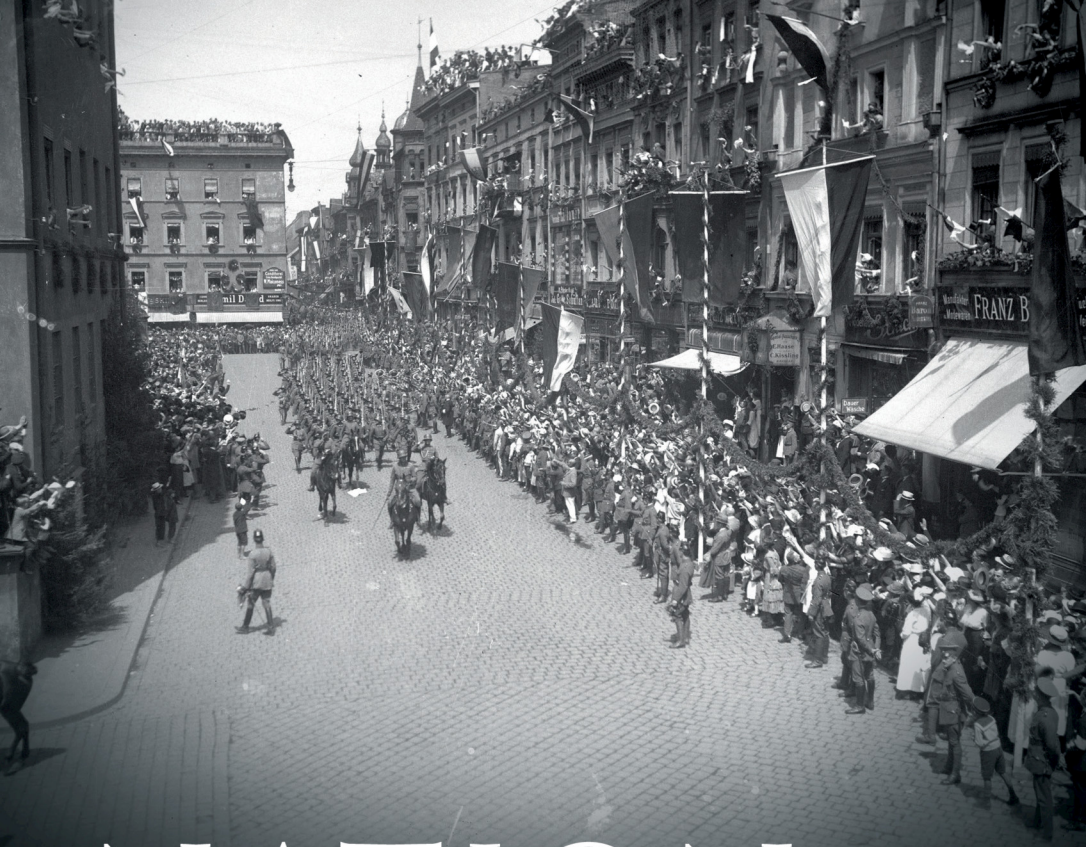

NATION and LOYALTY

in a German-Polish Borderland

Upper Silesia, 1848–1960

BRENDAN KARCH

Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland

In the bloody twentieth-century battles over Central Europe's borderlands, Upper Silesians stand out for resisting pressure to become loyal Germans or Poles. This work traces nationalist activists' efforts to divide Upper Silesian communities, which were bound by their Catholic faith and bilingualism, into two "imagined" nations. These efforts, which ranged from the 1848 Revolution to the aftermath of World War II, are charted by Brendan Karch through the local newspapers, youth and leisure groups, neighborhood parades, priestly sermons, and electoral outcomes. As locals weathered increasing political turmoil and violence in the German-Polish contest over their homeland, many crafted a national ambiguity that allowed them to pass as members of either nation. In prioritizing family, homeland, village, class, or other social ties above national belonging, a majority of Upper Silesians adopted an instrumental stance toward nationalism. The result was a feedback loop between national radicalism and national skepticism.

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Note on Translations and Place Names

This book portrays many local cities and villages whose names have no standard English translation. In the interest of clarity and conciseness, I elected to use the German name for towns when they are under German rule, and Polish names when under Polish rule. Thus, the same town may appear under different names. The first reference of each place in every chapter includes the alternative name in parentheses. For the sake of brevity, footnotes only use the name that best leads the researcher to the source.

Just as place names were contested, so too were the names of many individuals – often with different spellings and first names in German and Polish. I tried, in all cases where I have sufficient evidence, to reflect the individual's wishes. In many cases, it was difficult or impossible to establish the person's wishes, and thus I chose to use names from archival and printed sources as they appear, while editing for clarity and continuity.

Finally, many of the Polish newspaper articles cited in this study were most readily available through German administrative translations in the archives. While this resulted in the less-than-ideal practice of indirect translation, I hope the weight of this evidence outweighs any translation concerns. I noted all references where this is the case.

Abbreviations

AAN	Archiwum Akt Nowych (Polish Central Archives of Modern Records)
AAW	Archiwum Archidiecezjalne we Wrocławiu (Archdiocese Archives in Wrocław)
ADO	Archiwum Diecezjalne w Opolu (Diocese Archives in Opole)
AMO	Acta Miasta Opola (Opole City Archives)
APO	Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu (National Archive in Opole)
APW	Archiwum Państwowe we Wrocławiu (National Archive in Wrocław)
BArch	Bundesarchiv (German Federal Archives)
BdO	Bund der Oberschlesier/Związek Górnoślązaków (Union of Upper Silesians)
BDO	Bund Deutscher Osten (League for the German East)
CZA	Central Zionist Archive
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront (German Labor Front)
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei (German Democratic Party)
DNVP	Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party)
GstA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Secret State Archives)
IAC	Inter-Allied Commission
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (German Communist Party)

KVP	Katholische Volkspartei (Catholic People's Party, the Weimar-era Center Party in Upper Silesia)
LNA	League of Nations Archive
LNOJ	League of Nations Official Journal
MAP	Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej (Ministry of Public Administration)
MSZ	Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
MZO	Ministerstwo Ziem Odzyskanych (Ministry of Reclaimed Territories)
NO	Nadprezydium Opole (Provincial President in Opole)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (German Nazi Party)
OstDok	Ostdokumentation (Documents on Expulsion from Eastern Lands)
PiS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice Party)
PKP	Polski Komisariat Plebiscytowy (Polish Plebiscite Commission)
POW	Polska Organizacja Wojskowa Górnego Śląska (Polish Military Organization of Upper Silesia)
PSL	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)
PPR	Polska Partia Robotnicza (Polish Workers' Party)
PPRNwO	Prezydium Powiatowej Rady Narodowej w Opolu (County Presidium of the National Council in Opole)
PPS	Polska Partia Socjalistyczna (Polish Socialist Party)
PUR	Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny (National Repatriation Office)
PWRNwO	Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w Opolu (Provincial Presidium of the National Council in Opole)
RO	Rejencja Opolska (Opole District Administration)
ROBP	Rejencja Opolska Biuro Prezydialne (Opole District Governor's Office)
SA	Sturmabteilung
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
SPO	Starostwo Powiatowe w Opolu (County Administration in Opole)
SS	Schutzstaffel
USMO	Urząd do Spraw Mniejszości w Opolu (Minority Office in Opole)

USPD	Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany)
VVHO	Vereingte Verbände Heimattreuer Oberschlesier (United Associations of Upper Silesians True to Heimat)
ZPwN	Związek Polaków w Niemczech (Union of Poles in Germany)

Introduction

Central Europe is dominated today by homogeneous nation-states, its demography molded by the twentieth-century catastrophe of ethnic cleansing. Few places reflect this legacy more concretely than Poland. The country was transformed from a stateless, partitioned nation in 1900 into a multiethnic state by 1920, and then into a practically homogeneous nation-state after World War II. In the diverse Second Polish Republic of the 1920s–1930s, just over two-thirds of its population was Polish. Its largest minorities included Ukrainians or Belorussians at 17 percent, Jews at 9 percent, and Germans at 2.3 percent.[1] But with the cataclysm of the 1940s, Nazi and Soviet occupiers, working at times with Polish ethnonationalists and anti-Semites, violently remade Poland into its current form: its Jews murdered in the Holocaust, its territory shifted westward by Stalin, its Germans expelled to make way for forced Polish resettlers, and its remaining Ukrainians dispersed into Poland's interior.[2] Today, nearly

[1] These figures, based on native language, are notoriously unreliable, due to a significant presence of non-nationalized *tutejszy* (literary, "of here"), especially in eastern Poland, and pressure from census takers to increase the numbers of Polish speakers. See Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 36–37.

[2] The Holocaust literature is too vast to cite here. For a work that considers the expulsion of Germans and the resettlement of Poles into western territories as part of the same historical process, see Philipp Ther, *Deutsche und polnische Vertriebene: Gesellschaft und Vertriebenenpolitik in der SBZ/DDR und in Polen, 1945 – 1956* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998). Among the Ukrainians who remained in Poland's redrawn borders after 1945, nearly 200,000 were expelled in 1947 away from their eastern Polish homelands to scattered settlements in central and western Poland. See Marek Jasiak, "Overcoming Ukrainian Resistance: The Deportations of Ukrainians within Poland in 1947" in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic*

95 percent of residents identify themselves as exclusively Polish in ethnic terms.[3]

Amid the smattering of national minorities remaining today in Poland, the largest group, largely unknown outside the country, are Silesians (*Ślązacy)*.[4] In 2011, more than 800,000 individuals identified themselves as Silesian, around half of whom co-identified as both Polish and Silesian. The vast majority are clustered in south-central Poland, around the Katowice industrial conurbation, in the historical region of Upper Silesia.[5] (Practically all Silesians trace their heritage to Upper Silesia, rather than its westerly neighbor Lower Silesia.) Like Poland's other small minority groups, these Upper Silesians are also a historical residue of Poland's violent demographic revolution. But whereas national strife ultimately erased the presence of most Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians in Poland, it *created* the presence of Silesians.

This group emerged in Poland not through expulsions or resettlements, but rather through the regional invention of the very category of the Upper Silesian. Before 1945, Upper Silesia was a borderland region split among Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, and before 1918, a region belonging mainly to Prussia, tucked into its eastern fringes facing the Russian and

Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948 (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 173–194.

[3] Główny Urząd Statystyczny, *Ludność. Stan i struktura demograficzno-społeczna – NSP 2011*, Warszawa 2013. http://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/ludnosc-stan-i-struktura-demograficzno-spoleczna-nsp-2011,16,1.html. Last accessed May 15, 2018.

[4] The use of the term "minority" to designate Upper Silesians remains contested within Polish political discourse. The Polish government, according to its official bulletin on "National and Ethnic Minorities," fails to recognize Upper Silesians as either a national or ethnic minority, despite recognition of far smaller regional minorities such as the Tartars and Lemkos. Nor is Upper Silesian recognized as a regional dialect; only Kashub earns this distinction. The lack of recognition is justified by Silesians' similarity to Poles – the minority's ethnicity and language deemed a subgroup of those of Poles and a dialect of Polish. Fears in Warsaw over Silesian demands for widespread political autonomy are likely the underlying motivator for this nonrecognition. See Tomasz Kamusella, "Poland and the Silesians: Minority Rights a La Carte," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 11 (2012): 42.

[5] *Raport z wyników województwa opolskiego: Narodowy spis powszechny ludności i mieszkań 2011*. Accessed April 3, 2018 at http://opole.stat.gov.pl/publikacje-852/raport-z-wynikow-w-wojewodztwie-opolskim—narodowy-spis-powszechny-ludnosci-i-mieszkan-2011-1077/. The 2011 census allowed for primary and secondary ethno-national identification; 418,000 identified primarily as Silesians (of whom 362,000 identified *solely* as Silesian); 391,000 chose Silesian as a secondary identification, the vast majority of them identifying primarily as Polish.

Habsburg Empires.[6] Yet prior to the late nineteenth century, most residents of this region would not have identified themselves as Upper Silesians. Only through German-Polish nationalist competition, territorial conquest, partitions, bloody uprisings, and ethnic cleansing from the late 1800s through the 1940s did local citizens of this borderland come to see or understand themselves as Upper Silesians. The tumultuous political changes that turned this Imperial borderland into an indisputably Polish territory after 1945 thus also created the conditions in which the Upper Silesian minority – neither fully German nor Polish – was called into existence.

What created Upper Silesians as a distinct category of people? The region possessed two unique qualities within Central Europe that proved essential preconditions. First, Upper Silesia has long been home to an overwhelming Catholic majority, hovering near 90 percent in the past two centuries. Crucially, confessional loyalties crossed linguistic lines: German and Polish speakers prayed in the same churches. In most neighboring borderland regions, in contrast, Germans were typically Protestant, and Poles Catholic. But in Upper Silesia, confessional solidarity blurred national boundaries. Second, a majority spoke a Polish-leaning dialect known as *schlonsak*, which combined western Slavic grammar and structure with a smattering of Germanic vocabulary. Moreover, a significant portion of *schlonsak* speakers were at least minimally bilingual in German.[7] Both the regional dialect and Catholic practice thus tested the bounds of ethnonational categorization, making it more difficult to appropriate locals as either fully German or Polish. One important work in particular, by James Bjork, argues for the overriding importance of these Catholic bonds in inhibiting the Polish and German nationalist projects in Upper Silesia.[8]

While these regional particularities were essential, the making of Upper Silesians was driven primarily by national strife in Central Europe from

[6] This work is wholly concerned with German Silesia. Austrian Silesia – the slice that remained in Austria after Frederick II snatched away most of Silesia for Prussia in 1740–1742 – follows a different historical trajectory, despite similarities in ethnic makeup and national ambiguity.

[7] On the structure of the *schlonsak* language, and the politics of its construction, see Kevin Hannan, *Borders of Language and Identity in Teschen Silesia* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

[8] James E. Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). Another substantial work arguing for Catholicism as a buffer against nationalist projects, especially for the interwar period, is Guido Hitze, *Carl Ulitzka (1873–1953), oder, Oberschlesien zwischen den Weltkriegen* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2002).

the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. During these decades, ethno-territorial struggles encompassed the endlessly diverse macro region of Central and Eastern Europe. Activists and states fought to enclose territories and appropriate the people within them for their national projects. Czech, Polish, and German nationalists (among others) fought to establish Czech, Polish, and German states and, just as importantly, to awaken their populations to their respective national loyalties.[9] As multinational empires gave way to ethnic nation-states, radical visions of national homogeneity in Central Europe accelerated into the singular bloodshed and terror of the mid-twentieth century. But Upper Silesia proves a rare case of the partial failure of national homogenization. In particular, nationalist activists and state bureaucracies failed, despite zealous efforts, to compel Upper Silesians into becoming durably loyal Germans or Poles.

This book explains that failure and draws some implications for the study of nationalism more broadly. The following chapters hone in on the conflicts between German or Polish nationalist activists and state actors on the one side and those locals in Upper Silesia skeptical of these dueling national projects on the other side. Nationalist activists escalated strife in the region through a series of movements and regime changes from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, ultimately using mass violence to advance their utopian goals of ethnic homogeneity. Upper Silesians weathered extreme political instability from the 1860s through the 1950s, subject to the rule of Prussia, the German Empire, the League of Nations, Weimar Germany, the Second Polish Republic, Nazi Germany, and communist Poland.

Throughout this strife, a majority of Upper Silesians proved resistant to activists who tried to nationalize them. Local citizens instead navigated a century of mass politics, world wars, mass murder, and expulsions by intentionally crafting their own national ambiguity. By passing as loyal Germans or as loyal Poles under extremist regimes, many were able to escape

[9] Key works pointing to the explicit role of activists (and state actors) in nationalization include Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

the worst excesses of violence. As this work argues, nationalist activists and those skeptical of national commitment became entangled in a feedback loop. Upper Silesians' wavering commitment to these national projects prompted frustrated activists to adopt increasingly harsher measures and rhetoric. With both Polish and German nationalists turning toward extremism by the 1930s, national loyalties became less attractive to Upper Silesians. Locals began hedging their bets against regime change by holding on to their bilingual, Catholic communal ties. This instrumental attitude toward the German or Polish nations only further convinced nationalists of the need for forcible racial separation. Frustrated by popular apathy, Nazi and Polish activists in the 1930s–1940s used increasing repression to achieve their visions. Thus arose the feedback loop, in which national radicalism and national skepticism reinforced each other. Today's self-identified Upper Silesians are the living remnants of this historical struggle.

To understand this fraught process of turning real communities into "imagined" national ones, it is necessary to think small: to hone in on the everyday social conflicts that bred individual loyalties, or non-loyalties, to the nation. I thus focus on a single town and its surrounding county, Oppeln (Opole in Polish). This mid-sized district capital lay in the agricultural western stretches of Upper Silesia.[10] As a city of civil servants, Oppeln had a strong German character. But travel just outside the town borders, and one encountered a network of villages dominated by *schlonsak* speakers, who generally considered their tongue a variation of Polish. Unlike in the Posen region to the north, in Upper Silesia there was no native Polish nobility or intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. Almost all Polish speakers in Upper Silesia were farmers, artisans, workers, or priests. Polish nationalism was thus destined to be a movement of social upstarts, or outside activists. The Oppeln area was also a world apart from the eastern industrial stretches of Upper Silesia, which lay some 80 kilometers to the southeast. Smokestacks, coal mines, shantytowns, and worker unrest defined eastern Upper Silesia. But the rural Oppeln area remained socially placid by comparison. This relatively quiet and understudied corner of Upper Silesia, composed of around 200,000 inhabitants by 1939, thus makes an excellent test case for creating national loyalties.[11]

[10] Oppeln will be referred to by its German name during periods of German or League of Nations rule, and as Opole for periods of Polish rule. The same standard will be applied to other place names for which there are no English equivalents.

[11] "Die Bevölkerung des Deutschen Reiches nach den Ergebnissen der Volkszählung 1939." *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches* 552/1, 56. These figures combine the *Stadtkreis* and *Landkreis* Oppeln. In 1890, the same region had around 122,000 residents.

Nationalist activists were forced to infiltrate tight-knit villages and scramble long-standing communal ties. In their efforts to create imagined national communities, activists had to refashion local ones. The singing clubs, youth groups, priestly sermons, parades, schoolhouse politics, election patterns, intermarriages, and bar fights at the heart of this study show how communal boundary lines were remade and reshaped over generations – along both national and non-national lines.

In telling these stories, certain imbalances of power and of historical evidence must be reckoned with. The two national projects in Oppeln – German and Polish – were highly asymmetrical. Until 1945, Oppeln was a German district capital, populated by a Prussian bureaucratic elite endowed with the coercive power of the state to set norms and expectations around language and culture. This created an unmistakable assimilatory pull. The surrounding rural county mostly spoke *schlonsak* and prayed in Polish, but they attended German-language schools and (if they left their villages) sought jobs in a broader German economy.[12] The German national project thus relied on the pull of upward mobility and integration, a bargain that many Upper Silesians embraced. These means of state coercion – in particular, the setting of language policies – were pursued with varied levels of vigor, depending on the regime. German officials rarely invoked the naked violence implicitly backing their monopoly force – at least until the late 1930s, when the Nazis pummeled Upper Silesians into outward loyalty. Over the decades, most Upper Silesians who chose partial or even full German loyalty thus did so quietly. They took clerical jobs in Oppeln, married German speakers, or migrated to economically healthier German regions, usually without the drama that enters the historical record.

The Polish national project around Oppeln, in contrast, sought to upset this path to German integration. Tapping into what one scholar has called a national "inferiority complex," committed Polish nationalists (a mix of imported and home-grown activists) sought to convince "unawakened" locals that their political salvation lay in a national insurgency against their oppressive German rulers.[13] They had the harder task. This activist

[12] According to the 1910 census, Oppeln county (excluding the city) had a 78 percent Polish-speaking or bilingual population. Census results can be found in APO, RO, Syg. 2096. The large number of Protestant, German-speaking settlements founded by Frederick II resulted in the clustering of German speakers in specific villages, with most other locales almost universally Polish speaking.

[13] On the "inferiority complex," see Stanisław Ossowski, "Zagadnienia więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej na Śląsku Opolskim," *Przegląd Socjologiczny* IX, no. 1–3 (1947): 119.

call to national self-worth – to recognize one's true Polish roots – also demanded rejecting the upward social pull of German integration. Declaring Polish loyalty could also invite varying levels of communal and government discrimination, depending on the regime. Upper Silesians responded to the Polish national call with highly variable and ultimately fickle devotion. Their ambiguity toward the Polish cause emerges most clearly in the very public frustrations of activists themselves, who spared little invective for their wavering flock of Polish speakers. Additionally, German administrators' overwrought fears and officious disdain for Polish activists prompted copious government surveillance and handwringing. The Polish movement thus left behind a much more dramatic historical record, its successes and failures recorded by both state officials and its own activists. For these reasons, Polish nationalist activists receive far more attention in these pages than do German ones.

The story begins in the decades before 1890, when national difference played virtually no role in political life around Oppeln. Instead, a different set of battle lines was drawn: between Catholic Upper Silesians on the margins and a Protestant German core. Thanks to a religious revival starting in the 1840s, newly devout Catholic Upper Silesians fiercely resisted anti-Catholic legislation in the "small" German Empire that emerged in the 1870s. Polish and German speakers united across ethnolinguistic divides to defend their faith, thus defying the logic of nationalization. Turning these Upper Silesians into Poles and Germans thus required hard work by activists to unwind their Catholic political loyalty.

From 1890 until World War I, Oppeln witnessed the first major attempt to awaken the local population to its Polish loyalties. A single Polish activist, Bronisław Koraszewski, spearheaded a newspaper and Polish-Catholic associations. Building off regional discontent with the Catholic Center Party, a new Polish party recorded historic gains at the polls in 1903 and 1907, effectively dividing the local electorate into German and Polish camps. Yet just as electoral success peaked, Koraszewski's Polish social networks began to flounder. New, populist Catholic Workers Associations recaptured Upper Silesians' loyalties by championing bilingualism and national agnosticism. Citizens around Oppeln tired of national politics, often favoring social integration and economic advancement over their own supposedly innate national loyalties.

World War I would prove less traumatic to most Upper Silesians than the war's aftermath. The vast majority of Upper Silesians who served in the Prussian army did so loyally, despite more aggressive anti-Polish

sentiment in Germany. Polish activists benefited from Germany's hubristic fall into revolutionary chaos in 1918, and from the resurrection of a new Polish state. The Allies initially agreed to cede Upper Silesia to Poland on ethno-national grounds, but, amid German protest, reversed the decision in favor of a regional plebiscite. The Upper Silesian plebiscite, as the most significant democratic vote in all of Europe for national belonging after World War I, served as a key test of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination.[14] As I argue, Upper Silesians confounded the expectations of elites that they would willingly divide themselves into Poles and Germans. An ineffective French-led occupation, organized by the League of Nations to keep the peace ahead of the plebiscite vote, unleashed cycles of German-Polish violence that tore apart communities. For many Upper Silesians, the profound chaos of the plebiscite period only signaled the dangers of overt national loyalty. Rather than sharpen national divides, the plebiscite muddled them.

As a result of the plebiscite, Upper Silesia was partitioned between Germany and Poland, with Oppeln landing on the German side. New democratic freedoms in the Weimar Republic promised greater protection of bilingual rights. Germany and Poland, under a special League of Nations treaty known as the Geneva Accord, enforced minority protection rights in Upper Silesia. Polish nationalists hoped these freedoms would finally allow Upper Silesians to awaken to their national identities. Yet most locals shunned the institutions of Polish nationalism, such as Polish schools. At the polls, many more Polish speakers voted for Hitler than for the Polish party by 1932. Polish activists, frustrated by this apathy toward the Polish cause, subsequently rebelled against the democratic norms that had fostered locals' instrumental attitude toward the nation. They found an affinity with the rising Nazis in advocating forced racial separation. The turn toward racialist politics by the 1930s, while reflecting broader Central European trends, grew locally out of activists' frustration with national apathy.

Upper Silesians' satisfaction with bilingual and civil rights can be traced in part to the region's bilateral League of Nations protections, which proved some of the most robust in Europe. Their effectiveness depended

[14] Plebiscites were held in Schleswig, Allenstein, Marienwerder, Klagenfurt, and Sopron, in addition to Upper Silesia. Several other plebiscites were discussed, planned, or attempted but never carried out fully. Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War: With a Collection of Official Documents*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1933).

in large part on their reciprocal nature. German officials were motivated to protect their Polish minority at home to pressure Poland into protecting its German minority. In a historical twist, these League protections also extended to Jews. The Geneva Accord included provisions to protect religious minorities, which were enforced in favor of Jews after Hitler's takeover in 1933. From 1934 to 1937, Jewish Upper Silesians gained a truly exceptional legal status, as all Nazi anti-Semitic laws were voided in the region. The result was a brief, but significant reprieve for regional Jews. But with the end of the treaty in 1937, Upper Silesia's Jews immediately began to suffer the same fate as those elsewhere in the Reich.

While Jews were condemned by an unbending Nazi racial hierarchy to suffer and die, Polish speakers in Upper Silesia endured a far more variable and winding fate. Ironically, national boundaries in Nazi Upper Silesia became more fluid than in the Weimar era. Nazi coordination (*Gleichschaltung*) co-opted or disbanded Catholic and workers' associations that held together the social fabric, so Upper Silesians instead joined Polish youth groups, sport leagues, or theater troupes, which were protected by the League of Nations treaty. They used Polish nationalism instrumentally as a shield to reestablish social and religious networks destroyed by the Nazis. After the League protections expired in 1937, Nazis brutally persecuted Polish activists and cowed most Upper Silesians into limiting their public usage of Polish. Yet during World War II, these trends reversed: public usage of Polish increased dramatically with an influx of forced laborers from Poland. Since it was part of the German *Altreich* (pre-1938 borders), Upper Silesia was heedlessly labeled core German territory, its Polish character overlooked in the name of fighting the war. In 1945, after 12 years of Nazi rule, national dividing lines in Upper Silesia were messier than ever before.

Failed Nazi efforts at nationalization would find their mirror image in the postwar era, with the takeover of Upper Silesia by Poland. Across East Central Europe, millions of Germans were expelled as members of an enemy nation. Yet in Upper Silesia, a large majority of Upper Silesians stayed in their homes – more than 90 percent of the prewar population in many villages around Opole (now officially renamed from Oppeln). These locals had crafted an ethnic ambiguity robust enough to survive the scrutiny of both Nazi Germany and postwar Poland. They were aided by Polish administrators' lenient and fungible verification of their national loyalties. Yet life was far from rosy for these "autochthons," as they were called. The Polish drive to eliminate signs of the enemy nation after 1945 reached extremes that even the Nazis had not attempted for bilingual

Upper Silesians. German language usage was punished with fines and imprisonment, and almost all traces of the German language – down to books, appliances, or gravestones – were seized or effaced.

Natives responded to widespread oppression largely by retreating into closed-off communities. When the Polish–West German border opened for "family reunifications" from 1956–1959, thousands of Upper Silesians fled west, reclaiming their German citizenship. By 1960, the rough endpoint of this story, Upper Silesians around Oppeln had demonstrated their fickle national loyalties under both German and Polish regimes. The Upper Silesian identity that then reemerged after 1989 as a political reaction to Polish nationalizing centralism fits the pattern established over the previous century. The creation of Upper Silesians proved no less contingent than the creation of Germans or Poles. All groupings have functioned primarily as political categories used by activists seeking to harden contingent group loyalties into fixed ethnic identities. But the story of most Upper Silesians is essentially one of refusal to adhere to the fixity of identity. Their national loyalties remained contingent, and the means of attaining them instrumental.

FROM IDENTITIES TO LOYALTIES

This story of Upper Silesian national politics suggests an alternate narrative of national struggle in Central Europe and requires an alternate analytic vocabulary. Certainly, in regions with homogeneous populations or clearly delineated ethnolinguistic and religious boundaries, activists found it exceedingly easy to unite the population around nationalist sentiment. But in many of the mixed language or borderland regions across Central Europe, residents resisted the supposedly inevitable pull toward their ethno-national identity. In some cases, confession crossed traditional national boundaries: thus Polish-speaking Protestants in East Prussia developed loyalties to Germany above those to their supposed Polish-Catholic homeland.[15] In some cases, a reversal in local hierarchies prompted national shifts: thus the previously elite German speakers of Prague were slowly assimilated into a socially ascendant Czech-speaking culture before World War I.[16] In other cases, local residents stressed the

[15] Richard Blanke, *Polish-Speaking Germans? Language and National Identity among the Masurians since 1871* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001).

[16] Gary B. Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

value of bilingualism over nationalist-inspired monolingualism: thus many Bohemians resisted the efforts of both Czech and German schoolmasters to impose nationalist curricula in a single language.[17]

These examples, along with many others, complicate the narrative of national awakening.[18] They give the lie to the idea that nations are primordial social groups, slumbering until awakened. This myth must continually be dismantled in the face of nationalist narratives that still dominate history writing in Eastern Europe. These Polish narratives, in the case of Upper Silesia, insist that Polish activists spoke for all local Polish speakers, whom they awakened to their innate Polish identity. By conflating the small group of Polish activists with Polish society at large, these works silence the agency of nonactivists.[19] German histories of Upper Silesia fare little better, often ignoring the imprint of Polish culture and language on the region.[20] Upper Silesians were not predivided into pre-nations; rather, they existed in local communities defined by bilingualism, shared religious practice, and a social mixing so natural that it was hardly considered mixing at all. Rather than being awakened, Polish and German loyalties had to be constructed.

Moreover, when national activists succeeded in convincing some to become durably nationalized Poles or Germans, ethnic traits did not necessarily determine the national path taken. As historians have shown, the nationalization of ethnic groups in Central Europe did not proceed

[17] Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*.

[18] Some key monographs in the growing literature on national ambiguity or "switching" include Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*; Brown, *A Biography of No Place*; Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Timothy Snyder, *The Red Prince: The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke* (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

[19] Among this vast literature, see, for example, Mieczysław Pater, *Polskie dążenia narodowe na Górnym Śląsku, 1891–1914* (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 1998); Maria Wanatowicz, *Społeczeństwo polskie wobec Górnego Śląska, 1795–1914* (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1992); Edward Mendel, *Polacy na Górnym Śląsku w latach I Wojny Światowej: Położenie i postawa* (Katowice: Sląsk, 1971); Michał Lis, *Górny Śląsk: Zarys dziejów do połowy XX wieku* (Opole: Uniwersytet Opolski, 2001).

[20] In two cases, the narrative under consideration was written by Konrad Fuchs, primarily a business historian. See his contributions in Norbert Conrads, ed., *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas, Bd. 3: Schlesien* (Berlin: Siedler, 1994); *Geschichte Schlesiens: Bd 3. Preussisch-Schlesien 1740–1945, Österreichisch-Schlesien 1740–1918/45* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999). See also Joachim Bahlcke and Joachim Rogall, *Schlesien und die Schlesier* (München: Langen Müller, 1996).

along parallel, nonintersecting tracks, but rather crossed in unpredictable ways. Czech speakers were not destined to become Czechs, nor German speakers Germans.[21] And in some cases, including Upper Silesia, nationalization efforts failed to produce stable national loyalties at all for a significant portion of the population. Many Upper Silesians continued to jump national tracks, from Polish to German loyalties and back again, when it benefited them or made sense to do so.

With such regular national ambiguity or switching, it makes little sense to speak of most Upper Silesians as possessing stable identities as Poles or Germans. Indeed, this work strives to avoid the analytic minefield of national identity. Avoiding this term means counteracting not just activists but also the many theorists of nationalism who depict nations as coherent groups able to compel their members to a common identity. Just because activists envisioned society as divided into stable groups of Germans and Czechs, Poles and Ukrainians, does not mean that nationalists who actually created these group identities. The sociologist Rogers Brubaker has named this phenomenon "groupism," which he considers a central fallacy in much nationalist-inspired history and propaganda. According to Brubaker, nationalism did not create nations as stable social groups with their own agency, any more than socialism created the "working class" as a coherent, stable group agent. For Brubaker, nationalism instead is a continuous, incomplete, ever-evolving process of *categorization*, or dividing and separating populations.[22]

Brubaker's critique strikes at the heart of most nationalist theory, including prevailing constructivist interpretations. Constructivists see nations as modern creations: the process, nationalism, produces the social product, the nation. Nationalism involved harnessing the tools of modernization – such as increasing literacy, print culture, language standardization, new transport and communication networks, secularization, and industrialization – to spread national cultures and effect the division of first-order political loyalties along national lines.[23] Yet the assumed

[21] Jeremy King has labeled this historical fallacy "ethnicist" thinking. Jeremy King, "The Nationalization of East Central Europe," in Maria Bucur and Nancy M. Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2001).

[22] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), Ch. 1.

[23] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983) esp. 55; Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social*

products of this process – the resulting nations – are generally depicted as concrete identity groups, just as activists understand them. According to this narrative, Polish and German activists in Upper Silesia called into existence their respective national groups through their activism. Such a narrative falls into the trap of conflating the agency and agenda of nationalist activists with the populations they claim to represent. Polish activists in particular claimed to represent a stable national group of Poles in Upper Silesia, but many in their supposed flock had little interest in being members. The end result is a reification of nations as stable groups of those with a shared identity.

If the "nation" falsely projects a concrete group status onto a process of categorization, then "identity" suffers from being both too concrete and too vague. As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue, identity has taken on too many contradictory meanings. In particular, it often signifies both a stable, essential marker and also a constructed, fragmented category. On the one hand, identities are often presented as unchanging aspects of one's personality, as social forces that predetermine values and actions. Yet researchers also often use adjectives that label identities as "multiple" or "shifting." These two opposite poles, Cooper and Brubaker claim, mean that "'identity' is too ambiguous, too torn between 'hard' and 'soft' meaning, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers."[24] Nationalist activists and most constructivist theorists often embody this split personality in addressing identity. They typically assert the hard power of a group identity: the ability for Poles or Germans to act as a unified collectivity with a single voice. Yet at the same time, constructivists suggest that these national identities are in fact made through politically contested processes. In other words, constructivist theorists argue that an unstable, contested process – nationalization – yields a stable, hard outcome: national identities.

Any attempt to track the formation of Upper Silesian identities would thus walk a tightrope between explaining a highly contested and uncertain process and the supposedly stable output of an Upper Silesian or national identity. A main goal of my work is to offer an alternative to this identity

Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Karl Wolfgang Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, and New York: Wiley, 1953); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[24] Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 2.

tightrope to reclaim some of the basic constructive aspect of nationalization – to focus on the process rather than the outcome. This takes up the challenge laid out by Brubaker: to examine nationalism as an always unfinished mode of categorization, rather than as the formation of group identities. Such a constructivist approach moves the goal of social inquiry "from questions about the nature of people or society and towards a consideration of *how* certain phenomena or forms of knowledge are achieved by people in interaction."[25] Social constructivism is ultimately guided by this anti-essentialist assumption, that there is no definitive nature inherent in Upper Silesians, whether that be Polish, German, or Catholic.

This return to the roots of social construction necessitates deprecating identity in favor of a more flexible term that captures the process of nationalization. In this work I choose the term "loyalty." There are several advantages to seeking out loyalties as opposed to identities. First, this method focuses the historian's attention on the social process of making and unmaking. Loyalties must be nurtured, they must be earned, and they must be interactive. Loyalties are not inborn traits, they are not naturally given, and they are capable of being broken. They have a history and a future. Identities, in contrast, provide an "illusion of stability" or posit an "essential core" that shifts attention away from the process of social construction.[26] Histories that address the making of national identities, as in the classic case of turning "Peasants into Frenchmen," typically focus on the before and after of a singular transformation.[27] Identities, even if conceived of as multiple, are also often binary in nature: one is either a German or not a German, and while one can be German and something else, being partly German is not an option. Loyalties, in contrast, can be more easily described as partial, mediated, or contingent. They can be peeled back to reveal the processes that created them, and they remain open ended and incomplete, or at least always subject to revision.

Seeking out loyalties thus requires a focus on historical actors and their decisions – that is, on historical agency. Unlike identities, which are often

[25] Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 5–6.

[26] On the "illusion of stability," see Peter Haslinger and Joachim von Puttkamer, *Staat, Loyalität und Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa, 1918–1941* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007), 2. The term "essential core" comes from Martin Schulze Wessel, *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, 1918–1938: politische, nationale und kulturelle Zugehörigkeiten* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2004), 10.

[27] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

understood as imposed from the outside by nebulous social forces, loyalties must be nurtured or developed by individuals or concrete groups. One must pinpoint motivations, choices, and specific historical contingencies to analyze how loyalties are made or broken. Loyalty is necessarily a social phenomenon. Unlike identities, which even when socially constructed are often portrayed as individual traits, loyalties exist by definition only *between* certain individuals, groups, or institutions.

The term "loyalties" may conjure a second-rate or insincere form of attachment, one that lacks the deeply felt social force ascribed to an identity. Yet through history, men and women have died for loyalties – to family, comrades, nation, church, and so on – as much as they have for identities. The term "loyalties" also fits particularly well for a study of borderland nationalism. Away from borders, local citizens – the shopkeeper in Bavaria or the teacher in Warsaw – could be nationalized through forms of acculturation and group solidarity that did not appear overtly political. National belonging for many often became a deeply felt cultural attachment, as essential to life and as taken for granted as the air one breathed. Yet in the borderlands, ethnic nationalism in the era of mass politics was almost always experienced in expressly political terms by historical actors. Competing nationalisms laid bare the political goals undergirding their projects by denaturalizing any one assumed outcome. In the midst of such sharply politicized choices, nationalist activists had a more difficult challenge convincing locals of the innate ties between culture and national identity. Activists nonetheless used the language of duty and sacrifice to compel locals to embrace a singular national identity in the face of multiple competing ones. This comprised the illiberal core of ethnic nationalism in borderlands – compelling people to belong by culture rather than by political choice.

Focusing on loyalties and the choices that breed them promises, in contrast, a more democratic model for examining the rise of nations. For nationalist activists and states, loyalty to the nation was the ultimate value, and to neglect one's loyalties or profess multiple loyalties implied treason. National loyalty as practiced by activists was a zero-sum game: you either fully committed to one side or you became a tacit supporter of the enemy. But this perspective from above – from the molders and spokesmen (almost always men) of national-political legitimacy – is undermined from below, by citizens who saw loyalties as malleable, mutable, or multiple. For many Upper Silesians, the opposite of loyalty was not disloyalty, but rather loyalty to some other value, cause, or

person.[28] One could unquestionably be loyal to both church and nation, or class and family, or even both Polish culture and the German state. Moreover, such multiple loyalties could be measured and weighed against each other, far more accurately than could multiple identities. The rise and fall of nationalist political parties in Upper Silesia, for example, can serve as a measurable metric of shifting political loyalties. But to suggest that elections reflected wholesale shifts in identity is a much looser proposition. For these reasons, the following chapters measure the successes and failures of nationalism not in terms of identities created, but in terms of loyalties earned or lost.

FROM INDIFFERENCE TO INSTRUMENTALISM

Historians of Central Europe have also recently focused on the *failure* of national identities to form, a process they have labeled "national indifference." The term is meant to apply to the many residents – often residing in borderlands or imperial settings – for whom nationalist projects held little appeal. The concept has been most fruitfully applied to the Habsburg Empire and its successor states. Historians have revised the model of a dilapidated Habsburg Empire torn asunder by its various nationalisms. Instead, they have posited the limited appeal of nationalism to large numbers of Habsburg citizens, who looked with a wary eye upon the efforts of Czech, German, Slovene, Ukrainian, and other nationalist activists working to awaken and nurture loyalties. Many nationally indifferent citizens instead maintained loyalties to their churches, local communities, regions, class groupings, or to the dynasty itself.[29] If loyal national subjects are the expected product of the violent nationalization of Central Europe, then national indifference draws attention to the limits and failures of these projects.

Yet national indifference as an analytic tool holds limited value for the Upper Silesian case, for it covers both too little and too much conceptual ground. As the historian Tara Zahra has noted, the term "national

[28] Much of my thinking here resembles, and is partially indebted to, the work of Wessel, *Loyalitäten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik*, 1–12.

[29] For works that can be broadly categorized as exploring national indifference or alternate loyalties, see: Judson, *Guardians of the Nation*; Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*; King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*; Brown, *A Biography of No Place*; Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*; Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848–1916* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2005).

indifference" has worn many historical labels: "regionalism, cosmopolitanism, Catholicism, socialism, localism, bilingualism, intermarriage, opportunism, immorality, backwardness, stubbornness, and false consciousness, to name a few."[30] Those who acted indifferently embraced many different "isms" and behaviors – and sometimes had little in common. Those who embraced cosmopolitanism and those who were labeled backward most likely held different values and inhabited different social worlds. Upper Silesians could be nationally indifferent for a multitude of reasons. The term serves as an umbrella under which quite disparate practices and attitudes can be gathered. Such a multifarious definition risks losing coherence as a label for Upper Silesians' social motivations and actions.

At the same time, the concept of "indifference" is hemmed in analytically by its reactionary posture. Historically the term was most often deployed negatively by activists to criticize local populations that failed to embrace a nationalist agenda. The concept is, in Zahra's words, "a negative and nationalist category."[31] It tells us most explicitly what historical actors were *not* doing and *not* believing. In this sense, national indifference is typically depicted as the antonym to national identity, as an "imagined non-community."[32] This negative categorization risks obfuscating the interactive process of making national loyalties. It turns non-identity into another form of identity, insofar as it focuses attention on the outcome and assigns someone a label, or a personality: a non-German as opposed to a German. National indifference explains a condition rather than a process and thus may tell us too little about the social construction of national subjects.

Finally, national indifference as a term suggests not only a disinterest toward the logic of nationalism but also toward its consequences. Yet in Upper Silesia, as throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Ottoman Empire, local populations could rarely afford to remain indifferent to the often dire consequences of nationalist politics. Being the wrong minority at the wrong time could cost someone life or limb. In Upper Silesia, the choice of nationality could determine whether locals would be minority or majority citizens, what language rights they and their children would possess, whether their property would remain wholly theirs, whether they would be forced to leave their

[30] Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 98.
[31] Ibid., 104–105. [32] Ibid., 118.