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Author: Tomasz Nawrocki, Marek S. Szczepański

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Tomasz Nawrocki, Marek S. Szczepański

**Social Transformation
of Great Mining Regions
Experience of the 20th Century
Prospects for the 21st Century
(The Case of Upper Silesia, Poland)**

Introduction

This article, which deals with civilizational challenges of Upper Silesian mining communities at the end of the 20th century, consists of five complementary parts. In Part I, we present a diagnosis of economic and social situation of this *catastrophic* and *scansen-type* region of Poland and Europe. Part II deals with the history of mining local communities, from the early years of this branch of industry (which are given documentary evidence) to the end of the Second World War. In Part III, we reconstruct the changes within these communities in the time of real socialism (1945-1989). In the next part, we suggest necessary and radical changes in Upper Silesian mining and associated social structure. The last part of an article is an attempt to describe a regional social agreement called the Regional Contract. The Document was prepared in the Katowice voivodship in 1995 by numerous economic institutions, political parties, trade unions, social and cultural organisations. Its main purpose is quick and complex restructuring of the economy of the region, together with coal mining industry and mining communities.

The Katowice voivodship—core area of Upper Silesia An attempt of diagnosis

Upper Silesia, after the Second World War almost completely located within the Polish borders, covers the vast area of Katowice and Opole voivodship and part of the Częstochowa and Bielsko-Biała voivodships. Katowice voivodship—core of the Upper Silesian Industrial Region—covers the area of 6,650 km² what constitutes 2% of the Polish territory: it is inhabited by 4 million people, that is 10.5% of Polish population. In this relatively small region there are 15% of all Polish industrial plants, and among them—238 plants extremely dangerous for the natural environment. They mine 97.6% of coal, make 48.7% of all passenger cars, 56.6% of raw steel, 53.2% of rolled products and 100% of Polish zinc and lead. The voivodship provides 11%-15% of Gross National Product and 15% of all Polish goods which are later sent abroad. After the Second World War since the very beginning of the communist system these factories, both old, rebuilt and completely new have been functioning within weak techno-ecological regimes. And, as a result, since 1988 the Katowice voivodship has officially been treated as an *area of ecological catastrophe*.

This hyperconcentration of industry gives rise to dramatic consequences in the ecological sphere. Industrial plants of the voivodship emit no less than 742 agents destroying man's natural environment. It must also be noted in this context that systematic measurements take into account barely 20 of these agents and thus the description of the region's ecological situation must be, by definition, incomplete and unsatisfactory. The Katowice voivodship delivers to the atmosphere 25% of "Polish dusts" and 28% of gases emitted, and here again 25% of industrial effluents are delivered directly to the surface waters. This region is also responsible for 52% of all industrial waste and its absolute magnitude is already estimated at 1.7% milliard tons. This gigantic and radioactive rubbish dump grows every year by some tens of millions of tons (1990—72.4 million tons, 1993—60.9 million tons) and devours 300 hectares of land under new spoil tips and dumps. In the year 1990 in the territory of the voivodship were 198 industrial plants each producing annually more than 5 thousand tons of waste, principally mining waste, flotation slurries, washery waste, fly ash and cinders. If all the accumulated waste were spread uniformly over the area of the voivodship it would reach a height of more than 170 cm.

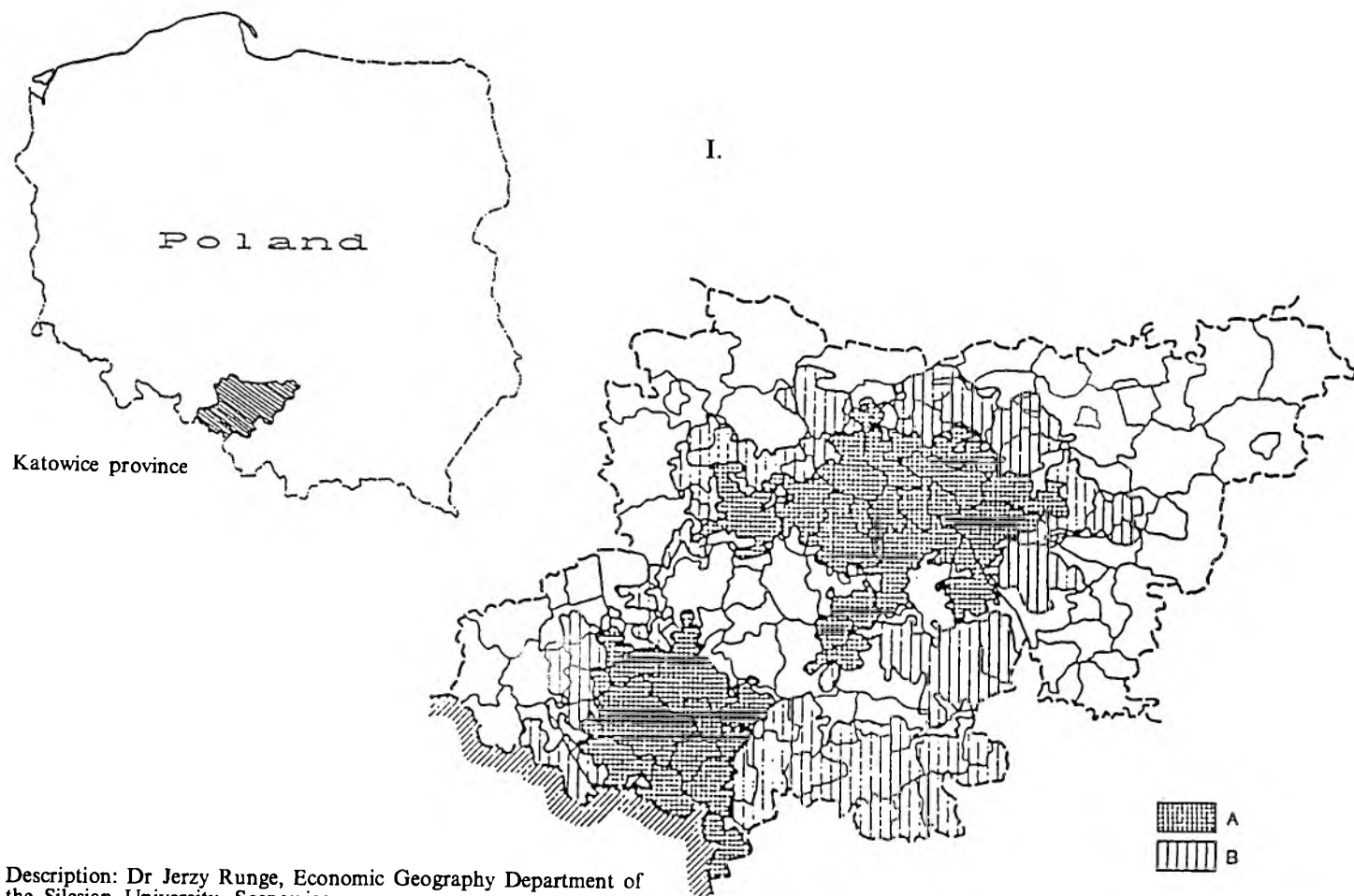
Upper Silesia is not only one of the most degraded regions of Poland but also one of the most catastrophic areas of Europe. Its present day is

characterised by immense ecological disaster, backwardness of monocultural economy of the region, deformed structure of employment (great over-representation of people employed in industry and a relatively small number of people working in services); underdevelopment of technical and social infrastructure, disintegration of regional community, deterioration of the regional culture, complex nationalistic structure or a number of pathologies in a created architectural space, etc. Such a situation determines a character of challenges which this region must meet before 21st century. The ability to answer these questions will show whether, as a result of present transformation, Upper Silesia will become a *scansen-type region*, a dying enclave doomed to backwardness in Europe, or it will be successfully modernised creating such a potential (social, political, economic) and such conditions for activities which will lead to long-term existence on a scene of world economy (*adaptive region*) or it will become a *locomotive of social and economic development*.

From careful study of available documents and of the results of many investigations and observations, it is possible to formulate a general thesis as to the overall state of the regional system. **Upper Silesia is suffering from ecological devastation (natural system), infrastructural neglect (technical system), economically underdeveloped structure. The political "centre" and the regional industrial lobby, treats it as a "raw materials enclave" of the country (production system). It is socially fragmented while a substantial proportion of the regional community is subjected to a process of cultural disruption (socio-cultural system). Further, it exhibits a chaotically developed architectural-town planning spatial layout (settlements system).** This dramatic diagnosis should not be taken to imply that there are no positive factors to be discerned in the Katowice voivodship. Here, by Polish standards, we may find a considerable influx of foreign capital (700 firms operating with the participation of foreign capital) and also rapid development of private entrepreneurial undertakings.

The strategic aim of regional restructuring must be recognised as being:

- halting further degradation of those sectors of state industry, in particular mining, in which radical reform could be a source of primary accumulation, governing the financial foundations for modernisation of the region;
- stimulation of innovative enterprises, backed up by Enterprise Incubators, Enterprise Promotion Centres, Information and Entrepreneurial Skills Centres, Technological and Scientific Parks; the success of undertakings of this type will depend, to a very large degree, on the participation of foreign capital and credits in the process of restructuring of the region;



Description: Dr Jerzy Runge, Economic Geography Department of the Silesian University, Sosnowiec

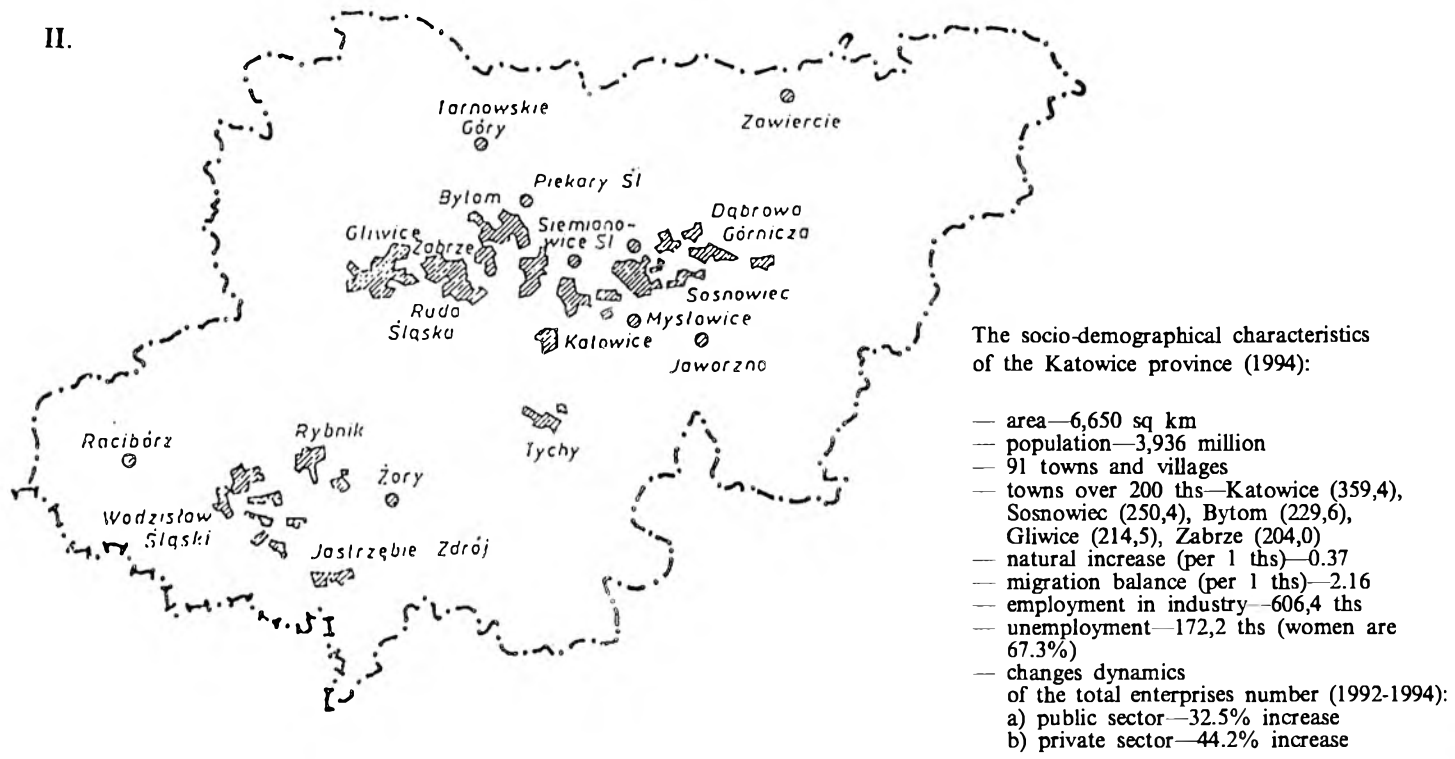


Fig. 1. The settlement and socio-demographic characteristic of the Katowice province (voivodship):

I. Spatial structure of the Katowice province (voivodship):
 A—Katowice conurbation and Rybnik Conurbation (core area),
 B—setting (periphery).

II. The main towns of the Katowice province (voivodship).

Table 1

Katowice voivodship in the process of transformation 1989-1994

Category	Measures	1989	1994
Population—total	ths of people	3,968,3	3,953,4
—cities		3,475,0	3,438,2
—villages		493,3	515,2
Employment (without individual farmers)	ths of people	1,460,4	1,120,7
—with private sector		265,5	
Companies with the dominance of foreign capital		38	794
Firms	ths	103,7 ¹	199
Unemployment	ths	63,4 ¹	172,2
—unemployment rate	%	3.4 ¹	10.1
Pensioners—total	ths	693,6	830,2
—a number of employees per 100 pensioners		211	135
Industrial production (previous year=100)	%	96.1%	110.7
—hard coal	mln t	173,4	129,5
—coke	ths t	6,283	7,934
—electric energy	T.W.h.	34,3	30,1
—steel	ths t	8,080	6,205
—coiled products	ths t	5,452	4,824
Flats provided to inhabitants	ths	11,9	3,3
Housing resources	ths	1,253,3	1,275,8 ²
Telephone subscribers per 1000 inhabitants		64,2	89,5 ²
Emission of dust	ths t/year	305,3	114,9 ²
Emission of gases	ths t/year	1,309	738 ¹
Doctors per 10 th person		23,0	24,5 ²
Nurses per 10 th person		56,0	57,2 ²
Beds in hospitals per 10 th inhabitants		26,8	27,3
		67,3	69,0
A number of mines		70	64 ³
—a number of people employed in mines	ths	305	285 ³

Explanations: ¹ 1990 year; ² 1993 year; ³1995.07.31.

Source: *Opracowania Kontraktu Regionalnego Województwa Katowickiego [Analyses for the Regional Contract for the Katowice Voivodship]*. Urząd Wojewódzki w Katowicach, Newsletter, Vol. 1.

Table 2

**Structure of employment in the main branches of industry
in the Katowice voivodship (1980-1993)**

Years	1980	1985	1990	1992	1993
Ths of people	906,1	829,0	729,4	646,9	610,8
Total					
% shares	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Ths of people	400,9	426,3	410,9	354,9	331,6
Fuel/energy					
% shares	44.2	51.4	56.3	54.9	54.8
Ths of people	121,9	108,2	89,0	81,4	77,8
Metal manufacture					
% shares	13.4	13.0	12.2	12.6	12.7
Ths of people	210,0	160,3	126,8	106,9	97,9
Engineering					
% shares	23.2	19.4	17.4	16.5	16.0
Ths of people	34,4	28,4	23,1	19,8	19,4
Chemicals					
% shares	3.8	3.4	3.2	3.0	3.2
Ths of people	47,9	30,4	22,0	20,6	20,1
Mineral products					
% shares	5.3	3.7	3.0	3.2	3.3
Ths of people	35,1	30,0	24,0	22,3	28,1
Light					
% shares	3.9	3.6	3.3	3.4	3.8
Ths of people	33,0	24,6	19,2	27,9	25,3
Food processing					
% shares	3.6	3.0	2.6	4.3	4.1
Ths of people	22,9	20,8	14,4	9,8	12,6
Other branches					
% shares	2.6	2.5	2.0	1.4	2.1

Sources: *Rocznik statystyczny województwa katowickiego* [Statistical Year-book of the Katowice Voivodship], Katowice 1981, 1989, *Biuletyn statystyczny* [Statistical Bulletin] 1992, WUS Katowice, March 1993.

Table 3

Unemployment in the Katowice voivodship

Years	1990	1991	1992/06	1993
Registered unemployed people (ths)	63,4	116,3	133,9	172,0
% share of the unemployed among the total number of workers in the national industry (without agriculture)	3.4	6.6	9.1	10.1

Sources: *Biuletyn statystyczny* [Statistical Bulletin] 1992, 1994, WUS Katowice, March 1993; *Rocznik statystyczny województwa katowickiego* [Statistical Year-book of the Katowice Voivodship], Katowice 1992, 1994.

- privatising a substantial proportion of large and medium sized industrial plants, currently state owned;
- radical restructuring of the production system involving tertiarisation, i.e major increase in numbers employed in the services sector. This process should bring about training of a significant part of the regional workforce, preparing them for the changeover from the industrial to the traditional and, wherever possible, up-to-date services sectors;
- creating institutional facilities for retraining of sections of the workforce together with assistance in reaching a new occupational stabilisation;
- guaranteeing elementary social services and benefits for the unemployed and their families;
- creating regional and local, and necessarily competitive, political, financial and technocratic elites;
- restoring the cultural identity of the region founded on the preserved cultural core traditions;
- reordering the physical planning-architectural space of the region;
- rehabilitation and revitalisation of the voivodship's ecology.

Mining communities in Upper Silesia. A historical outline

When describing a dramatic situation of the region and the character of challenges faced by Upper Silesian mining communities, one must consider the consequences of the so-called "long lasting".¹ A region is a territorial and socio-cultural unit which reflects long-term historical processes and secular trends. In Upper Silesia there are still present and active phenomena and processes begun in the 18th, 19th, 20th century and even earlier.

As far back as the Middle Ages, mining was a basic factor which determined the character of the region. By then, Upper Silesian miners (*gwarkowie*) extracted lead, gold, silver and iron ores which were processed in neighbouring *kuźnice* (medieval metallurgical plants). There appeared, often still existing, mining towns and settlements (e.g. Bytom, Tarnowskie Góry) of homogeneous occupational structure (miners and metallurgists and of specific spatial arrangement (determined by the location of deposits and topography).²

¹ F. Braudel, "Histoire et sciences sociales: la longue durée", *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisation* (1958).

² B. Jałowiecki, *Spoleczne wytwarzanie przestrzeni [Social Creation of Space]* (Warszawa 1988), p. 71.

The turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, together with technical progress in industry, brought a growing demand for coal. As early as in 1769, in Upper Silesia, they mined only 370 tons of coal, while in 1800—41 thousand tons.³ At the beginning, coal was excavated by means of very primitive methods and free, villein work. However, the difficulties in getting deep to the ground made it necessary to employ non-Silesian specialists and to constantly improve the mining technology. By then, however, the technological level of Silesian mines was much lower than in western part of Germany.

Dynamic development of mining in the first part of the 19th century secured a big market in Silesia. In 1849, the first train with Polish coal came to Berlin, what was very symbolical. At the same time, however, there could be observed the weakness of Silesian mining. Technological and economic backwardness, typical of the regions which followed the capitalistic development later (syndrome of "late newcomer" limited competitiveness of Silesian coal. In the second part of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th, the importance of mining and the whole Silesian industry for the German economy was slowly decreasing.⁴ In Silesia, in 1900, national income *per capita* estimated at only 86.6% of national income in Prussia (in Westphalia—99.6% of Prussian income *per capita*, and in Saxonian Kingdom—113.9%). In the following years this tendency was constantly decreasing. The wages of Silesian miners were also lower (in 1909—4 DM *per day*, while in the Ruhr—5.3 DM).⁵ Unemployment was higher than in whole Germany (in 1929, Germany—31.8/1,000 inhabitants, Silesia—39.9/1,000 inhabitants).⁶

Upper Silesia, after Prussian-Austrian wars in 1740 and 1744 when it was ruled by the Prussian king, followed the slow process of marginalisation and peripherisation. In the region with narrow, raw-material, semi-finished industrial, agricultural and food production⁷ there functioned the mechanisms of internal colonisation changing this into the region which supplied raw materials and low-processed goods. Upper Silesia became a peripheric region which was in asymmetric economic, political and cultural relations with better developed regions of Germany.

This situation was not radically changed by the division of Upper Silesia after the First World War, three insurrections (1919, 1929, 1921) and the plebiscite (1921). Poland received 29% of the plebiscite territory (46% of

³ K. Popiołek, *Historia Śląska [History of Silesia]* (Katowice 1972), p. 172.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Historia Śląska [History of Silesia]*, Vol. III, Part 2, ed. S. Michalkiewicz (Wrocław 1985), pp. 38-39.

⁶ K. Popiołek, *Historia...* [History...], p. 615.

⁷ J. Kokot, *Przemiany gospodarcze na Śląsku w latach 1945-1955 [Economic Changes in Silesia in 1945-1955]* (Opole 1966).

inhabitants) with 76% of coalmines (in 1929—146 thousand people were employed in mining), 97% of iron ore mines, 82% of zinc ore mines. Germany, however, got the majority of plants of higher level of production.⁸

In this way, a homogeneous economic structure of Upper Silesia was divided between reborn Poland and Germany. The Polish part became one of the best developed regions in greatly underdeveloped country, while the western part remained the peripheries of highly developed German economy (although Germany had to pay war damages). It influenced the situation of Silesian mining tormented by Polish-German customs conflicts (on the Polish side), much afflicted by economic difficulties in the early 20's (on the German side) and during the *Big Crisis* which began in 1929. Mining suffered this last recession on both sides of the border, although the situation was much more difficult for economically weak Poland. No wonder that in 1932 there were 2,352 primitive surface mines in which 12,174 poor people dug coal for their own use (*biedaszyby*).

In 1939 Germany occupied the Polish part of Upper Silesia. From that moment, mining and whole Silesian industry supplied for the war. There was a sharp increase in the production of coal due to the growing exploitation of workforce and coal deposit. Such a situation lasted till the Red Army invasion on these territories (1945).

Dynamic development of coal mining in Upper Silesia was connected with creating and restructuring of urban and rural mining communities. They no longer forced people to work in mines so the demand for workforce was growing. In 1779, Upper Silesian mines employed 619 workers, while in the early 20th century—over 120 thousand.⁹ They lived in neighbouring villages which were slowly losing their rural character and became mining settlements. Owners of the mines built workers' homes for them; their standard was different—from very primitive family houses (*familoki*) to miners' settlements of very good—in those days—living conditions (e.g. the only existing miners' estates of the "Giesche Erben" consortium in Giszowiec and Nikiszowiec). Miners themselves also built houses on the grounds belonging to the owners of the mines.¹⁰

⁸ K. Popiołek, *Historia... [History...]*.

⁹ W. Świątkiewicz, "Miejskie społeczności lokalne Górnego Śląska" ["Urban Local Communities in Upper Silesia"], in *Tożsamość kulturowa mieszkańców starych dzielnic miast Górnego Śląska [Cultural Identity of the Inhabitants of Old Districts of Upper Silesian Cities]*, eds. W. Świątkiewicz, K. Wódz (Wrocław 1991), p. 71.

¹⁰ J. Ligęza, M. Żwirska, *Zarys kultury górniczej [An Outline of Mining Culture]* (Katowice 1964).

These settlements were self-contained or, due to agglomerating processes, they *were engulfed* by neighbouring towns. In the process, they did not always lose their specific character but maintained social relations characteristic of local communities. The majority of cities in the voivodship were created in this way (e.g. Katowice consists of 70 old miners' settlements).¹¹

The above description presents Silesian mining communities of a similar social composition. The inhabitants had much in common—the place of living and the mine where men worked (often for generations) and women did shopping in shops near the mine. These communities were strongly rooted in the culture of Silesian borderland. They represented distinct cultural identity with developed work ethos, strong feeling of social egalitarianism, deep religiousness and family cult. They cultivated the plebeian Silesian culture.¹²

Mining communities in real socialism. An attempt of recapitulation

After the Second World War the situation of Silesian mining communities was dictated by the policy of Polish authorities towards mining and the region. Wojciech Błasiak gave the right description of its character in the below fragments of our work *Upper Silesia 2005*¹³ writing that throughout the whole time of real socialism, i.e. from 1945 to 1989, this region was the industrial powerhouse for the extensive industrial development of the whole country. It provided the energy—industrial economic resources for Poland. This role meant that the region was forced into the straitjacket of relative economic peripherisation in the first years of real socialism. The effect of this was a relative social marginalisation of the regional population together with degradation of the natural environment.

The fundamental cause of the relative economic peripherisation was to be found in the economic and social strategy implemented by the central political and economic bureaucracy. Later this strategy was modified and also suffered fluctuations due to market supply—demand variations but

¹¹ B. Jałowicki, *Spoleczne...* [Social...]; T. Nawrocki, J. Runge, M. S. Szczepański, *Struktury społeczno-demograficzne Katowic. Próba delimitacji w perspektywie socjogeograficznej* [Socio-demographic Structures of Katowice. An Attempt of Delimitation in the Socio-geographical Perspective] (Katowice 1994), mimeo.

¹² W. Błasiak, M. Błaszczak-Wacławik, T. Nawrocki, *Górny Śląsk. Szczególny przypadek kulturowy* [Upper Silesia. A Specific Cultural Case] (Warszawa 1990).

¹³ W. Błasiak, T. Nawrocki, M. S. Szczepański, *Upper Silesia 2005. The Restructuring Scenario* (Katowice 1994).

in essence it remained unchanged throughout the whole era from 1945 to 1989. Certainly a direct influence was exerted by the economic structure historically shaped by the constraints of "long lasting" and dominated by hard coal mining, zinc and lead ore mining, iron and steel metallurgy, zinc and lead metallurgy, power generation and the coking industry. This structure was the initial cause of deepening the economic disfunction and disproportions due to designating the region for the role of prime supplier of raw-materials, energy, industrial semi-finished products and initial products.

Of major importance here was the hard coal mining industry. This status was the consequence not only of the domestic demand for energy but also of the need for hard currency to maintain the country's balance of payments. Hard coal was, as it is still today, the basic primary energy carrier for the entire Polish economy and the large, unceasing urgent need for free currency brought unrelenting efforts to maximalise coal export. In the 50's, export of coal ranged from 34.7% to 49.6% of all Polish exports.¹⁴ It led to such a situation that coal mining exceeded allowable developmental limits and became a destructive sector both for nature and community.¹⁵

The underlying factor in the relative economic peripherisation process was the structurally nonequivalent exchange with the rest of the country. The economic surplus, produced in the region, coming principally from economic production at a low level of technological sophistication, did not return after a due period in the form of investment funds to improve these technologies and bring qualitative modernisation of the region's industry.

As a consequence, the region suffered a relative regression in economic structure, despite the fact that new industrial investment projects were sited here, in line with the strategy of the centre. The new plants located here served only to modernise the quantitative structure of the extensive industry of Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin. They formed merely the supplement and development of the needs of the traditional, extensive industries. Hence the continual influx of these new industrial investment projects did not change the qualitative structure of industry, but confirmed the domination of the traditional industries with a low level of technological processing and low economic profitability. The economy of real socialism could not ensure the technically proinnovation and economically proeffectiveness type of growth. Economic effectiveness of the extensive strategy pursued by the communist

¹⁴ W. Błasiak et al., *Górny Śląsk...* [Upper Silesia...] (1990), p. 97.

¹⁵ A. Klasik, *Elementarne problemy rozwoju aglomeracji katowickiej* [Elementary Problems of the Development of Katowice Agglomeration] (Katowice 1981), p. 7.

bureaucracy was ensured, on the other hand, by minimisation of manpower reproduction costs, costs of outlays for the technical infrastructure and for the natural environment. This policy found its expression in the limiting and minimisation of economic expenditure on housing, health protection and social services, education and culture, recreation, leisure facilities, extension of the network of regional technical infrastructure and proecological investments.

Realisation of such a strategy of economic development of Upper Silesia had an important influence on re-shaping of regional mining communities. Between 1945 and 1990, a number of people employed in mines increased almost four times (in 1945—92 thousand, 1948—270 thousand, 1990—380,8 thousand out of 729,4 thousand employed in the voivodship industry, what was 52.2% of all employees).¹⁶ They not only built new mines (before 1980 in Upper Silesia there were 24 new coalmines) but also developed whole mining regions (e.g. the Rybnik Coalmining Region). New mines employed people from economically over-populated areas (due to exhausted local workforce resources).¹⁷ They lived in settlements, close to the mines (in real socialism mining had a preferential access to *rare goods* like flats) or in new towns which were especially built to meet the needs of mining industry. Such submission of town-planning processes to the needs of mining industry caused that in 8 cities and 4 towns people employed in mines constituted 50% of all employed in the national economy.¹⁸

Żory and Jastrzębie are examples of new mining towns. The latter, in a short time, from a small settlement changed into a 100 thousand housing complex (a number of inhabitants has increased 51 times). It hasn't, however, become a real city but only a *gigantic mining housing space* which consists of blocks of flats with a big deficit of basic services.¹⁹ New mining high-rise block areas also had very poor services. Living there was reduced to a few monotonous basic activities—working, eating, sleeping, watching TV. And the space deprived of elementary service, shopping and cultural facilities, became “empty” in a sociological sense. In this way were created high-rise block areas with loose integration of inhabitants, and not distinct local communities.²⁰

The processes of disintegration concerned also the majority of older mining communities. Many of them were inhabited by newcomers, what often brought

¹⁶ W. Świątkiewicz, “Miejskie społeczności lokalne...” [“Urban Local Communities...”], p. 76.

¹⁷ W. Błasiak et al., *Górny Śląsk... [Upper Silesia...]* (1990), p. 100.

¹⁸ *Górnicy górnośląscy [Upper Silesian Miners]*, ed. M. S. Szczepański (Kraków-Katowice 1994), p. 70.

¹⁹ B. Jałowiecki, *Spoleczne... [Social...]*

²⁰ See M. S. Szczepański, “*Miasto socjalistyczne i świat społeczny jego mieszkańców [A New “Socialist City” and the Social Situation of Its Inhabitants]* (Warszawa 1991).

social conflicts. Some towns were incorporated into bigger urban complexes, (e.g. Bieruń Stary, Bojszowy), some disappeared like part of a unique settlement of Giszowiec (its planners followed the pattern of E. Howard's *garden town*). Such ideas were supported by regional authorities who aimed at disintegration of traditional Silesian culture as *lower and illegal*²¹ and wanted to replace it by a *socialist* version of all-national culture.²²

Mining communities in the process of transformation (1989-1995)

Key problems of restructuring of the Katowice voivodship are inevitably connected with a radical reconstruction and reduction of employment in the mining industry. In Poland today (1995) there are 66 operating coalmines, 64 of them located in the Katowice voivodship and forming 30 mining centres, 27 of which are sited in the towns and 3 in rural areas.²³ In 1989-1994 the production of coal fell by 30%, and employment by only 15% and its further reduction seems to be taken for granted with the decreasing demand for coal. Cautious estimate made by research workers of GIG in Katowice (Central Mining Institute)—based on both long-term and short-term empirical studies—shows that by the year 2000 122,3 thousand people will have left the mining industry (out of 297 thousand employed in April 1995). By the year 2010 another 42,6 thousand workers will have left this sector, so this industry will employ only 132,1 thousand people. The estimate provided by the State Agency of Coal in Katowice is a little bit more optimistic. According to its experts, in the year 2000 the mining industry will employ 225 thousand people, so 72 thousand will leave this sector. In the next decade this outflow of workers will be much smaller (25 thousand people) and finally there will be 200 thousand employees in this sector.

In this context we need to point out that all these cases of leaving the jobs in the mining industry, natural or forced, will cause the domino effect in non-mining branches, that is around the mine (services, architecture, metallurgy). They will also have a direct influence on the future of 88 production and service mining units which employ 80 thousand people (health service, administration of housing resources, personnel of miners' recreational centres).

²¹ See P. Bourdieu, "Les modes de domination", in P. Bourdieu, L. Boltanski, "La production de l'ideologie dominante", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Nos. 2-3 (1976).

²² W. Błasiak et al., *Górny Śląsk... [Upper Silesia...]* (1990).

²³ K. Tausz, "The Mining Industry as a Plane for Resolving the Social Effects of Restructuring", in *Transformation of the Old Industrial Regions as a Sociological Problems*, ed. K. Wódz (Katowice 1994), p. 329.

Writing about the domino effect, we must not forget about the results that the liquidation of a mine will lead to in traditional—that is patriarchal—Silesian families. In most of them, father is the only breadwinner (about 75% of all miners' families), while mother does the housework and looks after the children. Thus, we can assume that in Upper Silesia over 1 million people are professionally or through families connected with mining industry. Even if this model was rejected—for various reasons—the regional labour market is too small to employ miners' wives, who do not usually have enough professional qualifications.

Even the most careful estimate may appear deceptive in the conditions of uncontrolled and unrestrained development of the situation in the mining industry, especially of gas-coking coal. It is much dependent on the economic situation, or rather bad economic situation in metallurgy and they are both going through a deep crisis. What is worse, such mines are situated in a small area (the Rybnik-Jastrzębie Region), with a very poor labour market which is unable to absorb redundant people. The situation in Żory is a good example—the city of 70 thousand inhabitants, with two big plants: the mine Żory which is going into liquidation and a liquidated house factory. No wonder that the mining experts have unanimously evaluated the restructuring situation in the region as very critical leading to a dramatic (expert of Polish Academy of Sciences), tragic (expert of Solidarity '80) or revolutionary end (experts of GIG).

Regional Contract and Upper Silesian mining communities

In the first half of 1995 the representatives of socio-political, professional, self-governmental and economic circles prepared the document entitled *Regional Contract for the Katowice Voivodship* (further: *RC*).²⁴ This Contract—"meant for at least 20 years"—consists of three complementary parts. The first part is called "Regional Social Agreement" (further: *RSA*) and contains its signatories' concerted declaration of co-operation in support of "The Programme of Restructuring and Development of Upper Silesia and the Basin". The Document bears a date of May 24, 1995, and was signed in Katowice, on June 6, 1995, by the Regional Parliament of the Katowice Voivodship, the Upper Silesian Economic Society, the Regional Economic Council, the Regional Economic Chamber, The Region of Silesian-Dąbrowa Solidarity, the Union of Upper Silesian and North Moravian Communes, the All-Poland

²⁴ *Kontrakt regionalny dla województwa katowickiego [Regional Contract for the Katowice Voivodship]*, versions: 0; 1.0; 1.1; 2.0; 2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 3.0 (Katowice 1995).

Trade Union Agreement, the Upper Silesian Union and numerous representatives of other institutions and organisations.

The second part of *RC*—"The Region-Government Agreement"—contains a list of basic enterprises aiming at sanitation of the region. This part of the document shows also the ways of carrying out these undertakings and measures of their implementation. The signatories to *RC* assumed that strategic areas, in which transformation conditions successful restructuring of the region, are the following: education, social security, associated problems like public infrastructure, space shaping and environmental protection, self-government, economy, finances, social communication, promotion of the region and—last but not least—international co-operation.

The third part is entitled "Commentary on Regional Contract" and, as a matter of fact, makes a supplement to the first two parts of the document. It contains a little more detailed (of several sentences) explanations of strategic activities undertaken by the *RC* signatories. There are three main actors of *RC*. The first of them are voivodship actors (e.g. communes; big economic institutions: ironworks, mines, mining companies; important regional organisations, societies, funds, chambers). The second actor of *RC* is the Centre, mainly the central government, its departments and other central institutions. The third—the future actor of *RC*—are to be supra-state institutions, mainly the European Union and its various branches and departments.

According to the project, *RC* is to be a public-legal agreement concluded between representatives of the region and central authorities. As the authors of *RC* point out, it is a very rare form of agreement which is preceded, however, by the agreement of the Round Table in 1989. The items of *RC* allow for the possibility of yearly renegotiations of establishments accepted by the government and representatives of the region.

In mid June 1995, after the analysis of *RC* items, the Prime Minister Józef Oleksy ordered his officials from strategic departments—mainly education, finance, industry—to start negotiations with representatives of the region and to carry them on till the end of August 1995. For some obscure organisational reasons, the function of a chairman of the governmental negotiation commission was placed at a low level and was given to the deputy minister of agriculture. To describe, in short, the character of these talks, we can say that the representatives of the region expect the government to send great financial help to the voivodship, which would enable real restructuring processes; they also aim at indispensable legislative changes and expect the Centre to let the *RC* signatories act on a large scale. The Centre, however, standing face to face with insufficient budget resources and poor state funds, is going to limit financial transfer and agrees, at least verbally, on the necessary change of legislation and guarantees the realisation of previously accepted activities.

From a formal point of view, *RC* is an important document in which the problems of Upper Silesian mines and mining communities should be given priority. *RC*, however, treats all mining and heavy industry rather casually. One may have the impression that the *RC* signatories—who have wide knowledge of the region and its real problems—are characterised by some kind of escapism and the will of not considering the most difficult question—restructuring of heavy industry. Careful reading of all parts of *RC* is quite convincing. *RSA*, composed of 23 pages, considers the mining problems twice, although in a casual way. On pages 2-3, the authors present a general picture of the situation in the voivodship, and in point “i” they write about: “quick-worsening financial situation of mines, ironworks together with mining and ironworks communes”. Two pages further, however, the signatories to *RSA* say—without giving any professional grounds—that the constant elements of the economic structure of the Katowice voivodship will be “1. Modern mining industry and coal processing together with power industry and other closely related branches”.²⁵

Such a declaration, although significant, is not given a detailed description by *RSA*. Thus, we can assume that the problem of mining and mining local communities will appear in the most important negotiative part of *RC*, namely in the project of the “Region-Government Agreement”, that is in the chapter: “Economy”. Here, again, mining is treated casually, because only in the last point they mention the necessity of “preparing long-term plans to supply coal and iron goods, which would be included in the industrial policy of the country”.²⁶ Also the “Commentary”, a supplementary part of *RC*, contains only two sentences about mining and associated problems, and develops an idea of making necessary plans to supply and mine coal.²⁷

This casual treatment of mining and mining communities—at least from a formal point of view—leads to a few reflections. The authors of *RC*, which is an interesting attempt to create a new economic and social order in Upper Silesia, lacked imagination and sensitiveness. As a result, the problems of the branch, which attracts 1 million people either emotionally or professionally, are not viewed with due gravity. Most certainly, complex propositions presented in some points of *RC* involve problems of mining but, because of the difficulties in this branch of Upper Silesian industry, they should be treated in a separate and preferential way. While creating *RC* there may have appeared escapist attitudes and the desire to stress less thorny and less controversial economic problems. It is likely that this unsatisfactory presentation of mining items is in Upper Silesia a visible effect of “cultivation of silence” around

²⁵ Ibid.: Part I: “Regional Social Agreement” (*RSA*)..., p. 5.

²⁶ Ibid.: “Regional-Government Agreement” (*RGA*), Ch.: “Economy”, point 7, p. 12.

²⁷ Ibid.: “Commentary”, p. 16.

this branch. Every single attempt to undertake definite and determined reformatory actions (e.g. closing down constantly unprofitable mines) threatens regional and central establishments with social tensions and political conflicts.

Instead of conclusion

On July 28, 1995, the State Agency of Coal in Katowice published the Report on the economic situation of mining. From January to the end of June, the mines excavated 67 million tons of coal and sold 63 million tons. Coal mining, *per saldo*, met with 74% bigger loss than in the same period of 1994. Total net loss estimated at 658,6 million new zlotys, and it is still growing. Undoubtedly, its growth in the second half of the year will be traditionally a little lower due to seasonally growing demand for coal. Therefore, mining companies insist on immediate increase in coal prices. This complicated and socially difficult situation together with *RC* mining items makes us aware of how this significant and precedential document neglects the problems of the branch.

Further abandonment of real changes in coal mining and negligence of the "mining question" during the negotiations over *RC* may lead to:

- aggravation of still difficult situation of this branch and people working for it (in June 1995, gross wage average in mining was 1,099 zlotys; considering the conditions of work and its character, it was not too high),
- the decrease of the competitiveness of Polish coal on world markets,
- escalation of social and political conflicts in the region, which may be later extended beyond its borders. We must remember that in the end of May 1995, the day before the 15th anniversary of Gdańsk, Szczecin and Jastrzębie agreements of 1980, there was a scuffle between the police and miners of Silesia-Dąbrowa Solidarity. The day after, *Rzeczpospolita* wrote that: "The police used water cannons and clubs, and the demonstrators used sticks."²⁸ These were the first, but perhaps not the last—on such a scale—manifestations of growing rebellion and accumulated frustration. Further delay of mining problems and thus their accumulation will inevitably lead to such incidents and will intensify unrestrained, dangerous and unforeseeable acts.

²⁸ *Rzeczpospolita*, May 27-28 (1995).

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