

6 Polish nationalism and national ambiguity in Weimar Upper Silesia

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‘It is false to claim that everything is in the best order, when it is not true.’¹ This was the pessimistic report of one Polish newspaper in Upper Silesia in early 1927. Nearly six years after the plebiscite vote, Polish nationalists on the German side of partitioned Upper Silesia felt their movement under threat. Yet this threat did not come primarily, as one might expect, from the continued national rancor and repression from the plebiscite era. Rather than fearing German nationalists or the German state, Polish nationalists most feared the nationally ambiguous Upper Silesian. Committed Poles had been working in schools, churches, youth leagues, and politics throughout the 1920s to bolster the national loyalty of those Upper Silesians who remained on the German side of the partition border, but were deemed ethnically Polish. Yet their efforts were failing. Speaking of these supposedly Polish families, the same article claimed ‘they lack Polish newspapers and Polish books and the children don’t attend the Polish schools, but rather belong to German youth and sport clubs. These are the lukewarm, if not yet entirely lost, families.’² The battle for national loyalties continued in Upper Silesia after 1921 – but the battle lines were not merely between Germans and Poles, but just as often between nationalists and their targets of nationalization.

The Upper Silesian plebiscite of 1921 was intended to settle the national question in the region. But, as the following decades showed, the plebiscite in fact achieved the opposite. Rather than end the territorial contestation of Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland, it only escalated the battle. And rather than separate the region into two stable national groups, the plebiscite only heightened widespread practices of national ambiguity, as many Upper Silesians resisted defining themselves according to strict national categories. This chapter explores the interaction in the Weimar era between these two unintended outcomes of the plebiscite: between the efforts of state and nationalist actors to revise the partition by hardening national divisions, and the defiant response of many locals who refused to embrace a single national loyalty. As I argue, the two processes were in fact causally linked: nationalist activism bred national ambiguity, which in turn frustrated activists, leading them to embrace forced racial division as a solution. The result was a feedback loop between national ambiguity and radicalism.

Dissatisfaction with the partition among state and nationalist leaders, who worked tirelessly to revise the 1922 border, drove Upper Silesian political alignments and programs in the interwar period.³ Mutual dissatisfaction with the partition line came from the loss of territory, but also from the demographic results it created. The League of Nations committee that decided the partition line warned that the ‘mixture of racial elements’ in Upper Silesia made it impossible to draw borders that adhered to ethnic divides.⁴ Many on either side of the new border could be counted as dissenters: 44 percent of Upper Silesians in the new Polish partition had voted for Germany, and 29 percent in the German partition had voted for Poland.⁵ Roughly 150,000 pro-Germans emigrated west and 60–70,000 pro-Poles moved east to their respective national homelands, although some relocated before the plebiscite vote. While the ‘wild’, unregulated nature of much migration makes it impossible to give precise figures, it is clear that significant voting minorities, rather than relocate, remained in their homes after the partition.⁶

Ethno-linguistic minorities were also abundant after the partition. The rural county of Oppeln (Opole), which landed on the German side of the partition, was 78 per cent Polish-speaking or bilingual, according to the 1910 census. (These figures, moreover, belie the diversity of linguistic practice, and make no mention of the dominant dialect: the Slavic-based but German-influenced *schlonsak*. For purposes of simplicity, these dialect speakers will be referred to here as Polish speakers, even though many had a mainly passive knowledge of ‘official’ Polish.) Significant numbers of these Polish speakers remained around Oppeln: the 1925 census counted over 72 percent Polish speakers or bilingual citizens in the rural county.⁷ Having thus failed to divide the populace, the partition satisfied neither state. Germany sought reversion to the 1914 borders, while Poland hoped to take over the rest of Upper Silesia, which had been promised to it by the Allies in early 1919.⁸ Despite significant ups and downs in Polish–German relations from 1922 to 1939, the political dispute over partitioned Upper Silesia remained a constant sore spot for both states.

The states and activists fighting this battle engaged in national, bilateral, and international politics. Yet the continued fight also demanded the regional mobilization of Upper Silesians for their respective national causes. Much of the literature has focused on the German minority in interwar Poland, which was far larger and more economically powerful than the Polish minority.⁹ Far less attention has been paid to the efforts among organized Poles in German Upper Silesia to recruit and maintain the national loyalty of Polish speakers.¹⁰ Most historiography, written in Polish, insists on the unity of the Polish minority in German Upper Silesia by conflating the small core of committed activists with the hundreds of thousands of Polish speakers whom they claimed to represent.¹¹ The assumption that all Polish speakers in German Upper Silesia acted as a united, nationally oppressed minority pervades much of the literature. Yet the task of solidifying these minorities’ national loyalties was anything but straightforward.

Despite near-universal voter turnout in the 1921 plebiscite vote, the choice of one state over another on a ballot did not translate neatly into a self-clarification of national loyalties for all Upper Silesians. In the Oppeln area, despite 78 per cent being Polish-speaking or bilingual, votes for Poland only reached 30 per cent in the plebiscite.¹² Many of these Polish speakers who voted for Germany were derided by Polish activists as nationally indifferent. Many Upper Silesians, shaken by the violence and disorder of ethnic conflict in the plebiscite era, subsequently avoided ethnic politics in the Weimar era. Activists generally assumed that all members of an ethnic group were pre-enrolled for their respective nations based on their innate cultural or biological traits. This false logic that deems national switching or ambiguity impossible has earned the label ‘ethnicist’ from Jeremy King.¹³ Despite the ethnicist assumption by activists (and many historians) that Germans and Poles were destined to join their respective nations, the project of nationalizing Upper Silesians proved fraught and uneven in the interwar period. It is thus necessary to dispense with the assumption that Polish speakers around Oppeln were destined to join the Polish movement, for it frames success as inevitable, and failure as but a temporary roadblock. By discarding this teleology of ethnicism, the nationalization of Upper Silesians becomes an open-ended process, contingent upon local political and cultural conditions, and one in which the targets of nationalization are allotted greater agency in their decision to develop national loyalties, or not.

In order to better assess the success or failure of these nationalization efforts, it can be useful to scale down to the local level. The city and surrounding county of Oppeln highlights many of the complexities of nationalization in Upper Silesia. Located in the western stretches of Upper Silesia, on the German side of the interwar partition, Oppeln was a mid-sized provincial capital with a sizeable pro-German civil service in the city. Yet the surrounding county was populated by mostly Polish-speaking and bilingual farmers with modest landholdings.¹⁴ With an overwhelmingly Catholic native population, confessional solidarity crossed linguistic divides. Activists faced the challenge of turning these ‘real’ local communities – ones bonded by religious practice, economic ties, village sociability, and varying levels of bilingual interaction – into ‘imagined communities’ of Germans or Poles.¹⁵

As this chapter shows, Polish nationalists around Oppeln largely failed to nationalize Polish speakers in the Weimar era. The causes and consequences of this failure illuminate key themes in the history of Central Europe’s path to radical nationalism. In the eyes of Polish activists, the Weimar era provided, for the first time, democratic freedoms for national self-expression, freedoms that would finally allow the blossoming of Polish speakers into nationally loyal Poles. To this end, they focused their efforts on ‘awakening’ the still largely rural and nationally undeveloped Polish speakers around Oppeln. Yet this flowering of new democratic norms in the Weimar era actually yielded the opposite in Upper Silesia: locals satisfied by the regional Weimar administration’s protection of cultural and civil rights, and wary of ethnic violence

from the plebiscite era, shied away from Polish national politics. Democracy proved bad for Polish activists, and a boon to national ambiguity. As a result, Polish activists rebelled against the democratic norms that nurtured indifference to their cause, advocating instead forced racial separation. Tara Zahra has argued, in the context of Bohemia, that national indifference served as a ‘driving force behind escalating national radicalism’.¹⁶ In the case of Upper Silesia, national indifference and national radicalism existed in a feedback loop: the heightened demands of Polish national belonging and the practice of democratic accommodation of the Polish language drove locals away from Polish nationalism, which led frustrated activists to insist on an even more stringent vision of racial separation. The plebiscite and partition, as an exercise in ‘national self-determination’, subsequently yielded not two nations divided, but rather local communities even more wary of national division, a dilemma for activists who increasingly saw national radicalism as the only viable solution.

Polish activists and local Polish speakers: the widening gap

In creating loyal Poles in the 1920s, the Polish movement around Oppeln had hoped to continue its successes from the prewar period. Before World War I, the local nationalist leader and newspaper editor, Bronisław Koraszewski, had managed since his arrival in Oppeln in 1890 to build a vocal and powerful minority movement. In 1907 and again in 1912, the Oppeln district elected to the Reichstag a Polish nationalist representative, thanks to overwhelming support from the Polish-speaking countryside.¹⁷ Yet the national-political consolidation of Polish speakers did not extend to the plebiscite, when just 25 per cent of Oppeln county (*Landkreis*) voters, including newly enfranchised women, cast their ballot for Poland, far short of the support predicted by ethno-national statistics.¹⁸ This reversal of fortune can be explained by several factors. The prewar Polish movement found success at the ballot box, but lacked the deep social roots – a strong network of associations, schools, sporting clubs, or lay religious societies – necessary to breed enduring national loyalties. Practices of bilingual intermixing and accommodation continued in Oppeln’s shops, churches, and village squares. The prewar voting surge can also be read – in light of the subsequent plebiscite decline – as less of a national self-declaration, and more of a protest vote against the previously dominant Catholic Center Party. Just as the Center Party moved away from a politics of protest, Polish nationalists captured many of the local poor, disgruntled Catholic voters with a platform that largely resembled the earlier, battle-ready Catholic politics of the *Kulturkampf* era. But the plebiscite entailed more than just a protest vote against a feckless Catholic Center Party. It significantly increased the stakes of voting Polish: instead of merely registering discontent with anti-Polish Prussian policy as in 1907, a vote for the Poles in 1921 was a vote for joining *Poland*, a new and unstable state resurrected in 1918. A plebiscite vote for Poland reflected one’s willingness, at

the very least, to trade citizenship and potentially endure migratory or economic upheaval.

Combined with the increased national stakes of voting Polish, patterns of violence also help to explain the plebiscite majority for Germany around Oppeln. During the run up to the plebiscite, Upper Silesia was occupied by a French-led League of Nations force. The inability of these pro-Polish French forces to control the tide of violence during the occupation period gave Germany a powerful argument in the plebiscite: despite wartime deprivation and national hubris, the German state had recently provided Upper Silesians basic order and security. During the collapse into near anarchy of 1920–1921, the state that could promise greater security held a distinct advantage. Moreover, western Upper Silesians around Oppeln experienced nationalist violence mainly through incursions by outside Polish bandits, or local Polish cells, with German forces then restoring order. Germany thus appeared to many as the state best capable of preserving safety and social order.

These causes of the ethnically incongruent plebiscite results, in which many Polish speakers voted for Germany, reflected the problems for the Polish movement in German Upper Silesia after 1922. Polish activists needed to convince a local populace weary of violence, and wary of the consequences of ceding their homeland to Poland, that they should declare their loyalty to the Polish nation-state. This task was further hindered by the changes taking place in both the structure of the German government, and in the Polish movement. Polish nationalists in Oppeln lost several of their core activists – including their father figure, Koraszewski – who migrated to their new national homeland in Poland during and immediately after the plebiscite campaign.¹⁹ Those activists who remained were often either too young or too poor to move. Many had grown up in the small but dedicated Polish nationalist milieu. Many had also served in the Prussian Army, their loyalties radicalized by wartime trauma and plebiscite-era violence. This core group of activists numbered around 500, although the same 20 men generally rotated among local leadership positions.²⁰ The key local leaders were, without exception, men, and their patriarchal leadership often clashed, especially on issues of religion and education, with their female constituents. As the first generation to come of age in a nationalist subculture, in the midst of total war and the resurrection of a Polish state, these Upper Silesian activists proved more uncompromising in their nationalist fervor than the prewar generation.

Part of these nationalists' radicalization came from the erection of a Polish state and the increasing links between Polish nationalists and the homeland. Upper Silesian activists quickly became subsumed into the Germany-wide Związek Polaków w Niemczech (Union of Poles in Germany – ZPwN). Founded in Berlin in August 1922, the ZPwN sought to unify the representation of Polish nationals of German citizenship.²¹ The organization, largely under the sway of Poland's conservative National Democrat party, deemed Poland's western border project incomplete, and openly wished to

annex the remaining territories in Germany which they (supported by German census statistics) deemed ethnically Polish.²² With Poznań (Posen) now under Polish control, their main target shifted to Upper Silesia. The city of Oppeln increasingly became the organizational center of the Polish nationalist movement for all of Germany's eastern borderlands during the Weimar era. Relations between the new Polish consulate in Oppeln and local nationalist activists were also intimate, with the former providing the latter financial support and leadership.²³ The Polish movement could not escape being imbricated in broader political networks, and relied on money from Warsaw to survive. As a result, whereas prewar national activists in Oppeln sought national rights for Polish speakers within the German state, in the interwar period they tacitly advocated the eventual goal of Upper Silesia being ceded to its supposed Polish motherland. The expectations of loyalty thus increased considerably for Polish speakers. The logic of partial territorialization of nationality, achieved in the partition, served to raise expectations that the job would some day be finished. Rather than depoliticizing national belonging through self-determination, the partition instead radicalized the stakes of national belonging for Polish speakers in Oppeln.

At the same time that the local Polish movement became more insular, and more beholden to a supra-regional agenda of territorial revision, the Weimar citizens of Oppeln – German and Polish speakers alike – enjoyed greater freedoms than at any time in history. In addition to universal suffrage and relatively progressive social policies, Upper Silesians also benefitted from greater autonomy over cultural and language policies. For this, they could thank the plebiscite-era autonomy movement that helped to broker the promotion of Upper Silesia to its own province within Prussia. The newly resurgent Catholic Center Party used this provincial autonomy to support bilingual diversity in schools and churches, allowing Polish usage while embracing those who chose German. The program can best be described as one of gentle, or willing, Germanization. As the regional party head Carl Ulitzka noted,

The winning over of the Polish-speaking population for Germanness occurs not through combating the Polish mother tongue. Through positive transfer of German culture, through well-built and well-run schools, through easing entrance to higher schools of learning, through people's libraries, etc. the current of German culture will be transmitted into the Upper Silesian population.²⁴

While Polish nationalists decried this assimilationist program, it is clear that many local Polish speakers failed to muster the same hostility.

In addition to a more benevolent regional administration, Upper Silesians also benefitted from a new minority protection regime. Under League of Nations guarantee, Germany and Poland signed a reciprocal treaty, known as the Geneva Accord (Convention de Genève Relative à la Haute-Silésie),

which promised each state's minority freedom from discrimination, and rights to language use in education and public settings.²⁵ The Accord also created a special Mixed Commission – headed by the former Swiss President Felix Calonder – that worked at the regional level to enforce minority rights on either side of the partition border.²⁶ Compared to the League's meager or failed attempts to protect minorities in other areas of Eastern Europe, the Mixed Commission proved relatively successful. Much of this can be attributed to the bilateral impulse behind the treaty. Germany saw the rights of its ethnic kin in the near abroad dependent in part on how it treated its own Polish minority, and vice versa. This incentive was particularly strong for Germany, since its German minority in Polish Upper Silesia was far larger and economically stronger than the Polish minority in Germany. As a result, the Geneva Accord added an extra layer of protection of freedoms in language and schooling for Polish speakers in Upper Silesia, as Germany protected its minorities at home in order to protect its ethnic kin abroad.

Polish nationalists around Oppeln saw these greater freedoms as the gateway to a fully realized national movement encompassing hundreds of thousands of local Polish speakers. In activists' eyes the arrival of universal suffrage, the replacement of a repressive, anti-Polish provincial government by a tolerant, pro-Catholic one, and the establishment of minority protections heralded the freedoms necessary for national awakening. This awakening had been hampered by prewar Prussian repression, and could now flourish in the era of nation-state democracies. But, in fact, the opposite happened. It was precisely these new freedoms – the guarantees of bilingual rights and their enforcement – that satisfied most local citizens and sapped strength from the Polish movement. While a milder version of this local disillusionment with Polish nationalism had occurred in the years preceding World War I, the new democratic conditions accelerated the gap between locals uninterested in the Polish cause and Polish activists.²⁷

The following sections examine the failure of Polish nationalists to recruit local citizens in Oppeln's schools and churches, at the ballot box, and through minority complaints. The result was a widening gap between the agendas of nationalist leaders, and the response of their Polish-speaking flock. The increased stakes of national belonging helped to drive away Polish speakers satisfied with new practices of bilingual tolerance. Rather than self-reflect on this declining interest in Polish nationalism, activists instead repeatedly blamed locals for their lack of commitment, and ultimately – in the face of repeated failures – began to embrace forced racial division as the most feasible way to turn local Polish speakers into loyal Poles.

Bilingual rights: from goal to enemy

For Polish activists, schools provided the single most important site for crafting national loyalties, and the freedoms of the 1920s seemed to promise a new flourishing of Polish language education. Under the Geneva Accord, minority

groups were allowed to establish primary and middle schools with instruction in their own language. These regulations applied to both sides of the partition border. By July 1923, nationalist activists in Oppeln county had signed up 492 children for a minority school. Yet Polish minority schools proved a clear failure in 1920s Upper Silesia. The roughly 500 children signed up represented only a fraction of the 9,077 primary school students in mixed-language schools in the county. Moreover, when the schools opened, the number of attendees almost always fell short of the signatures collected. In May 1925 five new minority schools opened in Oppeln county, but of the 507 students who pre-enrolled, only 127 showed up for the first day of classes. In almost every case, school enrollments dropped shortly after the school opened, and continued to decline in the following years. To take one example, the minority school in Königlich Neudorf (Nowa Wieś Królewska), which was built after 96 signatures were gathered, opened to only 16 students in 1925, and was closed in 1929 with only six enrollees.²⁸ By the 1930–31 school year, in all of German Upper Silesia – an area with a population of around 1.4 million – just 347 students were enrolled in Polish schools.²⁹ Already by 1926 the Polish consulate in Oppeln could declare that ‘Polish schooling in German Upper Silesia finds itself in complete decline.’³⁰

Who, or what, was responsible for this failure? Polish nationalists initially blamed the German government for its plodding progress in building and staffing minority schools. The training of teachers in standard Polish proved the greatest challenge, as most Upper Silesian instructors had only an oral knowledge of the local Polish dialect, or perhaps a reading knowledge of religious texts. Two Berlin officials noted after a 1925 visit to Upper Silesia that the teachers’ linguistic deficiencies rendered most of them ‘totally unsuitable for instruction’.³¹ The initially poor quality of instruction no doubt discouraged enrollment, even though many parents were themselves only fluent in the local dialect. Yet by 1926, the German authorities had worked out most of their issues with teacher training. The government worked largely in good faith to improve the schools, even going so far as to keep open empty minority schools. Their primary motivation was to safeguard German-language education across the border in Polish Upper Silesia, which necessitated supporting minority schools at home.

A more significant reason for the failure of the schools lay with local families, few of whom found it necessary or desirable to send their children to the Polish schools. Often the students, never having learned standard Polish except through religious prayer, took the lead in rejecting the schools. In the village of Malino (Malina) in 1924, many parents withdrew their support for the minority school after their children complained about the difficulty of learning standard Polish.³² At a German school in nearby Zelazno (Żelazna) that same year, the teacher stopped offering Polish-language instruction because the students would not come to class. According to the teacher, no parents even asked for Polish instruction for their children past second grade.³³ This apathy of some parents was combined with a sense among many

others that Polish language and religious instruction *within* German schools was sufficient. Most German schools offered Polish as an optional subject, and as of July 1923 a good portion of local students took part. In the village of Frauendorf (Wróblin), 43 students took Polish language instruction, and 110 Polish religious instruction, in a school of 262 students. Throughout the 1920s, around four times the number of students signed up for Polish religious instruction as for a Polish minority school in German Upper Silesia.³⁴ Many parents preferred giving their children a German-language or bilingual education rather than a predominantly Polish-language one.

For Polish nationalists it was a moral failure that Polish-speaking parents refused to raise their children nationally. This failure was also felt acutely in the churches, where God-given morality was supposed to be passed down in the mother tongue. Yet when it came to the language of religious instruction for children, similar conditions prevailed as in the schools. Even among Polish-speaking parents, a large proportion chose German-language catechism for their children. These trends represented a continuation and acceleration of shifts in language preference from the pre-war period.³⁵ In a recurrent springtime ritual, Polish activists derided the decline in first communions offered in Polish in local villages.³⁶ Polish nationalists complained of forced Germanization by priests, although most complaints proved thinly grounded. For example, in Lugnian (Łubniany), Father Schmidt was attacked in 1928 in the local Polish nationalist paper, the *Nowiny Codzienne* (Daily News – hereafter *Nowiny*) for Germanizing his parish's youth. The anonymous author of the article claimed the priest 'doesn't respect the mother tongue of his parishioners and imposes the German language on them'.³⁷ But Schmidt's reply negated most of these claims. He had instituted an early-morning German-language service twice monthly only after his parishioners asked for one. He estimated that of the 3,100 people in his flock, 90 percent were bilingual, with around 200 German-only speakers and 50–100 people, all over the age of 65, who spoke only Polish. He claimed that both the German- and Polish-language services were well attended, and that Polish speakers happily sang in German. In confession and communion instruction, Schmidt noted that 'all children openly demanded only German instruction without any influence on my part'.³⁸ His claims were backed up by the parish council, which had requested the German-language services. Moreover, the minority school in the village had proven a failure, lasting only a few weeks before parents returned their children to the German school.

These practices of bilingual tolerance and seeming national apathy were resolutely unacceptable to the local Polish activists. Amid continued nationalist squabbles in Lugnian, the *Nowiny* newspaper blamed Schmidt for *not forcing* parents to educate children in Polish against their wishes.³⁹ The *Nowiny*'s reaction shows how the seeds of frustration among activists began to grow into illiberal politics. The widespread apathy regarding the national cause in educational and religious settings both angered and baffled regional activists. In their logic, nationality was not a choice, but an obligation – a

duty to God and fatherland. Most activists seemed to interpret this loyalty as an end in itself, to be achieved regardless of means. In their eyes, such measures were meant to defend the sanctity of Polish culture against integrationist and assimilationist social practices. But this same self-defense of group minority rights also forced obligations on individuals. It created a direct clash between supposedly innate group minority rights and liberal-individual choice over national affiliation. This clash played out at the level of local politics. For nationalist activists, national group rights outweighed personal choice. Thus, these activists sought to force parents against their wishes to cultivate their children's Polish language skills.

The activists' stance was reflected in the litany of criticism they directed at locals who, they wrote in the *Nowiny*, 'behave indifferently toward it [their Polish identity] and indifferently toward the work of cultural preservation'.⁴⁰ Such complaints typically emphasized the innate identity of Poles, and their failure to live up to their national duty. The Polish School Association scolded parents in 1927:

You are Poles, your mother tongue is the Polish language, therefore your children also belong, according to legal decisions and from the standpoint of nature, in the Polish schools. Today there is still time, you can still make good on what has been neglected.⁴¹

At its regional meeting in Beuthen (Bytom) in May 1927, the Association decried 'our anxiety, our indifference and our cluelessness about our own interests, both public as well as personal' among Polish speakers. For the school association, the 'clueless' were those who did not recognize the supposed benefits of Polish belonging – benefits presumed obvious even though they were rarely tied to any messages of economic uplift or self-help. Polish leaders maintained a haughty national faith vis-à-vis local Polish speakers. These activists' failures to convince locals to declare their national loyalty as an end in itself, detached from economic or material wellbeing, were thus recast as failures of nationalist commitment on the part of indifferent or ambiguous locals.

In addition to blaming nationally indifferent Polish speakers, nationalist activists also lodged dozens of complaints of terror and intimidation against Poles. For example, the *Nowiny* reported that, from January 1927 through March 1928, some 25 'acts of terror' had been committed in German Upper Silesia against Poles. Many of these complaints were lodged with the League of Nations Mixed Commission. The Silesian branch of the ZPwN was allowed to file complaints on behalf of individual citizens, or on behalf of the entire minority. Without a doubt, animus from German nationalists at the local level prevented some Poles from organizing cultural activities. For example, many tavern keepers denied them rental space for plays or singing groups, often under pressure from German nationalist activists.⁴² More serious attacks came from right-nationalist and Nazi paramilitary groups, such

as the forcible breakup of Polish meetings or an alleged bombing of the Polish consulate.⁴³ Nor were German authorities always sympathetic to Polish complaints. When a death threat was lodged in 1923 against Father Klimas, the most nationally active pro-Polish priest in the county, the German authorities offered police protection. Yet they also largely blamed Klimas for bringing the threat upon himself by refusing to offer German-language services.⁴⁴

While the ZPwN lodged many valid complaints with the League, they also cried wolf often enough to cast doubt on the general truth of their claims. This proved particularly true when complaints were made on behalf of nationally apathetic locals, often without these citizens' approval. A petition in 1924 alleged that German authorities had refused to build a Polish minority school in Tarnau (Tarnów Opolski). But Germans replied that, even though enough signatures were collected, local parents revoked their support upon learning that their children would be isolated in a separate school. The ZPwN, defeated by the local lack of interest, withdrew its complaint in January 1925.⁴⁵ In a similar case in 1928, the ZPwN alleged that, when the head teacher of a school in Königlich Neudorf caught scarlet fever, the authorities were tardy in finding a suitable replacement. In a town with at least 2,300 Polish speakers, only six children attended this Polish school. These parents eventually agreed to close the school and send their children to the local German school, with Polish language instruction. Thus, the case was resolved when national apathy forced the ZPwN to withdraw their complaint.⁴⁶ The ZPwN counted these complaints as acts of intimidation or repression by the German government, but there is little evidence that Upper Silesians suffered limitations on their freedom of national choice in schooling or church policies. Many Polish activists did rightfully feel intimidated, and thus adopted a battlefield mentality of national struggle. But they also applied their self-understanding of this struggle to a broader population of locals who were, in nationalist terms, noncombatants. In these cases, behind the dramatic staging of League appeals, nationalist activists saw Upper Silesians' freedom to reject the Polish cause as the true violation, as a rejection of their own beliefs in the ultimate rightness of Polish national organization.

Unsurprisingly, the League petition system was also used to air grievances that had little to do with nationality. In 1930 a Polish speaker in Ratibor (Racibórz) sought the ZPwN's help. He hoped to appeal a city ordinance expropriating his gardening plot to build a new apartment complex, even though no national discrimination was obvious in the city's decision. The response of the ZPwN showed frustration with such blatant opportunists. 'The Polish population reports to the Związek [ZPwN] only when there is, more often than not, nothing left to save', the regional leader Arkadiusz Bożek complained in response to the gardener. 'Then you scream: "We are going down! Bożek, Bożek help us!"'⁴⁷ The Polish nationalists had imagined building a vibrant national community of Poles, but instead found themselves defending a gardener facing land expropriation for a public housing project.

This path to irrelevance for the Polish movement was in fact paved by the ZPwN's own misuse of the system to claim a unity of Polish national interests. In using minority complaints to help their agenda of exaggerating repression against Polish speakers, the ZPwN tacitly encouraged other instrumental uses of the League protections. Thus, while the League minority protections arguably worked better in Upper Silesia than in most other regions of the minority belt stretching across Eastern Europe, these greater national freedoms did not result in greater national fervor. This was the seeming paradox which Polish nationalists felt unable to resolve, except through greater, shriller insistence on the predetermined unity of their flock.

National 'crossing' at the ballot box

Given the limited and declining interest in defining themselves as loyal Poles, Upper Silesians unsurprisingly delivered repeated electoral defeats to Polish nationalists at the ballot box. Elections provide both the clearest numerical evidence of a precipitous decline in the strength of the Polish movement, and the most direct link between Polish activists' frustration with this decline and their illiberal turn. Votes for the Polish party steadily plummeted during the Weimar period in and around Oppeln.⁴⁸ In the 1924 national parliamentary elections to the German Reichstag (there were three that year), the Polish party drew between 23 and 25 percent of votes in Oppeln county, excluding the city. Although this represented the highest vote totals of any county in Upper Silesia, the electoral strength did not hold. In both the May 1928 and September 1930 elections, the Polish nationalist party attracted just 14.4 per cent of voters in the rural county; in the July 1932 the Polish party pulled in just 5.7 per cent of the vote; and in the November 1932 elections this figure dropped to 4.6 per cent. Polish nationalists were never able to command the same dominance in the countryside that they had in the pre-World War I period, when they gained over two-thirds of votes in many local villages.⁴⁹

This downward trend can be tied to the program of the Polish party and to its political competitors. Despite occasional regional controversy, the Polish party defined itself mainly on an anti-Socialist, faith-bound vision of national loyalty. In the battle for pious voters, the Poles encountered stiff competition from the resurgent Catholic Center Party (Zentrum). The Center Party proved the strongest defender of bilingual rights, and its dominance of provincial administration meant that it stood as the protector of linguistic freedoms in schooling and religious practice. Although the Center Party discouraged bringing politics to the pulpit, many priests nonetheless found ways to make their political preferences clear. As a result, the Polish party often resorted to anti-clerical attacks. In particular, priests were accused of manipulating their flocks into voting on purely religious grounds and ignoring national loyalties.⁵⁰ The worst of these priests, the Polish nationalists argued, were those who had 'de-nationalized themselves', in other words, given up national commitment in favor of religious or regional loyalties.⁵¹ Yet the

repeated, shrill outcries over denationalization probably did more to raise 1
activists' own anxiety about bilingual religious practice than to alter such 2
practices among Catholic Upper Silesians. Given the decline in Polish voting, 3
the Center Party seems to have largely won the battle for the pious Catholic 4
voter. Ultimately the Poles saw the Catholic Center Party as the most reliable 5
and resilient enemy of their cause. It was the Center Party which tended to 6
draw away the largest number of Polish speakers into a regional political orbit 7
marked strongly by bilingualism and indifference to national belonging. As 8
the Polish nationalists' steady hatred for the Center Party suggests, national 9
apathy proved the greatest, most consistent threat to Polish activists. 10

A fundamental problem for the Polish party was its lack of a compre- 11
hensive social program for an economically depressed population. Even the 12
Center Party, with its extensive network of Catholic labor unions and welfare 13
programs, showed far more concern for locals' material needs. This deficiency 14
was obvious to some regional Polish activists. In a 1928 report, one Polish 15
nationalist from the industrial zone traced the Polish party's decline to its lack 16
of a social program. 'The broad masses allow themselves to be guided entirely 17
from worries about their material existence and vote ... partly out of conviction, 18
partly out of economic calculation, for the German parties'. He believed 19
that overcoming the population's 'political indifference' required organizing 20
Polish speakers into trade unions and professional organizations that were 21
nationally divided – a task the Polish party never seriously undertook.⁵² 22

Instead, the Polish party continued to insist that it should automatically 23
earn locals' votes based on the primacy of national affiliation. This decision 24
did not please all activists, as the lack of a social program helped lead to a 25
revolt within the Polish movement's Opoln leadership. Led by the *Nowiny* 26
editor Antoni Pawletta, a group of native-born Upper Silesians broke away 27
from the ZPwN-dominated movement between 1928 and 1933, moving to 28
establish their own organizations and alternative newspaper, the *Katolik* 29
Trzyrazowy (Catholic Thrice-Weekly). Their main complaints centered on the 30
heavily anti-German attitude of the national party, the lack of a social pro- 31
gram, and the lack of attention to local conditions in schools and churches. 32
'In our view one must reckon more with the voice of the voters than with the 33
views of a few Berlin men, who only know the needs of the Silesian popula- 34
tion from stories', their paper wrote.⁵³ The Polish nationalist movement ended 35
the Weimar era in disarray, with a local revolt against a nationally controlled 36
party, which relied on the imagined primordial national community of all 37
Poles for electoral support. 38

With the economic crisis gripping Europe after 1929, Upper Silesians 39
channeled their anger increasingly into the typical end-of-Weimar political 40
outlets: communism and Nazism. Amid economic collapse and radicaliza- 41
tion, Upper Silesians did not divide into two national camps, but rather 42
migrated towards political parties, including the Nazis, who actually down- 43
played local divisions between German and Polish speakers. Communism 44
grabbed hold of many under- or unemployed locals who had previously found 45

work in Oppeln's small limestone or cigar-rolling industries. The German Communist Party (KPD) viewed all nationalist parties with equal disdain, and organized events calling for class revolution in whichever language was likelier to rouse the audience.⁵⁴ By the end of the Weimar era, the KPD earned nearly four times more votes in Oppeln city and county than the Polish nationalists.

While communist refusal to take national sides is unsurprising, Nazi avoidance of anti-Polish attacks around Oppeln proved far more exceptional. Nazi propaganda, famously adaptable to local conditions, tended to downplay the supposed German–Slavic racial struggle around Oppeln. When Nazi Reichstag deputy Gregor Strasser gave a guest speech to 700 locals in the city in November 1929, he chose to depict the Nazi racial fight as a global battle to protect Germans: 'Asians, Chinese, and Negroes as well as Galician Jews must be excluded from having German rights or public offices. We need racially pure blood, in order to keep our clean and healthy economy.'⁵⁵ Nowhere in his speech did he mention Poles. Nazi attacks on organized Polish nationalists were not unknown, but this did not prevent successful recruitment of Polish speakers to the Nazi cause.⁵⁶ According to the *Nowiny*, the Nazi Party even offered rallies in Polish to attract locals.⁵⁷ The Polish paper also noted by 1930 that Polish-speaking voters in the countryside were increasingly supporting the whole range of German nationalist parties promising economic betterment, including the Nazis.⁵⁸

The trends noted by Polish nationalists bore fruit at the ballot box. Local Polish speakers turned out in substantial numbers for the Nazi Party. The village of Malino, for example, was over 95 percent bilingual or Polish-speaking according to the 1925 census, and 62 percent had voted for Poland in the plebiscite. Yet 47 percent of villagers voted for the Nazis in the July 1932 elections, nearly double the turnout than that for the Center Party.⁵⁹ Nearby Grudschütz (Grudzice), with 91 percent Polish or bilingual speakers, registered a 24 percent vote for the Nazis in the same election. This trend of Polish-speaking Upper Silesians voting in substantial numbers for the Nazi Party is not entirely exceptional. In Masuria, a southern section of East Prussia where most local Protestants spoke a Slavic dialect resembling Polish, several counties exceeded 60 percent vote totals for Hitler in the July 1932 elections.⁶⁰ Comparing Protestant East Prussia to Catholic Upper Silesia, it seems that the upper limit on potential Nazi voters around Oppeln was set not so much by the presence of Polish nationalist politics, which had all but disappeared. Rather, the limit was set by the resilience of the Catholic Center Party, which maintained a slim plurality of votes across Upper Silesia even at the height of Nazi voter popularity in 1932.

The reaction of the Polish nationalists to these competitors was predictably hostile. In the logic of their nationalist propaganda, allegiance to the KPD was part of the breakdown of Catholic-Polish society. The loss of the Polish mother tongue inevitably led to the loss of Catholic morals, which could lead to atheism and socialism:

Our children, Germanized in the schools and often in the churches, are a lost cause not just for nationality but also for the Catholic faith ... That is why their numbers are so high among the Communists. These are the effects of Germanization!⁶¹

For these Poles, national indifference was the original sin which spawned the communist devil; by rejecting one's nationality, one was destined for an immoral life of godless, materialist-driven political radicalism.

The Polish attack on Nazism was, however, more ambiguous. On the one hand, it was easy to depict Polish-speaking Nazi voters as national traitors. But the Nazis were seen by Polish activists as no greater enemy to their cause than any other German party. 'The Hitlerists as well as the other nationalists, and even the Center Party, the Social Democrats and the Communists show the same appetite when it comes to exterminating Poles', claimed the *Nowiny* during the July 1932 election race.⁶² This conflation of all parties as equal enemies of Polish nationalism arose from the fear of widespread national apathy. It was this apathy among voters, more than the actual policies of most parties (the Nazis excepted), that threatened to destroy the Polish movement. While one might expect fear among Polish activists about the aggressive nationalism of Nazism (even if the Nazis did not always deploy anti-Polish rhetoric locally), instead Poles often showed admiration for the Nazi movement. If lack of national dedication was the enemy, then the Nazis stood as the counter-example of nationalist fervor. At a September 1931 meeting, one Polish activist in Oppeln urged others to 'follow the example of the cohesion of the Stahlhelm [a right-nationalist paramilitary group] ... and the Nazi Party. Just as these German fighting organizations stand steadfastly together, so must all Polish brothers and sisters remain together and pursue their inbred rights'.⁶³ The Nazi Party thus served as a mirror for Polish activists' hopes, the successful nationalist model they could look to when they reflected on their own failures. This praise for the national solidarity and battle mentality of Nazism showed more than just a respect for one's enemy. It also ultimately shaped the methods and philosophy of forced national division that Polish activists came to embrace in Oppeln by the early 1930s.

Embracing racial separation

In the summer of 1932, as Germany lay in economic ruin and the Weimar political system teetered towards its final collapse, local Polish nationalists in Oppeln found enemies almost everywhere: the German government, the Catholic Party, socialists, and other German political parties. Chief among these enemies were Polish speakers who had abandoned the Polish cause. Unable to admit any fault in their own program, Polish activists instead blamed Polish speakers' abandonment of the cause on 'weakness of character'. Failure to embrace one's inborn nationality amounted to the deepest moral flaw imaginable to these activists. At the nadir of their electoral

support, the *Nowiny* claimed that local Polish speakers were guilty of nothing less than treason, lambasting them as ‘you coward, you betrayer of nationality, you brother murderer’.⁶⁴ The party of Poles thus ended the Weimar era spewing hate against the nationally ambiguous whom they had failed to recruit.

In 1932 the *Nowiny* approvingly portended a shift from a past era of ethnic mixing and integration to a future of strict ethnic separation. Nearly two hundred years of Prussian rule, the paper insisted, had yielded ‘a mass of cultural half-breeds, who count themselves part of the German people but were never really imbued with its high culture’. These ‘Germanized Slavs’, as they were pejoratively called, were the most loathsome enemy of the Polish nation, those who turned on their heritage to embrace a foreign culture. They were, in short, national traitors in the eyes of the *Nowiny*. The nationalists’ solution was a strict separation of the races ‘in the interest of the purity of both cultures’. It was this trend towards separation that they sensed taking root in Germany, thanks in large part to the rise of Nazism.

Luckily, one sees ever more clearly that the German people will no longer tolerate the preponderance of these cultural hybrids. Protest in Germany against the brutalization of Germanic culture through these ‘half-Slavic Germans’ is growing ever clearer. The reaction against these ‘pioneers of the Prussian spirit’ is arising ever more clearly.⁶⁵

Polish activists expressed an interest in not ‘tainting’ German culture with Polish speakers who tended towards assimilation. In this sense, they pitted themselves as brothers-in-arms with Germans who called for racial separation.

As the Nazis came to power in 1933, the attitude of Polish nationalists around Oppeln was at first rather sanguine. When the regional Polish leader Arka Bożek met the Oppeln county commissioner in March 1933, he claimed that ‘The present-day government cannot behave any worse than the previous government with respect to the Polish movement.’⁶⁶ While some element of flattery can be deduced in Bożek’s praise, Polish failures in the Weimar era suggest sincerity in his claim. From Bożek’s perspective, the Nazi government, with Hitler’s promise of racial separation, should have been a marked improvement over a democratic government focused on assimilation and integration. In May 1933, after Hitler gave a speech decrying assimilation to Germandom – the notion ‘that one can make Germans out of French and Poles’ – the *Nowiny* applauded the speech for its vision of two nations, mutually divided and inassimilable.⁶⁷

Although part of wider European trends, the logic of forced racial separation grew locally for the Polish movement out of frustration with their flock of Polish speakers. By 1932, many more Polish speakers around Oppeln voted for Hitler than for the Polish party. Commitment to the Polish project of nation-building through education, associational life, and politics remained

limited to a core group of committed activists who tried to exploit national rhetoric for their own political aims. They insisted on the objective nature of national belonging, asserting that local Polish speakers were simply waiting to be awakened. Weimar democracy dangled the promise of full freedom for nationalist politics, yet this freedom cut two ways: many local citizens, satisfied in large part with the cultural and political freedoms offered by the Catholic Center Party, refused to be awakened to the logic of Polish nationalism. Thus, just as the broader national battle between Poland and Germany over Upper Silesia continued through the interwar period, new local battle lines were drawn between national activists and those whom they failed to recruit. By the time of Hitler's rise to power, these local battles over nationalization – seen most clearly in Polish activists' failed efforts to turn Polish speakers into loyal Poles – would breed a frustration with democratically framed processes of national accommodation and a turn to more radical solutions of forced racial separation.

Notes

- 1 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 1 January 1927, no. 1. From German translation in Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu (APO), Nadprezydium (NO), Syg. 66.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 For overviews of the political landscape in interwar Upper Silesia, see R. Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918–1939*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1993; M. Wanatowicz, *Historia społeczno-polityczna Górnego Śląska i Śląska Cieszyńskiego w latach 1918–1945*, Katowice: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1994; G. Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873–1953), oder, Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen*, Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002; W. Rose, *The Drama of Upper Silesia*, Brattleboro VT: Stephen Daye Press, 1935; N. Conrads (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas, Bd. 3: Schlesien*, Berlin: Siedler, 1994; M. Czapliński, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs and R. Øerelik, *Historia Śląska*, Wrocław: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002.
- 4 S. Wambaugh, *Plebiscites Since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933, vol. II, 367, fn. 2.
- 5 Figures calculated from *Ibid.*, vol. I, 267, fn. 2.
- 6 These figures remain contested. Various estimates are discussed in D. Berlińska, *Mniejszość niemiecka na Śląsku Opolskim w poszukiwaniu tożsamości*, Opole: Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski, 1999, 94–96.
- 7 APO, *Rejencja Opolska* (RO I), Syg. 2096.
- 8 Wambaugh, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 212–213.
- 9 The German minority in Polish Upper Silesia features in R. Blanke, op.cit. The minority group also appears to a lesser extent in W. Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*, Publications of the German Historical Institute, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012. In Polish see T. Fałęcki, *Niemieckie szkolnictwo mniejszościowe na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1922–1939*, Wyd. 1 ed., Katowice: Państw. Wydawn. Naukowe – Oddział w Krakowie, 1970; A. Szefer (ed.), *Niemcy wobec konfliktu narodowościowego na Górnym Śląsku po I wojnie światowej: materiały z sesji naukowej pt. 'Górny Śląsk celem rewizjonizmu niemieckiego 1918–1919 w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę wygaśnięcia konwencji genewskiej'*, Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1989.

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- 10 One notable exception is J. Bolko, ‘Germans and Poles: Identity, Culture, and Nationalism in German Upper Silesia, 1918–1933’, Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York, Buffalo, 1995. Additionally, a few recent works compare policies on both sides of the interwar partition: J. Haubold-Stolle, *Mythos Oberschlesien: der Kampf um die Erinnerung in Deutschland und in Polen 1919–1956*, Einzelveröffentlichungen des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Warschau 14, Osnabrück: Fibre, 2008; A. Michalczyk, *Heimat, Kirche und Nation: deutsche und polnische Nationalisierungsprozesse im geteilten Oberschlesien (1922–1939)*, Neue Forschungen zur schlesischen Geschichte Bd. 19, Cologne: Böhlau, 2010; P. Polak-Springer, ‘Making “Recoveries”: The Cultural Politics of Territorial Appropriation in a Polish-German Industrial Borderland, 1922–1953’, Ph.D., Rutgers University, New Brunswick NJ, 2010. These latter works focus largely on the efforts of the ruling government on each side of the partition to legitimate its authority in a contested, multi-ethnic territory.
- 11 See, for example: E. Mendel, *Stosunki społeczne i polityczne w Opolu w latach 1918–1933*, Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1975; E. Mendel, *Polacy w Opolu, 1933–1939*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1980; J. Ratajewski, *Opolskie ‘Nowiny’ w latach 1911–1939*, Opole: Instytut Śląski, 1967; W. Wrzesiński, *Polski ruch narodowy w Niemczech w latach 1922–1939*, vol. 3, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2005; D. Kisielewicz, *Arka Bożek (1899–1954): Działacz społeczno-polityczny Śląska Opolskiego*, Opole: Wydawn. Instytut Śląski, 2006; W. Kornatowski, K. Malczewski and A. Glińska, *Wspomnienia Opolan*, Warsaw: Pax, 1960.
- 12 Full plebiscite results at the city, village, and county (Kreis) level are available in APO, *Starostwo Powiatowe w Opolu* (SPO), Syg. 134.
- 13 J. King, ‘The Nationalization of East Central Europe’, in M. Bucur and N. 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, pp. 112–152.
- 14 In Upper Silesia as a whole, 94 percent of farms were 20 hectares or less, and constituted 56 percent of all cultivated land. Large magnates controlled vast swaths of land in eastern Upper Silesia, but there were very few such large landholders around Oppeln. For provincial-wide statistics (from 1925), see Bolko, op. cit., p. 207. For Oppeln county statistics (from 1918), see APO, SPO, Syg. 1335.
- 15 The concept of nations as ‘imagined communities’ is articulated in B. R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edn, London: Verso, 1991.
- 16 T. Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2008, p. 5.
- 17 In the 1907 Reichstag election, Brandys earned just 16 percent of votes in the city of Oppeln, but 64 percent from the surrounding countryside. In some heavily Polish-speaking villages, such as Chmielowitz (Chmielowice) and Groß Döbern (Dobrzeń Wielki), Brandys earned more than 85 percent of the vote. Local results in *Gazeta Opolska*, 29 January 1897.
- 18 County-level plebiscite results available in APO, SPO, Syg. 134.
- 19 Mendel, op. cit., p. 214.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 On the ZPwN, see Wrzesiński, op. cit.
- 22 Blanke, op. cit., pp. 63–64.
- 23 On subventions to the Polish movement, especially the *Nowiny Codzienne* newspaper, see AAN, Konsulat RP w Opolu, Syg. 124.
- 24 Originally in *Coseler Zeitung*, 20 January 1928, no. 16. Quoted in Hitze, op. cit., p. 673, fn. 385.

- 25 For a full text of the treaty in French, see G. Kaeckenbeeck, *The International Experiment of Upper Silesia: A Study in the Working of the Upper Silesian Settlement, 1922–1937*, London: Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 567–823. 1
- 26 S. Rogowski, *Komisja Mieszana dla Górnego Śląska, 1922–1937*, Opole: Instytut Śląski, 1977. 2
- 27 For analysis of prewar disillusionment with Polish nationalism, see J. E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008, ch. 3. 3
- 28 Mendel, op.cit., p. 197. 4
- 29 Overall school statistics for German Upper Silesia in Kaeckenbeeck, op. cit., pp. 337–338. The 1933 census counted 1.48 million residents in German Upper Silesia. *Statistik des deutschen Reiches*, vol. 541, ‘Die Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reiches nach den Ergebnisse der Volkszählung 1933’, Heft 4, p. 12. 5
- 30 Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Konsulat RP w Opolu, Syg. 66, s. 96. 6
- 31 Travel report of Interior Ministry, January 1925, Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (GStA PK), I. HA, Rep. 77, Tit. 856, Syg. 449. 7
- 32 Report of Regierungsabteilung für Kirchen und Schulwesen in Oppeln, 15 November 1924, APO, NO, Syg. 145. 8
- 33 Statement of *Hauptlehrer* (head teacher) Wiench, July 1924, APO, NO, Syg. 79. 9
- 34 Kaeckenbeeck, op. cit., pp. 337–338. 10
- 35 Bjork, op. cit., pp. 60–70. 11
- 36 See, for example, *Nowiny Codzienne*, 10 November 1928, no. 261 and 25 May 1929, no. 119. From official German translations in APO, NO, Syg. 79. 12
- 37 *Nowiny Codzienne* 10 November 1928, no. 261. From official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 79. 13
- 38 Report of Father Schmidt, 19 March 1929, APO, NO, Syg. 79. 14
- 39 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 25 May 1929, no. 119. Official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 79. 15
- 40 *Ibid.*, 7 May 1927 no. 103. From official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 232. 16
- 41 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 19 March 1927, no. 64. Official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 135. 17
- 42 APO, SPO, Syg. 94. 18
- 43 Bolko, op. cit., pp. 296–297. 19
- 44 APO, NO, Syg. 88. 20
- 45 ZPwN complaint, 9 October 1924, and German reply, 30 December 1924, APO, Urząd do Spraw Mniejszości w Opolu (USMO), Syg. 60. 21
- 46 APO, USMO, Syg. 216. 22
- 47 Oppeln police report, 19 April 1930, APO, RO, Syg. 1860. 23
- 48 The party oscillated names between the *Polska Partia Ludowa* (Polish People’s Party) and *Polska-Katolicka Partia Ludowa* (Polish-Catholic People’s Party). 24
- 49 In the January 1907 Reichstag elections, the rural county (Landkreis) returned 64 percent of votes for the Polish candidate. The villages of Groß Döbern (Dobrzeń Wielki), Gosławitz (Gosławice), Grudschütz (Grudzice), Folwark, and Kempa (Kępa), among others, tallied over 80 percent of votes for the Polish party. Local election results in *Gazeta Opolska*, 29 January 1907. 25
- 50 See, for example, *Nowiny Codzienne*, 23 September 1924, no. 221; 28 September 1927, no. 222; 23 October 1930, no. 247. 26
- 51 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 10 May 1930, no. 108. From official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 67. 27
- 52 German translation of Witczak pamphlet, n.d., APO, RO, Syg. 1859. 28
- 53 *Katolik Trzyrzadowy*, 18 February 1933. German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 211. 29

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- 54 For police reports on local communist activity around Oppeln, see APO, SPO, Syg. 75. 1
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55 Oppeln police report, 26 November 1929, APO, RO, Syg. 1800. 3
56 For reports of Nazi violence against Polish nationalists and Polish-speaking communists, see Bolko, op. cit., 295 ff. 4
57 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 23 October 1930, no. 247. See also Bolko, op. cit., pp. 80–81. 5
58 *Ibid.*, 1 January 1930, no. 1. 6
59 1925 census results in APO, RO, Syg. 2096, plebiscite results in APO, SPO, Syg. 134. Election results in *Oppelner Zeitung*, 1 August 1932. 7
60 Richard Blanke, *Polish-speaking Germans? Language and National Identity Among the Masurians Since 1871* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 255. 8
61 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 27 June 1928, no. 146. Official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 67. 9
62 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 26 July 1932, no. 169. 10
63 17 September 1931. Oppeln police report in APO, NO, Syg. 215. 11
64 *Ibid.*, 6 August 1932, no. 179. Official German translation in APO, NO, Syg. 68. 12
65 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 22 June 1932, no. 141. 13
66 Report of Matuschka to Prussian Interior Ministry, 17 March 1933, APO, NO, Syg. 75. 14
67 *Nowiny Codzienne*, 21 May 1933, no. 106. 15
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