

TERESA KULAK
Polish Historical Society
ORCID: [0000-0002-5397-9940](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5397-9940)

POLITICAL AND TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS IN SILESIA 1919–1926

POLITYCZNE I TERYTORIALNE PODZIAŁY PROWINCJI ŚLĄSKIEJ 1919–1926

ABSTRACT: The article concerns the effects of the Resolution of the Prussian Parliament of 14th October 1919, according to which, before the Plebiscite envisaged in the Treaty of Versailles, the Opole (Oppeln) district (Regierungsbezirk) was separated from the Province of Silesia and given the status of the Province of Upper Silesia, and the Province of Lower Silesia was created from the merged Wrocław (Breslau) and Legnica (Liegnitz) districts. After the Plebiscite, in accordance with the decision of the Council of Ambassadors of 20th October 1921, the Plebiscite area was divided and the portions of the Upper Silesian and Lower Silesian Provinces (from the border region of Wrocław) were assigned to Germany and Poland according to decision made on 10th July 1922. As a result of the Act of the Prussian Parliament of 25th July 1923, two separate Provinces of Upper Silesia and Lower Silesia were established, but the division of the property of the former Province of Silesia between them was decided by the Act of 26th October 1926.

KEYWORDS: Lower Silesia, Upper Silesia, Plebiscite, district (Regierungsbezirk), provincial parliament, Prussian Parliament

Silesia, the largest province of the Kingdom of Prussia, administratively divided into three districts (Regierungsbezirke): Opole (Oppeln), Wrocław (Breslau) and Legnica (Liegnitz), also known as Upper, Middle and Lower Silesia, have not suffered from any military operations on its territory during World War I¹. It

¹ About the threat to Silesia from Russian troops in the first weeks of the War see: *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Schlesien*, ed. Norbert Conrads, Berlin 1994, pp. 607–608; *Schlesien und Schlesier*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, München 1996, p. 121.

remained on the sidelines of the events of that time, similarly to the neighbouring Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) and Vistula River Pomerania, where Poles, as everywhere under the Prussian partition, Germanised and repressed by the anti-Polish Folk Laws were awaiting German defeat and regaining independence². The internationalization of their political and legal situation began with the declaration of President Thomas W. Wilson, announced on 22nd January 1917, in connection with the USA's accession to war. A year later, in his famous Fourteen Points, he expanded his idea by giving the ethnic factor in point 13 the highest rank in the reconstruction of the Polish state³. The European complement to the position of the President of the USA was the Versailles declaration of the Prime Ministers of France, Great Britain and Italy of 3rd June 1918. They stated that "independent and united Poland with free access to the sea is a necessary condition to lasting and just peace and rule of law in Europe"⁴.

The authorities of the Province of Silesia, represented by the state administration department in the person of the province president (Oberpräsident) and by the head of the provincial self-government (Landeshauptmann), as the representative of the local government, did not treat international discussions around Wilson's 13th point as a threat. They presented their own formal and legal standpoint, proving that in the light of international law Silesia was not annexed during the Partition, because in the 18th century it no longer belonged to the Rzeczpospolita, and from this pragmatic conclusion they drew the conviction of the inviolability of the eastern border of the Reich in the Silesian section. They were worried about the legal status of Wielkopolska, occupied by Prussia during the Second Partition of Poland in 1793, and were prepared for the possibility of losing it. They therefore made a confidential request to the State government to force the Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland in Warsaw, occupied by the Germans, to provide formal guarantees on the preservation of the German-Polish border after the War according to the state of 1st August 1914⁵. These efforts were made obsolete by the outbreak

² Marian Seyda, *Polska na przełomie dziejów. Fakty i dokumenty*, vol. 1, Poznań 1927, pp. 200, 460. See also: *Spółczesność polska na ziemiach pod panowaniem pruskim w okresie I wojny światowej (1914–1918)*. Zbiór studiów, ed. Mieczysław Wojciechowski, Toruń 1996.

³ Adam Basak, *Argument etnograficzny przy rozstrzygnięciu sprawy granicy polsko-niemieckiej w 1919 roku*, "Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka", 23 (1968), 4, pp. 527–559.

⁴ *Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925*, eds. Halina Janowska, Tadeusz Jędruszczak, Wrocław 1981, p. 410.

⁵ Manfred Laubert, *Die oberschlesische Volksbewegung. Beiträge zur Tätigkeit der Vereinigung Heimattreuer Oberschlesier 1918–1921*, Breslau 1938, p. 5.

of the revolution in Berlin on 9th November 1918 and the seizure of power by the social democrats, who – after the dethroning of Emperor William II – proclaimed a republic, and end the War with a truce signed on 11th November in Compiègne.

Also in the capital of Silesia, on 9th November, the two social democratic parties, SPD and USPD, as well as the newly formed liberal-left Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP), made a political upheaval by creating the People's Council in Breslau (Volksrat zu Breslau), which on 15th November declared itself the Central People's Council for the Province of Silesia⁶. After calling on the German inhabitants of Silesia and Wielkopolska to form volunteer corps to fight the Poles, the Council received support from the previous Silesian (i.e. Imperial) local government authorities (Provinzialverwaltung Schlesien), headed by the provincial self-government (Landeshauptmann) Georg von Thaer. Since his election in 1916, he held an office in an alliance with representatives of Upper Silesian industry and Silesian aristocracy representing great land ownership, organized after the War in the far-right Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP)⁷. The cooperation between the new and old authorities in the Silesian province was disrupted by the initiative of Father Carl Ulitzka, the Upper Silesian leader of the Catholic Centre Party, who appealed in early December 1918 with the separatist slogan "Upper Silesia for the Upper Silesian people"⁸, hostilely received by the Silesian local authorities⁹. They considered that his concept of separating Upper Silesia in the form of an independent administrative and economic unit was a political and economic threat to the province. The War caused a catastrophic decline in production in the districts of Wrocław and Legnica¹⁰, so they did not want to lose Upper Silesia, which was in a better economic situation. Especially from 1915, when the Germans occupied a large part of the Dąbrowa Basin, with its natural resources and labour force. The local authorities were convinced that the members of the Centre Party, politically linked to the representatives of the

⁶ Edmund Klein, *Rada Ludowa we Wrocławiu. Centralna Rada Prowincji Śląskiej*, Warszawa–Wrocław 1976, pp. 70–76.

⁷ Franciszek Biały, *Z dziejów ugrupowań burżuazyjnych na Śląsku. Rola i działalność Deutschnationale Volkspartei 1918–1921*, "Studia Śląskie. Seria nowa", 15 (1969), pp. 89–130.

⁸ Franciszek Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum w kwestii górnośląskiej po I wojnie światowej*, Opole 1973, pp. 12–16; Edmund Klein, *Śląskie koncepcje separatystyczne (listopad 1918 – kwiecień 1919)*, "Studia Śląskie", 23 (1978), pp. 27–65.

⁹ Helmuth Neubach, *Teilung der Provinz*, [in:] Winfried Irgang, Werner Bein, Helmut Neubach, *Schlesien. Geschichte, Kultur und Wirtschaft*, Köln 1995 (Historische Landeskunde. Deutsche Geschichte im Osten, 4), pp. 210–212.

¹⁰ Edward Nabel, *Gospodarka wojenna Niemiec 1914–1918*, Warszawa 1959; Romuald Gelles, *Gospodarka Wrocławia w czasie I wojny światowej*, "Studia Śląskie", 28 (1975), pp. 74–111.

Upper Silesian industry, aware of the economic disintegration of the Province of Silesia, aimed at loosening the existing relationship with it and obtaining provincial autonomy within the framework of Prussia, or provincial autonomy at the scale of the Reich¹¹. Alarmed about these plans, they acted against the division and condemned, as a separatist, the conference organised on 31st December 1918 in Breslau under the leadership of Cardinal Adolf Bertram, with the participation of representatives of the Centre Party, the authorities of Berlin and the Army, during which a fierce discussion broke up between supporters and opponents of the separation of Upper Silesia. However, in the decisions adopted at that time, referred to in the literature as “Breslauer Beschlüsse”¹², the view of the government and local government administration has prevailed, as the indivisibility of the Silesian province was recognised. Only the possibility of introducing cultural autonomy in Upper Silesia (limited to learning religion in the Polish language¹³) was allowed, in order to calm the sentiments of the local Polish population. On 6th January 1919, the Republican authorities additionally introduced a state of siege in all “Polish counties” of Upper Silesia.

From 18th January 1919, the matters of Germany’s post-war borders passed into the competence of the Paris Peace Conference of the Main Allied and Associated Powers, i.e. France, Italy, Great Britain and the USA, to which the delegation of the Republic of Poland presented the territorial postulates, prepared in the Polish National Committee in Paris¹⁴. Taking into account the results of the census of 1910 for Upper Silesia¹⁵, which had 1,258,186 Poles and 884,045 Germans, Poland demanded the eastern part of the Opole district and 4 northeastern counties: Góra (Guhrau), Milicz (Militsch), Syców (Groß Wartenberg) and Namysłów (Namslau), where Polish population lived in the borderland with Wielkopolska¹⁶. Polish

¹¹ Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum*, pp. 102–110.

¹² Klein, *Śląskie koncepcje*, pp. 27–65; See the minutes of the meeting in: *Źródła do dziejów powstań śląskich*, vol. 1, ed. Henryk Zieliński, Wrocław 1965, pp. 77–88.

¹³ According to the stance of the Prussian government of 28th October 1918. Cf. Przemysław Hauser, *Niemcy wobec sprawy polskiej. Październik 1918–czerwiec 1919*, Poznań 1984, p. 26.

¹⁴ Marian Leczyk, *Komitet Narodowy Polski a Ententa i Stany Zjednoczone 1917–1919*, Warszawa 1966, pp. 175–177; Eugeniusz Romer, *Pamiętnik paryski (1918–1919)*, eds. Andrzej Garlicki, Ryszard Świątek, Wrocław 1989, pp. 175–176.

¹⁵ I’m omitting here the efforts made by Czechoslovakia. See Dan Gawrecki, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918–1921*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds. Teresa Kulak, Andrzej Brożek, Wrocław 1996, pp. 85–106.

¹⁶ *Akty i dokumenty dotyczące sprawy polskiej granic Polski na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu 1918–1919*, collected and issued by the General Secretariat of the Polish Delegation, part 1: *The territorial programme of the Delegation*, Paryż 1920, pp. 25, 30–55.

territorial demands were accepted by the Polish Affairs Committee and included in the proposals for the Peace Treaty, presented to the German delegation on 7th May 1919. The German delegation rejected them on 29th May, with the justification of the impossibility of paying off the war reparations imposed on Germany if Upper Silesia was incorporated into Poland. This blackmail resulted in the amendment of the draft treaty on 4th June and the imposition of a Plebiscite on Poland, which was sanctioned in the Article 88 of the Peace Treaty, signed on 28th June 1919 in Versailles. Out of 22 counties in the Opole district, with 13,640 km² and 2,112,700 people, 15 counties were separated to form a Plebiscite area covering 10,782 km², with a predominantly Polish population. The Plebiscite also covered 4 border counties from the Breslau district.

The announcement of a Plebiscite in Upper Silesia resulted in the first of the post-war political and territorial divisions of the Silesian province, signalled in the title of this text. The Prussian Landtag, by the Resolution of 14th October 1919, separated the Opole district from the Province of Silesia, and transformed it into the Province of Upper Silesia. Meanwhile, from the previous districts of Wrocław and Legnica, the Province of Lower Silesia was established¹⁷. The Landeshauptmann Georg von Thaer, who, from the perspective of several years¹⁸ regretted the permanent “fragmentation” of the Silesian province, then recognised the need for separate administrative-political and propaganda preparations in both Plebiscite territories. He took into account the socio-political differences between the inhabitants of industrialized Upper Silesia and the agricultural counties on the border of Silesia and Wielkopolska. He considered these operations only in “tactical” categories, hoping for a “return to the previous state” after a win in the Plebiscite¹⁹. However, there were serious fears in Wrocław about a possibility of losing part of the Silesian province and the economic potential of Upper Silesia. Thus, the Provincial Committee (Provinzialausschuß), the self-governing executive body of the province, subordinate to Thaer, adopted a directive on 14th August 1919, in order to “maintain joint management in key areas of territorial and self-governing administration” in case of the creation of a separate Upper Silesian province²⁰. One

¹⁷ Zdzisław Surman, *Sprawa Górnego Śląska w Sejmie Pruskim w latach 1919–1922*, “Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Śląska”, 10 (1970), p. 70 ff.

¹⁸ Georg von Thaer, *Die Provinzen Ober- und Niederschlesien*, Breslau 1924, p. 11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ It is revealed by the print: Der Landeshauptmann von Oberschlesien, *Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien*, Ratibor 1925.

could see in this initiative an intention of the Wrocław self-government administration to interfere in the activities of the Upper Silesian authorities, as well as to limit their administrative and economic independence²¹. It could also have been a manifestation of their resistance against the policy of the Prussian state authorities, but the literature on Upper Silesia²² after World War I takes these issues into account only to a small extent. The limited size of this article makes it possible to signal only some of the initiatives of the then Lower Silesian authorities trying to protect the Silesian province from a definitive division.

In the intention of the Prussian authorities, the newly created Province of Upper Silesia was to fulfil propaganda tasks towards the Polish Catholic population in order to win it for Germany. At the same time, as the Prussian Constituent Assembly in Berlin openly stated in the course of the debate in Berlin, they tried to “save Upper Silesia and the billions invested there” for the State²³. However, the Centre Party did not receive its support for its idea of autonomy, in the face of the resistance existing in Prussia against the transfer of power to Catholics and the transformation of “the Prussian Upper Silesia into a separate German land”²⁴. The Polish Legislative Parliament, when passing on 15th July 1920 the *Organic Statute of the Silesian Voivodeship*, was the first to provide the Upper Silesian people with a distinct legal status within the future Polish state²⁵. Whereas in Germany, in view of the reluctant position of the Landtag, the Upper Silesian Autonomy Act was passed on 25th November 1920 by the Reichstag. However, it could not enter into force because, according to the Treaty of Versailles, since 11th January 1920, the Plebiscite area has passed from the sovereignty of Prussia and Germany to the French-Italian-British Commission Interalliée de Gouvernement et de Plébiscite, based in Opole²⁶. For this formal reason, the implementation of the Law on Autonomy was officially suspended until 2 months after the division of the Plebiscite territory.

The resulting legal state caused an extension of the time of formation of the internal structures of the Province of Upper Silesia, because the first post-war

²¹ Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum*, pp. 43–44.

²² Ewa Wyględa, *Górny Śląsk w latach 1918–1922. Bibliografia*, Opole 1981. See also: Adam Galos, *Literatura historyczna o dziejach Górnego Śląska w latach 1918–1922. (Próba ogólnego przeglądu)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r.*, pp. 7–28.

²³ Surman, *Sprawa Górnego Śląska*, pp. 74–75.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

²⁵ Józef Ciągwa, *Autonomia Śląska (1922–1939)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r.*, pp. 157–174.

²⁶ Jan Przewłocki, *Międzysojusznicza Komisja Rządząca i Plebiscytowa na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1920–1922*, Wrocław 1970, p. 28.

elections to the provincial parliament, ordered in Prussia on 20th February 1921, could not take place there. Thus, by the Act of 14th January 1921, it was decided to continue to hold joint meetings of the Provincial Parliament in Wrocław, during which the Province of Upper Silesia was to be represented by the “Imperial” MPs, as “substitute MPs”, from the Opole district, elected to the Silesian Parliament in 1917²⁷. The joint Parliament still had 160 delegates, including 52 Upper Silesian and 108 Lower Silesian from both districts (67+41), who in total represented 10 national and regional parties²⁸. The Parliament elected the members of the other local government bodies: the Landeshauptmann and councils: the provincial and three district, and also appointed representatives of the province to the Berlin State Council²⁹. Despite the republican system, the powers of the Provincial Parliament, conferred by the Local Government Law in 1875, were maintained. These included the adoption of the provincial budget, the tax levied on county and municipal council associations, matters of provincial property management and the organisation of social welfare. The Provincial Parliament also decided on regional education, culture and arts. It supervised crafts and agriculture and the condition of local roads and railways.

Further territorial changes in both provinces were caused by the results of a Plebiscite held on 20th March 1921, which was attended by 1,186,234 people in Upper Silesia. 706,820 (59.7%) votes were given in favour of Germany, including 182,288 emigrants, i.e. people born in Upper Silesia and coming from the Reich to maintain the area. Poland received 479,414 votes (40.3%), including 10,120 emigrants³⁰. The mechanical treatment by the British and Italians of the significant difference in the global number of votes cast in favour of Germany and Poland resulted in their proposal to divide the Plebiscite territory unfavourably for Poland and depriving Poland of a part of the industrial district. On 3rd May 1921, the Poles reacted for the third time with an uprising, after which the division of the Plebiscite area was determined on 20th October 1921 by the Council of Ambassadors³¹. However,

²⁷ Tomasz Kruszewski, *Sejm prowincjonalny na Śląsku (1824–1933)*, Wrocław 2000, pp. 392–393.

²⁸ Teresa Kulak, *Propaganda antypolska dolnośląskich władz prowincjonalnych w latach 1922–1933*, Wrocław 1981, pp. 22–30, party composition, Tab. 1–3.

²⁹ *Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 4. Tagung, Anlagen no. 2, no. 3.

³⁰ Andrzej Brożek, *Sposoby regulowania zmian granicznych w Europie po I wojnie światowej*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r.*, p. 68.

³¹ Teresa Kulak, *Parlament Rzeszy Niemieckiej wobec decyzji Rady Ambasadorów i postanowień konwencji górnośląskiej*, “*Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Śląska*”, 11 (1971), p. 142 ff.

sovereignty over the areas granted to them was not obtained by both Poland and Germany until 10th July 1922, after the Upper Silesian Convention, signed on 15th May, came into force, the implementation of which was to be controlled for 15 years by the League of Nations³².

The newly established Province of Upper Silesia, as a result of the Plebiscite division, lost 10.2% of the area and 18.5% of the population. The losses of the Province of Lower Silesia were small, as they accounted for 2% of its area (511.56 km²) and 1% of its population, i.e. 26,248 people³³. The Plebiscite covered agricultural districts inhabited by the population, which was Polish, but subject to the large landownership dominating in the border area, which economically affects the political positions of the dependent inhabitants³⁴. Thus, only scraps of the Counties of Góra, Milicz, half of the County of Syców and the County of Namysłów have passed from the Wrocław District to Poland³⁵.

Whereas in the German part of Upper Silesia, only after gaining sovereignty over the assigned territory from the Plebiscite area, the Prussian Landtag, by laws of 11th and 25th July 1922, granted to the Province of Upper Silesia local government bodies, creating its Provincial Department and Provincial Parliament, and at the same time expanded their powers. For this reason, the Centre Party abandoned its efforts to create an autonomous province of the Reich³⁶, in favour of which only 8,8% of the population voted at a referendum (previously postponed) held on 3rd September 1922. Upper Silesia thus remained a province of Prussia³⁷, and then the Plebiscite part, by a resolution of the Parliament of 27th September, was merged with Prussia³⁸. Furthermore, on 19th November 1922, elections to the Upper Silesian Provincial Parliament were held, also postponed in 1921. It was only afterwards that the Prussian Parliament adopted an executive law on the division of the

³² Jerzy Krasuski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1919–1925*, Poznań 1962, pp. 151–164.

³³ Karl Werner, *Niederschlesien*, [in:] *Staatslexicon*, ed. Hermann Sacher, vol. V, Freiburg i. Br. 1929, p. 386.

³⁴ Marian Orzechowski, *Ludność polska na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1922–1939*, Wrocław 1959, p. 10.

³⁵ *Akty i dokumenty dotyczące sprawy polskiej granic Polski na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu 1918–1919*, collected and issued by the General Secretariat of the Polish Delegation, part 2: *Granica polsko-niemiecka*, Paryż 1925, pp.174–178; *Merkblatt für den Regierungsbezirk Breslau*, Breslau 1927, p. 3.

³⁶ Karl Ulitzka, *Der Deutsche Osten und die Zentrumspartei*, [in:] *Nationale Arbeit*, ed. Karl Anton Schulte, Berlin 1929, p. 149.

³⁷ Michał Lis, *Górny Śląsk. Zarys dziejów do połowy XX wieku*, Opole 2001, p. 156.

³⁸ Surman, *Sprawa Górnego Śląska*, p. 102.

Province of Silesia and the delimitation of the border between the new provinces on 25th July 1923³⁹ The result of the vote was a great blow to the Breslau authorities, which had previously hoped that the Upper Silesian MPs would abstain from voting, as the Lower Silesian MPs did.

However, the new province was still not legally independent as there was no separation of powers of the existing joint administrative authorities and economic structures, so the two-day meetings of the joint provincial parliament were continued in Wrocław. However, having obtained the status of a province, the Upper Silesians were already able to create commissary forms of their provincial authorities, which were filled by members of the Katholische Volkspartei (KVP), i.e. the Upper Silesian branch of the Centre Party. Carl Ulitzka was appointed interim deputy of the Landeshauptmann, and the function of Commissary Oberpräsident and then President of the Province was held from 1919 by Joseph Leo Bitta, and since 1924, by Dr. Albert Proske. This new, temporary configuration of the legal-administrative coexistence of the two provinces took the name Provinzialverband Schlesien⁴⁰. It was not satisfactory for the KVP, which was seeking to achieve an independent government, which is evidenced by the meeting of 52 members of the Upper Silesian Provincial Parliament, chaired by Graf Hans von Praschma, held on 23rd May 1924 in Wrocław, in order to elect the provisional Upper Silesian Landeshauptmann. Hans Piontek, Mayor of Racibórz (Ratibor), was elected and the result of the efforts made in Berlin was the administrative separation of the province. Its division was carried out on 7th June 1924 by Carl Severing, Prussian Minister of the Interior, but there were still many common institutions⁴¹. This did not hinder the Landeshauptmann Hans Piontek from taking up his office in Racibórz on the 1st August and creating the Provincial Department subordinated to him.

In Wrocław, where such a hasty election of the Landeshauptman of the Province of Upper Silesia was not expected⁴², after that event, activities inhibiting the process of separation of the provinces began. The press recalled the propaganda

³⁹ The Law in: *Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 4.Tagung, Anlagen no. 2.

⁴⁰ Gerhard Webersinn, *Die Provinz Oberschlesien. Ihre Entstehung und Aufbau der Selbstverwaltung*, "Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau", 14 (1969), p. 286.

⁴¹ *Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 5.Tagung, Anlagen no. 2, no. 3.; Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum*, pp. 112, 117.

⁴² There is no clear evidence of this in the files, but judging by the reactions, the meeting, albeit announced, was held in secret from the authorities of the Province of Lower Silesia.

character of the Resolution of 14th October 1919 and considered it to have fulfilled its purpose and the Centre Party gained power in the new province. The “Schlesische Zeitung”, the DNVP’ organ, had already proposed to remain at the political level of the provincial authorities and to give up the creation of costly local government, but in Upper Silesia it was not approved⁴³. Thus, it initiated press attacks, tactically bringing to the fore information about the expenses incurred in creating the official structures of the new province. For in Opole the seat of the Oberpräsident was located, in Racibórze the local government and in Nysa (Neisse) – Landesfinanzamt. It also informed about the numerous office staff, recruited mainly from among the officials of the Province of Silesia⁴⁴. The public reacted to these press releases, due to the statutory requirement of self-financing of the province. It was therefore concerned about the costs and the increase in taxes due to the crisis that followed the French occupation of the Ruhr after 11th January 1923⁴⁵.

In order to signal to all members of the Parliaments and the supreme authorities how complicated the financial and legal regulations related to the division of official structures would be, the Provincial Department of the Lower Silesian Parliament published *Denkschrift über die Folgen einer Teilung der Landesversicherungsanstalt Schlesien* (Memorandum on the consequences of a division of the Silesian Provincial Insurance Institution), informing about future operations related to the division of this oldest insurance institution in Silesia⁴⁶. The Landeshauptmann Piontek, touched by this speech, wrote an article entitled *Die Schlesische Einheitsfragen* (Questions of Unity of Silesia) in the “Schlesische Zeitung”, referring to its recommendations on the need to maintain “the unity of Silesia”. He openly stated there that the relationship between his province and Lower Silesia is unfair⁴⁷. As the justification, he stated that the representatives of Upper Silesia are outvoted by Lower Silesian members, and the budget for both provinces treats their needs equally, although Upper Silesia has been more affected. The Lower Silesian part of the Provincial Parliament, mainly from the DNVP faction, reacted to the revealed resentment, presenting on 10th November 1924 the Memorandum

⁴³ “Schlesische Zeitung”, 172, 10th April 1924.

⁴⁴ “Schlesische Volkszeitung”, 366, 12th August 1924; Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum*, s. 90–93.

⁴⁵ Jerzy Krasuski, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1919–1932*, Poznań 1975, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Cf.: *Denkschrift über die Folgen einer Teilung der Landesversicherungsanstalt Schlesien*, Breslau 1924.

⁴⁷ “Schlesische Zeitung”, 477, 15th October 1924.

Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens (On the question of the future of Silesia)⁴⁸, also sent to Berlin, in which the need to maintain a uniform area of Silesia was justified by arguments included in two groups of issues: economic and political.

Regarding economic matters, the need for joint actions on provincial electrification and electricity supply management was brought to the fore. A joint undertaking was also supposed to be the regulation of the Odra riverbed, in order to rationally use the only natural communication route in Silesia. The regulation was to be combined with the construction of retention reservoirs, which would eliminate the annual flood hazard and the development of arable land. As the crowning of the joint activities, instead of the division of the provinces, it was proposed in the Memorandum to establish the Silesia Wholesale Economic Union (Grosswirtschaftsverband Schlesien), in the sense of a macro-region that would combine the interests of both provinces, for an effective (as a “Zweckverband” – m special purpose union) solution to these problems⁴⁹. Obviously, it was clear in these proposals that there was a need for the province to return to the territorial *status quo ante bellum*, i.e. the belonging of Upper Silesia⁵⁰, necessary also with regard to the presented common political problems. According to the Lower Silesian part of the Parliament, the need for the unity of the German forces was dictated by the border location of the Silesian province (called: Grenzland Schlesien), because after the war the Slavic threat doubled, due to the Polish and Czech state neighbourhood, so the separation of the Upper Silesian province could result in its actual separation from Prussia. This fuelled the anxiety about the Upper Silesian separatism, which had existed since 1918 in the Lower Silesian political and economic circles. There was no concealment of the negative opinion about the administrative independence of Landeshauptmann Piontek and the Katholische Volkspartei who supported him, as the Memorandum’s conclusion contains a significant statement that “the Lower Silesian fraction of the Centre Party sympathises also with its critical content”⁵¹.

After the Memorandum *Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens* was published, Hans Piontek made his appearance in the “Oberchlesische Volksstimme”, the Upper Silesian organ of the Centre Party, with a press counterattack under the eloquent title

⁴⁸ *Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens*. Preface: 16th December 1924; *Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 5. Tagung, Anlagen no. 2.

⁴⁹ Separate print: *Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens*, Breslau 1924, p. 6; date of *Preface* 16th December 1924.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 2–3.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*; cf. Hawranek, *Polityka Centrum*, p.103.

Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien [Lower Silesia against Upper Silesia]⁵². In the article, he reiterated that accusations of the unjust relationship between Upper Silesia and Lower Silesia and the its representatives were outnumbered in the Parliament. He also pointed out the lack of equal distribution of the budget, although his province was affected by “three Polish uprisings, which Lower Silesia did not experience”. After this initial press attack, he promised an official response in the form of a memorandum. A separate edition appeared with the same title: *Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien*⁵³, and its co-author was said to have been Robert Tauche, director of Landesfinanzamt in Nysa. The main attack was directed against the Grosswirtschaftsverband ‘imposed’ on the Province of Upper Silesia and then focused on the aforementioned issues which, according to the Wrocław authorities, were supposed to determine the need for an organisational union of both provinces. The issue of the joint development of the Oder river, which was put forward by Wrocław, was declared to be of no use, as its management is under the competence of the state authorities. The electrification of the provinces did not require any cooperation, as both parts of the province have separate relay networks, and in the case of local arable land development there was no need for supra provincial institutions. The final conclusions of the memorandum of Landeshauptmann Piontek led to the rejection of the idea of “Grosswirtschaftsverband Schlesien”, with an indisputable assessment of it as a concept “hindering the Upper Silesian economy” and “an obstacle to provincial development”⁵⁴. Some diplomacy was required to address the issue of the Slavic neighbourhood raised by the Wrocław authorities and to their suggestion of a politically dangerous accusation of “weakening the German front against them”. The Upper Silesian Landeshauptmann responded by asserting that his primary task is to regain the Polish (lost) part, so it is important to have a well-functioning local government that will be able to counteract the Polish irredentism⁵⁵.

The growing conflict culminated on 8th May 1925 with the end of the four-year term of office of the Provincial Parliament. During this last joint session, there were demonstrative speeches by Robert Tauche, KVP representative and Josef Cyrus from the SPD. Both declared that the Upper Silesian Provincial Parliament was given its seat in Racibórz, so their factions will no longer participate in the

⁵² Reprint in: “Oberchlesische Volksstimme”, 16, 16th January 1925, 17, 17th January 1925.

⁵³ Landeshauptmann von Oberschlesien, *Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien*, Ratibor 1925, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*; *Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien*, “Oberchlesische Volksstimme”, 17, 17th January 1925.

session in Breslau⁵⁶. This meant a sudden end to the previous cooperation, whose backstage was revealed on 21st August by Ulrich Burmann, a representative of the Lower Silesian SPD, acting as a rapporteur of the Main Commission (Hauptkommission) of the outgoing Provincial Department. He did not hide his disappointment with the attitude of the Upper Silesian MPs and their provincial separation, practically since 1923, during the vote in the Prussian Landtag, when the Lower Silesian MPs expected a revision of the Parliamentary resolution of 1919 and a return to the unity of Silesia. They had been and still were convinced that a close economic relationship between the two provinces, i.e. the proposed “Zweckverband”, would be beneficial for their future and for regaining their former economic significance. Burmann described the efforts of Upper Silesians towards independence as “anti-national and dangerous for the German people in the East”. Because it is only in a “united province” that there is adequate potential to “fulfil the important economic and political tasks that fall on this part of Germany”⁵⁷. In the conclusion of the session, the representatives of Lower Silesia rejected the possibility of full separation, but this was done by the Prussian Parliament on 26th October 1926, separating the Silesian offices and institutions according to their current state of provincial territorial affiliation. However, due to the long-time official practice, some common institutions were left to the Wrocław authorities, including the issues of provincial insurance (social and fire insurance), electrification and regulation of the Oder river mentioned in the Memorandum *Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens*. During the parliamentary debate in Berlin, Karl Ullitzka was disappointed to note that Upper Silesia, “contrary to the expectations of its inhabitants, became a province with limited rights and an incomplete organizational structure”⁵⁸. Undoubtedly, he was right, because the province was considered to be an artificial creation and the underdevelopment of its structures resulted from the fact that, as a small area, it formed a single region, so the functions of the Oberpräsident and the President of the Province were performed by the same person. It received a provincial

⁵⁶ Statements in *Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 4. Tagung.

⁵⁷ *Vorlage des Provinzialausschusses betreffend Stellungnahme zu dem von der Staatsregierung zur Äusserung übersandten vorläufigen Gesetzentwurf über die Trennung und Auseinandersetzung der Provinzen Ober- und Niederschlesien*, 20th August 1925, [in:] *Verhandlungen*, 5. Tagung, Drucksache No. 73.

⁵⁸ Ullitzka, *Der deutsche Osten*, p.149.

parliament, but due to the top-down reduction of administrative costs after the War, not all offices and local government institutions were established there.

The separation of the two provinces proceeded in an atmosphere of mutual accusations and disputes, but for Lower Silesia, economic issues and the need for State aid were the most important. Upper Silesia, after the division of the Plebiscite area in 1922, received support from a special fund *Treudank und Abstimmungsfonds* and similar “gratitude for loyalty” received other provinces, among them largest amount was granted to The Frontier March of Posen-West Prussia (loss of 69.4% of the area and 78.1% of the population). Due to the minimal losses, Lower Silesia was omitted, so in Wrocław it was considered that the association with Upper Silesia, as a Provinzialverband, would increase the joint losses to 10,2% of the territory and 18,5% of the population, placing Silesia, after the March, in second place in applications for State aid. As no such agreement was reached, the animosities of the Lower Silesians soon increased, as their predictions proved to be correct. In 1927, as part of the “Osthilfe”, i.e. the government aid programme for the 6 eastern provinces of Prussia, Upper Silesia received aid in the amount of 2,500 thousand marks, and Lower Silesia the least of them, i.e. 1,500 thousand marks⁵⁹.

The authorities of Wrocław sought also prestige, because until 1918 Wrocław was an Imperial-Royal residence town, the Silesian province had 40,382 km² and was the largest of all the provinces of the Kingdom of Prussia. The Act on Partition of 25th July 1923 was perceived as a political catastrophe, also because the Lower Silesian province with an area of 26,615.83 km² and a population of 3,126,373 people, according to the 1925 census, had fallen to 4th place in Prussia⁶⁰. The Upper Silesian people were blamed for this “degradation of the province” because it was expected that after the Plebiscite – in view of the diminished area of the Upper Silesian province – its leaders would give up the division of Silesia for fear of the administrative costs of its maintenance. Meanwhile, for them, the Act of Partition of the province became politically enticing, as they obtained rule in Upper Silesia and freed themselves from Wrocław.

Summarizing the events in Silesia between 1919 and 1926, it should be emphasized that the inhabitants of Wrocław received with grief the division of Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland, in June 1922 as a result of a Plebiscite, but they accepted the loss of the area caused by an international decision. Yet the

⁵⁹ Alojzy Targ, *Opolszczyzna pod rządami Lukaszka i Wagnera*, Katowice 1958, p. 89

⁶⁰ *Merkblatt für den Regierungsbezirk*, p. 3.

partition of the Silesian Province in 1923 was received differently, as the earlier provincial separation of Upper Silesia in 1919 was treated as a tactical measure to save it for Germany. However, in 1923, despite the fierce protests of Lower Silesians, the implementing law of the Prussian Parliament on the partition of the Province of Silesia was adopted by the votes of the members of the Centre Party. Whereas in Wrocław it was planned that the resolution of 1919 would be revised together. This problem, called by U. Burmann as an “unused opportunity” for Silesian unity, appeared on 21st August 1925, during the last meeting of the General Commission of the Provincial Parliament. It was an accusation of the Upper Silesian members because in his opinion, the revision of the 1919 act was possible and necessary to restore not only the former economic significance of the province. He stressed that thanks this significance Silesia would become “an administrative unity and a defence against the threat of a German from the East”⁶¹. Thus, the Upper Silesians’ efforts to own their own province were described by Burmann as “anti-national and deliberately endangering the German population in the East”. In the idea of the “Zweckverband”, he saw the condition “to fulfil the important economic and political tasks of which this part of Germany was responsible”.

The disputes were to be settled by a Law of the Prussian Parliament of 28th October 1926, which divided the provincial property of Silesia, but still left some common institutions, so the Lower Silesia was blamed by Upper Silesia for causing them to have a province with “limited rights”. Lower Silesia, on the other hand, accused Upper Silesia of their ambitions to pursue political separateness, which led to the “degradation of the Silesian province”. Moreover, in their pursuit of separation, they did not take into account the overriding requirement of cooperation in matters of common provincial interests and national security.

The controversies that arose at the beginning of the independent start of both provinces generated disputes in the following years and created tense mutual relations, which were additionally hampered by the need for both sides to seek State aid. The atmosphere of competition and mutual bidding in the effectiveness of the arguments used and the proposed methods of action remained between the two provinces until the top-down merger of the two provinces on 21st March 1938.

⁶¹ *Vorlage des Provinzialausschusses betreffend Stellungnahme zu dem von der Staatsregierung zur Aeusserung übersandtes vorläufigen Gesetzentwurf über die Trennung und Auseinandersetzung der Provinzen Ober- und Niederschlesien, 20.08.1925, [in:] Verhandlungen, 5. Tagung, Drucksache No. 73.*

STRESZCZENIE

Podziały obszaru prowincji śląskiej zapoczątkowała uchwała Sejmu pruskiego z 14 X 1919 r., w związku z zapowiedzianym w traktacie wersalskim plebiscytem, przeprowadzonym 20 III 1921 r. Z prowincji śląskiej wydzielono rejencję opolską, z przewagą ludności polskiej, którą chciano pozyskać dla Niemiec, przez utworzenie odrębnej prowincji górnośląskiej. Równocześnie powstała prowincja dolnośląska, z dwoma rejencjami – wrocławską i legnicką, jednak władze wrocławskie akceptowały to rozwiązanie, tylko jako doraźne i propagandowe, starając się nie utracić regionu przemysłowego. Po plebiscycie i podziale Górnego Śląska między Niemcy i Polskę w 1922 r. oczekiwały, że Górnoślązacy, z powodu pomniejszonego obszaru prowincji, zrezygnują z jej podziału. Bezskutecznie protestowały przeciw podziałowej ustawie wykonawczej z 25 VII 1923 r. oraz ustawie z 28 X 1926 r., dzielącej zasoby materialne i uprawnienia urzędowe b. prowincji śląskiej. Podział Śląska na 2 prowincje: Śląsk Górny i Śląsk Dolny istniał do 1938 r., kiedy zostały one połączone ponownie w jedną administracyjną całość.

BIBLIOGRAFIA / REFERENCES

SOURCES

- Akty i dokumenty dotyczące sprawy polskiej granic Polski na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu 1918–1919*, collected and issued by the General Secretariat of the Polish Delegation, part 1: *The territorial programme of the Delegation*, Paryż 1920.
- Akty i dokumenty dotyczące sprawy polskiej granic Polski na Konferencji Pokojowej w Paryżu 1918–1919*, collected and issued by the General Secretariat of the Polish Delegation, part 2: *Granica polsko-niemiecka*, Paryż 1925.
- Denkschrift über die Folgen einer Teilung der Landesversicherungsanstalt Schlesien*, Breslau 1924.
- Merkblatt für den Regierungsbezirk Breslau*, Breslau 1927.
- Niederschlesien gegen Oberschlesien*, Ratibor 1925.
- “Oberchlesische Volksstimme”, 1925.
- Powstanie II Rzeczypospolitej. Wybór dokumentów 1866–1925*, eds. Halina Janowska, Tadeusz Jędruszczyk, Wrocław 1981.
- Romer Eugeniusz, *Pamiętnik paryski (1918–1919)*, eds. Andrzej Garlicki, Ryszard Świątek, Wrocław 1989.
- “Schlesische Volkszeitung”, 1924.
- “Schlesische Zeitung”, 1924.
- Seyda Marian, *Polska na przełomie dziejów. Fakty i dokumenty*, vol. 1, Poznań 1927.
- Verhandlungen des 60. gemeinsamen Provinziallandtages der Provinzen Nieder- und Oberschlesien*, 4.Tagung.
- Źródła do dziejów powstań śląskich*, vol. 1, ed. Henryk Zieliński, Wrocław 1965.
- Zur Frage der Zukunft Schlesiens*, Breslau 1924.

STUDIES

- Basak Adam, *Argument etnograficzny przy rozstrzygnięciu sprawy granicy polsko-niemieckiej w 1919 roku*, “Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 23 (1968), 4, pp. 527–559.
- Biały Franciszek, *Z dziejów ugrupowań burżuazyjnych na Śląsku. Rola i działalność Deutschnationale Volkspartei 1918–1921*, “Studia Śląskie. Seria nowa”, 15 (1969), pp. 89–130.
- Brożek Andrzej, *Sposoby regulowania zmian granicznych w Europie po I wojnie światowej*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds. Teresa Kulak, Andrzej Brożek, Wrocław 1996.
- Ciągwa Józef, *Autonomia Śląska (1922–1939)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds. Teresa Kulak, Andrzej Brożek, Wrocław 1996, pp. 157–174.
- Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas. Schlesien*, ed. Norbert Conrads, Berlin 1994.
- Galos Adam, *Literatura historyczna o dziejach Górnego Śląska w latach 1918–1922 (Próba ogólnego przeglądu)*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds. Teresa Kulak, Andrzej Brożek, Wrocław 1996, pp. 7–28.
- Gawrecki Dan, *Československo a Horní Slezsko 1918–1921*, [in:] *Podział Śląska w 1922 r. Okoliczności i następstwa*, eds. Teresa Kulak, Andrzej Brożek, Wrocław 1996, pp. 85–106.
- Gelles Romuald, *Gospodarka Wrocławia w czasie I wojny światowej*, “Studia Śląskie”, 28 (1975), pp. 74–111.
- Hauser Przemysław, *Niemcy wobec sprawy polskiej. Październik 1918–czerwiec 1919*, Poznań 1984.
- Hawranek Franciszek, *Polityka Centrum w kwestii górnośląskiej po I wojnie światowej*, Opole 1973.
- Klein Edmund, *Rada Ludowa we Wrocławiu. Centralna Rada Prowincji Śląskiej*, Warszawa–Wrocław 1976.
- Klein Edmund, *Śląskie koncepcje separatystyczne (listopad 1918 – kwiecień 1919)*, “Studia Śląskie”, 23 (1978), pp. 27–65.
- Krasuski Jerzy, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1919–1925*, Poznań 1962.
- Krasuski Jerzy, *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie 1919–1932*, Poznań 1975.
- Kruszewski Tomasz, *Sejm prowincjonalny na Śląsku (1824–1933)*, Wrocław 2000.
- Kulak Teresa, *Parlament Rzeszy Niemieckiej wobec decyzji Rady Ambasadorów i postanowień konwencji górnośląskiej*, “Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Śląska”, 11 (1971).
- Kulak Teresa, *Propaganda antypolska dolnośląskich władz prowincjonalnych w latach 1922–1933*, Wrocław 1981.
- Laubert Manfred, *Die oberschlesische Volksbewegung. Beiträge zur Tätigkeit der Vereinigung Heimattreuer Oberschlesier 1918–1921*, Breslau 1938.
- Leczyk Marian, *Komitet Narodowy Polski a Ententa i Stany Zjednoczone 1917–1919*, Warszawa 1966.

- Lis Michał, *Górny Śląsk. Zarys dziejów do połowy XX wieku*, Opole 2001.
- Nabiel Edward, *Gospodarka wojenna Niemiec 1914–1918*, Warszawa 1959.
- Neubach Helmuth, *Teilung der Provinz*, [in:] Winfried Irgang, Werner Bein, Helmut Neubach, *Schlesien. Geschichte, Kultur und Wirtschaft*, Köln 1995 (Historische Landeskunde. Deutsche Geschichte im Osten, 4).
- Orzechowski Marian, *Ludność polska na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1922–1939*, Wrocław 1959.
- Przewłocki Jan, *Międzysojusznicza Komisja Rządząca i Plebiscytowa na Górnym Śląsku w latach 1920–1922*, Wrocław 1970.
- Schlesien und Schlesier*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke, München 1996.
- Spoleczeństwo polskie na ziemiach pod panowaniem pruskim w okresie I wojny światowej (1914–1918). Zbiór studiów*, ed. Mieczysław Wojciechowski, Toruń 1996.
- Surman Zdzisław, *Sprawa Górnego Śląska w Sejmie Pruskim w latach 1919–1922*, “Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Śląska”, 10 (1970).
- Ulitzka Karl, *Der Deutsche Osten und die Zentrumspartei*, [in:] *Nationale Arbeit*, ed. Karl Anton Schulte, Berlin 1929.
- Targ Alojzy, *Opolszczyzna pod rządami Lukaszka i Wagnera*, Katowice 1958.
- Thaer Georg von, *Die Provinzen Ober- und Niederschlesien*, Breslau 1924.
- Webersinn Gerhard, *Die Provinz Oberschlesien. Ihre Entstehung und Aufbau der Selbstverwaltung*, “Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau”, 14 (1969), pp. 275–329.
- Werner Karl, *Niederschlesien*, [in:] *Staatslexicon*, ed. Hermann Sacher, vol. V, Freiburg i. Br. 1929.
- Wyględa Ewa, *Górny Śląsk w latach 1918–1922. Bibliografia*, Opole 1981.