

Janusz Pfaff

Jan Długosz University of Humanities and Natural Sciences, Częstochowa, Poland

(Uniwersytet Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczy im. Jana Długosza)

Faculty of Humanities

Institute of History

Social mood and attitudes of Upper Silesia community in the context of Polish foreign policy in 1945–1950

(doctoral dissertation abstract)

The dissertation consists of a comprehensive introduction of scientific aspects, followed by five chapters and an equally rich final section.

The main focus of research was influence which social mood of Silesians (*Ślązacy*) living in Upper Silesia (*Górny Śląsk*) and their attitudes had on the domestic and foreign policy. The research aimed at demonstrating the mechanism of two-way interactions between the sentiment and attitudes of a certain group of people and the domestic and foreign policy. The dissertation is a kind of a case study where the primary objective is not to just investigate and describe the history of Upper Silesia through a certain period but rather to use its example in order to demonstrate the mechanism of mutual forces acting between those two factors on the social, political and economic history at the local, regional, state and wider (international) level. The dissertation is an example of how to use innovative historical research methodology that takes account of behavioural factors in the context of their interactions with political, macro-economic, ethnographical and other factors. Sentiment and attitudes of communities have been always used in propaganda intended to incentivise certain political decisions or endow them with rationale. This research attempted to decode and understand this phenomenon.

The dissertation is in fact a proposal of an innovative research method which can be applied in the study of history. The research was founded on an original modification of the research process – one that is used in the science of human behaviour. This aspect has been elaborated further in the scientific introduction. Its key theoretical foundation is the actor-network theory, also known as ANT. The introduction also lists research hypotheses which were then confirmed or rejected and tested as described in the ending section of the dissertation.

The research involved a great number of resources from many archives, museums and libraries, as well as certain private collections of documents. The nature of the research was rather interdisciplinary with the auxiliary function played mainly by sciences of economics, sociology, social and general psychology, politology, ethnography, anthropology, culture studies, and social engineering including its divisions (especially the theory of propaganda, sociotechniques and public relations). In addition to the resources, the research process also accounted for certain objective factors that were divided into 7 categories: (1) social mood; (2) social behaviour (including attitudes, as commonly used in historiography rather than in psychology); (3) domestic-level decisions of the Polish authorities; (4) international events, phenomena and political/economic decisions (including those involving Poland); (5) analogous events and phenomena; (6) macro-economic factors (capital resources, markets, market sentiment); (7) needs (and desires).

Chapter I depicts the Silesian community from pre-1945 perspective and in the context of Upper Silesia's development as a key industrial centre. The chapter investigates social mood, attitudes and identity of Silesians from the point of view of the Polish and German rivalry in this region, ranging between the end dates of both world wars, and also in the context of development of certain conceptual definitions of nation, nationality, race, national vs ethnic identity, independence of the state, nationalist and political attitudes and sentiment. The chapter also attempts to specify certain determining features of the name of e.g. Upper Silesia and Silesians.

Chapter II shows the direct political environment of the international dispute which at that time concerned Silesians and Upper Silesia. This issue is discussed in the context of emerging international treaties that attempted to stabilise the European situation after the end of World War II, with the special role of three conferences of the anti-German coalition leaders who met in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. This chapter describes the process of formulating the rationale which the new Polish authorities used in order to back their territorial claims against the German state, although such claims were in fact forced as *status quo* upon taking physical action on the territory. Political decisions of that time required a justification based in facts, especially during the upcoming meeting of the peace conference.

Chapter III is devoted to showing the entire organisational back office that stood behind the political propaganda in Poland, with the key issue being to provide justification for the many arguments that the representatives of Poland then raised at the Potsdam conference in order to substantiate their territorial claims to northern and western regions. One of the key arguments was ethnic origin of the Polish people who resided on the annexed territories, es-

pecially *Opolszczyzna* – the region around the town of Opole where Poles had been the obvious majority. This chapter therefore explains who were the distributor, the publisher and the recipient in the propaganda system, as well as content guidelines and objectives of the communication. A crucial role was played by social mood and attitudes of the original community living in Upper Silesia as it used to be shaped before the war (without giving regard to border-line crossing it then).

Chapter IV explains the process how the propaganda system was used to create the image of the social mood and attitudes of Silesians as a community of unquestionable Polish patriots with a radically anti-German mindset. However, the reality clearly differed from such false image. The discrepancy between the facts and the false image posed a major concern for the national authorities as they attempted to overcome this issue by persuasion, political decisions (instruments of law) or means of coercion and reprisal. The overall political activity in that area was called a re-Polonisation policy, in the broader sense, and it involved campaigns for rehabilitation and verification of people's nationality, combat against the German language (regardless where or how it was used then), change of names of physical objects and people to Polish versions, and mobilisation of Silesians to take part in social and cultural activities underlining their unquestionable Polish origins and patriotism (largely founded on the common fear of Germans). In 1948, the anti-German propaganda across Silesia started to give way to the pro-Communist propaganda.

Chapter V contains an analysis of the political sentiment surrounding the issue of the Polish-German border which, once decided in Potsdam on preliminary basis, was an informal arrangement and foreign politicians challenged it. This chapter depicts the process how propaganda shaped the image of such political sentiment and therefore the public relations of the Polish state. However, similarly to the case of the social attitudes, the real sentiment among Silesians was far more complex than that and rather unfavourable from the perspective of the Polish authorities who were implementing their own vision of the foreign and domestic policy. The sentiment of the Silesian community as well as the wider group of the Polish population was also under the influence of the international political scene where events were evaluated from the perspective of the risk of a new world war that could lead to more border changes.

The research discovered that the social mood of Silesians as well as their attitudes had major political weight in 1945–1950, mainly on the international level but also inside Poland. One of the primary aims behind the decisions taken by the Polish authorities of the time which concerned the entire region of Upper Silesia and the Recovered Territories was to di-

rect the behaviour of Silesians in a way that would create anti-German but pro-Polish sentiment among them. According to the research, the social mood and attitudes (and it applies not only to the Silesian community but just about any community) and the policy of the state (not only the foreign policy but any policy in any conditions) are linked by constant interactions between them. Moreover, social mood and attitudes are a very important tool that domestic authorities and authorities of foreign state(s) can use in their policy making. They leverage them to pressure certain political decisions that would be beneficial for the state but disadvantageous for other state(s). This can be achieved by using propaganda in order to highlight the actual social mood and/or to incite it. Often a false image of the social mood is created by using provocation or by forcing communities to show certain collective behaviour that can be interpreted as a clear social mood that only allegedly results from attitudes present in a given community. Such falsified image was backed up with political and mass media communication that followed the line of propaganda, and the Polish authorities attempted to use such image to cause certain impact on the international political scene – such was the rather characteristic case of Upper Silesia in 1945–1950 and the following years.

The dissertation also contains many recommendations for further research concerning the history of Upper Silesia and its historiography. It points out that many issues still need revisiting in order to confirm or reject the current theories and axioms involving not just Upper Silesia and its original community but also the history of Poland and the general history.

Janusz Ploch
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