Polish city of Katowice.⁹⁷ As can be imagined, the event was portrayed quite differently in each paper. “Today on June 20, the city of Kattowitz was occupied by the Polish military,” declared the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*.⁹⁸ For *Górnoślązak*, the day was one to be celebrated. “A wonderful, unforgettable day!...It must first be stated that the people welcomed the approaching troops not only with ovation, but sincerely and cordially...[T]here was not a single house there, not even a window, not even one, not decorated with greenery, eagles and red-and-white ensigns.”⁹⁹

Kocynder likewise celebrated this area of Upper Silesia officially becoming a part of Poland. In one illustration, the Polish military marches through town to a cheering crowd. This is in the background, though; the focus is on two Germans, who observe from a distance. “So,”

⁹⁵ George A. Finch, “Upper Silesia,” *The American Journal of International Law* 16, no. 1 (January 1922): 75-80, here 78.

⁹⁶ Wambaugh, vol. 1, 260.

⁹⁷ “Einzug des polnischen Militärs in Kattowitz,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 20 June 1922; “Wejście wojsk polskich do Katowic,” *Górnoślązak*, 22 June 1922.

⁹⁸ “Einzug des polnischen Militärs in Kattowitz.”

⁹⁹ “Wejście wojsk polskich do Katowic.”

says one. “The Polish Army is finally here and it doesn’t devour us Germans as the German newspapers promised.” The other replies, “But the Breslau and Berlin papers will certainly bring news that we were chopped for Polish stew.”¹⁰⁰ Now that they had gained the bulk of the Industrial Triangle, the Polish press could spare a little conciliation. The Germans have nothing to fear in the new Polish Upper Silesia, they wrote; they will be treated fairly and with kindness. In the frontispiece of this issue, the Polish military is led into town by Polonia herself. Depicted as a beautiful young woman in bright red medieval dress and with a crown of laurels, Polonia walks among her adoring public. “To you, Poland, we return,” read the caption. “After centuries of captivity, after centuries of longing, the day of golden freedom has come. We welcome you Poland, our Mother!”¹⁰¹ Fifteen months after voting in the plebiscite, and a year after a bloody uprising, that which Polish nationalists had worked so hard for was finally a reality. Upper Silesia, part of it, at least, had “returned to Poland.” The people had done what was asked of them during the plebiscite campaign – they had become Polish.

The celebratory atmosphere reflected in the Polish press on that mid-June day in 1922 belied the tension still simmering beneath the surface. Neither Germany nor Poland was pleased with the division of Upper Silesia, and the region would continue to be a source of consternation throughout the Interwar Period. On 21 June 1922 – the day after Polish troops entered the city – the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, now a minority-language German paper published in Poland, ran a poem entitled “Homesickness.” In it, the paper lamented the heartbreaking loss felt at being separated from one’s fellow Germans. Once so close, now “you seemed so far away from me today/ As if you had left me...The Homesickness touches me again./ It screams for your heart,/

¹⁰⁰ “Wojsko polskie a Niemcy,” *Kocynder*, Year 3, No. 14, 20 June-1 July 1922.

¹⁰¹ “Do Ciebie, Polsko, wracamy,” *Kocynder*, Year 3, No. 14, 20 June-1 July 1922.

In which it wants to go to rest,/ With all of its pain.”¹⁰² *Kocynder*, too, contemplated this pain, in an illustration depicting two Polish Upper Silesians separated by the border. The man on the German side hangs his head in sadness. “I must be separated by foreign force,” he laments. “It is hard on my soul and my heart hurts.” “Oh, my dear brother,” replies the man on the Polish side. “Don’t lose heart. This artificial border is so fragile...Although it separates you today, and it saddens and hurts, Poland will set you free, too!”¹⁰³ Several months earlier, in February 1922, *Kocynder* ran this same illustration, under the title, “Bloody Border,” and with a more direct quote: “Brother, don’t lose heart! I won’t rest until you are free!”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² “Heimweh,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 21 June 1921.

¹⁰³ “Rozłaka,” *Kocynder*, Year 3, Number 14, 20 June-1 July 1922.

¹⁰⁴ “Krwawa granica,” *Kocynder*, Year 3, Number 1, 1 February 1922.

EPILOGUE

On 14 November 1926, the residents of a small territory in East Central Europe went to the polls. Unlike five years earlier, however, they were not asked to vote for which nation they wished to belong. Instead, the residents of the Silesian Voivodeship, as the Polish partition of Upper Silesia was now known, went out this Sunday on a much more mundane matter: the election of local and municipal representatives.

That is not to say, however, that the local press did not portray these elections as fiercely fought combat. *Gazeta Robotnicza*, on 13 November 1926, advised its readers, “We are only a few days away from the battle...This battle must be won by the PPS.”¹ “Comrades” were advised to talk about the PPS list wherever and whenever they could – “on the way to and from work...At work and on duty...At home at dinner.” The kitchen table was especially important, as it was here that he could “convince the wife that she must support her husband and vote as he votes, for the PPS list,”² – an echo of the same concerns voiced in the German *Volkswille* in 1919. For *Gazeta Robotnicza*, this was a strictly *political* election. There was no discussion or definition of what it means to be a Pole. Unlike during the plebiscite period, when there was at least a nod of conciliation towards centrist and right-leaning parties, here the paper drew a line between the PPS and other political parties. This was not a decision between nations, but between political parties.

¹ “Towarzyski i Towarzysze do ataku!”, *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 13 November 1926.

² Ibid.

For the *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, however, the very fate of the German minority in the Silesian Voivodeship hung in the balance. “No one is allowed to stay home from the municipal elections on Sunday!” the paper declared.³ Otto Ulitz, who had served as Kurt Urbanek’s assistant in the German Plebiscite Commissariat and now was a leader in the *Deutsche Volksbund für Polnisch-Schlesien* and a representative in the Silesian *Sejm*, wrote an essay for the paper designed to grab at the heart strings of the German minority. It was a “Polish fairytale” that “there [was] no Germandom here anymore, that it had died or was only artificially preserved.”⁴ The elections would save the German minority from “discrimination in all areas of public life.” Ulitz framed this election as a battle between nations, between Germans and their Polish oppressors. While *Gazeta Robotnicza* could stress the differences between the PPS and its political opponents, political discord would only divide the German electorate. For this reason, the German Party and the German-leaning Catholic People’s Party (KVP) ran on combined lists. Near the end of his essay, however, Ulitz turned away this overtly nationalist rhetoric. “Our sense of community is not limited to Germandom,” he wrote. “We are children of a homeland [*Heimaterde*], no matter whether Germans or Poles, children of a country, whose treasures can be wrested only in laborious work...[W]e cannot be excluded from participation in the history of our homeland [*Heimat*].”⁵ This *Heimat* was not Germany, but Upper Silesia.

The German national slate won 42 percent of votes cast in the voivodeship,⁶ despite German-speakers comprising, after several years of emigration, only about 13 percent of the

³ Notice, *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 13 November 1926.

⁴ “Gemeindewahlen und Deutschtum,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 12 November 1926.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Philipp Ther, “Caught in Between: Border Regions in Modern Europe,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian and Ottoman Borderlands*, eds. Omar Bartov and Eric D. Weitz

population.⁷ In Katowice, they won 29 of 60 seats, while the SPD won five. The results were even greater in Królewska Huta, where the German parties won 32 of 54 seats.⁸ The *Kattowitzer Zeitung* could not help but crow about their success. “It is almost overwhelming how thoroughly election day has cleared up the fairy tale that there are no Germans left in the voivodeship. The most remote villages, even in the supposedly pure Polish districts of Pleß [Pszczyna] and Rybnik, have German majorities.”⁹ The paper cited Wilcza Dolna/Nieder-Wilcza and Wilcza Górna/Ober-Wilcza as examples of this victory. In the plebiscite, both villages had voted for Poland – the latter overwhelmingly so, with 72 percent.¹⁰ But in 1926, voters swung the other way. In Wilcza Górna, the German national parties won 77 percent of the vote, almost the inverse of the plebiscite. In Wilcza Dolna, the German victory was even more overwhelming, as it captured 84 percent of the vote.¹¹ The plebiscite was supposed to divide Upper Silesians into their respective national corners. What, then, explains the victory of the German national parties?

In fact, Upper Silesians on both sides of the divide would continue to defy German and Polish national expectations at the ballot box throughout the 1920s. While Tomasz Kamusella

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 493; Tomasz Kamusella, “Upper Silesia, 1918-1945,” in *The Politics of Ethnicity in Central Europe*, ed. Karl Cordell (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 100.

⁷ Ther, “Caught in Between,” 493. Laura Crago puts the German population at 13.1 percent. Crago, “Nationalism, religion, citizenship and work in the development of the Polish working class and the Polish trade union movement, 1815-1929: a comparative study of Russian Poland’s textile workers and Upper Silesian miners and metalworkers” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1993), 312.

⁸ “Unser Wahlsieg,” *Kattowitzer Zeitung*, 16 November 1926.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Oficjalne Wyniki Plebiscytu Górnegośląskiego,” printed in Franciszek Hawranek, *Encyklopedia Powstań Śląskich* (Opole: Instytut Śląski w Opolu, 1982), 700. Poland had carried 59 percent of the vote in Wilcza Dolna. “Oficjalne Wyniki,” 699.

¹¹ Calculated from figures found in “Unser Wahlsieg.” These villages make a good test comparison, as the number of votes cast in the plebiscite (414 in Wilcza Dolna, 347 in Wilcza Górna) are nearly the same as those cast in the 1926 election (402 and 321, respectively).

rightly notes that the German victory in the 1926 municipal elections “represented a never-to-be repeated peak,”¹² the German minority was still over-represented in the Silesian *Sejm* in terms of population. Between 1922 and 1929, 14 of the *Sejm*’s 48 seats, or roughly 29 percent, were held by members of the German minority; they gained an additional seat in the 1930 election.¹³ In 1926 specifically, though this may hold for the subsequent elections, as well, voting German was a form of protest against Piłsudski’s new political order. The Silesian Voivodeship’s status as an autonomous province within Poland was deeply cherished by its inhabitants. Piłsudski’s May Coup and new *Sanacja* government in 1926 threatened the region’s autonomy. This was especially true after September 1926, when Michał Grażyński, the new governor of the region, attempted to curtail Silesia’s autonomous rights and bring it more firmly into the fold of the central, national state.¹⁴ Two months later, the people voiced their displeasure by voting for the German nationalist party.

Meanwhile, in German Upper Silesia, both the German and Polish nationalist parties struggled to breakthrough at the polls. The high-water mark for the Polish national party around Oppeln was during the three 1924 Reichstag elections, when they won between 23 and 25 percent of the rural vote. But its number of supporters continuously fell throughout the 1920s and early 1930s; by November 1932 – ten years after the division of the region – its vote share had plummeted to 4.6 percent.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the German Democratic Party (DDP) and German People’s Party (DVP) barely registered with voters; the strongest German national party was the

¹² Kamusella, “Upper Silesia, 1918-1945,” 100.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Ther, “Caught in Between,” 493.

¹⁵ Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

right-wing German National People's Party (DNVP), which did well among the civil servants and members of the free professions clustered in Oppeln but failed to attract voters in the surrounding countryside.¹⁶

Instead, Upper Silesians continued to navigate towards supranational parties. For most of the 1920s this meant that old stalwart of the region, the Catholic Center. While German-leaning, the Center was the strongest advocate for linguistic rights, especially in education and religious practice.¹⁷ Greater access to language education was a large part of what Karch calls “the widening gap” that developed between strident Polish nationalists and Polish-speaking Upper Silesians. One of the most important aspects of the pre-war Polish nationalist movement was ensuring children could be taught in Polish. In the 1920s, cultural and linguistic autonomy was largely granted by the Weimar government, effectively stealing the nationalists' thunder and weakening the Polish nationalist movement. After the economic collapse in 1929, however, Upper Silesians trended towards political outsiders – the Communist and Nazi Parties. In the November 1932 Reichstag elections, the Communist Party earned 17.7 percent of the vote in Oppeln county, compared to the 4.6 percent of the Polish national party.¹⁸ The Nazi Party downplayed their anti-Polish rhetoric while campaigning in the region, stressing an economic message that earned support from a number of Polish-speaking voters in the rural counties. In the July 1932 election, the Nazi Party won 47 percent of voters in the village of Malino – despite the fact that 95 percent of the village's population was Polish-speaking or bilingual, and had voted for Poland in the plebiscite by 62 percent. This was nearly double to vote earned by the

¹⁶ Karch, *Nation and Loyalty*, 179-80.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 177.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 180.

Catholic Center. Still, in the region overall, the Center maintained a slim plurality even in the 1932 elections.¹⁹

For national activists, voting in an election was meant to be an expression of one's national sentiment. Yet throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, Upper Silesians continuously frustrated these expectations, especially in German Upper Silesia. For a good proportion of Upper Silesians, voting was not about loyalty to a national ideal, but rather a form of protest. In the Silesian Voivodeship, this meant Polish-speakers voted for the German nationalist party as a way to demonstrate their discontent with Piłsudski's *Sanacja*. In Oppeln Silesia, both German- and Polish-speakers eschewed "their" national parties for the Catholic Center. As the economy worsened and their faith in the democratic state faltered, some turned to anti-establishment political outsiders, including the party that would shape the next phase of Upper Silesian history: the Nazis.

In the 1930s and '40s, a spate of English-language monographs was published which addressed Upper Silesia's plebiscite and division in a manner bordering on hyperbolic. Upper Silesia was a "country of contrasts," a "drama" that had to be calmed, a "problem" that needed to be solved. How was it that Germany had won the overall plebiscite vote, when the 1910 Language Census, taken to illustrate the numbers of Germans and Poles in the region, had them in the minority? Why had upwards of twenty percent of Poles voted against their national self-interests and for Germany?

The answer, unfathomable to both the national activists of the time and historians of mid-century but borne out by recent scholarship, is not that Upper Silesians were voting against their national interests, but rather that did not have any. Or, at least, feelings of national belonging

¹⁹ Ibid, 181.

existed alongside other identities – Upper Silesian, Catholic, worker, mother. But the plebiscite did not ask about the non-national. On 20 March 1921, Upper Silesians submitted a ballot reading “Germany” or “Poland” not because they felt themselves to be definitively a German or Pole, but because no other option existed. There was no “Upper Silesian” card, no “Catholic” card. In the aftermath of the First World War, the only path available for Eastern Europe was the national, a choice handed down by foreign men nearly one thousand miles away.

When given this choice of either/or, a large portion of Upper Silesians votes matched their professed “mother tongue.” But a substantial minority did not, voting instead based on some criteria other than language. It would also be wrong to assume that those who voted “correctly” based on their language did so for purely national reasons. As the plebiscite propaganda demonstrates, nationality and ethnicity were only part of the overall arguments made by Germany and Poland. Economic and material well-being featured prominently as well, and it is likely that many Upper Silesians decided to vote for the known-quantity of Germany rather than take a risk on the unknown, unproven Polish state.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, various paths appeared before the people of East Central Europe. The old order of empire was gone, and there were countless possibilities for what could replace it. But the end of the First World War was also the culmination of decades of nationalist and nation-building movements. It was in this paradigm of the nation that the Allied Powers, who would ultimately remake the map of Europe, operated. Thus, the choices available for Upper Silesians were filtered through a nationalist lens. It was not enough to choose socialism; one had to decide between the German and Polish definitions of socialism. One of the reasons the autonomous movement never truly gained traction was because it fell outside of the German-Polish dichotomy.

The plebiscite was designed to be the purest form of national self-determination, a chance for a people to definitively declare themselves to belong to a nation. While not always the case for everyone who votes, the plebiscite campaign provided German and Polish nationalists a place in which they could define and redefine themselves and each other. Germany attempted to shed its Prussian history and embrace a “new Germany” – one that replaced militarism with middle-class respectability and comfort. For Poland, it meant creating a new Polish family, centered around a strong, working class father and a mother who passed on the Polish language and Catholic faith to their children. It is possible – likely, even – that the intense propaganda of the plebiscite campaign heightened national sentiment among a substantial portion of the population. And it is just as likely that, in the years that followed, as life began to settle after the chaos of the First World War, that national sentiment receded, and another identifier – regional, religious, gender, class – took its place.

Upper Silesia’s “continuum of crisis” ended in June 1922. In almost eight years it had endured the First World War, a revolution, three Uprisings, three elections, and one all-important plebiscite. Upper Silesians were tasked with choosing their own fates, to declare their own national self-determination – and then had that decision was ultimately determined by four men who had no attachments whatsoever to the region. The German-Polish border of 1922 – this “artificial,” “bloody” border – was not to last. Within twenty-five years, this border would be erased, and erased again. The division of Upper Silesia, then, was the ending of one era in the region, and the beginning of another.

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