An Argument at the Monument Stone: Manipulation of Nationalist Linguistic Ideology in Identity Claims by the German Minority in Poland

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This paper is about the problems that multi-linguals in Europe may have in legitimating claims to national identity. The problem presented in this paper is that a particular group, in particular political circumstances, finds itself faced with an ideology of national identity which makes a two-fold demand of language, and the group can only meet one of them. How do they manage this dilemma?

The paper presents an informed reading of a recorded conversation which took place early in the morning in the woods near a village, here called "Ostr\w", in Opole Silesia, Poland. Opole Silesia, for historical reasons I will shortly explain, is the region of Poland where people of German national self-identification live in greatest concentration, and the stronghold of the politically organized Social and Cultural Society of the German Minority. I was in the woods near the village for the occasion of the dedication of a monument stone, marking the site of the so-called "Priest-hole," where the villagers and their priest had hidden themselves from the invading Swedes during the Thirty Years' War. The dedication of the stone was the morning kick-off to a day of festivities celebrating the seven-hundredth anniversary of the first written mention of the village in 1293. I had been invited by a historian, a native of the village who had been asked to give a lecture that afternoon. We were accompanied by another native of the village, a much less highly educated man who still lives there and is very grounded in local life. The morning's formalities were over, and we had returned to our car when a large tourist bus lumbered through the woods. From the bus emerged a group of German men and women, mostly in their fifties or older, and a group of girls dressed in folk costume. They had been specially invited. The girls were going to dance that afternoon. They wanted to know what was going on, and, told that a memorial had just been dedicated, they wanted to see it. The Professor and the Local Man, who as native Opole Silesians were able to converse fluently with the mono-lingual Germans, offered to show them the monument stone. When we reached it, one of the men in the group looked at the inscription, and asked belligerently, "Why is this written only in Polish? They spoke only German here!"

It is not true that the inhabitants of Ostr\w at the time of the Thirty Years' War spoke only German. In fact, at that time, it is possible that the only one who spoke German was the priest. The original inhabitants of Silesia were Slavs, and Silesia was first a province of Poland under the Piast dynasty. Passed to Czech suzerainty as part of a treaty in 1339, Silesia became Austrian with the other Czech lands in 1526 (Davies 1982:28 ff), and remained Austrian until Frederic the Second wrested the territory from Maria Theresa in 1742 (Davies 1982:507). Ostr\w, then, was under German-speaking administration from 1526 until 1945, but competence in German did not become widespread until the second half of the nineteenth century. The transfer of Silesia to Poland after the Second World War thus introduced standard Polish into a previous bi-lingual repertoire. But the language of local Ostr\w society -- of village society throughout Opole Silesia -- was and remains the Silesian dialect of Polish.

Why, then, were these particular Germans convinced to the contrary? The discussion that ensued lasted forty minutes, and became heated. Understanding what was at stake in it reveals much about the role of language in the European ideology of national identity. Specifically, the ideological "rub" here is that for these particular Germans, native language is an essential index of national identity, and, having been told that Ostr\w is 80% German, they assume that until 1945, German was spoken there as a native language. The Local Man, as a representative of the village, has a pressing interest in presenting Ostr\w as German to the Germans, who are not only guests but financial patrons, while the professor, as a historian who happens to identify with Polish nationality, is committed to introducing the Germans to the historical facts. What is interesting is that in this self-presentation, the Local Man is able to manipulate nationalist linguistic ideology. Although "native language" is important, language has another role in nationalist ideology, and the Local Man emphasizes that in one aspect, the village conforms to

expectations, while diverting attention from the problematic issue of "native language."

The monument stone, then, not only served to focus memory of Ostrovians' being forced to hide from political struggles long past, but also became the locus of their role in a political struggle still actively playing itself out. Opole Silesia is the only corner of the territories transferred from Germany to Poland after the Second World War where the population was not expelled in entirety to the Occupied Zones of Germany through a series of military operations -- a process we now call "ethnic cleansing" (See Davies 1982:562-565 for a brief discussion, as well as Bahr, deZayas, Kaps, Paikert). The ideological reason for this is that according to the premise that native language is an essential index of nationality, bi-lingual Silesians constituted a Polish population who had been subjected to a centuries-long, but nonetheless artificial, process of Germanification (see Urban 1994:68 ff, Senft 1995). Yet the presence of this population gives Opole Silesia an important place in the irredentist hopes of the West German League of Expellees, the right-wing political organization of those expelled from the transferred territories. In the view of the League of Expellees, Opole Silesia is a privileged instantiation of the slogan "Silesia remains German," since there are still Germans there. In considering Opole Silesians Germans, they follow the philosophy of Article 116 of the German Federal constitution, that of ius sanguinis, the law of blood. For Article 116 grants automatic citizenship rights to all "ethnic Germans" in eastern Europe, the posterity of German emigrations centuries past. As Verdery describes, German ethnicity is taken as demonstrated when individuals belong to a German ethnic collectivity and express this identity through language and culture (Verdery 1985). Since the group of Germans at the monument stone were a contingent of the "Landesmannschaft Schlesien," the Silesian sub-group of the League of Expellees, they assumed that Opole Silesians are such a cultural and linguistic collectivity. What they fail to recognize is the implications of another clause of Article 116, which grants automatic citizenship rights to all the posterity of citizens of the German state in its 1937 borders regardless of their cultural and linguistic identity. Two different conceptions of what it means to be German -- the civil identity of citizenship, and the cultural identity of ethnicity -- do not go together in the historical experience of Opole Silesia. As we will see, this disjuncture has a correlate in nationalist linguistic ideology.

While the fall of Communism allowed for official interest on the part of the West German government and precipitated a wave of interest by various organizations and municipalities, the League of Expellees had already developed contacts with local village elite, and were positioned to actively support the initial organization of the Social and Cultural Society of the German Minority. Sub-groups of the organization entered into patronage relationships with individual villages, and the SCSGM village chairman of Ostr\w had established such a relationship early in the post-Communist period, in 1990. In the process, he had told the League of Expellees group -- the group representatives of which he had specially invited to the 700th anniversary celebrations --that "80% of the inhabitants of Ostr\w are German," referring to the village's indigenous population and the definitions of Article 116 of the German Constitution. Such statements have been standard SCSGM practice, and it has been standard practice also to neglect to flesh out the ethnographic picture of Opole Silesians' domestic language and Slavic cultural roots.[1]

In the argument at the monument stone, the limitations of this strategy become evident. While some of the Germans from the League of Expellees group seem impervious to the Professor's patient attempts to present the historical facts, and their implications, one man paraphrased a fundamental question at several points during the conversation: "I don't understand how it can be that the villagers here could be Germans when Germans were expelled after the war, and it was Poles who were allowed to remain." (See Appendix for an edited rendition of the transcript.)

The Local Man, however, is not a member of the Village Council, but simply an aware citizen. As such, he knows that the national identification of Opole Silesians is contingent and not unitary. Historically, as Berli½ska reports:

The results of research conducted in the years 1987-1989 by the Sociology Division of the Silesian Institute in Opole indicate that before the war national identity among Silesians was labile, of a nominalistic character, that is, there existed no deep feeling of connectedness with German national culture. The following response illustrates this position best: "My parents considered

themselves whatever the situation warranted. But not so much Germans, because the pure Germans were on the other side of the river" [i.e. farther west]. Older Silesian respondents expressed their distinctness from Germans, which generally vested itself in the use of Polish and in local customs and religion [a Catholic/ Protestant divide]. A Silesian could not be a pure German, at most he could be "a little bit of a German" or "more of a German." Yet the fact that from the moment they left the isolation of traditional village society Silesians began to absorb certain values of German culture, with language at the head, testified that they could not consider themselves Poles. Nevertheless, the entire baggage of their own traditions, customs, religion and native language ensured that they were not considered -- nor considered themselves -- full members of the German nation. Difficulties in establishing a definitive national identity are typical for border regions which, like Opole Silesia, have repeatedly changed hands over the course of the centuries. (Berli½ska 1989:6)

The current manifestation of this historical conditioning is a population which is internally differentiated in terms of national and group identification. Berli½ska conducted survey research in which she posed the question: "Who are you? Who do you feel yourself to be? How would you describe yourself?" Respondents could choose one of the following replies: a Pole, more a Pole than a Silesian, more a Silesian than a Pole, a Silesian, more a Silesian than a German, more a German than a Silesian, a German. The results look as follows on the bar graph (Cf. Figure 1 at end of article)

Polish-oriented responses, both equivocal and unequivocal, account for about 20% of the total. German-oriented responses account for about 15%. Silesian-oriented responses account for about 65%. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to note that the question's construction invites respondents to differentiate between national identity and local group identity, and fully 50% rejected national identity completely in favor of considering themselves simply to be Silesian. This underlines the statistical preference among this population for the geographically local and culturally proximate option. What is key to understanding the position of the Local Man, however, is that the privileging of an identification with a nation-state breaks down generationally. 57.1% of those choosing the Polish option were under the age of 40 (and it's interesting to note that almost 40% of this group had a Polish spouse), while, dramatically, 72% of those choosing the German option were over the age of 56 (Berli½ska 1992).

As is the Local Man. And it is important to know that even among those of this generation for whom German national identity co-exists with Silesian identity, fieldwork has shown that the post-war experience had the widespread result of making German identity an emotionally dear one. Silesian identity is non-problematic; German identity fraught and highly defended.

The professor, on the other hand, belongs to that small segment of indigenous Opole Silesian society whose national identity is definitively Polish. His father fought on the Polish side in the Silesian Uprisings that occurred at the time of the Post World War I nationality plebiscite, and an uncle was later killed in Auschwitz as a Polish nationalist. He accepts the nationalist ideology of native language and culture indicating nationality, and accepts the logical conclusion that by this measure, Silesians are Poles, although he understands the historical complexities which have led some to reach different conclusions. Since he is a nationalist, then, what the Professor knows as a historian has consequences for identity, and he also knows that the Nazis, whose nationalism was similarly grounded, chose to misrepresent the historical facts to fit their convenience, which was to consider Opole Silesians as Aryan. He knows that, as one sixty-year-old explained to me, "We were always taught that we were a Volksstamm [racial branch]."

Thus it is understandable that the long discussion among the Professor, the Local Man, and people from the group of Germans focused on history, and especially the history of language use. Implicitly, it was an interrogation of the village's legitimate participation in the national community that the Germans represented. The issue was particularly acute in that the form of participation in question was the role of being worthy recipients of financial support -- support these particular Germans intended for fellow Germans only.

Before turning to how the Local Man manages to "finesse the situation" ideologically, let us consider the ideological assumptions apparent in the Germans' arguments. First of all, the question, "How many inhabitants does this village have, and how many of them are Germans?" was raised not only in this conversation, but repeatedly by Germans

over the course of the day. Before the start of the argument at the monument stone, I recorded a conversation to this effect between a German free-lance journalist and an Ostrovian, and this conversation emerged at the end of the argument. Furthermore, it was posed later in the day in such a way as to foreground it extremely: at the formal ceremonies, those at which the professor also gave his lecture and at which various awards were bestowed and folk dances performed, one of the high officials of the Opole Silesian German Minority called this question out to the village council during a question and answer session. That he posed it in German, while the language of the proceedings was Polish, indexes to whom he expected the question and its answer to be meaningful. Ideologically, this question must assume that each individual has a single defined national identity on the basis of which he or she can be categorized. As discussed above, this is not the case in Opole Silesia.

Second, comments about the inscription reveal an assumption that historically, only such clearly defined Germans were members of the German nation-state. One man said, "I would disagree [with the inscription being only in Polish] because we've got to do here with the German people, and not the Polish people, right? The Thirty Years' War was a war with the Germans, and not with the Poles. And they've got that turned around here." Yet the Thirty Years' War was not simply a war with the German people in the sense of modern nation-state warfare, and the Austrian state of which Ostr\w was a unit at the time was avowedly multi-ethnic.

Another thrust of the conversation underlines that the League of Expellees group views language, especially in public, written-literally-in-stone use, as a primary symbol of identity. They spend some time discussing why a predominantly German village would have allowed such a monument to be inscribed only in Polish? Their conclusion is one often offered by the German Minority to cover the fact that this symbolic function is not meaningful to most Silesians: that the Polish authorities must not have allowed it.

All three of these assumptions reflect the image of a culturally and linguistically monolithic nation-state which can only accommodate two possibilities of individual national identity: either one is a member of the nation-state nationality, or one is a member of a national minority. Such membership is established on the basis of native language and cultural practice. Neither historical assimilation or "civilization," so important to the French model of nationality, nor "multi-culturalism," that important if problematic feature of the American model, counts.

The Local Man, then, is faced with the task of obfuscating the reality of his village's history in face of the Professor's attempts to clarify. For, lacking his companion's stake in the visitors' retaining their illusions, the Professor patiently offered historical examples and elucidation to the effect that the original inhabitants of the area are Slavs. Let us consider the beginning of the conversation[1]:

Man from League of Expelles group: Why is there only Polish here, they only spoke German here?

Professor: I can't really completely support that. In the, um, *population list*, that is, at the end of the nineteenth century there were still, that is, in the school there were eleven pupils who came from German families, and, then, there were over a hundred and eighty from Polish families. Yes, so it was

M, LE: But that was when they had immigrated, when the Prussians had let them in, but not before that.

P: No, before that there were, ah, Slavic inhabitants, that is, the place names and everything is, is, Polish so one didn't say a, ah, a, a "Priesterloch" [priest-hole] or something like that, one said, until today one says "Ksi"ïad\l" or "Farled\l" [where "Farle" is a German loan blended with Slavic "d\l"], so the whole region it was Polish and also the, ah, name "Ostr\w" and not "Ostrau," "Ostrau" doesn't occur until the eighteenth century, that is in the archives.

M, LE: Yes.

Local Man: But that's looking back on it, one can't, because we don't exactly know either, so... but anyway, the name, well, there was a German priest here, right? [He reads the name of the priest who hid his congregation in the "priest-hole" from the stone's inscription.]

P: Yes, but the priest came from Berlin, he was three....

LM: A person can argue about whether only, whether only Polish was spoken, back then, right? It's hard to tell [this sentence exhibited Polish syntactic interference]. At

any rate there were here, this and that kind of people were here, right?

M, LE: Well, yeah, but....

We see here an initial strategy of historical equivocation. The Local Man draws on this strategy more than once. For example, late in the conversation, he asserted that at the time of the Thirty Years' War, there were fewer than a hundred villagers anyway (as the inscription informs onlookers), and because of the war, people were wandering around Europe all over the place. "There were even French people here!" he concludes. And, so, he implies, who can tell what the ethnic composition of the village was? Yet this is not his only strategy. Immediately following the above exchange, the Local Man brings out a common German Minority linguistic trump card. And it is this move that invites us to consider the complexity of nationalist ideology, and the two-fold demand it makes of language.

M, LE: Well, yeah, but...

LM: We didn't know the Polish language at all, it was a Silesian language, right? It was....

M, LE: A dialect, right?

Woman from League of Expellees group: Water Polish, Water Polish, yes? ["Wasserpolnisch" is a German derogatory name for Silesian Polish. The term was also prefixed to the names of other languages spoken within Germany]

LM: Water Polish, yes? One speaks it, there are a lot of expressions....

2nd man from League of Expellees group: A mixture of German and Polish.

LM (overlapping): German expressions are, and then these other [...] not like the Polish. We didn't know the Polish language at all.

M, LE: No.

LM: When the Russian arrived, we had to look in books first, what it was in Polish. We knew the Silesian language, right? But not the Polish. And that's connected to it, one can't tell, today, how it really was. At any rate, the people were here, then, Germans and there were also, that is, Polish, the people here are that too, right?

The point is clear: Silesian is not Polish. We did not speak Polish. Therefore, because language is a primary index of national identity, we cannot be considered Poles. On the other hand, we did speak German. Therefore, surely, we can be considered German.

I stated above that the language of village society in Opole Silesia is "the Silesian dialect of Polish." Is it then true that Ostrovians did not speak Polish?

What is at stake here is the relationship between ethnographic and linguisticographic fact and its ideological implications. If one believes that national identity can be inferred from the cultural and linguistic legacies of ancient history, then the facts of those legacies will inexorably lead to conclusions concerning national identity. Concerning the Local Man's argument, then, there is a parallel in my role as evaluator of the claim that "Silesian is not Polish" in this analysis of the argument and the role of the professor in the argument itself. For the professor was trying to convince the Germans that their conclusion that Opole Silesians are ethnically German is not supported by the facts, even against entrenched unwillingness on the part of some to believe it or even to let him finish a sentence (see, for example, the exchange at the beginning of Side II of the tape). Yet, beyond that, one can consider the following question: what is it about European nationalist linguistic ideology which makes this matter? It is the answer to this question which reveals the Local Man's adept manipulation of the ideology.

To consider first, then, the linguisticographic facts:

The grammatical structure of Silesian is Slavic. Silesian, like Polish, has a system of seven cases and nouns exhibit the same consonantal alternations as in Polish. Verbs occur as members of several conjugations, and tense, person, and gender markers may be suffixed to the verb stem in the past tense, as in Polish, although the Silesian past tense has the possibility of constructions (including analytic ones) not available in Polish. Silesian has a Slavic system of verbal aspect. Furthermore, in the semantic realm, Silesian and Polish have the characteristic relationship of "low" and "high" variants of a language, whereby cognates of semantically neutral Silesian words have derogatory meanings in Polish:

Silesian	Polish
cha»pa -- house	cha»upa -- hut
chop -- man, husband	ch»op -- peasant
ka»y -- mud	ka»y -- shit
»okropnie -- very	okropnie – terribly, awfully
pazur -- fingernail (human)	pazur -- claw (animal)
robi*f* -- to work (any work)	robi*f* -- to work (heavy manual work only)
gamba -- mouth	g"ba -- snout

There is no question of a Germanic origin of this dialect. The only serious question of its linguistic kinship is whether it ought to be considered a dialect of Polish or Czech. (See Nitsch 1939 for an argument ascribing it to Polish).

Taking a strictly synchronic view of lexicon, however, the picture is not so clear-cut. Silesian lexicon is cognate to Polish, Czech and German. Some Silesians claim that they can understand Czech television broadcasts more easily than Poles because of this. And German re-lexification of Silesian has been massive. Matuschek, who claims that this process was particularly rapid during the first decades of this century, describes the results as follows:

foter, fater < Vater ojciec, "father"; *muter*<Mutter, matka, "mother," *bana*<Bahn, kolej, "railway"; *geszynk*>Geschenk, prezent, "gift"; *bezuch*>Besuch, odwiedziny, "visit"; and words for clothing, cork, suit, inheritance, tea-cup, butterfly, herring, button, teacher, suit-case, ice-skates, eye-glasses, socks, young lady, cemetary, handkerchief, and many others. Further, the entire administrative vocabulary, household terms, clothes and accesories, kinship, names of months, health, agriculture, all parts of a bicycle, names of sports. (Matuschek 1994:41-43)

Some syntactic structures have also been borrowed, such as the overlay of German separable deictic particles on slavic prefixes, i.e. *Wciepnej* to *rein; wyciepnej* to *raus*, "throw that in/out", Polish wrzuczaj to, wyruczaj to, as well as idioms. All in all, then, it is not surprising that when one asks Silesians who are familiar with German and Polish as well as Silesian, while not being versed in historical linguistics, where they see their dialect as fitting in, they shrug: it's betwixt and between.

This is not to say, however, that Poles unfamiliar with the dialect can understand it. Indeed, for example, it should be self-evident that the utterance,

Jo» san richtig nie wia kaj jo» jes. (Silesian)

[I here really [negation] know where I am.]

will not be comprehensible to someone who would express it this way:

Ja tutaj na prawd" nie wiem gdzie jestem. (Polish)

[I here on truth [negation] know where ["be" in first person singular]]

Not all utterances are so different. Nevertheless, a degree of mutual incomprehensibility does obtain, and younger speakers, whose Silesian has moved in the direction of standard, can nevertheless manipulate their speech so as to exclude Poles from comprehension.

In conclusion then, while I can confidently assert that Silesian is a dialect of Polish, there is some sense to the Local Man's claim that it is not Polish. However, to be strictly fair, this is not a universal Silesian assessment of the dialect. A still older generation of Silesians has retained the dichotomy of "German/Polish" in thinking about their repertoire. In the first months of fieldwork, I often found myself listening with no comprehension to the broad Silesian of people in their seventies or older, only to have them say kindly, "Oh, can't you understand Polish? That's all right, I'll speak to you in German." My subjective point of view would tempt me to side with the Local Man, however: my ability to understand *Polish* was perfectly fine by that time.

There is thus a space between the statements, "Silesian is a dialect of Polish" and "Silesian is Polish." What remains unspoken, of course, is that Silesian Polish is certainly not a dialect of German, for all it's germanicization, and notwithstanding the "research" conducted during the Nazi era concluding the contrary, i.e.: "W. Mak 'proved' in 1933 ([published in] *Der Oberschlesier*, Opole) that the Silesian dialect is completely separate, having nothing to do with Polonica, being connected rather to the German dialects." (Rospond 1959:340) This is a lie. But it matters only insofar as native language is taken as a behavioral expression of essential national identity.

What then, of the Local Man's claim to the German language? He is echoing a sentiment I heard often from older Silesians in fieldwork: "Our language was German." They are expressing the folk belief, common throughout the world, that true languages are written and have a literary tradition. And it is perfectly true that in the immediate aftermath of the war, Silesians were often forced to use dictionaries to express themselves comprehensibly to Poles, and even if the first word that came to mind was in Silesian, the dictionary, of course, was a German-Polish one.

The tradition by which native language is taken as a behavioral expression of essential national identity is an old one. In the early nineteenth century, for example, Wilhelm von Humboldt asserted "that the structure of languages in the human race is different because and insofar as language is the spiritual distinctiveness of the nations themselves." (Humboldt 1830-1835, VII 43, quoted in Coulmas 1985:11. Translation mine.) But being a speaker of a national language has another function: it allows one to participate fully in the national community. The imagination of the modern national community, as Benedict Anderson has pointed out, depends on a "national print language" which allows all members of a nation to read and listen to a national media, and work in large-scale bureaucracies. Thus the second role of language in nationalist ideology is allowing the communication on which participation depends.

This role also has its ideological elaboration, its own nobility. One man of this generation describes this particularly well, explaining that he and his wife are "of German heritage." Having learned German culture in school, he said, he can't be easily re-oriented toward Polish culture. For example, what is Mickiewicz to him? Schiller is a poet closer to his heart; he feels familiar with Schiller's poetry, which he read as a schoolboy; he has a relationship with it. His wife added that it's different -- legitimately different -- for younger people, whose schooling was Polish. "Heritage" -- the artistic culture of literature and music -- is important, and the "heritage" of pre-war Silesians is that of German national culture.

Anderson's point, then, allows us to understand the two-fold demand of nationalist ideology on language. Language should both index commonality with the nation's past (a diachronic indexicality) and allow full participation in the nation's present (a synchronic pragmatic function). In the German ideology, there is an expectation that these will converge in the Romantic artistic expression of the nation's past in the standard language of the present. For individuals, then, the linguistic identity which most straightforwardly establishes a claim to national identity is that exemplified by the German visitors to Ostr\w: monolingualism in the state language. A native speaker of the state language has the hearth-and-home link to the historic development of the nation and, thanks to schooling, the ability to participate fully -- and read Schiller. In contrast, a domestic speaker of a dialect of that language has the link to historicity (for, after all, the nation as we know it grew out of its own past "folk culture,") but will have to acquire the standard language in order to participate, or risk being stigmatized, tellingly, as "backward." Immigrants fare even worse, since their language serves neither historicity nor participation: the national language must be acquired, and maintaining the immigrant language underlines foreignness. For German-identified Opole Silesians, the form of the problem -- that left unspecified by the Local Man -- is that they are domestic speakers of a dialect of the wrong language.

The Local Man finds some sympathy from one of the German women, who echoes his point, only to give opportunity to the Professor to counter it. Yet, as mentioned, most of the League of Expellee group seem quite determined to continue to believe that Opole Silesians are German, and yet another woman again comes down firmly on the side of the value and nobility of the literary language. Here is the exchange:

W, LE: And that's the case, and this German, um Polish can't have been the Cong, how do we say, the Congress Kingdom Polish, as they have it now as they speak it now,

they must have also had this other, as we say, well, we say "Water Polish."

[The woman has sensitively repeated the Local Man's argument; she also seems to be sensitive to the fact that "Water Polish" is a derogatory term.]

Others: Water Polish, yes, Water Polish

P: Well, but, but... (others continue to mull over this term, Water Polish)

W, LE: And that is a, Water Polish is a dialect.

P: Is a dialect, but there's a dialect also among Cracovians or in Zakopane or for example in other regions, the people did not speak literary Polish or German....

Other W, LE: No, we also have this dialect.

P: ... but rather their dialect.

M, LE: It's the same in German! In Bavaria we have... (he is drowned out)

P: But here it was... the German language as official language, and the school language and at work, so one didn't let's say develop a German dialect like in Lower Silesia. It was the literary, it was the German language of the stage, that is, our people spoke High German.

W, LE: Yes, yes, yes.

P: At home they spoke Polish, in dialect form, and, and when they got into jobs, in school they spoke High German such that you could understand it all over Germany, and not like in Bavaria or wherever.

M, W, LE: Yes, yes.

P: There, you see! [This is the longest speech the Professor has been allowed to make.]

Other W, LE: Yes, that's right. The Upper Silesian, we always said, speaks a *pure, High German.* [emphasis mine]

P: Yes, but that was because it came from school! (laughs)

It is true: Eastern Silesians spoke standard German. Their ability to participate linguistically in the national community cannot be questioned. All that can be questioned is their historical link to a racially conceived nation where standard, it is held, grew out of German dialects. It is by emphasizing the synchronic, participation/community aspect, and obfuscating the diachronic, authentic historicity aspect, that Opole Silesians manage the situation of being able to meet only one aspect of the two-fold demand of nationalism on language.

It is, as I've mentioned, the Germans in this episode who have the clear claim to German national identity. They are mono-lingual German speakers and life-long residents of the territory of the German state, even if some of them were militarily expropriated and forced to move in order to stay within it. They are also financially privileged, which helps in the Realpolitik of identity [C]onstitution (if you'll forgive the pun). Yet bilingualism, too, has its advantages in Realpolitik. In the final analysis, the most important ability of Opole Silesians to "finesse the situation" may not lie in the obfuscating emphasis on standard, literary language. During formal, indoor proceedings, the professor got his chance to give the historical lecture which had so often been interrupted in the woods that morning. He traced the village's original settlement by Slavs, the development of bilingualism, and concluded by saying, "It is thus evident that this is a Polish village." The League of Expellees group were all present in the lecture hall, seated in a row. Seated in a row also were various officials of the German Minority: the council chairman who had invited the Germans was there. But, then, why should these bi-linguals worry about this view being presented? This part of the celebrations was under official auspices of Ostr\w, a unit of the Polish state. The Professor gave his lecture in Polish, and none of the Germans understood it.

Endnotes

1. It should be noted that the possibilities opened by the "Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Poland on the confirmation of the borders existing between them," of November 14, 1990, and the "Treaty ... on good neighborliness and friendly cooperation" of July 17, 1991 have greatly increased the ability of Opole Silesian villages to establish positive working and patronage relationships with a range of West German municipalities and civic organizations. Many

more recently established relationships allow Opole Silesians to be open and honest about their cultural practices and historical experiences. Indeed, Berlinska argues that overall, what drives West German interest in helping communities in Poland is the western borderland experience: a large proportion of such relationships are established between communities in the former German eastern territories, whether now inhabited by an indigenous or an immigrant Polish population, and communities in the historical western and northern borderlands of Germany. (Berli½ska in press).

2. Words printed in italics are translated from Polish; normal typeface indicates translation from German.

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Appendix

transcribed conversation, abridged.

May, 1993, in the woods near Ostr\w (a pseudonym), on the occasion of the dedication of an inscribed monument stone commemorating the "priest-hole" in which the village priest and his congregation hid from the Swedish army during the Thirty Years' War. The dedication was the first event in a day-long celebration of the 700th anniversary of the first written mention of the village's name.

A complete transcription in the original languages is available from the author upon request. Here, text is translated from German unless printed in italics, which indicate translation from Polish.

Excerpt 1:

The first segment of taped conversation takes place between a German free-lance journalist, a woman probably in her thirties, and a representative of the village, a man in his late fifties or sixties.

Journalist: And... can one say how many German families are still here, that is, real German families in Ostrau?

Village man: If one were going to describe them as German then one would have to talk about Germandom, no?

J: Uh-huh.

V: There are people who perhaps, although they were born here perhaps don't, ah, quite declare themselves as German, at any rate, at present one can say, because it, because of [tape distorted] that here many were re-settled from eastern Poland, perhaps from central Poland, as a workforce, so there were apartments built here [....] the possibility to settle here, that was one of the reasons that one got them here, because after all there were apartments to be found here, and so they came here specially, because there were apartments here, and then not much is lacking that there are....

J: Mixed marriages. Many mixed marriages.

V: Many mixed marriages, completely, if one were going to speak about families, families that, actually they come from the whole of Poland. From [?], from Warsaw, generally, from Chenstohova, so they settled here from all over Poland..., because of work and they were able to find apartments here because you know that the housing shortage here in Poland... there weren't enough apartments built.... (short pause)

J: But now one can after all say that two-thirds of the citizens of Ostrau have declared themselves for the German Friendship Circle, that is, for the German minority. Are there Poles among them, as you have now explained it, can one say somehow, yes there are these mixed marriages, that's totally normal, if two-thirds of the citizens say now that they're Germans....

V: When [?] said [....] he had in mind the people who are indigenous, who, ah, who have lived here generation apon generation, from long ago.

Excerpt 2:

The argument at the monument stone. See text.

(After the segment quoted in the text the conversation turns to translation and discussion of the inscription on the stone. After some explanation:)

2nd M, LE: I would argue with that because we're dealing here with the German people, and not with the Poles, right? The Thirty Years' War was with the German people, right? And not with the Poles. And here they've got that turned around....

(Woman interjected "yes" at appropriate points in preceding comment.)

3rd M, LE: How does it happen then that there are still 80% Germans living here today, despite the Expulsions, although Germans were expelled and Poles were not expelled. I don't get it. And in the nineteenth century industrialization began. There were practically only Germans living in Upper Silesia but then the Poles came in through industrialization, and the Prussians were so generous as to let them all in, whoever worked, whoever was hard-working, didn't ask about religion....

(This is historically inaccurate).

4th M, LE: No, at that time Poland didn't exist! After 1815 there was no Polish state.

(The group attempts to get straight the facts of the Polish Partitions.)

Side II of the tape begins with the professor's voice:

P: But in an <u>ethnic</u> sense they were Slavic, in an <u>ethnic</u> sense. That's something one has to take into consideration here! (Laughs briefly)

M, LE: In an ethnic sense they were not either Slavic, right? (He continues, but the professor drowns him out with another example of the history of village settlement.)

M, LE (coming admirably to the point): In that case the 80% of villagers would have to at one point have been Poles, they would have to have all been Germanized, and that's not the case at all! By whom then?

P: Well, by the Prussians of course! Not by the Austrians! It was, there was only a German school! And it was already, as Uliczna writes, from 1768 it was accredited as a German school, here in Ostrau. Already under the Austrians and under the Prussians of course because then there was compulsory schooling, that was it, and the people <u>had</u> to go to school, I also, I'll give you an example....

(The group attempts to get the facts of compulsory schooling straight, whereby members of the L of E group want to maintain that there had always been separate schools for Poles and for Germans in Silesia, which, the professor tries to explain, is wrong. In the middle of this:)

3rd M, L E: At any rate I don't get how, how the villagers... [over an interruption] can have been Poles and now suddenly they're all Germans, despite the Expulsions. I don't get it.

Another M, LE: Yes!

LM: At that time there lived in Ostrau, he [the professor] has said it, only a hundred people!

Other man: Scarcely a hundred!

LM: Yes, scarcely a hundred people, under a hundred!

Other man: Under!

Yet another man: And because, also because of the war, right?

LM: And the war, the Thirty Years' War, one has to think about it, some families had just come here, right? [This sentence exhibits syntactic interference from Polish]. There were French people!

(multiple overlapping comments, which the professor interrupts:)

P: Ehh (strong expulsion of breath seemingly expressing exasperation). Listen. In the Chronicle, there were lime kilns here, ok? Lime kilns. The f, the f, the farmers, and they couldn't, they couldn't get the lime any farther because they didn't, in the chronicle it's written that they did not know the German language and only a certain Gromutka, a village headman, he was capable of speaking German and he could do business [....]

M, LE: I don't get why here in a German, an overwhelmingly German community they didn't at least do this bi-lingually.

(general agreement and discussion)

Woman: It ought to be bi-lingual.

Other man: At least, yes.

P: But it was bi-lingual thanks to the German school, don't you see? It was simply because of the German school that the people here were bi-lingual!

Woman: No, the inscription ought to be bi-lingual!

(The anthropologist asks the professor if this had been discussed; it is established that this is an issue for an official of the village. From the general murmur emerges:)

M, LE: Not permitted, yes!

W, LE: Yes, not permitted, yes.

M, LE: That's the reason.

W, LE: Yes, that's the reason.

M, LE: That's the reason!

W, LE: Yes!

M, LE: Yes! They weren't allowed to!

W, LE: Yes.

(The professor's voice emerges with yet more historical elucidation. Into this comes the voice of a woman from the League of Expellees group who hasn't spoken before. She argues that Frederic the Second didn't concern himself with the religion or language of his subjects. Glensk comments that Frederic the Second is said to have said that he himself speaks "only French, and German only with horses." The new woman continues with the argument about dialect quoted in the text. The woman who made the comment about the Upper Silesian speaking pure, high German then turns the conversation again:)

W, LE: When Silesia was under Austrian dominion, they also spoke German here, the Austrians also speak German. (agreement) So how can one claim that only Polish was spoken?

P: But listen, in Austria there were other peoples! There were also there, there were Hungarians, there....

W, LE: That was off to one side! Here it was German!

P: (two attempts at interruption, then a change of tactic. He states that in the inter-war period there were representatives of the Polish minority in Silesia in the German parliament. The woman then erupts:)

W, LE: After the First World War? Yeah, that was crap anyway after Geneva and so on, the Versaille Treaty was just so much cheating! East Upper Silesia voted for Germany and was detached anyway, right? It was all crap!

(There follows something new in the tape: complete silence for several seconds. By this time, the group is walking back to the bus and car. I am walking beside the professor, and address him in Polish:)

EV: *Better to give up at once, they see it as they see it and that's it.*

P (laughs): *They're always surprised, how can it be that these people speak Polish?*

EV: *I remember that it was you who first told me, two years ago, what the situation is here, because in the western press, you only get opinions like these.*

P: *Those are German statistics! [....] Really it was only the children of teachers and managers, those were the only Germans, the only ones who spoke German at home, yes!*

EV: *Except that you can't divide it, it was one society, a bi-lingual one.* (We argue about this for several turns. The professor contends that bi-lingualism brought about by compulsory schooling is not really social bi-lingualism, while I believe that German schooling was positively embraced by many. Our voices get louder. Then:)

W, LE: Speak German, we are among Germans!

P: Yes, but this is an American!

EV: Yes, I'm an American! I can speak either Polish or German.

W, LE: Well, then, kindly speak German. In that case we can speak German.

P: But now she already speaks Polish a little better!

W, LE: In that case she would have to speak English....

(This line of talk, which effectively disrupts the professor's and my talking about the group behind their backs in their presence, goes on for several turns. Also heard were comments about how in a united Europe, only ethnic boundaries will remain. The new woman asked me if I were a journalist, and on learning that I was writing a dissertation, the other woman admonished me to "write what's right, not what's wrong -- and you can put in there that everybody was kicked out of Lower Silesia." We also hear another woman talking to the local man:)

W, LE: How many inhabitants are there in Ostrau?

LM: Three thousand five hundred, and we, ah...

W, LE: How many German and how many Polish inhabitants?

LM: Two thousand Germans in Ostrau.

W, LE: Yes, so...

LM: And a thousand five hundred are then German or Polish....

W, LE: I see.

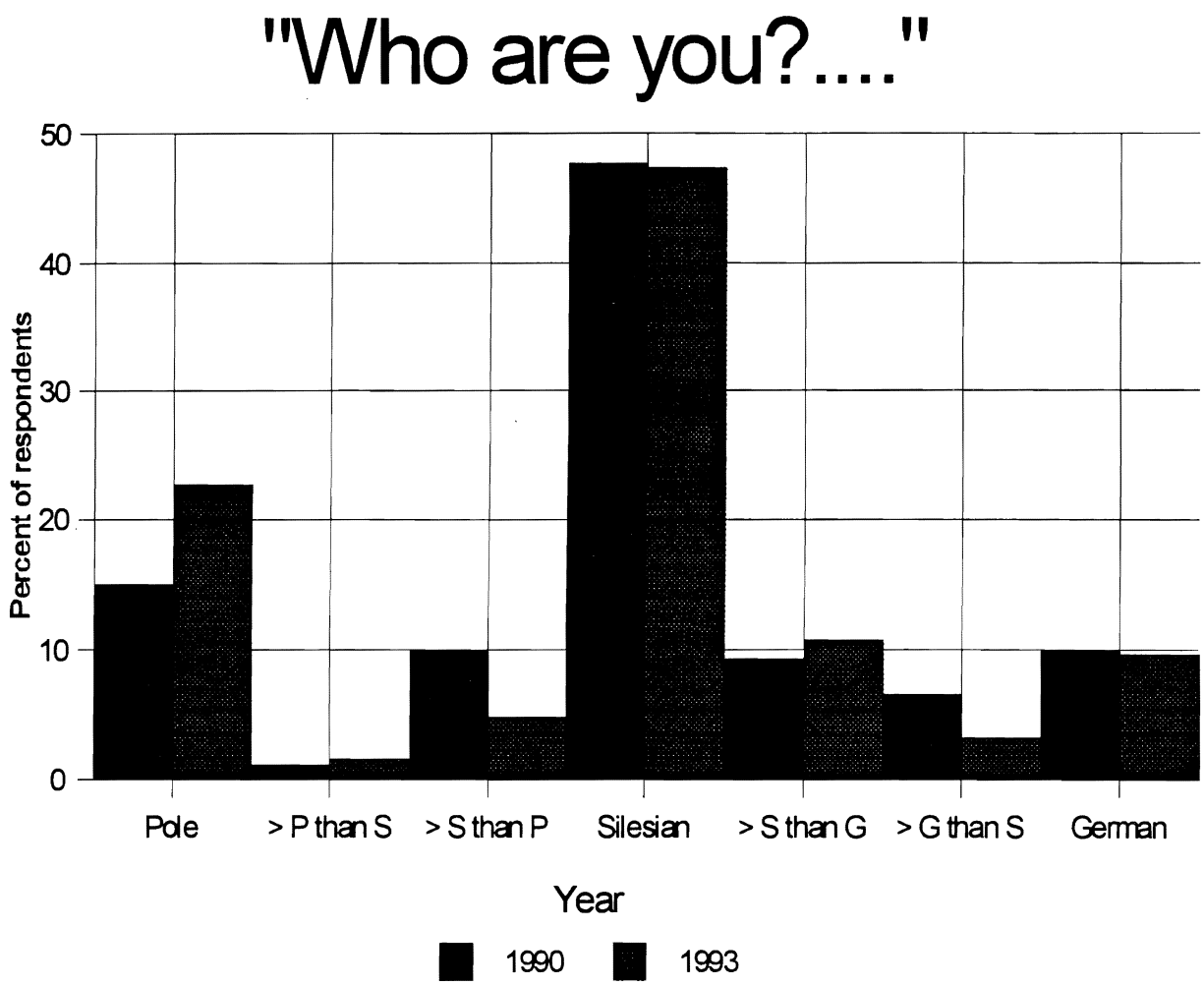
LM: Right? One can't say. But two thousand are Germans. People of German origin. And the thousand five hundred, then, they consider themselves, perhaps there or they are, not so....

(This is drowned out by good-byes and thanks, as we reach our car. As the professor and I get in he says with a deep breath:)

P: *Hard to explain how* (breath)... *At least three hours of lecture on the subject of history and only then...*

EV: *And do you think that that would help?*

P: *No*


"Who are you?...."
50
40
30
20
10
0
Percent of respondents
Pole
> P than S
> S than P
Silesian
> S than G
> G than S
German
Year
1990
1993