Silesian: From *Gwara* to Language After 1989

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**Abstract**

In the past Silesian was seen to be a dialect of the Polish language (and sometimes of Czech). During the 1990s, following the fall of communism and the establishment of democracy in Poland, most Silesian-speakers decided to treat Silesian as a language in its own right. It became part and parcel of their effort to shed the status of second-class citizens that had been imposed on them in interwar and communist Poland. Warsaw has not recognized this language yet but, despite suffering this (quite humiliating) disadvantage, Silesian-speakers have produced a growing number of articles, books, websites, or radio and television programs in their language, winning a recognition for Silesian as a language abroad and among scholars. It appears that the Polish administration’s rigid stance toward the Silesians and their language is dictated by the logic of ethnolinguistic nationalism, which equates the legitimacy and stability of the nation-state with the full ethnolinguistic homogeneity of its population. This article sketches the trajectory of the main events and probes into the state of the discourse on the issue of Silesian language and culture during the quarter of a century after the fall of communism in 1989.

**Keywords:** democracy, *Einzelsprache*, ethnolinguistic nationalism, Germany, language corpus planning, language status planning, multilingualism, Poland, Silesian language, Upper Silesia


Na pamiętkę Roztomilych Ylternōw,  
Mutry Anny a Fatra Stephana

*[N]*aród to nie jest sprawa doczesna, tylko ideologia! **Którą sobie ludzie wymyślił** z głowy. **Sprawy doczesne** to jest to, jak się je, jak się śpi, jak się objąć z dziewczyną, jak ją pocałować. [...] **Natomiast naród** [...] [t]jo jest **fikcja ludzkich umysłów**.

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1 I thank Catherine Gibson for her useful comments and suggestions for improvement. Obviously, I am responsible for any remaining infelicities.

2 The nation is not a worldly affair, only an ideology! An ideology that people invented, not existing outside their heads. Worldly affairs are how well one sleeps, how to come to an embrace with a girl, how to kiss her. [...] In contrast, the nation [...] is a fiction of human minds (my translation). Jerzy Nowosielski. 2015 [1993]. Maluje się zawsze dla Pana Boga (pp 374-412). In: Jerzy Nowosielski. *Listy i zapomniane wywiady* (ed. by Krystyna Czerni). Cracow: Znak, p 403.
Introduction

During the first decade of the 21st century Silesian was accepted as a language by most of its speakers in Poland, and also by linguists and IT specialists outside Poland. The use of Silesian in speech and writing is spreading rapidly, especially through cyberspace which is as yet not controlled by the majority of the world’s nation-states (the rare exceptions to this rule of thumb being China or North Korea). From the perspective of the number of speakers, Silesian is the second most widely spoken language in Poland after the country’s sole official and national language of Polish. Poland recognizes and supports such minority languages as Belarusian, German, Lithuanian, Romani or Rusyn, each used by several tens of thousands of speakers. This protection is generously extended to the ten or so Karaim-speakers and to the actually non-existent (in Poland) minority speech communities of the languages of Armenian and Tatar. This suggests that the Polish authorities actually only pay lip service to the protection of minorities and their languages. Typically, in today’s Poland, such protection is lavished on non-existent or rapidly diminishing speech communities, while on the other hand it is strenuously withheld from over half a million Silesian-speakers. The sole exception to this hypocritical trend is the minority-style protection conferred, since 2005, on the 100,000 speakers of the Kashubian language.

The explanation for this paradoxical hypocrisy lies in the Central European model of nation-state, which invested heavily in language as the basis of statehood and nationhood formation, legitimation and maintenance. Ethnolinguistic homogeneity (so highly atypical in the history of Poland-Lithuania and interwar Poland, and achieved only during World War II and the communist period) appears to the majority of ethnic Poles to be the sole guarantee of their state’s very existence. Hence, Poland’s civil service and citizenry at large share a knee-jerk reaction to protect this homogeneity, be it through law or extralegal measures. Hardly anyone notices that this approach makes Silesian-speakers into second-class citizens, which does not bode well for the quality of Polish

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3 It is necessary to take responsibility for yet many other matters, such as the postwar fate of the Germans, Mazurs and Silesians (my translation). Andrzej Leder. 2013. Przesłania rewolucja. Ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, p 200.


democracy. To put this into perspective, the speakers of this unrecognized Silesian language are as numerous as the entire population of Luxembourg and are substantially more numerous than all of the Maltese. I propose that democratic Poland cannot afford to exclude half a million or more of its citizens from full and unrestricted participation in the country’s political life. It can be done only at peril to democracy itself and pluralism guaranteed by it.

By way of an introduction, this article reflects on the political dynamics of ethnolinguistic nationalism in Central Europe, before turning to the history of Upper Silesia’s multilingual inhabitants during the 19th and 20th centuries in the context of the rise of nationalism and the processes of nation-state building. Nevertheless, the main focus is on the postcommunist period, which has seen a growing acceptance of Silesian as a language and an increase in the production of books, periodicals, websites and films in this language, alongside radio, television and multimedia programs. I take note of the main trends in recent Silesian cultural production, alongside the discourse on the status of Silesian. Hopefully, the wealth of bibliographical information gathered here will help other interested researchers probe in greater depth into the various topics connected to contemporary Silesian language and culture.

**Ethnolinguistic Nationalism in Central Europe**

The idea of the normative equation of the demographic unit of ‘a nation’ with the similarly normative unity of ‘a language’ emerged across the lands of the former Holy Roman Empire under the onslaught of Napoleonic attack at the turn of the 19th century. It became a new ‘modern’ norm to postulate that speakers of a language constitute a nation, and that a territory compactly inhabited by such a speech community should be made into a nation-state. This norm was tried out during the 1860s and 1870s when Italy and Germany were founded as ethnolinguistic nation-states. Subsequently, in the wake of the Great War, the political shape of Central Europe (understood as the vertical mid-section of Europe from Scandinavia to the Balkans) was reorganized in line with this principle. Ethnolinguistic nation-states were erected in place of the erased empires of the Habsburgs, the Ottomans and in the western borderlands of the erstwhile Russian Empire, alongside some eastern territories detached from the German Empire. Furthermore, during the Balkan Wars and World War I, the ideologically ethnoreligious character of the Balkan nation-states became increasingly ethnolinguistic. The novel organizational logic of the postwar geopolitical space was accepted by the United States and gradually ‘naturalized,’ as evidenced by the following quote from an influential 1917 tome on the subject, perused at the Paris Peace Conference, ‘the growing coincidence of linguistic and political boundaries must be regarded as a normal development.’ Even earlier, the Bolsheviks had accepted this logic as part of their program, though they

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had a chance to implement it in any meaningful manner only after 1922, when the Soviet Union was established.\footnote{Cf Stephen Blank. 1994. \textit{The Sorcerer as Apprentice: Stalin as Commissar of Nationalities, 1917–1924}. Westport CN: Greenwood Press.}

As a result, for better or for worse, in Central Europe language remains the basis of state making, legitimation and maintenance to this day. In this region, the widely accepted normative belief is that a polity to be legitimate, it must be an officially monolingual nation-state, with such a national-cum-official that is not shared with any other polity in this function. According to this line of political thinking, for instance, if someone speaks Polish, he must be a Pole, a member of the Polish nation, and as such should enjoy citizenship of the Polish nation-state. Therefore, from the vantage point of ethnolinguistic nationalism, it does not make sense that an Austrian speaks German, and not some ‘appropriately’ named Austrian language. Likewise, the Americans may not be a ‘real’ nation, because the United States does not have a national or official language. The normative hold of ethnolinguistic nationalism is so strong in Central Europe that when Czechoslovakia was founded in 1918, it was declared to be the national polity of the Czechoslovak nation, speaking and writing the Czechoslovak language. By the same token, when Yugoslavia broke up in the 1990s, the successor nation-states had to be endowed with their own specific languages, not shared with any other polities or nations. Hence, Serbo-Croatian split into Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian.

The politicization of languages and their names is so deeply entrenched in Central Europe that its dynamics can impact on a state’s domestic and international relations. For example, Bulgaria recognizes Macedonia as a state but not its Macedonian language, which Sofia claims to be just another ‘literary standard’ of the Bulgarian language. The official Bulgarian stance is that there is no Macedonian nation either, because from Sofia’s perspective citizens of Macedonia speak ‘Bulgarian’ and as such constitute part of the (ethnolinguistic) Bulgarian nation.\footnote{Cf John Shea. 1997. \textit{Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation}. Jefferson NC: McFarland, p 352; Diletanti polititsi, izpelniteli na chuzhda volia suzdadokha edin vuzel v dvustrannite otnosheniia sus Skopie. 2012. Blog.bg. 25 Sept. kostas.blog.bg/politika/2012/09/25/1-priznahme-li-makedoniia-ili-omazahme-konstituciata-i-mejd.1003277. Accessed: Aug 9, 2015.} In 1991 in independent Moldova the official Moldovan language was renamed as Romanian. The Russophone part of the country’s population feared a union with Romania, which led to a war and the rise of the de facto polity of Transnistria. In order to placate the fears and to lure Transnistria back, in 1994 Chişinău changed the name of its official language back to Moldovan.\footnote{Cf Charles King. 1999. The Ambivalence of Authenticity, or How the Moldovan Language Was Made (pp 117-142). \textit{Slavic Review}. Vol 58, No 1; Matthew H Ciscel. 2007. \textit{The Language of the Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and Identity in an Ex-Soviet Republic}. Lanham: Lexington Books.} In the post-Soviet Baltic nation-states of Estonia and Latvia, citizenship has been withheld from Russian-speaking residents who failed or decided not to take the qualifying test in the national languages of Estonian and Latvian, respectively.\footnote{Cf Gregory Feldman. 2008. The Trap of Abstract Space: Recomposing Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Post-Soviet Estonia (pp 311-342). \textit{Anthropological Quarterly}. Vol 81, No 2; Kristine Krūma. 2009. Checks and Balances in Latvian Nationality Policies: National agendas and international frameworks (pp. 67-96). In: Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig and Wiebke Sievers, eds. \textit{Citizenship Policies in the New Europe}. Amsterdam : Amsterdam University Press} As a result, over a tenth of
both countries’ populations is composed of non-citizens for whom the oxymoronic Estonian and Latvian aliens’ passports were introduced.15

**Inventing Nations, Languages and States**

During the last three decades since the publication of the seminal volume edited by Eric J Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in 1983,16 it has become part of received knowledge that it is people alone who thought up the notion of the nation, and create and maintain nations established in line with this concept. Hence, nations are not phenomena of nature, or sent to earth by god(s), but products of man-made culture. A similar denaturalization of languages and states (and their territories) has not yet taken place. Apart from specialists dealing with these issues, the public at large tends to believe that languages are part of nature. They may concede that it is humans who build states, yet in Europe the penchant is for insisting that ‘our nation-state’ is at least a millennium old, if not actually eternal. For example, it is commonly believed that the Polish nation-state was founded in 966, not in 1918; while its German counterpart in 800 or 962, not in 1871. School education and politicians perpetuate these myths since they are useful for social and political cohesion.

In reality, it is humans and their groups in Europe who invented and initially implemented the concept of ‘a language’ (*Einzelsprache*) as a discrete entity, before colonization and imperialism spread this political standard to elsewhere in the world. With the use of the technology of writing and printing, the continuous linguistic was divided and apportioned to this or that language. The languages were defined, produced and finally made ‘tangible’ and manipulable through dictionaries, grammars, school textbooks, and official academies tasked with developing and protecting (‘cultivating’) national languages. With the rise and the actualization of the ideal of popular education and full literacy, schools and state offices spread the official or national (standard) language across the entire territory of a given nation-state at the expense of other languages and non-standard variants of the official (national) language. In the second half of the 20th century, radio and television accelerated this process of ethnolinguistic homogenization, nowadays deepened (and sometimes subverted) by the ubiquitous internet.17

The concept of the state and entities fashioned in accordance with it are also products of human creativity. A group of humans claim a piece of territory as theirs to the exclusion of outsiders. They develop methods to police the perimeter (construed as a boundary) that ensure the intensification of contacts among the members of the in-group residing in the polity, while limiting the opportunity, number and intensity of contacts between this in-group and outsiders. Mathematics, statistics, geodesy or cartography allow for measuring and representing the territory of the state, as deemed necessary in light of changing economic, demographic, military, ideological or other needs. As a result, the

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17 Cf Tomasz Kamusella. 2015. *Creating Languages in Central Europe During the Last Millennium*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
state and its territory are created (invented) and become ‘normal’ or even ‘natural’ to the state’s populace.\textsuperscript{18}

**Upper Silesia in Nationally-Inflected Modernity**

In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the historical region of Upper Silesia was located in Prussia’s then largely forgotten southeasternmost corner with its overwhelmingly rural inhabitants.\textsuperscript{19} The rapid development of coal mining and metallurgical industry in the region during the second half of this century brought Upper Silesia to the attention of the powers that be. The region evolved into the second largest industrial basin in continental Europe after the Ruhr. Nowadays, from the ‘normal’ ethnolinguistic perspective, it is popular to stress the mixed, Germanic-Slavic, character of Upper Silesia. But this approach is anachronistic, as at that time the main locus of people’s identity was religion, estates and loyalty to the monarchical ruler. From the religious vantage, Upper Silesia was homogenously Catholic, with Protestants (many of them conscripts from without Upper Silesia) accounting for a tenth of the population. However, the second half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century saw also the rise of the ethnolinguistic map as a new genre of political cartography, while on the other hand, it was decided to include in censuses the question about one’s language as the indicator of one’s nationality. The technologies of inventing (creating) nations, languages and nation-states were combined into a mutually reinforcing nexus that characterizes Central Europe’s socio-political modernity.\textsuperscript{20}

When probing into and using a given ethnolinguistic situation for nation-building, designers of census and map makers usually disregarded the phenomenon of multilingualism in standard languages and non-standard variants. State administration and elementary education for all, as increasingly geared to the model of etholinguistically defined national polity, required ‘a clarity’ on language use. It was decided that a person could fluently speak only a single language as his ‘mother tongue.’ The bilingual, Slavophone and German(ic)-speaking populations in northern West Prussia, southern East Prussia and in the borderland between Brandenburg and Saxony were thus classified as speaking, respectively, the languages of Kashubian, Mazurian and Sorbian. The similarly bilingual population in Upper Silesia was registered in official statistics as speaking either Polish or Moravian. This is the bureaucratic-cum-scholarly origin of the classificatory tradition that to this day defines Silesian as a dialect (\textit{gwara}) of the Polish language and Moravian as a dialect (\textit{nářečí}) of Czech.

In reality what underlies this understanding of the sociolinguistic situation in Upper Silesia is the largely arbitrary decision on the medium of education in elementary school. Until 1918 the Catholic and Protestant Churches ran the educational system in Prussia. The Breslau (Wrocław) bishop controlled schools in northern and central Upper Silesia,


\textsuperscript{19} For the sake of simplicity and given the required brevity of this article, I do not discuss the 18\textsuperscript{th}-century division of Silesia between Prussia and Vienna; or the Habsburgs’ crownland of Austrian Silesia, composed from the southernmost area of historical Upper Silesia and, in the west, of a tiny bit of historical Lower Silesia.

while the Moravian archbishop in the region’s southernmost area. In 1849-50 the former hierarch’s administration settled on Polish in their schools for Upper Silesia’s Slavophones, while the latter’s officialdom for the same purpose selected the local Slavic dialect that was printed in Fraktur (that is, Gothic script) and thus made into a separate language of Moravian. Obviously, these statistical ‘Polish- and Moravian-speakers’ of Upper Silesia usually spoke the very same dialect, only they happened to live on the different sides of the diocesan border that transected their region. Although the use of Polish and Moravian in Upper Silesia’s schools was largely discontinued after 1872-76, a tradition developed to label the bilingual population’s Slavophone speech in the Breslau Diocese as ‘Polish,’ despite the fact that the majority of them never identified either with the Polish language or the then nascent Polish national movement. They rather saw themselves as (Upper) Silesians, Catholics, Prussians and / or Germans. To the eye of Upper Silesia’s Slavophone, Poles lived across the border in Russia (that is, the Congress Kingdom of Poland) or in Austria (that is, Galicia).

After 1918, at the Paris Peace Conference, ethnolinguistic nationalism was accepted as the basis for the political reorganization of Central Europe. In line with this ideology, Upper Silesia was divided among Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, following the civil strife, the internationalization of the region and the plebiscite (1919-21). After the all too short period of relative democracy and, autonomy for Upper Silesia in Poland (1922-26) or democracy and self-rule in Germany (1922-33), relentless ethnolinguistic homogenization set in without much respect for the concerned populations’ wishes. Polish was purged from public life, official use and education in Germany’s section of Upper Silesia, while German from Poland’s share of the region. Germanization was facilitated by emphasizing that despite its Slavic character, Silesian was not a dialect of Polish. Rather, it was construed that the Silesians’ centuries-long participation in ‘German culture and civilization’ made their speech into a ‘culture dialect’ (Kulturmundart) of the German language, a Slavic (or Slavic-Germanic) dialect united with this language through shared German culture and values. During World War II, all of Upper Silesia reincorporated into Germany, the policy of Germanization was extended to the formerly Polish part of the region. The classificatory niceties were conveniently forgotten and Silesian was treated then as part of the Polish language that needed to be eradicated from German soil. After 1945, when most of the deutsche Ostgebiete (or ‘Recovered Territories’ in the language of Polish politics) passed to Poland, the entire Upper Silesia found itself within the Polish boundaries. Subsequently, wholesale

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Polonization replaced Germanization.\textsuperscript{25} The process was facilitated by the expulsion of the local elite defined as ‘indubitable Germans.’\textsuperscript{26}

Until the fall of communism Silesian was officially perceived as a dialect of Polish that in the process of modernization would finally disappear and be replaced by standard Polish.\textsuperscript{27} However, in practice, as was the case during the interwar period,\textsuperscript{28} teachers and officials saw Silesian as a ‘corrupt Polish’\textsuperscript{29} or even as a ‘dialect of German.’\textsuperscript{30} Hence, for the sake of Polonization, until the mid-1990s, in school during Polish lessons, Silesian-speaking children were taught to speak and write ‘correct Polish’ with the use of special textbooks for Silesian-speakers, which in their methodology and approach eerily reminded textbooks of Polish as a foreign language for Czech or Slovenian-speakers.\textsuperscript{31} During the communist times, as a concession to Silesian’s linguistic differences (but nevertheless from the ideological-cum-classificatory standpoint, it was still safely encased within the broader bracket of Polishdom), some collections of regional fairy-tales, stories and anecdotes were published with the use of elements of Silesian or in a strongly Polonized variant of this language or dialect, in both cases invariably with the employment of the standard Polish spelling.\textsuperscript{32} To my knowledge, the full lexical, syntactic and phonemic difference of Silesian was reflected only in a single scholarly publication that never entered the popular discourse.\textsuperscript{33} The sole book resembling everyday spoken Silesian that was more readily accessible was the 1974 Polish translation of the German-language novel on Upper Silesia by Janosch (pseudonym of Horst Eckert). He stems from Upper Silesia and became the most beloved children writer in West Germany. All the dialogs in the Polish edition of his book, though originally written in German, were translated into Silesian, not into Polish.\textsuperscript{34} At the very end of the


\textsuperscript{34} Janosch. 1974. \textit{Cholonek czyli Dobry Pan Bóg z gliny} [translated from the German by Leon Bielas]. Katowice: Śląsk.
The end of communism and the subsequent systemic transformation in Poland, Germany and across the entire former Soviet bloc also brought a change to Upper Silesia. In the 1991 Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Warsaw and Berlin jointly recognized the German minority in Upper Silesia. Previously the Polish stance had been that only 3,000 Germans had lived in Poland, although between 1950 and 1989, 1.23 million ethnic Germans (Aussiedlers, or ‘resettlers’) had left Poland for West Germany. The most substantial part of this forced emigration (ethnic cleansing), from 1950 to 1990, was composed from around 0.8 million Silesians (meaning here, indigenous inhabitants of Upper Silesia). The biggest waves of their departures to West Germany occurred in the late 1970s and the late 1980s.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, availing of the rapidly regained freedom of travel, Silesians began visiting relatives back in their old Heimat and in (West) Germany. The reestablished grassroots relations allowed for the swift development of economic, employment and cultural links. Bonn, having to deal with the sudden influx of Aussiedlers from the post-Soviet states and Romania, hoped that Silesians (especially from Opole Province, coterminous with the western half of Upper Silesia) would not follow suit. Warsaw also wanted to retain them in order to prevent an imminent demographic collapse in the area. To this end, in 1991 the German Consulate in Wrocław began issuing qualifying Silesians with German citizenship and passports, without the necessity of leaving for Germany, which earlier had been the basic requirement of this process. The applicants were not compelled to give up their Polish citizenship, either, which then was in blatant breach of both, German and Polish, law. As a result, about a quarter of a million Silesians living in Upper Silesia now hold dual German and Polish citizenship. This largely unreported development cushioned the postcommunist deindustrialization of Upper Silesia, especially in predominantly rural Opole Province. Tens of thousands of laid-off miners and steel mill workers immediately found seasonal work in Germany, and after the founding of the European Union in 1993, also farther afield, for example, in the Netherlands.

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The blooming of German minority organizations and their wide-ranging activities in Opole Province during the 1990s did not translate into any German-medium minority educational system. Hence, the use of German as a language of everyday communication was not revived even in the smallest Upper Silesian village, let alone in any urban neighborhoods. The oldest generation of Upper Silesia’s Germans who had finished several years of German school before 1945 could at long last freely converse and read in this language, alongside singing German hymns in church. Middle-aged seasonal workers acquired some working knowledge of German, but as many as two-thirds of Upper Silesia’s Germans see Silesian as their ‘mother tongue’ (first language), and almost all speak it on an everyday basis, unlike German or Polish. Hence, amongst family and in their ethnic neighborhoods, Upper Silesia’s Germans speak Silesian and only switch to (standard or Silesian- and German-inflected) Polish in office, school or when travelling outside their region.41

Due to the vagaries of history and German law, indigenous Upper Silesians from Katowice (Silesian) Province, that is, the eastern half of Upper Silesia, in most cases, were unable to acquire German / EU citizenship. It was they who felt the full brunt of the unemployment triggered by the postcommunist deindustrialization of their region synonymous with communist Poland’s heavy industry.42 The country’s mainstream parties showed no interest in their problems either. Warsaw left Upper Silesia and its inhabitants to their own devices. This led to the coalescence of the grassroots movement that aspires to gain autonomy for Upper Silesia and official recognition for the Silesians as a minority and for their Silesian language.43 The initial timeline of this process may be schematically sketched as leading from the founding of the Silesian Autonomy Movement (RAŚ, Ruch Autonomii Śląska) in 1990 to the establishment of the Association of People of Silesian Nationality (ZLNŚ, Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej) six years later. The Polish authorities’ repeated refusal of register the ZLNŚ led to a case against Poland in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which was adjudicated twice, in 2001 and 2004. This refusal of registration was not deemed technically illegal (though three judges issued a concurring opinion in which they enumerated their


reservations on this subject), but the Council of Europe obliged the Polish state to undertake a meaningful dialog with Silesian organizations and activists.

The Polish authorities have yet to embark on such a dialog, leaving just a few Polish scholars attempting a deepened analysis of the current Silesian national / ethnic / linguistic movement. Instead, at present a similar story of the Polish authorities’ refusal to register any national or ethnic Silesian organization is repeated in the case of the Association of Persons of Silesian Nationality (SONŚ, Stowarzyszenie Osób Narodowości Śląskiej). Established in 2011, initially SONŚ did not encounter any problems with registration because its founders, mindful of the ECHR’s aforementioned judgement, resigned in the organization’s charter from participating in any elections. However, already in 2013, SONŚ was declared illegal on the account of the use of the term ‘Silesian nationality’ in its name. According to the Polish authorities such entities as the Silesian nation (nationality, ethnic group or minority) or the Silesian language do not exist, hence organizations aspiring to represent the former or to cultivate the latter


cannot be registered.49 Most probably the case of SONŚ will be referred to the EHCR in late 2015 or 2016.50

During the communist period it was assumed that Poland, from the ethnolinguistic vantage point, was fully homogenous and the population was not asked about their national membership (nationality) or home/family language (‘mother tongue’).51 This approach changed radically after 1989, particularly due to the official recognition of several national minorities, especially the German minority that concentrates in Upper Silesia. Hence, the questions on nationality and language were included in the Polish postcommunist censuses of 200252 and 2011 (despite not being required by the European Union’s Eurostat statistical office, as is sometimes incorrectly maintained). Ironically, the returns showed that Silesians, numbering 0.85 million, are the largest minority in today’s Poland, while the more than half a million speakers of Silesian make it the largest minority language in the country.53 However, the Polish authorities disregard the results and ‘reinterpret’ (or rather falsify) all the declarations of Silesian nationality as declarations of Polish nationality, because the official doctrine is that Silesians are at most a regional branch of the Polish nation.54 A similar ‘reinterpretation’ (falsification) is applied to the declarations of Silesian as a home / family language, which are counted as declarations of Polish on the basis that officially Silesian is classified as a dialect of the Polish language.55

51 The questions on the population’s nationality, language and religion was included in Poland’s first postwar census of 1946 with an eye to identifying Germans who were expelled from Poland in line with the decisions of the Potsdam Agreement (see: Piotr Eberhardt. 1996. Między Rosją a Niemcami. Przemiany narodowościowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX w. Warsaw: PWN, p 127).
This persistently negative attitude of the Polish state administration (including, quite menacingly, the security forces) toward the Silesians and their aspirations amounts to a denial of the status of a subject of politics to this group of Polish citizens who see themselves to be speakers of their own Silesian language and members of their own (ethnic, ethnolinguistic) national minority (nation). This denial pushes the Silesians into a position of a passive object of politics, just as during most of the 20th century. I propose that this denial is in breach of the Polish Constitution and the basic principles of democracy. Not surprisingly, many Silesians dislike the situation and express their displeasure by joining RAŚ, SONŚ or the ZLNŚ. Some participate in numerous Silesian and Silesian-language forums on the web. A few authors also undertook the task of reinterpreting the past of Silesia from a Silesian national perspective. Their attempt at building a Silesian national master narrative is criticized as ‘unprofessional,’ because it follows the tenets of the ‘19th-century ethnonational model.’ However, to a degree this nascent Silesian national master narrative is a mere mirror reflection of the Polish


national master narrative that is unreflectively taught in school and widely accepted in public discourse to this day.\textsuperscript{61}

**Silesian Language?**

Many Silesians take offence that what they speak should be officially referred to in Polish as a *gwara*, associative of *gwar*, or Polish for ‘din’ or ‘noise.’\textsuperscript{62} Obviously, they do not see their own speech to be ‘unintelligible noise,’ though it may appear as such to a speaker of standard Polish from central Poland who may prefer not to make an effort to comprehend Silesian. What is more, the Polish term *dialect* (dialect) is commonly employed to refer to the regional speech of Poland’s other regions, be it in Mazovia or Wielkopolska (Great Poland). Inexplicably, journalists and even scholars prefer the generic term *gwara* instead of the more neutral *dialect* to speak about the ‘Silesian dialect.’ In Polish linguistic terminology *gwara* denotes the language form of a village or town (*not* of a region), that is, a ‘subdialect.’ Unfortunately, the term *gwara* is used also in the title of the large multivolume dialectal dictionary of the Silesian dialect that began publishing in 2000.\textsuperscript{63}

Just as there is no linguistic definition of ‘a language’ (*Einzelsprache*), linguists are unable to define the dichotomy of language and dialect either.\textsuperscript{64} Similar to the Western (in its origin) concept of *Einzelsprache*, the aforementioned dichotomy also evolved as an element of (initially European) politics. It is part and parcel of the power game, especially in Central Europe, where language continues to be the very basis of statehood and nationhood. The concepts of *Einzelsprache* and dialect belong to the realm of politics, alongside the rife belief that dialects are somehow ‘lower’ than languages, and as such dialects ‘must belong to’ languages, not the other way around. It is a clear (ab)use of lanaguage for furthering political ends. Obviously, the decision as to which language form (lect) is a dialect and which is a language is entirely arbitrary. It remains in the hands of those (governments, rulers, that is, political elites) who happen to hold power over a territory (‘state’) and its population (‘nation’). As a result, those whose lect is elevated to the status of a language speak ‘correctly,’ while the language of speakers of other lects is downgraded to the status of ‘dialects,’ perceived from above as ‘corrupted’ and ‘incorrect.’ To be fully accepted as ‘civilized’ and ‘educated,’ ‘speakers of dialects’ have to master the elite group’s lect, seen as a ‘proper language.’\textsuperscript{65} The

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\textsuperscript{61} Obviously, many ethnic Silesians are not interested in Silesian language and nationalism, and accept the status quo as it is. For them sometimes religion or other loci of identity are more important, while yet others prefer to side with German or Polish nationalism. Cf Tara Zahra. 2010. Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis (pp 93-119). *Slavic Review*. Vol 69, No 1; Tomasz Kamusella. 2016 [Forthcoming]. Upper Silesia in Modern Central Europe: On the Significance of the A-National / Non-National in the Age of Nations. In: James Bjork, Tomasz Kamusella, Anna Novikov and Timothy Wilson, eds. *Creating Nationality in Central Europe, 1880-1950: Modernity, Violence and (Be) Longing in Upper Silesia*. London: Routledge.


dynamics are not so insidious in polities where language does not constitute the basis of statehood legitimation, but in Central Europe it condemns ‘dialect-speakers’ to the unenviable position of second-class citizens.

Faced with this high political and social value placed on languages, apart from leaving for a non-ethnolinguistic polity (such as Britain), dialect-speakers have two basic options when wishing to gain full enjoyment of political rights in an ethnolinguistic nation-state. Firstly, they may acquiesce to the prevailing ethnolinguistic norm by acquiring the official (national) language (in addition to their first or community language). On the other hand, they may seek official recognition for their lect as a language. The former solution is more viable under authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, while the latter seems to be favored in democracies, where constitutions commonly forbid discrimination on the basis of language, race or religion.66

During the systemic transition after the end of communism, Silesians, in their region forgotten by the Polish government and the mainstream parties, initially decided to join the German minority. But soon the project of regional autonomy became more attractive to those who were unable to acquire German / EU citizenship. Next, in the late 1990s, in line with the ethnolinguistic model of gaining legitimacy in Central Europe, Silesian was proposed to be a language in its own right.

Some scholars noticed this tendency,67 but it took some time before a wider discussion emerged on the subject of Silesian as a language.68 In the first decade of the 21st

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century, the continuing disagreement over the status of Silesian led to the following three basic ways of defining it in an ethnonational manner. Firstly, those who identify themselves as Silesians (that is, members of the ethnonlinguistic nation by this name) see Silesian as a (Slavic) language in its own right. Secondly, Silesians who identify themselves as Poles (and/or members of the Silesian regional group of the Polish nation) perceive Silesian as a dialect of the Polish language. And last but not least, Silesians who identify themselves as Germans mostly use Silesian as a badge of their un-Polishness, while some, though more rarely, also perceive it possibly as a Germanic-Slavic dialect of the German language. But the German minority organizations and activists prefer to sideline the issue of Silesian, focusing fully on the German language, and at most on German-Polish bilingualism. Obviously, these three groups of Silesian-speakers are not hermetic, and their members often shift from one to another or may simultaneously identify with more than one group.

At present, the political-cum-ideological quarrel over the status of Silesian is limited to Silesians and Silesian Poles. The former hope for an official recognition of Silesian at least as a ‘regional language’ in emulation of such status that, in 2005, was already conferred on Kashubian in 2005 in line with the provisions of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages. On the contrary, Silesian Poles and Poland’s mainstream parties prefer that Silesian remains a dialect of Polish. Furthermore, in accordance with the logic of Central Europe’s ethnolinguistic nationalism, they see the other camp’s efforts to elevate Silesian to the status of a language as ‘seditious’ and ‘in

breach of Polish ‘raison d’état.’ 69 Notwithstanding the fact that the Polish Constitution defines the Polish nation purely in civic terms as all the Polish citizens, 70 the Polish authorities seem to agree with this position and continue withholding recognition from both the Silesian language and nation. 71

Faced with the state’s unfavorable attitude, the Silesians began developing their language and culture at the grassroots level as they saw fit. They could do so, unlike before 1989, because the Polish administration largely observes the rule of law and basic principles of democracy. Between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, several popular Silesian-Polish dictionaries were published, some of which were quite extensive. Initially, they referred to Silesian as a gwara (dialect) but then increasingly termed it a language. 72 In 2006, a modest dictionary appeared in which, for the first time ever, Silesian is paired with German and English. 73 But it was the publication of the multivolume dictionary of the Silesian dialect (thus far covering words from A to H), between 2001 and 2011 that decisively encouraged aspiring lexicographers and standardizers of the Silesian language in their efforts. 74 Recently, this newly regained confidence created a positive interest in Silesian elsewhere in Poland, which is catered for with popular dictionaries and conversation books of Silesian targeted mainly at Polish-speakers. 75

In 1998 Marek Szołtysek began successfully publishing his own books on Silesian history language and culture in the form of lavishly illustrated albums. His albums are frequently purchased by tourists and locally in Upper Silesia as first communion and birthday presents. The main attraction is that the author writes in Silesian, but in a slightly Polonized variety and mainly with the use of standard Polish spelling, which

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makes the books immediately intelligible to non-Silesian-speakers.\(^{76}\) Recently, he also translated into Silesian the most beloved collections of Polish children poems by Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa.\(^{77}\)

During the 1990s, the Polish authorities still decisively influenced the cultural production available in Silesian. They continued to treat Silesian culture in a folkloristic (that is, colonial\(^ {78}\)) manner, or at best portrayed the Silesian language as a ‘funny lingo’ good only for telling jokes and anecdotes.\(^ {79}\) This attitude was inherited from the communist times, when for instance, feature films with the use of Silesian had to be either brashly patriotic or focus on low life comedy\(^ {80}\) (though there were some rare exceptions even prior to 1989, especially during the liberalization of the Solidarity period in 1980-81\(^ {81}\)). Unfortunately, Jan Kidawa Błoński’s stunning fresco on the fate of the Silesians from the 1930s through the early 1990s, with the participation of Poland’s then most popular actors unfortunately has failed to register both with the Polish and Silesian public. The film is not even available on DVD.\(^ {82}\) Only a decade later, Lech Majewski’s movie of ethereal beauty, but safely removed from the political reality of present-day Silesia and Poland, gained a considerable following.\(^ {83}\) Meanwhile, the doyen of Polish filmmaking, Kazimierz Kutz, who stems from Upper Silesia, continued writing his region and the


\(^{83}\) Lech Majewski. 2001 [Feature film]. Angelus. Warsaw: Filmcontract Ltd.
Silesians into the Polish postcommunist national master narrative. But importantly, in the television series of 22 conversations with renowned figures from Upper Silesia, he did introduce Silesian as the medium of discussion. (Tellingly, the broadcasting of this series was limited to the territory of Upper Silesia.) And in his retirement, Kutz reinvented himself as a politician championing, at the state level (namely, in the Polish Senate) Silesian culture and language, if not Silesian nationalism. But the Polish political establishment just keeps ignoring his principled pronouncements on the issues. Interestingly, the Upper Silesian Catholic Church, which in the 1990s stood up for the use of German in liturgy and pastoral services for the German minority, now keeps its distance from the Silesian language, though some sermons are infrequently delivered in Silesian.

The 1990s marked the rise of *Geschichtspolitik* ('politics of history') across postcommunist Europe as an important basis for legitimizing politics. The Silesians and most Upper Silesia's Germans and indigenous Poles rejected the new centralist and homogenized Polish national narrative, which did not espouse the specificity of the postwar fate of their parents and grandparents. In 1945 tens of thousands of the inhabitants of Upper Silesia had been rounded up and sent to the Soviet Union or incarcerated across their own region, despite the official view that they were ethnic Poles hidden 'behind the thin veneer of imposed Germanness.' Numerous books appeared on these events and on the turning of former Nazi concentration camps into Soviet and Polish camps for Upper Silesians, including the infamous Auschwitz / Oświęcim extermination camp. Whatever the differences might split asunder indigenous Silesians


of various identity, national and linguistic persuasions, soon an agreement emerged that the events amounted to an ‘Upper Silesian Tragedy,’ that must be commemorated, so that it is never repeated again. The Upper Silesian Tragedy became their shared basis of the regional remembrance of the 20th century.\footnote{Warsaw seems to have accepted this development and recently even began espousing it.\footnote{This is as much at present (that is, in 2015) the Polish authorities are ready to concede to the Silesians’ wishes and needs. The Silesian language, let alone the Silesian (national) minority, remains outside the pale of the Polish political correctness nowadays.}}\footnote{It is worth noting that, at the turn of the 21st century, authors writing in Silesian began to express their views and concerns through the genre of plays\footnote{The full variety of genres used for writing}. The Silesian-speaking public at large replied enthusiastically to this novel trend, writing more plays for popular radio competitions\footnote{The Silesian-language play Polterabend was successfully staged in Katowice and televised for country-wide consumption.}. Stanisław Mutz’s Silesian-language play Polterabend was successfully staged in Katowice and televised for country-wide consumption.\footnote{In 2008 and 2010 Alojzy Lysko followed with his sprawling four-volume novel based on the wartime fate of his father. In 2014, he added another volume to it, this time paying attention to the fate of his mother who had waited for the return of her husband until her death.}}\footnote{The Silesian Tragedy became their shared basis of agreement emerged that it is never repeated again. Warsaw seems to have accepted this development and recently even began espousing it. This is as much at present (that is, in 2015) the Polish authorities are ready to concede to the Silesians’ wishes and needs. The Silesian language, let alone the Silesian (national) minority, remains outside the pale of the Polish political correctness nowadays.} Warsaw seems to have accepted this development and recently even began espousing it. This is as much at present (that is, in 2015) the Polish authorities are ready to concede to the Silesians’ wishes and needs. The Silesian language, let alone the Silesian (national) minority, remains outside the pale of the Polish political correctness nowadays.

It is worth noting that, at the turn of the 21st century, authors writing in Silesian began to express their views and concerns through the genre of plays. The Silesian-speaking public at large replied enthusiastically to this novel trend, writing more plays for popular radio competitions. Stanisław Mutz’s Silesian-language play Polterabend was successfully staged in Katowice and televised for country-wide consumption. In 2008 and 2010 Alojzy Lysko followed with his sprawling four-volume novel based on the wartime fate of his father. In 2014, he added another volume to it, this time paying attention to the fate of his mother who had waited for the return of her husband until her death.

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in Silesian also includes poetry. 97 Strangely, poetry is not of utmost importance in this case, though the genre tends to dominate among writers in other minority and regional languages across Europe.

In 2003, the former Solidarity dissident, Andrzej (Andrzej) Roczniok, founded the Narodowa Oficyna Śląska / Ślōnsko Nacyjno Ôficyno, or the first-ever publishing house that specializes in books on Silesia and in Silesian. Two years later he translated a popular graphic novel into Silesian,98 and in 2007 he began publishing the Ślōnsko Nacyjjo (Silesian Nation), which is the first-ever bilingual, Polish and Silesian, periodical.99 The regional authorities in Katowice noticed the growing attraction of the Silesian language and allowed Roczniok and a linguist from the University of Silesia, Jolanta Tambor, to organize two ground-breaking high-profile conferences on the standardization of this language in 2008 and 2009 with the participation of regional and state politicians.100 The hope was that, like Kashubian, Silesian would be soon recognized as a regional language in Poland, but as yet to no avail.101 Meanwhile optimists proposed the introduction of lessons of Silesian language and culture to schools across Upper Silesia as part of the regional education package.102 The program was readily supported by two organizations established in 2007 for the sake of protecting and cultivating the Silesian language, namely, Danga (‘Rainbow’ in Silesian) and Pro Loquela Silesiana (‘For the Sake of Silesian’ in Latin).103 In 2009 the standardized spelling of Silesian was adopted,104 and two primers of Silesian for children were swiftly published with its use.105 Interestingly, only at this moment do writers and publishers of Silesian-language books begin to use Silesian in the titles of their works. Earlier, almost exclusively Polish had been employed in this function. The standardization of other elements of Silesian continues as an important project that attracts attention and efforts of many Silesian and Silesian-language activists to this

97 Cf Karol Gwóźdz. 2010. Myśli ukryte. Šymjanowice Ślůnskje [that is, Siemianowice Śląskie]: Wydawnictwo "Hologram".

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2008 was a year of high hopes for recognizing Silesian as a language also on account of two further events. A year earlier, in 2007, in reply to Andrzej Rocznik and Grzegorz Kozubek’s (initially, the editor of Ślůnsko Nacyjo) application, SIL (tasked with registering the world’s all languages in line with the ISO 639-3 standard) recognized Silesian and conferred the szl code on it. News about this development began to spread a year later, in 2008. This code makes it possible to employ Silesian in cyberspace as any other fully-fledged language. For instance, at present, the Silesian-language interface is prepared for Facebook and for Samsung smartphones. However, thus far, the most important outcome of the international recognition of Silesian has been the founding of the Silesian-language Wikipedia (Ślůnsko Wikipedyjo) in 2008. Two years later, in 2010, this Silesian Wikipedia adopted the 2009 standard spelling of Silesian, though many of its articles still remain in the old spelling. As a result the Ślůnsko Wikipedyjo is bi-orthographic.

With 3,628 articles under its belt, the Silesian Wikipedia ranks as the 176th largest Wikipedia among the total of the world’s 291 Wikipedias in various languages. As such the Ślůnsko Wikipedyjo is a middling resource but, for instance, bigger than the Maltese Wikipedia. However, out of the world’s 7,100 recognized languages, Silesian belongs

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to the extremely small group of as few as 300 languages (or a mere 4 per cent of the globe’s languages) in which a considerable array of publications and audiovisual language resources are available. 117 Taking into consideration the number of speakers, Silesian is a member of the category of 1,336 languages with more than 100,000 speakers. Hence, about 5,800 languages have fewer speakers than Silesian. 118 These examples amply show that it is politics (that is, ethnonationalism) only which prevents the recognition of Silesian as a language in Poland. To take at the face value the Polish administration’s claims that Silesian cannot be recognized as a language, due to its underdevelopment in the sphere of grammar standardization and writing, this stance entails a proposal that in the world there are not more than about 200 languages meriting status as ‘a language’. 119 Perhaps, the Polish authorities would rather not stand by this logical – though highly paradoxical – conclusion of their line of thinking on the issue of the Silesian language. Some scholars and legal experts already take note of the problem and propose that the current situation with the obstinate non-recognition of Silesian as a language appears to be an unwarranted imposition from above, in breach of the constitutional and democratic rights of the Silesian-speaking citizens of Poland. 120

Perhaps the undeclared hope on the part of the Polish authorities is that with time, the Silesian language and Silesian national minority (nation) activists, alongside their supporters, will tire in the face of the cold shoulder repeatedly given to them by state offices and courts of law. It is hoped that they will eventually desist, while the ECHR and other European institutions will keep looking the other way. Although it must be noted that some leading politicians’ offensive statements on the Silesians and their language are not really helpful in this regard. 121 (On the other hand the Polish Prime Minister’s


2015 referral to the Silesians as a nation turned out to be a mere slip of the tongue.\textsuperscript{122} Among others, this hope is derived from the example of the trajectory of the Moravian and Silesian national and linguistic movement(s) across the border in the Czech Republic. These movements enjoyed a brief heyday in the 1990s, but rapidly declined into near-obscurity at the beginning of the 21st century.\textsuperscript{123} However, the difference is that Prague never mounted any problems with the registration of Moravian and Silesian parties, whose representatives were successfully elected to the Czech Parliament.\textsuperscript{124} Afterward the novelty of ethnically non-Czech parties soon waned. But in the Polish case, it is the proverb ‘the forbidden fruit is the sweetest’ that more aptly encapsulates the nature of the current stalemate.

**Conclusion: The Standard Silesian Language Nowadays**

In 2009 Andrzej Rocznioł published the first-ever book in standard Silesian spelling. It happened to be a collection of poems by the famous poet Óndra Łysohorsky (pseudonym of Erwin Goj), who during the 1930s in Czechoslovakia, singlehandedly had forged a literary language\textsuperscript{125} from the Slavic dialect spoken in the Moravian-Upper Silesian borderland. Łysohorsky named this language Lachian. With this new edition of Łysohorsky’s poems, Rocznioł potentially claimed the literary tradition of Lachian for standard Silesian.\textsuperscript{126} The following year, in 2010, Rocznioł brought out the third and final volume of his Polish-Silesian dictionary, which is the first-ever one in the standard Silesian spelling.\textsuperscript{127} Although some other publishers produced a couple books in standard Silesian (especially the SÓNŚ leader, Pejter [Piotr] Długosz),\textsuperscript{128} for better or worse, Rocznioł’s publishing house is still leading the way.\textsuperscript{129}


Perhaps fittingly, the first academic article in Silesian that appeared in 2011 is devoted to the standardization of this language. However, regarding scholarly texts in this language, the pride of place belongs to the Silesian-language abstract of Dariusz Jerzyński’s monograph on the politician Józef Koźdoń (who made his career by establishing and leading popular Silesian national parties during the first half of the 20th century in Austria-Hungary and Czechoslovakia). In reality, this abstract amounts to a proper learned article on the volume’s subject. In 2009 Silesian Wikipedists developed the first-ever map of Europe in Silesian, which six years later was joined by another in the standard Silesian spelling. Significantly for the development of the Silesian language, in 2013, Zbigniew Kadłubek’s Silesian translation of Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* was published in standard spelling. In the same year the world-renowned journal of Slavic studies *Die Welt der Slaven* brought out a comprehensive article on the Silesian language, its history and standardization. Also in 2013, the new regional periodical *Fabryka Silesia*, founded in Katowice by the recently deceased Jan Lewandowski, triggered a broad public discussion on the Silesian language, its status and use. Two years later, in 2015, SONŚ supported the publication of a history of Western philosophy in Silesian, Aleksandr Dulichenko, the most prominent authority on ‘Slavic micro-languages,’ who used to teach at Opole University in Upper Silesia, considers Silesian to be a language of this type. Polish students of pedagogy – who earlier, in an eerily colonial fashion, insisted on teaching ‘correct Polish’ to Silesian-speaking schoolchildren and often encouraged them to despise their own language –


now take care to espouse Silesian as a valuable element of the educational process. However, this new reconciliatory attitude is rarely acted upon; I have not heard of any schools where primers of the Silesian language are in official use.

During the first half of the 2010s, the playwright and director, Ingmar Villqist (pseudonym of Jarosław Świerszcz), began probing into the difficult postwar period in Upper Silesia with the realistic use of Silesian, German and Polish on the stage. A similar effect of Upper Silesian multilingualism was achieved by Stefan Twardoch in his popular novels (significantly, he uses the standard Silesian orthography in Drach). This renowned author, whose opinions are readily reported in state-wide newspapers and periodicals, does not mince words when criticizing Poland for not recognizing the Silesians and their language. And on the basis of the 2012 campaign to encourage the use of Silesian in public and local self-governmental offices, in 2014, Pro Loquela Silesiana (led by Mirosław Syniawa) with the use of a grant from the European Economic Area funds carried out a program aimed at counteracting the ‘soft discrimination’ suffered in Poland by Silesian-speakers. The program’s main outcome is a series of video clips in Silesian that embolden and urge Silesian-speakers to use their language in all situations of public life. I only wish that the Polish administration would take note. Warsaw’s persistent denial of the existence of the Silesians and their language definitely does not constitute a good democratic practice.

This staunchly negative official attitude toward the Silesian language caused many enterprises across Upper Silesia to explicitly forbid their employees from communicating with customers in Silesian. This recent development follows the broader practice of def

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144 Cf Przemysław Jedlecki. 2014. Szczepan Twardoch: "Pier...l się, Polsko". Jest doniesienie.


146 Cf and periodicals, This popular novels with the use of a grant from the European Economic Area funds carried out a program aimed at counteracting the 'soft discrimination' suffered in Poland by Silesian-speakers. The program’s main outcome is a series of video clips in Silesian that embolden and urge Silesian-speakers to use their language in all situations of public life. I only wish that the Polish administration would take note. Warsaw’s persistent denial of the existence of the Silesians and their language definitely does not constitute a good democratic practice.
facto banning German from public spaces across the region\(^{151}\) (even including the localities where ethnic Germans constitute the absolute majority of the inhabitants\(^{152}\)), despite the fact that it is officially recognized as a minority language in Poland, and some communes are even officially bilingual in Polish and German.\(^{153}\) The continuing fear of speaking German outside one’s own family, instilled in Poland’s Upper Silesia after 1945, prevents most of the very few remaining native speakers of the German language from using it in public (apart from church).\(^{154}\) Their reluctance to exercise the democratic right to speak in their native language was – in the native speakers’ eyes – amply vindicated by the Polish nationalist skinheads’ brutal foray into the Upper Silesian village of Dziewkowice in 1994,\(^{155}\) the state-wide outcry at the attempted opening of the third-ever in Poland (partly) bilingual (Polish-German) minority elementary school in 2012,\(^{156}\) or by the to this day unexplained murder or assassination of a highly popular German / Silesian local politician in 2014.\(^{157}\) The Germanophone / ethnic German community overlaps, to a considerable degree, with the Silesian speech community, which brushes off the negative attitude toward German onto Silesian, as well. This semi-identification of Silesian with German is facilitated by the old prejudiced view, which persists among the Polish (Polish-speaking) majority, namely, that Silesian is ‘Polish corrupted by German,’ or even a dialect of German.

The never-ending ethnon linguistic quest for the utopia of full ‘national purity’ (that is, homogeneity) is hard to marry with democratic pluralism and remains highly contradictory to the logic of globalization and of borderless travel in the European Union. Since 2004, over two million Polish citizens have availed themselves of the latter possibility, settling mainly in Britain and Ireland.\(^{158}\) (Nowadays as many people speak


Polish in Britain on an everyday basis, as Silesian in Poland, that is well over half a million.\textsuperscript{159} Ethnically, linguistically and culturally nearby Slovakia or well-to-do Slovenia are much closer to Poland. But apart from economic considerations, what makes Britain and Ireland attractive to the aforementioned Polish migrants is established democracy and the considerably wider range of individual freedoms than what these migrants might enjoy back in Poland. Among others, without any intervention on part of the state administration or law, in Britain and Ireland one can employ whatever language or script happens to be of use for one's business, education or personal life. Should a person encounter linguistic problems when in hospital, court of law, or dealing with municipal, regional or state administration, required information in print or orally is made readily available in tens of languages, for instance, in 57 languages by the Dundee City Council. Among others, in Basque, Indonesian, Haitian Creole or Yiddish, as well as in Polish.\textsuperscript{160} By contrast, the municipalities of towns and cities in Poland stick exclusively to the Polish language, though at times offer some general information in English, French or German, but exclusively for tourists, not for residents.\textsuperscript{161} This attitude is eerily in step with the general Polish unwillingness to accept ethnically non-Polish immigrants and refugees, as evidenced by grassroots and some politicians’ recent negative reactions to the need of shouldeing part of the burden of the 2015 European refugee crisis.\textsuperscript{162} It is proposed that such ethnically non-Polish newcomers would ‘endanger’ the grail of ethnolinguistic homogeneity,\textsuperscript{163} while public figures calling for accepting refugees in the name of liberal values are threatened, even with death.\textsuperscript{164}

The solution to the limitations that ethnolinguistic nationalism has imposed on Central Europe since the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century lies ‘in the wild and exuberant jostling of peoples and


races that [...] became the new world we now take [in the United States or Britain] for granted."\textsuperscript{165}

\textit{Cill Rìmhinn / Saunt Aundraes / St Andrews}
\textit{September-October 2015}