

The Situation with Regard to Language and Nationality in the Teschen (Cieszyn/Těšín) Region before 1880



Dan Gawrecki

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In order to assess how respondents' language of daily use (Umgangssprache) was determined in the censuses conducted within the Habsburg Monarchy from 1880 onwards, it is useful to take into account developments which occurred prior to this date.¹ This is particularly true if we consider the Teschen (Cieszyn/Těšín) region — a region located far away from the centres of nations and states, whose population was made up of different ethnic groups which frequently cited historical events to support their claims in polemical disputes concerning censuses. This paper is not concerned with the Celtic, Germanic or Slavic tribes or nations that lived in the Teschen region; instead it focuses on how historical events were used to construct arguments which were deployed in census-related disputes, how these events affected national identification, and thus how they impacted on the results of the censuses.

Neither Czech nor Polish archeological literature consider it probable that Celtic tribes existed in the Teschen region, though some archeological finds at the town's Castle Hill (Góra Zamkowa) may provide evidence of Celtic expansion. There is also no archeological evidence of the presence of Germanic tribes and ethnic groups from the *Völkerwanderung* period,² though in the 18th century it was assumed that the region was inhabited by the Quadi. There is ample evidence of Slavic tribes from the 8th century onwards, but no consensus exists among historians as to whether the region was inhabited by Western Croats, Golensizi, Opolans or Wislans, so it is not possible to make any qualified statements as to which language they spoke.³

The Teschen region lay within the sphere of influence of Great Moravia, and later it probably came under the control of the Přemyslids. By the beginning of the 11th cen-

1 This study originated as part of the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) grant project no. 13-00790S *Národnost ve sčítáních lidu v českých zemích 1880–1930 (spory, polemiky, konflikty)* [Nationality in Censuses in the Bohemian Lands 1880–1930 (Disputes, Polemics, Conflicts)].

2 Pavel Kouřil, *Pravěké a středověké osídlení Těšínska*. In: *Nástin dějin Těšínska*. Ostrava — Prague 1992, pp. 10–16, here p. 12.

3 Jaroslav Bakala, *Středověké Těšínsko do roku 1450*. In: *Nástin dějin Těšínska*, Ostrava — Prague 1992, pp. 17–30, here pp. 17–18.



tury it was part of the Polish state. In 1290 it became a Duchy, which cultivated links with the Bohemian state; from 1327 the Duke of Teschen (from the Piast dynasty) was a vassal of the Bohemian King. When the Teschen Piasts died out (1653), the region was ruled by the Habsburgs, the Bohemian royal family. The region remained part of the Bohemian Crown Lands until July 1920, when it was divided up between the successor states. This brief outline will suffice for the purposes of the present discussion.⁴

For those involved in 19th-century national disputes, it was important to be able to show that “our nation was here first”; this formed the basis of the historical claims made on the nation’s behalf. The Teschen region was part of Silesia. At the turn of the 19th century, Silesians were still considered to be a single nation, which had been divided as a result of the Habsburgs’ defeat in the Silesian Wars. Language was not considered a criterion for national identity.⁵

In the second half of the 18th century a parson from Pruchna named Ludwig Heimb, who wrote poetry in Polish, penned the following words in his poem *Gloria Quadorum (Witay piękny Kwadski kraju) (Greetings, land of the Quadi)* expressing the notion that the inhabitants of the Teschen region, as descendants of the Quadi, were different from both Czechs and Poles: “Nic wy Czechy, Francuzowie/ Włosi, Polacy, Węgrowie/ Zostanie każdy w swym kraju/ My też w naszym Quatskiem raiu, bo tu chuczą wody z górów ...” [“You Czechs, French/ Italians, Poles, Hungarians/ Stay in your own countries/ As we will in our paradise of the Quadi, where the water roars down from the mountains ...”].⁶ It is highly probable that the Germanic Quadi lived mainly in Moravia and Slovakia, but Heimb identifies his “land of the Quadi” as (Teschen?) Silesia, and the town of Teschen as the capital of the Quadi region. In the 19th century Heimb’s poetry was frequently published in the regional press.⁷

It was Ludwig Heimb who ensured that the inhabitants of the Jablunków (Jablunkov, Jablunkau) region (the southern part of the Teschen district) were considered to be a separate ethnic group, known as the “Jackové”. “W Jablunkowie są Jackowie, / wyrozumią każdej mowie, / bo handlują z Węgry, Turkem, / szli na szance z Brandenburkem.” [“In Jablunkov are the Jackové, / they understand every language, / because they trade with the Hungarians and the Turks, / they went to the fortifications with

4 A recent overview is Irena Korbelařová — Rudolf Žáček, *Těšínsko — země Koruny české. Ducatus Tessinensis — terra Coronae Regni Bohemiae. (K dějinám knížectví do počátku 18. století)*, Český Těšín 2008.

5 “So war Schlesien gewaltsam zerrissen, nachdem es über Tausend Jahre einen Körper ausgemacht hatte. Nach dieser Trennung verlor sich bald auch die Einheit des Nationalcharakters; ein Beweis daß dieser weniger vom Lande, als von der Regierungsverfassung und Religion abhängt.” Faustin Ens, *Das Oppaland oder Troppauer Kreis nach seinen geschichtlichen, naturgeschichtlichen und örtlichen Eigenthümlichkeiten ...*, Bd. I., Wien 1835, p. 155.

6 Ludwig Heimb: *Gloria Quadorum*. Łysa Góra, edited by Jan Malicki, Katowice 1995. Cited from Janusz Spyra, *Historiografia a tożsamość regionalna w czasach nowożytnych na przykładzie Śląska Cieszyńskiego*, Częstochowa 2015, p. 235.

7 J. Spyra, *Historiografia*, p. 235, 189.

the Brandenburgers.”] The term “Jackové” originated either from the ancient Sarmatian Iazyges or the (possibly related) Yaz tribe, which in the 13th century arrived in what is now Hungary along with the Cumans.⁸ However, this song was almost unknown in Jablunków; people there only found out about it from Heimbs’ poetry.

The humanists and their successors “peopled” the whole of Silesia with various ancient tribes, both real and invented; among the numerous ethnic groups which were said to have been the original inhabitants of Silesia were the legendary Elysians, the Celtic Kotins, and many more. However, far more important than seeking for Silesians’ ancestors among the Germanic Lugi (Cureus etc.) and Quadi or the Celtic Boii (accentuating the connection with the Bohemian state — Třanovský) was the sense that the inhabitants of the Teschen region were different from their neighbours, including both the Poles and the Czechs — a notion which was reflected in numerous developments that were specific to the region in the period 1848–1945.

An important concept for understanding national relations in the region during the 19th and 20th centuries is the term “Wasserpölen”, which was used primarily by Germans to designate the Slavic inhabitants of the Teschen region (and other regions). The term dates back to at least the 17th century. Initially it was considered neutral, but in the mid-19th century it became part of pejorative usage.⁹

One ancient legend which still survives today as a cultural phenomenon tells the story of the foundation of the town of Teschen; the legend is commemorated annually in both parts of the divided town, and it centres around the Three Brothers’ Well (Studnia Trzech Braci). In 1960 the town organized a lavish celebration of the 1150th anniversary of its foundation in 810 as the first town in Silesia. Fifty years later the celebrations were presided over by the Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and the President of the European Parliament Jerzy Buzek, who was born in nearby Smilovice. The foundation legend played an important role in the formation of regional identities — and ultimately in perceptions of the ethnic character of the town — in the 19th and 20th centuries, and it was a central motif in the national disputes which helped to form these identities and perceptions.

The legend was created in the 1580s by Eleazar Tilisch, a secretary to the Piast Duke. It states that the pre-Piast Duke Leszek III (+804), identified by Tilisch as a Pole, divided up his territory among his sons; Teschen was founded by the son Ciessimirus. Jakub Schickfuss (1625) later amended the story, stating that the town was founded by Prince Gessimir in 810. At the beginning of the 18th century, Jan Karel Tluk (Skop) interpreted the etymology of the town’s name (in Polish, Cieszyn) as

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- 8 Lubomír Bajger, Původní obyvatelé městečka Jablunkova, Těšínsko 1966, no. 1, pp. 19–20; Jaroslav Nehýbl, K problému Jazygů jako předků jablunkovských Jacků, Těšínsko 1981, no. 4, pp. 15–19; J. Spyra, Historiografia, p. 235.
- 9 The most detailed Czech study of this issue is Ladislav Pallas, Jazyková otázka a podmínky vytváření národního vědomí ve Slezsku, Ostrava 1970. This linguist cautiously postulated that the term *aquatico polonica*, using in the 17th and 18th centuries, was derived from Henelius’ phrase *quadicum polonica*, or from the description of the “Moravian language” in Silesia as *idioma quadicum v Alma diocesis olomucensis*; Pallas speculated that these expressions may have formed the basis for the terms *Wasserpole* and *wasserpölnisch* (pp. 10–12).



having originated in the Polish verb “cieszyć się”, meaning “to rejoice” (“gaudeo”). The Mayor of Teschen Alois Kaufmann drew on a folk etymology (though he admitted that he had certain reservations about it) claiming that the town was founded by three Slavic dukes (brothers), who rejoiced when they came together at the location where the town was founded. Proponents of this version of the story cited the existence of the Three Brothers’ Well, which bore a German inscription dating from 1827 attesting to the story — though in fact the well was documented in the 15th century as belonging to the “brothers” (friars) of the Dominican order. The legend of the three brothers’ meeting was popularized by the Teschen court clerk Paul Lamatsch von Warnemünde in his four-part poem entitled *Die Gründung von Teschen* (1840). His version of the legend, which also specifies the names of the other two brothers (Bolek and Leszek), remains dominant today. Various other variations on the legend reflect the prevailing ideologies of their time. František Sláma (1886) claimed that the town was founded by Čech, Lech and Rus — i.e. the founders of the Czech, Lechite (Polish) and Rus’ peoples. Andrzej Kotula (1869) emphasized that the town was founded at a time when Polish territory reached as far west as the Ostravice river. The leader of the Polish national movement Paweł Stalmach, in his musical play *Cieszmyr*, drew on the legend to appeal for unity among the Polish tribes and provinces; he criticized the official line that the region’s association with the Austrian and German provinces had proved beneficial to its people, and he likewise questioned the benefits of the region’s incorporation into the Bohemian state, which had lasted several centuries. The German newspaper *Silesia* published articles claiming that only the German colonization had finally brought civilization to the town and the surrounding area. The Czech newspaper *Noviny Těšínské* (1890) printed a version of the foundation legend stating that the town had been established jointly by a Bohemian, a Moravian and a Silesian. Supporters of Josef Koždon’s Silesian People’s Party emphasized Teschen’s regional distinctiveness and maintained that the region should not be viewed from a Polish perspective.¹⁰

Up to the turn of the 19th century there are no records of any particularly vehement disputes concerning linguistic or national identities; belonging to one’s native region was felt to be far more important. The legend of the Polish Piast founders of Teschen was created by a German secretary to the Piast Duke, whose office conducted its business in both Czech and German. Rural schools used mainly Czech-language textbooks, but everyday communication evidently took place in the local dialect. Schools in towns taught mainly in German and Czech. The population of the central and eastern parts of the province (except for the predominantly German city of Bielitz (Bielsko, BÍlsko) and the surrounding area) spoke a dialect closely related

10 J. Spyra, *Historiografia*, pp. 57, 76, 312, 322, 360, 370, 373–380; Jaroslav Bakala, *K úloze historiografie v národním zápase slezských Čechů*. *Fontes Musei Reginaehradecensis* 8, 1981, p. 143; Marie Gawrecká — Dan Gawrecki, *Slezské legendy, mýty, symboly a stereotypy*. In: 19. století v nás. *Modely, instituce a reprezentace, které přetrvaly*, M. Řepa (ed.), Prague 2008, pp. 50–64, here p. 59; Vlasta Byrtusová, *Bratrská studánka v Těšíně, Těšínsko 50, 2007*, pp. 24–27; František Sláma, *Vlastenecké putování po Slezsku*, Prague 1886, pp. 131–132 etc.



to Polish, while a dialect closer to Czech was spoken in the Frýdek (Friedek, Frydek) region and in the communities along the west bank of the Ostravice river as well as in the vicinity of Moravian Ostrava (Mährisch Ostrau, Morawska Ostrawa). Distinguishing a precise boundary-line between Czech-speaking and Polish-speaking areas is a highly problematic endeavour; authors who have attempted to do so have based their conclusions on documents recording the language used by parsons when giving sermons. Other documentary evidence — including various official communications and complaints submitted by subjects — is far from reliable. The language used in such documents depended primarily on the language of the local lords and scribes, as well as on various other circumstances (citizenship, the Austrian annexation of Galicia, plus religious circumstances connected with the Reformation, Re-Catholicization and religious tolerance). Nevertheless, the use of Czech as an official language at the provincial and municipal level persisted for longer than was the case in Bohemia and Moravia.¹¹

Authors writing about the linguistic situation in the region were concerned mainly with emphasizing the numerical size of their own ethnic group or nation. Until the mid-19th century most authors remained relatively impartial on this matter, and information on the issue was scarce. However, later authors tended to take a more biased or polemical approach. For example, Kneifel's topographical study (dating from the beginning of the 19th century) was criticized by Londzin (1924) as "niejasne i balamutne zapiski" ["unclear and confusing records"], because his respondents, when asked which language they spoke, replied that they spoke "po naszymu" (a phrase meaning "our language" which denotes the local dialect); however, it is unlikely that villagers would have given him any other answer, and historians today (e.g. Korbelařová, Žáček) consider Kneifel's work to be a relevant source. Jerzy Samuel Bandkie (1815) claimed that there were no Czechs in the Teschen region. Josef Bayer's topographical study (1817) classified Frýdek and Morávka (Morawka) as Polish communities, Šafařík described the entire region as Polish, and a similar claim can be found in Rieger's dictionary.

A pastor named Winkler from the village of Návsí (Nawsie) stated that the linguistic boundary was delineated by the Olza (Olše, Olsa) river as far as Teschen. Šembera identified a strip of Czech-speaking (Moravian-speaking) territory along the Ostravice river, as did the Moravian ethnographer František Bartoš (who for

11 Irena Korbelařová — Milan Šmerda — Rudolf Žáček, *Slezská společnost v období pozdního baroka a nástupu osvícenství* (na příkladu Těšínska), Opava 2002, pp. 58, 114–116; Blanka Pitronová, *Národnostní poměry na Ostravsku v 17. a 18. století ve světle pramenů církevní provenience*. In: *Ostrava. Příspěvky k dějinám a současnosti Ostravy a Ostravska* 17, 1995, pp. 59–83; Milan Šmerda — Irena Korbelařová, *Sociální hnutí na Těšínsku ve 2. polovině 18. století (s edicí poddanských stížností z roku 1766)*, Opava 1998; Irena Korbelařová — Rudolf Žáček, *Statistické prameny církevní provenience k dějinám Slezska, Slezský sborník* 104, 2006, no. 2, pp. 81–89; *Statisticko-topografický popis Těšínského kraje ze 40. let 19 století. Zvláštní otisk z Časopisu Slezského zemského muzea v Opavě, 1999–2000*; Reginald Kneifel, *Topographie des kaiserl. königl. Antheils von Schlesien, T. 1–2, Brünn 1804–1806*; Józef Londzin, *Polskość Śląska Cieszyńskiego, Cieszyn 1924*, p. 35.



a short while was a teacher at Teschen's Catholic secondary school). Austrian ethnographers and statisticians (e.g. Karl Czörnig Joseph Hain) stated that the linguistic boundary was blurred, including linguistically mixed communities in the Silesian territory near Polská Ostrava (Polska Ostrawa, Polnisch Ostrau) and in the western part of the Frýdek region (1846–1851). The Polish ethnographer Łucjan Malinowski (1869) — and later, drawing on Malinowski's findings, also Jerzy Harwot (1903) — shifted the linguistic boundary somewhat eastwards, enlarging the territory where the Czech-based dialect was spoken. Jan Bystroń approved of the “preservation of Old Polish” in the Polish-Silesian dialect, and he classified several communities in the Frýdek region as ethnographically Polish. For Polish authors the main authority was Kazimierz Nitsch, who delineated the linguistic boundary in 1907–1909, at a time when the region was experiencing a major population influx from Galicia. More recent Polish linguistic surveys have raised objections to Nitsch's methods. The most significant Czech work on the linguistic boundary is contained in articles by Andělín Grobelný, as well as in Grobelný's unpublished study which can be found in the library of the Silesian Museum.

Nationally biased arguments can be found repeatedly in Polish opinion journalism, though Czech journalism on the subject has more or less abandoned the notion that there were no Poles in the Teschen region (or that they only arrived in the region during the 19th century as migrants from Galicia, or that they were originally Moravians who had been “Polonized”). An unfortunate exception to this rule is a book by Lubomír Kubík.¹² This is merely a small selection of the arguments that have been advanced by writers on the subject; others will be mentioned where relevant in the following text. At this juncture it is sufficient to state that the linguistic similarity between Czech and Polish provided more space for various forms of speculation and census-related disputes than was the case in the Czech-German border areas.

The preceding paragraphs have made little mention of the German population of the region — which out all the groups in the local population was best-prepared for modern nation-building. The ranks of the German community in the town had been swelled by members of the Slavic population keen to achieve social advancement, for which knowledge of German was an essential prerequisite.¹³ It was generally the case that German nationalist ideas first gained acceptance in the Lutheran community — partly because Lutherans tended to study at (German) schools either in Upper Hun-

12 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 9^a–95; Andělín Grobelný, *K otázce etnické příslušnosti obyvatelstva na Těšínsku v 16. a 17. století*. In: *K otázkám dějin Slezska*, Ostrava 1956, pp. 88–90; *Jazyková hranice a školství na Těšínsku v 18. století a v první polovině 19. století*, ibid., pp. 128–130; Češi a Poláci, p. 283; *K jazykové hranici na Těšínsku v letech 1792–1871*, manuscript; *Polityka państw narodowych wobec języka na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*. Pod redakcją naukową Michała Lisa, Łucji Jarczak, Leokadii Drożdż. Opole, Stowarzyszenie Instytut Śląski, Państwowy Instytut Naukowy — Instytut Śląski w Opolu 2013; Stanisław Zahradnik — Marek Ryczkowski, *Korzenie Zalozia*, Warszawa — Praga — Trzyniec 1992; Lubomír Kubík, *Těšínský konflikt*, Olomouc 2001.

13 Józef Chlebowczyk, *Hlavní problémy a etapy polsko-českých vztahů v Těšínském Slezsku v 19. a na počátku 20. století (do roku 1914)*, *Slezský sborník* 58, 1960, p. 531.

gary (now Slovakia) or in Germany itself. In 1842 students at the Lutheran secondary school in Teschen founded their own Gelehrtenverein, which propagated the ideal of German unification and the notion that it was in the Slavs' own best interests to become assimilated into the German community.¹⁴

The first significant reflection of German nationalism in scholarly historiography can be found in Albin Heinrich's first synthetic work on the history of the Teschen region;¹⁵ this tendency is also visible in Heinrich's studies on archeological finds, which he classifies as Germanic.¹⁶ The region's most prominent historian — Gottlieb Biermann, whose works included historical overviews of the Teschen region, the Troppau-Jägerndorf (Opava-Krnov) region and a history of Protestantism in Austrian Silesia¹⁷ — viewed the Slavic national movements as a danger to the Monarchy, expressing the conviction that Silesians would always remain loyal to the Emperor and the Empire: "Abgesehen von einigen wenigen, hauptsächlich im östlichen Schlesien wühlenden Agitatoren, welche unter der Maske der Nationalität und anderer Masken ihre winzige Persönlichkeit zu einer unberechtigten Bedeutung aufbauschen oder andere selbstsüchtige Zwecke verfolgen, und abgesehen von einer verschwindend kleinen Zahl von Schwärmern, denen der Fanatismus das Auge für das wahre Wohl des Volkes blöde macht und welche ohne es zu ahnen bloße Werkzeuge in den Händen rühriger Agitatoren sind, ist Schlesien bislang stets treu zum Gesamtvaterlande, treu zu der von unserm hochsinnigen Kaiser verliehenen Verfassung gestanden [...] Und sollte die Zukunft wieder Stürme bringen, der Schlesier wird gewisslich wacker halten zu Kaiser, zum Reiche, zur Verfassung." ["Apart from a small number of agitators, mainly active in eastern Silesia, who — under the mask of nationality and under other masks — are inflating their insignificant personalities to an unjustified level of importance or are pursuing other self-serving goals, and apart from a vanishingly small number of zealots whose fanaticism blinds their eyes to the true choice of nation, and who have unwittingly become mere tools in the hands of provocative agitators, Silesia has hitherto always remained loyal to the fatherland, loyal to the Constitution bestowed upon us by the high-minded Emperor ... And should

14 Józef Chlebowczyk, *Úloha a funkce dvojjazyčnosti v národotvorných procesech*, Slezský sborník 75, 1977, p. 191; Edward Buława, *Němectví nade vše*, Těšínsko 39, 1996, no. 4, pp. 1–4.

15 Albin Heinrich, *Versuch über die Geschichte des Herzogthumes Teschen von den ältesten bis auf gegenwärtige Zeiten*. Teschen 1818; for an evaluation of this book see Janusz Spyra, *Geteilte Gesellschaft, geteilte historische Identitäten, Bemerkungen tur Historiographie des Teschener Schlesiens*. In: *Geteilte Regionen — geteilte Geschichtskulturen? Muster der Identitätsbildung im europäischen Vergleich*, red. Burkhard. Olschowsky, Series: *Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa* 47, München 2013, pp. 59–77, here pp. 69–70.

16 Albin Heinrich, *Germanische Altentümer aus dem Heidenthume. Aufgefunden in k. k. Schlesien*. In: *Taschenbuch für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 1, Brünn 1826, pp. 216–239.

17 *Geschichte des Herzogthums Teschen*, Teschen 1863, 1894; *Geschichte der Herzogthümer Troppau und Jägerndorf*, Troppau 1874; *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreichisch-Schlesien*, Prag 1897.



the future again bring turmoil, the Silesian will surely remain true to the Emperor, the Empire, the Constitution.”¹⁸ This citation dates from 1874; it was published several years before the first census which determined respondents’ language of daily use (Umgangssprache), and we can assume that it represents the general attitude towards the Polish and Czech national movements that was current among the German community and the so-called “renegades” (i.e. Silesian inhabitants regarding themselves as a specific ethnic group). However, Biermann’s work is still used by modern historians, unlike Czech and Polish works from the pre-WWI period (Prasek, Sláma, Franciszek Popiołek), which are nowadays of interest primarily for historians of historiography.¹⁹

One might expect that learning more about the past may have led to some degree of reconciliation among the national camps, or at least to a certain mutual tolerance. In reality, however, opinions and positions became increasingly vehement and polarized, fuelled by the growth in political tensions and extreme nationalism. This can be illustrated by the opinion of Kurt Witt published in 1935; like Albin Heinrich, Witt was convinced that the Teschen region had originally been ethnically German, and he concluded that the process of industrialization during the 19th century had led to a partial re-Germanization of the territory: “Die wirtschaftliche Vormachtstellung des Deutschtums, die im Zuge der Industrialisierung immer offensichtlicher geworden war, hatte den Prozess einer teilweisen Wiedereindeutschung nur beschleunigt.” [“The economic supremacy of the German nation, which became increasingly visible during the course of industrialization, had only accelerated the process of partial re-Germanization.”]²⁰

By the final third of the 18th century, German had become the predominant language used by the official authorities in the Teschen region, and the rapid process of Germanization was facilitated by industrialization. The Czech and Polish dialects were often spoken by the lower classes and the population of rural areas. This tendency is reflected in the results of the censuses conducted before the First World War: out of eight towns in Teschen Silesia, the predominant language of daily use (Umgangssprache) in 1880 was German in Bielitz (Bielsko, Bilsko) (86.5%) and Teschen itself (49.5%), Czech in Frýdek (80%), and in the remaining five towns Polish — Bogumin (Bohumín, Oderberg), Frysztat (Freistadt, Fryštát), Jabłonków, Skoczów (Skotschau, Skočov) Strumień (Schwarzwasser, Strumeň). By 1910, German had become predominant in six of the towns (spoken as the language of daily use by over 50% of the population); Polish remained predominant in two towns (Frysztat, Jabłonków), while Czech lost its former predominance in Frýdek. Taken together, 60.1 % of the population in the towns of Teschen Silesia stated German as their language of everyday use, 30.1 % stated Polish, while just 9.3 % stated Czech.²¹

18 G. Biermann, *Gechichte der Herzogthümmer Troppau und Jägerndorf*, p. 690.

19 J. Spyra, *Historiografia*, pp. 389–390.

20 Kurt Witt, *Die Teschener Frage*, Berlin 1935, p. 32.

21 Jan Kapras, *Český úřední jazyk ve Slezsku*, Brno 1909; Marie Gawrecká, *K národnostní problematice slezských měst do roku 1914*. In: *Národnostní problémy v historii měst, Prostějov 1993*, pp. 88–96, here p. 96; *Národnostní problémy slezských měst v době modernizace 1740–1918*. In: *Město a městská společnost v procesu modernizace 1740–1918*, Pavel Kladiwa — Aleš Zářický (eds.), Ostrava 2009, pp. 147–159, here p. 153.



The most fundamental fault-line in the national-political conflicts which affected the Teschen region was the relationship between the Czech and Polish communities. The introduction of compulsory school attendance was followed by various demands related to the language of instruction at primary schools; a number of school commissioners and Polish clergymen demanded that Czech alphabet books be replaced by materials written in the local dialect. The Moravian-Silesian Provincial Gubernium remained unconvinced of the need for such a change, and argued against it on cost grounds. However, the situation gradually began to change after the 1848/1849 revolution, when the “Moravian” (i.e. Czech) language was replaced by Polish in an increasing number of schools and churches.²² Nevertheless, these changes did not spark any significant conflicts. The burgeoning Czech and Polish national movements were of more interest to the emerging future elites than to ordinary people. The situation until the end of the 1830s was aptly characterized by Józef Chlebowczyk: “there was an absolute absence of any elements of sentiment related to an awareness of belonging to one of the nations which were emerging at the time — Polish or Czech”.²³

Initially the Czechs were in a stronger position²⁴ thanks to the efforts of Jan Winkler, the Czech pastor in Nawsie, and the Czech officials and secondary school teachers in Teschen. In these early stages, the young people who would eventually go on to become the leaders of the Polish national movement were still learning standard Polish; for example, Andrzej Cinciała wrote his diary in German until 1845/6, when he switched to Polish. His remarks on his fellow students are characteristic: “wszyscy Niemcy, chociaż rodzice nasi ani słówka po niemiecku nie umieli” [“all were Germans, although our parents did not know a word of German”].²⁵ The revolutionary year 1848 was a milestone for the burgeoning Polish national movement in the region. The Lutherans Jan Stalmach and Andrzej Cinciała assumed a leading role in the movement. The weekly publication *Tygodnik Cieszyński* (later *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska*) became its mouthpiece, and at the Prague Slavic Congress in 1848 the Teschen representatives (Stamach, Kotula) declared that they would be members of the Polish-Ruthenian section and published a memorandum demanding that the Teschen region be incorporated into the province of Galicia (Dlaczego Śląsk, ile jest słowiański, łączyć się chce

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- 22 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 59–75; Andělín Grobelný, *Češi a Poláci ve Slezsku v letech 1848–1867. Přípravné studie z dějin národního a dělnického hnutí*, Ostrava 1958; Ludwik Brożek, *Školství v Těšínském Slezsku v druhé polovině 19. století*, *Slezský sborník* 58, 1960, pp. 207–212.
- 23 Józef Chlebowczyk, *Główne problemy i etapy stosunków polsko-czeskich na Śląsku Cieszyńskim w XIX wieku i na początku XX wieku (do 1914 r.)*, Katowice 1914, p. 7.
- 24 Joachim Bahlcke, *Schlesien und die Schlesier*, München 1996, pp. 112–113; Oskar Wagner, *Zur Entstehung des tschechischen und polnischen Nationalbewußtseins im Herzogtum Teschen. Ein Beitrag zur österreichisch-schlesischen Kirchengeschichte*, *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* 22, 1973, pp. 454–474; Dan Gawrecki, Jan Winkler a počátky formování novodobých národů na Těšínsku. In: *Práce a studie Muzea Beskyd ve Frýdku-Místku, Frýdek-Místek* 1995, pp. 5–13; Milan Kudělka, *Češi a Poláci na Těšínsku v době národního obrození*, Ostrava 1957.
- 25 A. Cinciała: *Pierwsi szermierze na kresach śląskich*. In: *Pamiętnik dra Andrzeja Cinciały notariusza w Cieszynie (1825–1898)*. Wydał i wstępem zaopatrzył Jan St. Bystroń. Katowice 1931, p. 173.



do Polski) (Why Silesia? As it is Slavic, it wishes to become part of Poland).²⁶ The Poles seized the initiative in the region for the next half century.

However, the developments of 1848 did not mark the end of Czech-Polish collaboration united by anti-German sentiment, as is claimed even in some more recent German literature (“Die slawische Einheit zerbrach endgültig, als sich Stalmach während des am 2. Juni 1848 in Prag einberufenen Slavenkongress nicht der tschechischen, sondern polnisch-ruthenischen Sektion anschloß” [“Slavic unity was definitively broken when, during the Slavic Congress convened in Prague on 2 June 1848, Stalmach became part of the Polish-Ruthenian section, not the Czech section”]).²⁷ The lawyer Ludvík Klucki, who was originally from Moravia but served as the Mayor of Teschen from 1851 to 1861, was a generous benefactor of the weekly *Tygodnik Cieszyński*; the Czech pastor Jan Winkler helped to translate texts from Třanovský’s hymnbook into Polish; and Czech clergymen from the Frýdek region participated in the Polonization of ecclesiastical life and rural schools.²⁸

In 1848 the 24 year-old renowned Polish leader Paweł Stalmach (a Lutheran) claimed that the entire Duchy of Teschen was Polish. According to his successor Józef Londzin (a Catholic), “mocno ubolewał, że nie znalazł należytego poparcia ze strony społeczeństwa polskiego, bo inaczej byłoby mu się udało zyskać i Frydeckie dla Polski” [“he greatly regretted not enjoying greater support among the Polish community, because otherwise he would have been able to gain the Frýdek region for Poland”].

Likewise, the Vicar General of Teschen Franciszek Śniegoń (who later became an Auxiliary Bishop) on several occasions publicly expressed the opinion that Polish schools would have been established throughout the Teschen region if only the Rudl brothers from Moravia (school inspectors from the Deaneries in Frýdek and Karwina (Karviná, Karwin) had not given preference to Czech over Polish.²⁹

From their very beginnings as an organized movement, the Polish nationalists attempted to gain the upper hand over their Czech opponents. At the time, the Czechs were not in a position to state such intentions explicitly;³⁰ however, an opportunity eventually presented itself shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. Ferdinand Pelc, the Chairman of the *Maticе osvěty lidové* educational association, characterized the Czech nationalists’ goals succinctly: “We had a simple goal: to protect what we had, and to regain what could be regained. The Poles had to be pushed back from their positions along the Ostravice river [...] It was evident to us that at some point we would penetrate to Bohumín, Karviná and Těšín [...] to the Olza river. [...] We were convinced that before 1848 everything there on the other side of the Olza had been Czech...”³¹

26 A. Grobelný, *Češi a Poláci ve Slezsku*, p. 83.

27 J. Bahlcke, *Schlesien*, pp. 113–114.

28 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 104–105; J. Chlebowczyk, *Główne problemy*, pp. 20–21.

29 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, p. 75, 104–106.

30 Bedřich Šimeček, *O národním ruchu na Těšínsku v době 1880–1890*, *Věstník Matice opavské* 39, 1934, pp. 40–74. (The author of the memoirs protested against accusations that the Czechs in Teschen had not engaged in their own national activities, and that they had collaborated with the Poles.)

31 Ferdinand Pelc, *O Těšínsko. Vzpomínky a úvahy*, *Slezská Ostrava* 1928, p. 26.



However, in the mid-19th century it was the Poles who were on the offensive. This raises a question: What factors enabled the Poles to achieve their successes? Polish literature on this topic strongly emphasizes the Polish ethnicity of the population in the Teschen region, to which the Czech “immigrants” had to adapt. According to these authors, although Czech was the language of official documents, the language of the common people was Polish. However, the Czech literature expresses regret that the Czech population of the region sacrificed their national interests and demands in favour of Pan-Slavic cooperation; these authors criticize the Czech community for its passivity and lack of leadership. “Put briefly: The Czechs in the Teschen region lacked a ‘Czech Stalmach’ or a ‘Teschen Lelek’ who would have been able to breathe more élan and energy into their national life.”³² Czech authors tend to emphasize the linguistically mixed character of the Teschen region and the lack of clear national sentiment among its population — a factor which also accounts for the marked shifts in nationality that took place within individual municipalities during the ten years between the last two censuses conducted before the First World War — shifts which at the time were attributed to ruthless coercion. In the 19th century, most of the territory of the former Duchy of Teschen was Polish-speaking rather than Czech-speaking, but attempts to delineate a precise linguistic boundary between the two areas were largely futile. Elsewhere I have expressed the opinion that the decisive role in the formation of the linguistic and national character of the territory was played by agitation, combined with changes in state borders.³³ This opinion is supported by the above-cited statements by Paweł Stalmach, Franciszek Śniegoń and František Pelc. Józef Londzin likewise characterized the situation succinctly when he stated that it depended on parsons, teachers and educational authorities.³⁴ Other similar statements could also be cited.

The Polish nationalists’ offensive in the region’s schools and churches after 1848 was not without its own problems. One such problem concerned the introduction of Polish hymnbooks by Janusz (Catholic) and Heczko (Lutheran). Catholics in Těrlicko (Cierlicko) rejected the Polish books because they were printed in the Roman typeface; in other places too, people preferred Czech hymnbooks printed in the Schwabacher typeface. When Polish school textbooks were introduced, some people complained that they were used to books printed in Schwabacher, while others claimed that they could only read Moravian (i.e. Czech) and that they had never learned to read Polish or German.³⁵

In December 1853 the school boards from Německá Lutyně (Niemiecka Łutynia, Deutsch Leuten), Polská Lutyně (Polska Łutynia, Polnisch Leuten) and Dětmarovice

32 Ostravsko do roku 1848, Ostrava 1968, p. 250.

33 E.g.: Polska, czeska i niemiecka historiografia wobec problematyki narodowościowej na Śląsku Austriackim w XIX e. (do 1914 r.). In: XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich, Wrocław 15–18 września 1999, Pamiętnik, tom I Przełomy w historii, Toruń 2000, pp. 271–286, here pp. 275–276; Regionale und nationale Identitäten in Österreich-Schlesien im langen 19. Jahrhundert. In: Die Grenzen der Nationen. Identitätenwandel in Oberschlesien in der Neuzeit, Kai Struve und Philipp Ther (Hg.), Marburg 2002, pp. 111–134, here 114–116.

34 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 74–75.

35 J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 50–55.



(Dzieńmorowice, Dittmannsdorf) protested to the Provincial Educational Authority against the use of Polish in schools. In the autumn of 1856 the Silesian Provincial Government forced teachers in Šenov to teach in “Moravian” by distributing Czech textbooks to the school. In 1860 a petition against the introduction of Polish at schools in the eastern and central parts of the Teschen region, signed by 60 municipalities, was presented to F. Smolka, a Deputy at the Imperial Council. The petition was vehemently rejected by the Germans. Czech nationalists in Dětmárovice and communities in the Bohumín region complained that Polish had been introduced into schools and churches by force, and demanded the return of the “Moravian” language. The newspaper *Opavský besedník* recommended that Poles should be taught in Polish and Czechs in Czechs; this may have sounded good in theory, but in practice — due to the lack of clear national identity among the region’s population — it could never have been implemented. In 1861 another conflict broke out in Německá Lutyně and Dětmárovice, where villagers complained first to the District Authority in Bohumín and then directly to Vienna, demanding the removal of Polish from the local school. In 1870 a conflict in Německá Lutyně forced the authorities to send in the army to restore order, and 50 rioters were imprisoned. A Polish author of the time (Londzin) claimed that the incidents had been caused by “Moravian chauvinists from outside the village”.

In 1862 the parson of Těrlicko introduced Polish sermons and hymns. This sparked protests by 300 parishioners from Těrlicko, Stanisławice (Stanislavice), Grodziszczce (Hradiště), Mistrzowice (Mistřovice) and Koniaków (Koňakov); the Archdiocese eventually stipulated that both Czech and Polish were to be used. A year later, the same villages demanded that Polish be introduced in schools, so Czech textbooks were replaced with Polish materials.³⁶ Numerous similar examples could also be adduced.

However, here I am not concerned with offering a detailed analysis of such cases or determining who was responsible (a task which would in any case be highly problematic). Nor is it the purpose of this paper to assess whether various opinions in the 1860s and 1870s were motivated more by national or linguistic considerations. In any case, until the end of the 1870s ordinary people in the region did not feel the need to declare their nationality publicly; they were essentially forced to do so by the census in 1880. Various factors played a role in people’s national sentiments or respondents’ decision to declare one or another language of daily use: for example, the Catholic community in Orlová (Orłowa, Orlau) came under the patronage of the Břevnov-Broumov (Braunau) Monastery, used Czech for purposes of worship and education, and considered themselves Moravians (later Czechs), while the Lutheran community used Polish and considered themselves Poles.³⁷

A notable case of the assertion of Czech identities occurred on 24 April 1862 in the Frýdek region, where 25 municipalities from the Frýdek district addressed a demand to the District Authority calling for the Czech language to be used in official communication. The municipalities considered it unnecessary to employ interpreters. The response to the demand was typical of the era: the authorities stated that

³⁶ J. Londzin, *Polskość*, pp. 73–76, 88–89; A. Grobelný, *Češi a Poláci*, pp. 140–144, 162–164; Evarist Piřha, *Jazykový a národnostní spor v těrlické farnosti v letech 1862–1864*, Místek 1934.

³⁷ Alois Adamus, *Z dějin Orlové*, Orlová 1926.

the population was not Czech but mixed (Moravian-Polish-Slovak-German), and that the petitioners had been encouraged to submit this ill-advised demand by individuals who were keen to make money as translators.³⁸

The era in question was marked by an increase in nationalist activity — not only Polish but also Czech. However, up until the 1890s this activity could not be described as a mass phenomenon; it involved primarily the social elites, who were inspired by the nationalist programmes being developed in the main centres of national life. Despite the various disputes and polemics outlined above, the Czech and Polish communities continued to maintain an essentially cooperative relationship, supported throughout the duration of the non-democratic electoral system by a shared opposition to German dominance. However, the unity of the Polish-speaking population was compromised by disputes between Catholics and Lutherans, who formed their own separate political parties during the 1880s.³⁹ For many Polish Lutherans, cooperation with their German fellow Lutherans was more important than the creation of a unified national community of Poles. There was also a relatively sizeable group of Polish-speaking people who did not share the Polish nationalists' ambitions for the restoration of a Polish state. By 1848 they already had their own newspaper expressing their support for the Frankfurt Parliament,⁴⁰ and in the 1890s they formed a political party (led by Josef Kozdon) with its own newspaper.⁴¹ They looked to German culture as a model, and of all "national groups" in the Teschen region it was they who were the most loyal to the Austrian empire.⁴² They had little effect on the Austrian census results as they mostly declared Polish as their language of daily use. However, they were active in political life; their leader Kozdon was elected to represent the rural Bielitz district at the Silesian Diet, defeating Józef Londzin, the head of the Association of Silesian Catholics (*Związek Śląskich Katolików*). In the post-war border dispute they joined forces with the Upper Silesian Germans to demand the creation of an independent Silesian buffer state; when it became evident that this demand was unrealistic, they supported the region's incorporation into the Czechoslovak Republic.⁴³

From the 1880s onwards the Teschen region became a major transit corridor for migrants from Galicia, of whom tens of thousands settled there permanently — especially in the local coalfields. Although they spoke Polish, most of them did not con-

38 A. Grobelný, *Češi a Poláci*, pp. 162–163.

39 Dan Gawrecki, *Politické strany polské menšiny*. In: *Politické strany 1861–1938. Vývoj politických stran s hnutí v českých zemích a Československu*, Brno 2005, pp. 495–510, 943–956.

40 Józef Chlebowczyk, *Nurt frankfurcki i początki kwestii narodowej na Śląsku Cieszyńskim, Zaranie Śląskie 27*, 1974, pp. 17–38.

41 Marie Gawrecká, *Šlonzácké hnutí a Josef Koždon*, *Acta historica et museologica Universitatis silesianae opaviensis 3*, 1997, pp. 163–175.

42 Marie Gawrecká — Dan Gawrecki, *Język — szkoła — ruch narodowy (kilka uwag)*. In: *Polityka państw narodowych wobec języka na Górnym Śląsku w XIX i XX wieku*. Pod redakcją naukową Michał Lisa, Łucji Jarczak, Leokadii Drożdż, Opole, 2013, pp. 9–16.

43 Dan Gawrecki, *Šlonzáci na Těšínsku a sčítání lidu v letech 1910 a 1921*, *Těšínsko 57*, 2014, no. 1, pp. 1–9; Jaroslav Valenta, *Česko-polské vztahy v letech 1918–1920*, Ostrava 1961.



sider themselves Poles; frequently they were content to undergo Germanization or Czechization. The battle to “recruit” these Galicians was a characteristic feature of the nationalist agitation in the censuses between 1890 and 1910. During the post-war border dispute between Czechoslovakia and Poland (which centred on control of the Těšín/Cieszyn region), some Galicians joined the Czech volunteer forces.⁴⁴

During the 1890s, the growth of Czech political activism which accompanied the region’s industrial boom led to a deterioration of Czech-Polish relations, culminating in an antagonism that was more vehement than the previous Czech-German rivalry. This situation was reflected in the census data; by the time of the 1910 census, the Polish “advance” had been halted, and the position of Czech as a language of daily use was approximately the same as it had been in 1880. One of the reasons underlying this change was the decline in migration from Galicia. Czech propagandists described Poles in the Teschen region as “Polonized Moravians”; the poet Petr Bezruč, whose collection *Slezské písně* (*Silesian Songs*) was greatly inspired by the census results, wrote of a hundred thousand Polonized Moravians and a hundred thousand Germanized Moravians “before Těšín”. For the Poles, the Ostravice river marked the natural boundary of their territory, though they identified Polish influences as far as the town of Hranice, whose name (meaning “border” in Czech) was viewed as symbolic of its natural role. Even in the period between the world wars, Polish journalists wrote about the Polish character of the Opava and Hlučín regions as well as parts of North Moravia.⁴⁵

Epilogue: The situation changed radically after the Great War and the post-war border dispute, when both successor states were keen to demonstrate their national credentials. The Czechs gained a sizeable majority in the 1921 census of nationality conducted in the part of the region allocated to Czechoslovakia. This was due partly to the method of data collection, but also due to a number of other reasons: “Galicians” who did not have official residence rights in the region found it very difficult to obtain Czechoslovak citizenship, even though most of them declared Czechoslovak nationality. A special category of “Šlonzáci” (Ślązacy, Schlonzaken) was created (meaning “Silesians” in the local dialect); within this category, respondents could declare their nationality as Czechoslovaks, Poles or Germans. The “Šlonzáci” were even described as a sub-branch of the “Czechoslovak nation”.⁴⁶ Some Poles, especially members of the intelligentsia, had emigrated to Poland — either under coercion, or (in some cases) voluntarily. The heated debates over the census results had an impact

44 Marie Gawrecká, *Středoevropské migrace v 19. století a jejich národnostní a kulturní aspekty*, Opava 2014, pp. 97–117.

45 Petr Bezruč, 70.000. In: *Slezské písně*, Praha 1958, pp. 38–39; O naszym Śląsku. 2. Narodowość księstwa cieszyńskiego, *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* 13, 24. 11. 1860, no. 47; Polacy na Śląsku Hulczyńskim. *Front Zachodni*. *Pismo poświęcone sprawom wzajemnego stosunku Polski i Niemiec*, rok VI, numer 10, grudzień 1938, pp. 1–3.

46 “The ‘Šlonzáci’ in the Těšín region are a branch of the Czechoslovak nation; they are a native population, sometimes of Czech or so-called Moravian nationality, who 50 years ago were Polonized against their will.” Józsa Vochala, *Šlonzáci. Šlonzácká větev sjednoceného národa československého*, Frýdek 1921, p. 3.

on Czechoslovak-Polish international relations, and vice versa — Czechoslovak-Polish relations had an impact on the situation in the region.

During the German occupation (1939–1945) a small part of the former Czechoslovak territory in the region was incorporated into the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, while the majority of it (after the defeat of Poland) became part of Germany itself. The population in the German part of the region declaring Silesian nationality were classified into four categories as part of the system known as the Deutsche Volksliste; each category had a different legal status. They were required to serve in the German army.⁴⁷ In the Teschen district, out of a total population of 297 400 people, 205 300 were on the Volksliste. The remainder of the population consisted of 33 700 Poles, 14 900 Germans and 38 500 members of other nationalities, mainly Czechs.⁴⁸

After the Second World War the German populations were expelled from the region⁴⁹ and there was a huge influx of new settlers of various nationalities, including Slovaks. For the Poles, the process of assimilation into the majority nation continued. There were numerous problems and disputes (the “Volksliste people”, the Cieslar Platform, the existence of Polish organizations, the theory of two homelands, education, administrative reorganizations which had the effect of dissolving districts with large Polish minority populations, etc.), but there were no major complaints about censuses.⁵⁰ In the most recent censuses (1991, 2001, 2011) respondents were able to state their nationality freely; they could declare their nationality as Moravian or Silesian, or they could declare two nationalities simultaneously. The last category — Silesians (Ślonzáci) — is now viewed entirely differently than it was during the First Czechoslovak Republic. In the most recent Czech census (2011) a total of 12 214 respondents declared Silesian nationality. Only around a quarter of these were in the Těšín region, with the remainder living in the Opava region, another part of the historical province of Silesia.⁵¹

This paper has attempted to provide a general overview of developments related to nationality in the Teschen region; its aim has been to offer a basis for understanding the disputes which accompanied the censuses conducted in the region between 1880 and 1930 — disputes which will be discussed in more detail in the individual chapters.

47 Ladislav Pallas, *K nacistické národnostní politice na Horním Slezsku včetně Těšínska v letech 1939–1945*, *Slezský sborník* 79, 1981, pp. 261–288.

48 *Dějiny Českého Slezska 1740–2000*, II, Opava 2003, p. 386.

49 Tomáš Staněk, *Německé obyvatelstvo v českých zemích (zejména po roce 1945) ve výzkumech Slezského ústavu Slezského zemského muzea v Opavě*, *Slezský sborník* 107, 2009, pp. 81–101.

50 Gabriela Sokolová — Šárka Hernová — Olga Šrajerová, *Češi, Slováci a Poláci na Těšínsku a jejich vzájemné vztahy*, Opava — Šenov u Ostravy 1997.

51 Roman Baron — Andrzej Michalczyk — Michał J. Witkowski, *Kim jest Górnioślązak?* In: *Historia Górnego Śląska. Politika, gospodarka i kultura europejskiego regionu*, red. Joachim Bahlcke — Dan Gawrecki — Ryszard Kaczmarek, Gliwice 2011, pp. 468–469.

