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Brendan Karch. *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland: Upper Silesia, 1848-1960.* Publications of the German Historical Institute Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 346 pp. $105.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-108-48710-8.

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For centuries, Upper Silesia was characterized by a German-Polish language mix; following the three Silesian wars between Prussia and Austria, Upper Silesia became Prussian in the mid-eighteenth century, and from 1871 part of the German Reich. In 1921, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, a plebiscite was to be held to provide ultimate clarification on the issue of the national division of Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland. The nationalism that arose as a result and with which this region is still often associated today was, however, not always evident there. In his convincing and informative book, Brendan Karch shows how this differentiated and heterogeneous region turned into a national German-Polish conflict area in the period between 1848 and 1960. The town of Opole and the surrounding region serve as his principal example for the growing nationalization process in Upper Silesia.

The population of Upper Silesia had, for centuries, been characterized by a lack of national identity, with Catholicism being the unifying element among the local population up until 1890. Karch argues that the inhabitants viewed Upper Silesia as a single bilingual, religious unit, with religion constituting their common regional base. Language was not an indicator of difference because many Upper Silesians spoke both German and Polish fluently.

It was the introduction of Protestantism, as an external force and as manifested in Bismarck's culture struggle (***Kulturkampf***) from 1871 to 1881, that was instrumental in the development of Upper Silesia as a regional unit. The separation of state and church which he promoted was also intended to reduce the influence of the existing Catholic Church in Upper Silesia. Many offices and public positions were now occupied by Protestants. The lines of conflict thus came to be drawn according to religious denomination, although the weak economy in Upper Silesia at the beginning of the twentieth century and the ensuing impoverishment of the population were also benchmarks by which the situation was measured. Karch's multifaceted and comprehensive presentation shows the great efforts some Polish intellectuals and politicians made to present Catholicism in Upper Silesia as an issue that was no longer regionally specific, as well as to instrumentalize Catholicism as the national Polish religion.

As a consequence of the Treaty of Versailles, multilingualism and Catholicism as the common religion came to lose their significance as symbols of identity. The plebiscite mandated for Upper Silesia in the treaty lent strength to the nationalist

tendencies. Both the Polish and the German governments quickly began to form paramilitary troops and to employ these in the struggle for sovereignty in Upper Silesia. These conflicts are reflected in the Silesian Uprisings organized by the Polish Upper Silesians. The result of the plebiscite, in which 60 percent voted in favor of remaining in the German Empire and 40 percent in favor of secession to Poland, did nothing to ease the tensions. On the contrary, the division of the region (1922) paved the way for the rise of the national conflicts in the following years.

Thus, it was mainly the minorities in the respective parts of Upper Silesia who were instrumentalized for politically motivated purposes. The nationalist propaganda on both the German and the Polish side attempted to represent them as oppressed sections of the population whose cultural roots had been severed. In the course of this process, Karch argues, skepticism grew among the Upper Silesians with regard to expressing loyalty exclusively to one nation. Many of them identified first and foremost with the region in which they lived, and up until 1945 the question of German or Polish national identity was of secondary concern. Similar identification patterns were also characteristic for Upper Silesian Jews. Most of them "saw no outright conflict between being a Jew or Polish speaker and also a German" (p. 187). This changed after 1937 when the National Socialists (NS), as part of their persecution policy, decreed themselves who was classified as a "Jew." The violence and brutality of NS power destroyed the "balance of power at the local level" (p. 220). The Polish side responded to Nazi claims to power with heightened nationalism. Yet even in this conflict it is not possible to determine any one-sided national allegiances. As Karch stresses, there was no lack of Polish Upper Silesians who sympathized with the Nazi regime. During the Second World War when Nazi Germany occupied the whole of Upper Silesia, loyalty to the German occupying powers often proved to be the only survival strategy.

After 1945, when Upper Silesia became Polish, the multifaceted identity of its inhabitants helped them to withstand relatively unscathed the repressions of the immediate postwar period. Unlike Lower Silesia or former East Prussia, the people of Upper Silesia were often characterized as autochthonous and were largely unaffected by forced displacements and expulsion. The reaction of many nationally indifferent Upper Silesians to the intensive efforts of the Polish government to "Polonize" the region was to leave for the West. There were opportunities for this in the 1950s when the Federal Republic of Germany and the International Red Cross instigated some restricted-period agreements for "family reunifications."

Although the title of Karch's book promises to deal with the postwar era up until the 1960s, the book itself does not fulfill this promise. He deals only very briefly and superficially with the period after 1945, and in particular with the 1960s. There is no profound analysis of the new constellations of dependencies and decision-making scope that arose in postwar Poland for those Upper Silesians who associated themselves particularly closely with German culture. This omission should not, however, lead us to lose sight of the fact that Karch has succeeded in producing an important, informative, and well-written book. The greatest benefit the reader draws from the book lies in the empirical criticism of the rigid, culturally homogeneous concept of identity. This alone makes it a book that is unquestionably also critical of contemporary scholarship in that it approaches the ongoing research on identity with considerable skepticism and shows clearly that a functional—rather than substantialist—concept of the various forms of culture is required.

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