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Author(s): F. Gregory Campbell

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The Struggle for Upper Silesia, 1919–1922

F. Gregory Campbell
University of Chicago

At the junction of Central Europe's three old empires lay one of the richest mineral and industrial areas of the continent. A territory of some 4,000 square miles, Upper Silesia was ruled by Austria and Prussia throughout modern history. The northern sections and the area west of the Oder River were exclusively agricultural, and inhabited largely by Germans. In the extreme southeastern corner of Upper Silesia, Polish peasants tilled the estates of German magnates. Lying between the German and the Polish agricultural areas was a small triangular area of mixed population containing a wealth of mines and factories. That Upper Silesian "industrial triangle" was second only to the Ruhr basin in Imperial Germany; in 1913 Upper Silesian coalfields accounted for 21 percent of German coal production. At the close of the First World War Upper Silesia lay in the midst of dissolving empires; it contained a mixed German and Polish population, and it included a vital economic area of Central Europe.

Both Germany and Poland laid claim to the area, but Upper Silesia could not remain a matter of purely local concern in 1919. The fate of Upper Silesia became a subject of intense debate at the Paris Peace Conference.¹ The original draft of the Treaty of Versailles stipulated that the entire area would become part of the new Polish state. As a result of the protests in the German reply to the draft treaty, Lloyd George took up the issue and fought vehemently for a plebiscite. Warning against the danger of creating a "new Alsace-Lorraine" and emphasizing the doubtful national loyalties of the area, he overrode the opposition of Clemenceau and the indecision of Wilson, and succeeded in placing the provision for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia in the Treaty of Versailles. That decision was one of few important concessions granted to the Germans at the peace conference, and it resulted purely from the initiative of Lloyd George. Already at Paris the lines of the unfolding struggle for Upper Silesia were drawn, with British policy

¹ See Piotr S. Wandycz, *France and Her Eastern Allies, 1919–1925* (Minneapolis, 1962), pp. 29–48; Arno J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking* (New York, 1967), pp. 804–5. I would like to thank Prof. Joseph J. Mathews for first arousing my interest in this topic.

supporting the German claims and French efforts just as solidly on the side of the Poles.

I

Twenty-one months passed between the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the holding of the plebiscite. Until January 1920 when the treaty took effect, the area remained under German administrative control. The police and the old officials, schooled in the traditions of the Prussian bureaucracy, were a force for stability and order—in the German sense, of course. Pitted against the bureaucracy and police forces were a Polish people's council under the leadership of Wojciech Korfanty and a military command just across the border of Poland. The name of Korfanty was to become associated with the Polish cause in Upper Silesia as that of no other.² A Catholic and a native of the area, a former representative in the Reichstag and the Prussian parliament, he was a shrewd politician with an intimate understanding of the Upper Silesians and an instinct for demagoguery. And he had returned to Upper Silesia from the successful Polish revolt in Posnania. Whereas the Germans were the conservative force in seeking simply to maintain the status quo, Korfanty and his Polish followers were the revolutionaries, dedicated to incorporating the area into the new Polish state.

In mid-August 1919, the first of three so-called Polish uprisings broke out on the occasion of a general strike in the industrial area. The insurrection was quickly successful in the two southeastern counties of Rybnik and Pless, which were the Polish strongholds; but as the Polish forces massed for a push northward into the industrial area they met strong German resistance. The German Commissioner for Upper Silesia was Otto Hörsing, a member of the Social Democratic Party, who had been sent to Upper Silesia in January 1919 to become chairman of the local Workers and Soldiers Council. Despite his membership in the SPD, Hörsing was not loath to quell strikes and demonstrations, particularly Polish ones. Proclaiming martial law and a state of siege, he ordered German troops against the insurrectionists and succeeded in reestablishing his authority over the entire area within a week. Naturally each side accused the other of precipitating the conflict and resorting to inhuman measures. German sources blamed Spartacists as well for inciting the workers to rebel (and there obviously was considerable Spartacist agitation in Upper Silesia). In a secret report to the

² For an informative but unsympathetic political biography of Korfanty, see: Ernst Sontag, *Adalbert (Wojciech) Korfanty: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der polnischen Ansprüche auf Oberschlesien* (Kitzingen-Main, 1954).

German cabinet on August 28, 1919, Hörsing warned that the Poles might attempt to present the Allies with a *fait accompli* by seizing and holding Upper Silesia with force.³

When word of the uprising reached Paris, the Allies requested Berlin to permit a prompt Allied occupation of Upper Silesia without waiting for ratification of the Treaty.⁴ The German government refused not only for reasons of domestic prestige but also because of important political and economic considerations. Berlin hoped to use the remaining months of its control over the area to influence the inhabitants in a pro-German sense; and, at the same time, the Germans tried to mine as much coal and to gather as many foodstuffs from the area as possible.⁵ On the other hand, the German government could not afford to be overtly uncooperative with the Allies. It therefore agreed to allow an Allied military commission to make an inspection tour of Upper Silesia, and the commission in turn issued a report in mid-September taking a moderate and conciliatory position toward both sides. The suggestions of the commission for restoring peace were generally followed by both Germans and Poles, and an uneasy calm return to the area.⁶ But the uprising had furnished a preview of more serious clashes to come.

In the late summer and autumn, Hörsing demanded repeatedly that communal elections be held in Upper Silesia despite grave doubts in

³ Alte Reichskanzlei, protocol of the cabinet meeting of August 28, 1919, 3438/742986-999. These numbers refer to the microfilms of the archives of the German Chancellery and the Foreign Office. The first number is the serial number, and the second set are the frame numbers of the particular document cited. The microfilms are available in the National Archives in Washington.

⁴ For Allied deliberations concerning the uprising, see *Foreign Relations of the United States: Paris Peace Conference* (hereafter *FRUS: PPC*, 7: 698-701, 735-36, 768-74, 927-29).

⁵ At the time of the uprising a common fear among all interested parties was the possible destruction of the coal mines. Upper Silesian coal was particularly crucial for a Central Europe facing its second postwar winter. In regard to German agricultural policies, see the remarks of Herbert Hoover in the meeting of the American delegation at Paris on September 3, 1919. *FRUS:PPC*, 11: 413. For documents in the archives of the German Foreign Office concerning the uprising see, *Auswärtiges Amt*. (hereafter *AA*), "Die Zukunft Schlesiens," *Der Weltkrieg* 31, no. 3, vol. 1. The documents of the German Foreign Office that were not microfilmed are cited by their archival number in Bonn.

⁶ To the Polish side, the commission report urged that the Poles stop their nationalist agitation from across the border, that they withdraw their infiltrators from the area, and that they await patiently the arrival of the plebiscite commission. To the Germans it urged a general amnesty for those involved in the uprising, permission for Polish refugees to return to their homes and jobs in Upper Silesia, and the avoidance of any reprisals against the Polish population (*Schulthess' Europäischer Geschichtskalender* [1919], 1: 399-400).

Berlin concerning the likely outcome of the vote. Hörsing hoped that Germany—and particularly the Social Democrats—would win a propaganda victory while the area was still under his administration, and he designated the first anniversary of the German revolution as the date of the balloting. The effort to identify allegiance to Germany with loyalty to the socialist movement proved a failure, however, for the election results showed a large majority for Polish candidates. Moreover, the Social Democrats suffered severe losses to the more radical Independent Socialists.⁷ Although the Allies refused to recognize the election on the grounds that it might unduly influence the plebiscite results, the fiasco brought about Hörsing's resignation. Having failed to promote the German cause by an appeal to socialism, the Weimar Coalition thereupon turned to its other major party, the Catholic Center, for a new commissioner in Silesia. Thereafter, an increasingly important part of German propaganda in the area involved an appeal to Catholic loyalties.⁸

After the Treaty of Versailles finally took effect on January 10, 1920, the interallied plebiscite commission assumed control of Upper Silesia in early February. Only three of the Allied powers were ever represented on the commission. At the peace conference it had been decided that no Japanese representative would be included; and, with the refusal of the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty, American participation also fell by the wayside.⁹ The occupation forces were overwhelmingly French, as were in the administrative personnel of the commission. The French sent 11,000 troops, the Italians 2,000, and the British none; of the twenty-one district controllers, eleven were French, five Italian, and five British. The vital importance that the French attached to the Upper Silesian question was underscored by their choice of a representative—General Le Rond, who had been one of their leading experts for Polish affairs at the peace conference. Le Rond served as chairman of

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 477–78.

⁸ Sontag, p. 73.

⁹ Because of the general trust in American troops, the possibility of an American occupation was one of the inducements used at the peace conference to win Polish acceptance of a plebiscite. Already in June 1919, however, Wilson indicated that it might not be possible to send American forces to Upper Silesia (*FRUS:PPC*, 6: 201, 534). The growth of isolationist sentiment in the United States was illustrated during August 1919 when Representative William R. Wood introduced a resolution in Congress against the sending of American soldiers to Upper Silesia for the mere purpose of "protecting the private property of citizens of said allied countries" (*Congressional Record*, 66th Congress, 1st Session, 58, pt. 5: 4461–62. Two days later, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker promised that no American troops would occupy Upper Silesia (*New York Times*, August 30, 1919, p. 3).

the commission, and it was obvious from the start that his sympathies lay with the Poles. The British representative, Col. H. F. P. Percival, and the Italian, Gen. Alberto de Marinis, soon found themselves allied against Le Rond on almost all matters of dispute.¹⁰

Despite mounting tensions in Upper Silesia, the first grave dispute arose only in August 1920. With Polish fortunes in the war with the Soviet Union at their nadir, a false report spread in Upper Silesia on August 16 that the Soviet army had captured Warsaw. Riots immediately broke out in Kattowitz as a result of German demonstrations celebrating the supposed Russian victories. French troops remained passive as German mobs attacked and burned the Polish propaganda headquarters and sacked Polish stores. Korfanty reacted by issuing a call to arms to the Polish population, and for a week young Polish bands roamed the eastern part of the province, upset civil administration, and committed occasional atrocities. The main object of Polish efforts was the disbandment of the German security police since it was largely through that body that Germans continued to exercise influence in the area. The interallied commission had promised to replace the security police with a gendarmerie composed equally of Poles and Germans, but what the commission had not yet carried through peacefully the Polish insurgents accomplished by force. In every area where they gained control, they dissolved the old German police system and established their own.¹¹

In Germany, despite widespread animosity toward the Poles and sympathy for the Russians, the government adopted a strictly neutral policy in the Soviet-Polish war. A complete Soviet victory against the Poles would have brought the Bolshevik threat to the very boundaries of Germany, which itself was torn by mass strikes and civil unrest. The German minister in Warsaw delivered an urgent warning against any temptation to support the Bolsheviks and argued that Poland was necessary as a buffer state between Germany and the Soviet Union.¹² Active intervention in the war was never a serious possibility for Germany in

¹⁰ See Percival's reports to London in *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* (hereafter *DBFP*), 1st ser., vol. 11. Concerning the composition of the commission and its initial difficulties, see pp. 11-14. The best secondary account of the activities of the plebiscite commission is in Sarah Wambaugh, *Plebiscites since the World War* (Washington, D.C., 1933), vol. 1, chap. 6.

¹¹ The international press carried a running account of the uprising. See, for example, the issues of the *New York Times* and the *London Times* for the week from August 16 to August 23. Percival's reports concerning the uprising are published in *DBFP*, 1st ser., 11: 36-45, 48-50, 58-65.

¹² AA, Geheimakten, K170/K023969-973, Report of Alfred Count von Oberndorff to the German Foreign Office, July 1, 1920.

its weakened state in 1920. Berlin did warn repeatedly, however, of the economic consequences of the riots in Upper Silesia. At the Spa Conference in July the Germans had reluctantly undertaken reparation obligations, which they claimed could be fulfilled only if Upper Silesian coal production maintained the predicted level. Through informants in Paris, they were aware of a deep split between the British and the French in the Conference of Ambassadors.¹³ They knew that their argument would find resonance in London, and the importance of Upper Silesia for Germany's ability to pay reparations remained Berlin's strongest propaganda weapon.

The failure of French troops to take effective steps against the Polish insurgents greatly upset British policymakers. In September Curzon made the first of several unsuccessful attempts to force the dismissal of Le Rond. Le Rond came to Paris and defended his actions so adeptly that the British were left isolated in the Conference of Ambassadors. They had to content themselves with a few procedural changes within the plebiscite commission.¹⁴ Although the commission managed to restore its authority in Upper Silesia, the success of the uprising enabled the Poles to abandon their former delaying tactics and to press for a quick plebiscite.¹⁵ The Germans, however, after having lost their security police and much of their election organization, tried to postpone the plebiscite until they could remap their strategy.

Through the autumn and winter of 1920–21 the question of the suffrage of nonresident voters dominated the diplomatic preparations for the plebiscite. Over the years, many people born in Upper Silesia had moved out of the area. The Treaty of Versailles gave them the right to vote in the plebiscite, largely as a result of the urging of the Polish delegation. Closer study subsequently indicated that the majority of the "outvoters" would likely vote German; as initial estimates placed their number as high as 300,000 it was conceivable that they could tip the balance for Germany.¹⁶ The Poles therefore reversed their policy, bitterly opposed the suffrage of nonresidents, and argued that only current

¹³ The chairman of the German peace delegation, Gerhard von Mutius, maintained close contacts with Carlo Garbasso, an Italian representative in Paris, who kept the Germans informed of events in the meetings of the Conference of Ambassadors. See Mutius's letters to Foreign Minister Walther Simons on September 25 and October 19, 1920 (AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601-479–481, D601493–495).

¹⁴ *DBFP*, 1st ser., 11: 54–82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96; Wambaugh, 1: 242. The controversy concerning nonresident voters is a central theme running through the published British documents for the winter of 1920–21. See *DBFP*, 1st ser., 11: 83–190.

inhabitants should vote. Here they received strong French support. The Germans and the British just as avidly contended for the outvoters.

The diplomatic struggle concerning the outvoters touched upon considerations that were to become crucial. For one thing, the British were attempting to oppose French policy in Upper Silesia without actually having any troops stationed in the area. The French claimed that they could not maintain order during the plebiscite if there were a large influx of nonresident voters. As a result, various schemes for the holding of the plebiscite were concocted in an effort to lighten the police duties of the occupation troops. One proposal was that Upper Silesia be divided into zones that would vote on separate dates; but here another difficulty developed, for the Germans were wary of possibly setting a precedent for an ultimate division of Upper Silesia. Berlin continued to lay claim to all of Upper Silesia, and, when the German ambassador in Paris discussed the possibility of dividing the area into zones for voting purposes, he received a sharp rebuke from the German Foreign Office.¹⁷ The British soon became convinced of the danger of any system of voting that would allow for differentiation between the ballots of resident and of nonresident voters, and in January 1921 the British Cabinet finally decided to send 2,000 troops to Upper Silesia. At a meeting of the Supreme Council in February, Lloyd George forced Briand to agree to the British plan for a plebiscite to include nonresident voters and to be conducted on a single voting day in the entire area of Upper Silesia.¹⁸ In the last major diplomatic dispute before the actual balloting, the British-German side emerged victorious.

Although London and Paris were the focal points of diplomacy during the preparations for the plebiscite, both Germans and Poles were deeply engaged in propaganda efforts in Upper Silesia. An essential factor in all calculations was the Catholic church. The vast majority of Upper Silesians were Catholic, and the church could be highly influential in political questions. Upper Silesia lay in the archbishopric of Breslau, where the Prince-Bishop, Cardinal Adolf Bertram, made no secret of his German national sympathies. But whereas the higher clergy was largely German, the lower ranks and particularly the parish priests were strongly Polish. Themselves the sons of Polish workers and peasants, they saw nothing wrong with influencing their congregations in favor of the Polish cause. Thus, there developed an increasingly intense

¹⁷ Ambassador Wilhelm Mayer mentioned the idea to Lord Hardinge, the British ambassador in Paris. He was reproved by Foreign Minister Simons in a letter of January 15, 1921 (AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601532-533).

¹⁸ *DBFP*, 1st ser., 15: 141-47.

struggle among the clergy in which Breslau vainly sought to curtail the political activities of the local priests.

Neither Polish nor German officials were oblivious to the importance of church influence. Korfanty in his masterly propaganda campaign missed no chance to equate Catholic convictions and Polish loyalties. Making use of popular opinions stemming from the time of Bismarck's Kulturkampf, Korfanty seized upon and promoted the old slogan: "Being Catholic means being Polish." But the main diplomatic efforts of both Warsaw and Berlin concentrated on the Vatican. In the spring of 1920, Allied and Polish diplomats exercised sufficient pressure in Rome to achieve the temporary removal of Upper Silesia from Bertram's jurisdiction. The Vatican appointed Monsignor Achille Ratti, the papal nuncio in Warsaw, to serve as the church's commissioner for the Polish-German plebiscite areas. Since Bertram was German and Ratti sympathetic to the Polish cause, that decision obviously resulted in a freer hand for the local priests in Upper Silesia. That Polish success was the signal for the opening of a long diplomatic contest in Rome in which the German and the Polish representatives vied for the favor of the church.¹⁹

In April 1920 the German Foreign Office sought an appropriate representative who could present the German case convincingly in Rome. The choice fell on Hans Count Praschma, a loyal Catholic whose own estates in Upper Silesia lay outside the plebiscite area. Praschma traveled to Rome in May and depicted to Pope Benedict XV the sad fate of German Catholics if they should fall into Polish hands. After his audience with the pope, Praschma felt that he had won papal support for current German policies in Upper Silesia and that the Vatican would curtail the pro-Polish activities of the local clergy.²⁰ Despite Praschma's special mission, German diplomatic influence at the Vatican was exercised primarily by the German ambassador, Carl-Ludwig Diego von Bergen, and by a close associate of Bertram, Monsignor Steinmann of the cathedral chapter in Breslau. Bertram never reconciled himself to the limitation of his authority over Upper Silesia, and through the autumn and winter of 1920 German political figures also grew increasingly resentful of Ratti's Polish leanings. (In Germany the papal nuncio, Eugenio Pacelli, was equally sympathetic to the Germans al-

¹⁹ In this instance, British policy supported a decision that was essentially in Polish interests. The British expected or at least hoped that Ratti would be truly neutral, and they strongly desired that he actually reside in Upper Silesia (*DBFP*, 1st ser., 11: 1-3).

²⁰ AA, division 2, Papstlicher Stuhl, Politik 24, vol. 1, telegram from Ambassador Bergen to the German Foreign Office, May 31, 1920.

though he was never involved in the Upper Silesian dispute to the same extent as Ratti. In retrospect, there was in 1920 the intriguing situation of two future popes, one in Poland and one in Germany, each closely identified with the nation to which he was papal nuncio and therefore with sharply contrasting policies in Central Europe.)

Between October and December the dispute between Bertram and Ratti reached its climax. It began with the decision of the plebiscite commission to forbid Bertram's coming to Upper Silesia on the grounds that his presence would disturb public order. Since the area still officially belonged to Bertram's archbishopric, the Vatican supported his protests of the decision. However, mindful of Polish resentment of Bertram, Church officials hoped that he would voluntarily cancel his visit if the commission formally recognized his right to enter Upper Silesia.²¹ In early November Ratti visited Bertram in Breslau in order to urge that compromise upon him. Their meeting was a complete failure. Bertram adamantly insisted upon actually coming to Upper Silesia. Prince Hatzfeldt, the German plebiscite commissioner, reported to the Foreign Office that Bertram would not likely be willing to receive Ratti again, and he added his own description of Ratti's personality that was hardly complimentary to the man who was to become pope within fifteen months: "We will never find the slightest support from this man. He is the typical diplomat of the Middle Ages, slick as an eel, and he squirms like an earthworm; he engages in monologues—even with the Cardinal [Bertram]—and in every sentence there is a 'but'."²² Such reports helped influence the German government to adopt a cool and sceptical attitude toward Ratti when he ascended the papal throne in February 1922 as Pope Pius XI.

Bertram remained in close contact with the German Foreign Office and relied on German diplomatic support at the Vatican. On December 5 he had a conversation in Berlin with a high official of the Foreign Office, most likely Foreign Minister Simons, in which the discussion ranged over the entire scope of German-Polish disputes as they affected the archbishopric of Breslau. The account of their discussion of the Upper Silesian problem ended with this notation:

At the close of this part of our conversation, the Cardinal Prince-Bishop requested that we put pressure on the Cardinal State-Secretary so that the Holy See in its decisions in Upper Silesian matters rely not

²¹ *Ibid.*, Vatikan, Breslau, Politik 20, vol. 1, telegram from Ambassador Bergen to the German Foreign Office, October 26, 1920.

²² *Ibid.*, Päpstlicher Stuhl, Politik 24, vol. 1, report from Hatzfeldt to the German Foreign Office, November 8, 1920.

exclusively on information from Nuncio Ratti, but rather, where plebiscite questions are concerned, that it hear as well the opinions of the Nuncio to the Reich, Pacelli, so that a clear picture can be acquired. Ratti is scarcely fitted for his post, was formerly a library administrator in the Ambrosiana, and is hardly qualified to be a diplomat. On the other hand, the Prince-Bishop has reason to believe that the Holy Father is sympathetic to the German viewpoint in the Upper Silesian question, so that it is only a question of supplying him with accurate information. . . . The Prince-Bishop ended the discussion with the request that contacts between the Foreign Office and the Prince-Bishopric be upheld in the fight against chauvinistic Polishness.²³

Throughout the Weimar era, those contacts were indeed well maintained not only in Poland but also in Czechoslovakia, where the Breslau archbishopric possessed vast estates.

Bertram reached the summit of his public activities in late November when he issued a pastoral letter that seemed to promote German efforts in Upper Silesia. By publicly claiming Vatican support while actually exceeding Rome's policies, he aroused the wrath of Cardinal State-Secretary Pietro Gasparri. On December 7 Gasparri and Bertram's deputy in Rome, Monsignor Steinmann, held an extended conversation about the Upper Silesian situation. The Polish minister at the Vatican had demanded the abrogation of Bertram's proclamation, and the Polish government held the Vatican responsible for Bertram's actions.²⁴ In view of German objections to Ratti and Polish opposition to Bertram, Gasparri decided to appoint a special representative to reside in Upper Silesia and to enforce political neutrality within church circles. The choice fell upon Monsignor Ogno Serra, the Vatican's *chargé d'affaires* in Vienna. Ogno was ordered by the Vatican to forbid all clerical political agitation in Upper Silesia. That applied to Bertram just as to the Polish parish priests. Steinmann greeted the decision to send Ogno to Upper Silesia, for it thereby eliminated Ratti's authority in the area. Steinmann considered the general attitude among Gasparri and his assistants to be positive toward the German cause, and he remarked that Ratti's increasingly pro-Polish attitudes had caused head-shaking in the Vatican.²⁵

During the months of his residence in Rome, Steinmann exploited local sympathies for Germany with a skillful propaganda campaign. He pointed out that Poland would remain a Catholic country even without Upper Silesia whereas the loss of two million believers would be

²³ *Ibid.*, unsigned memorandum of December 5, 1920.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, letter from Steinmann to Bertram, December 7, 1920.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

a hard blow for the Catholic cause in Germany. In addition, he claimed that in the probable case of a renewed outbreak of Soviet-Polish fighting the Bolsheviks would occupy and control Upper Silesia if it were part of Poland, whereas they would respect the international boundary if it were part of Germany. Therefore, giving Upper Silesia to Poland meant running a greater risk that it would be Bolshevized. He pleaded, as he phrased it, that the Vatican preserve its neutrality in the contest by supporting the "just" demands of the Germans. In the winter of 1920-21 that meant supporting the suffrage of nonresident voters, delaying the plebiscite until spring when the outvoters could travel to Upper Silesia more easily, and opposing any division of the area into zones for voting purposes.²⁶ As has been seen, all these demands were eventually won for the Germans by British diplomacy.

In conjunction with events in Upper Silesia the German ambassador at the Vatican had launched a campaign in Rome in which he had attempted to persuade Gasparri to recall Ratti from Warsaw. That request was more than Gasparri would grant.²⁷ But the Germans did consider the sending of Ogno to Upper Silesia and the removal of Ratti's influence to be a diplomatic victory. Ogno's reports from Upper Silesia were sympathetic to the German side, and the Vatican was moved to authorize Ogno to discipline local clergy who were engaging in Polish political propaganda.²⁸ Such was the situation in the late winter of 1920-21 as the date for the plebiscite approached.

II

The February meeting of the Supreme Council decided that the plebiscite should be held in the middle of March 1921. The intervening weeks proved to be one of the most strained periods in postwar diplomacy. At the beginning of March, Allied statesmen met in London with German representatives for a definitive conference on reparations, which, however, quickly developed into a stalemate. Following their decisions in Paris in January, the Allies demanded German agreement to a final reparations bill of some 150 billion gold marks. The Germans had a much lower estimate of their ability to pay, and Foreign Minister

²⁶ *Ibid.*, memorandum presented by Steinmann at the Vatican. A copy of the memorandum accompanied Steinmann's letter to Bertram of December 7, 1920.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, telegram from Ambassador Bergen to the German Foreign Office, December 9, 1920.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, letter from Ambassador Bergen to Ernst von Simson, director of Division II of the German Foreign Office, January 27, 1921; telegram from Ambassador Bergen to the German Foreign Office, February 22, 1921.

Simons was careful to point out that even that offer was contingent upon German retention of Upper Silesia. In reprisal for the German failure to agree to terms, the Allies established a separate customs regime in the occupied Rhineland and ordered their troops across the Rhine to occupy the cities of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort as well. Those events illustrated issues that were inextricably bound up with the Upper Silesian dispute. The Germans could not formulate separate diplomatic policies on the reparations question and on Upper Silesia; rather, they had to harmonize their overall policy, making compromises on one issue in the hope of winning concessions in the other. Although the amount of reparations that Germany could pay depended in part on German retention of Upper Silesian mines and industries, French diplomacy consistently refused to recognize any connection between the two issues. In addition, the occupation of the three cities on the right bank of the Rhine created a new consideration for diplomats in the spring and summer of 1921. The fact that Allied troops were poised to occupy the entire Ruhr industrial area—and the manifest willingness of some to do so—limited even more sharply the room for German diplomatic maneuvering.

On Sunday, March 20, 1921, the plebiscite finally took place in a surprisingly peaceful atmosphere. Both Warsaw and Berlin had accused each other of making military preparations in order to disrupt the voting, but neither side was yet willing to resort openly to force. Of the registered voters, 98 percent actually cast ballots, with 707,488 for Germany and 479,369 for Poland. Germany thus won 60 percent of the overall vote. In accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Versailles the balloting was by communes; 844 voted for Germany and 678 for Poland.²⁹ There were 191,000 outvoters, the majority of which doubtlessly voted for Germany. The transport of the outvoters across Germany to Upper Silesia had become a popular display of patriotism, featuring political speeches, band music, and women and children distributing food packages at the stops in the railroad stations along the way.³⁰ In answer to Polish complaints about the outvoters, the

²⁹ A table containing a breakdown of the vote is printed among selected documents of the plebiscite commission in Wambaugh, 2: 246–47; for an analysis of the vote, see Wambaugh, 1: 249–51.

³⁰ Many of the outvoters were Upper Silesians of Polish extraction who had moved to other parts of Germany and had there become germanized. Their numbers were particularly large in the Ruhr industrial area, and for that reason the British had suggested Cologne as a balloting site for the outvoters. Concerning germanization policies among the Poles in the Ruhr valley, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Die Polen im Ruhrgebiet bis 1918," in *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Cologne, 1966).

Germans claimed that the decision of the plebiscite commission—not to allow the suffrage of residents who had moved to Upper Silesia after 1904—robbed Germany of some 50,000 votes. Poles pointed out that the Germans built up their majority in the northern and western areas of the province that had never really been claimed by Poland.³¹ Nevertheless, the plebiscite area was exactly the same as that originally granted to Poland by the Entente in the draft treaty at Paris; and the Poles had never shown any hesitation then about their willingness to annex the entire area. In the strategic industrial region situated within the triangle Beuthen-Gleiwitz-Kattowitz (Boytom-Gliwice-Katowice), the vote was more evenly divided, with 259,000 votes recorded for Germany and 205,000 for Poland.

The mixed results of the election afforded ample opportunities for widely differing interpretations of the vote. With the exception of the Germans, everyone was agreed in principle that Upper Silesia should be divided between Germany and Poland, but it was clearly impossible to draw a boundary line without leaving national minorities on both sides. The northern and western agricultural areas had voted overwhelmingly German; in the extreme southeast the counties of Rybnik and Pless with their untapped ore reserves were clearly Polish. The communes in the industrial area, however, formed a mosaic of conflicting loyalties; the cities were German, but the outlying mining communes were Polish. The vote could therefore be interpreted according to national interests in order to support varying boundary proposals.

Neither side was completely happy with the outcome. Two days after the plebiscite, Prince Hatzfeldt wrote to Foreign Minister Simons that the results were worse for Germany than expected, that the idea of making Upper Silesia a free state was gaining popularity, and that the British and the Italians in any case would probably agree to Polish acquisition of the counties of Pless, Rybnik, and Tarnowitz (Tarnowskie Góry).³² Simons, however, contended that only one solution was acceptable for Germany—namely, the retention of the entire province, and the claim to all of Upper Silesia remained the official German policy.³³ The Germans based their position on the result of the plebiscite, the supposed economic indivisibility of the area, and the assertion that any partition of Upper Silesia would be contrary to the Treaty of

³¹ This was particularly true of the district of Leobschütz. See the discussion of the plebiscite and ensuing diplomacy in Wandycz, pp. 225–37.

³² AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601632–633, letter from Hatzfeldt to Simons, March 22, 1921.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3057/D601634–635, letter from Simons to Hatzfeldt, March 30, 1921.

Versailles. But even a hasty reading of the treaty was sufficient to demonstrate that that interpretation was as fallacious as the Polish and French argument against the outvoters had been.³⁴

The real bargaining position of the Germans involved an offer to make concessions in the reparation issue in return for the right to retain Upper Silesia. The logic of the position was best set forth in a letter from Gerhard Mutius, German representative at the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris, to Simons on April 2. Mutius argued that the possession of Upper Silesia was more important than a smaller or larger reparations figure, especially since Germany would have to agree to the reparations demands of the Entente anyway. He urged that concessions be made on the reparation question in order to strengthen the German bargaining position for Upper Silesia, as well as to avoid further Allied occupations of German territory.³⁵

Simons had already written to Ambassador Sthamer in London that a reparations agreement was both possible and necessary, but that Germany could make concrete proposals only after it was assured of the retention of Upper Silesia.³⁶ In the week after the plebiscite, the German representatives in London, Paris, Rome, and Brussels met for a strategy conference in Berlin, and a specialist for Upper Silesia returned with each of them to their respective capitals. In addition, Simons insisted that the Foreign Office send a formal note to the Entente powers officially laying claim to all of Upper Silesia. Simons wrote to State-Secretary Haniel that German domestic politics necessitated such a note and that it was advisable as a historical precedent as well. Contending that any division of Upper Silesia without German agreement could not endure, Simons warned that silence by Germany might later be interpreted as consent to the division of the province.³⁷

³⁴ In the interwar years it became a popular opinion in Germany that the Allies violated their own treaty by allowing a division of Upper Silesia. That belief was obviously mistaken. In the Treaty of Versailles, para. 5 of the Annex to Article 88 stipulated: "On the conclusion of the voting the number of votes cast in each commune will be communicated by the Commission to the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, with a full report as to the taking of the vote and a recommendation as to the line which ought to be adopted as the frontier of Germany in Upper Silesia." Similarly Article 90 stipulated: "Poland undertakes to permit for a period of fifteen years the exportation to Germany of the products of the mines in any part of Upper Silesia transferred to Poland in accordance with the present Treaty."

³⁵ Mutius, because of his dealings with the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris, was in a particularly good position to give advice concerning the overall formulation of German foreign policy (AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601689-692, letter from Mutius to Simons, April 2, 1921).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2368/490042-043, letter from Simons to Sthamer, March 30, 1921.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3057/D601628, letter from Simons to Haniel, March 29, 1921.

On April 1, Berlin dispatched a formal note demanding the retention of the whole area.

Whereas the Germans naturally tried to exploit the result of the plebiscite, the Poles attempted to discount it. Paderewski—still a Pole if not a premier—expressed the Polish outlook quite plainly when he observed that the plebiscite had been held only “for the information of the commission in Paris” and that “the actual line of division of Silesia between Germans and Poles will be drawn later in Paris by Allied authorities, who have the power to ignore the vote if they so desire.”³⁸ Korfanty did all he could to extend Polish claims. He proposed a boundary that would have advanced the Polish frontier to the Oder River in the south and given Poland about two-thirds of the population and all of the industrial resources. As justification for his proposal Korfanty claimed that, whereas the area west of the line was definitely German, the part to the east had voted—narrowly to be sure—for Poland.³⁹

But whatever the conflicting claims of the Poles and the Germans, the final decision still rested in the hands of the Entente, and the recommendation of the plebiscite commission was therefore crucial. Throughout late March and April Le Rond, Percival, and De Marinis debated various boundary alternatives but found themselves unable to agree on a common proposal. On April 30 they finally submitted two conflicting recommendations to the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris. Le Rond suggested a boundary that varied only slightly from the Korfanty line. He contended that there were two “blocks” in Upper Silesia, one German and one Polish, and that his line followed the division between these “blocks.” Admitting that there were German majorities in the urban areas that he would have given Poland, Le Rond explained: “It is not the population, in large part transient, of these cities which constitutes the fundamental nationality of the country; it is the permanent peasant and working population.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, Percival and De Marinis submitted a joint report that gave only the extreme southeast counties of Rybnik and Pless to Poland. By detaching those two counties, the British and the Italians were also able to claim that they were respecting the results of the plebiscite, for the industrial triangle itself had returned a German majority.⁴¹ Their solu-

³⁸ *New York Times*, March 22, 1921, p. 2.

³⁹ Wambaugh, 1: 251.

⁴⁰ “Exposé du représentant de la France sur l'établissement de la frontière de l'Allemagne en Haute-Silésie,” in *ibid.*, 2: 243–50.

⁴¹ “Proposition des représentants de la Grande-Bretagne et de l'Italie sur la ligne frontière à tracer entre l'Allemagne et la Pologne en Haute-Silésie à la suite du plébiscite du 20 mars 1921,” in *ibid.*, 2: 251–57.

tion would have given Poland only 23 percent of the population and 25 percent of the communes, whereas 40 percent of the votes and 42 percent of the communes had gone for Poland in the plebiscite. Even worse for the Poles, all the developed industrial area would have stayed with Germany.⁴²

On May 1 a newspaper article entitled "The Diplomats Have Spoken" spread the false report that the interallied commission had decided in favor of the British-Italian boundary proposal.⁴³ It served as a cue for the third and largest Polish uprising. As workers went on strike and youths streamed across the border from Poland, the insurgents swept through the province up to the Korfanty line. Whereas it could be argued that the first two uprisings had been largely spontaneous—or even provoked by the Germans—the organization and efficiency of the May revolt left little doubt that it had been carefully planned in advance. The object was to gain control of the area claimed by the Poles and to present Allied diplomatic councils with a *fait accompli*. Openly acknowledging his leadership of the rebellion, Korfanty warned that any counteraction by the Allies or the Germans would cause the insurgents to destroy the mines and the factories. On the third day of the uprising, Korfanty announced that the Polish government had removed him from his position as Polish plebiscite commissioner, but the open border between Poland and Upper Silesia, over which the insurgents were streaming, did little to allay suspicions of the collusion of official circles in Warsaw.

The striking success of the insurgents was in large part possible because of the lack of resistance from French troops. The 2,000 British soldiers sent to Upper Silesia to police the plebiscite had been withdrawn immediately after the balloting, and the French again bore almost sole responsibility for maintaining order in the province. Their failure to resist the insurgents effectively caused a new controversy between Paris and London. The situation in Upper Silesia became a topic for almost daily debate in the House of Commons. It became obvious that at least some British circles were becoming increasingly apprehensive about the possibility of French economic dominance of the continent, particularly of the European coal fields.⁴⁴

Simultaneously with the outbreak of the uprising, the Allies had delivered an ultimatum to Germany on the reparations question, demand-

⁴² Wambaugh, 1: 253.

⁴³ See Wambaugh's account of the uprising, 1: 253–55.

⁴⁴ See the statements by J. M. Kenworthy in *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 5th ser., 141 (1921): 2357–61.

ing German acceptance of a final reparations bill of 132 billion gold marks and immediate payment of one billion gold marks. That ultimatum—backed by the threat of an occupation of the Ruhr valley—produced another cabinet crisis in Berlin; from this a new government under Joseph Wirth emerged. Wirth's government was committed to a policy of fulfillment of Allied demands. One calculation in the adoption of that policy was the hope that German acquiescence on reparations could purchase Allied favor in Upper Silesia. In protesting Allied failure to prevent the Polish uprising, the Germans pointed out that the Allies were bound by the Treaty of Versailles to maintain order in the area and that it was inconsistent for the Allies to list German violations of the Treaty while failing to maintain their own obligations.⁴⁵ Lloyd George seized upon that argument in Commons on May 13 to provoke an open controversy with Briand: "Either the allies ought to insist upon the Treaty being respected, or they ought to allow the Germans to do it. Not merely to disarm Germany, but to say that such troops as she has got are not to be permitted to take part in restoring order in what, until the decision comes, is their own province—that is not fair. Fair play is what Britain stands for, and I hope she will stand for it to the end."⁴⁶

Lloyd George may well have been seeking a way to avoid sending British troops back to Upper Silesia. But Briand obviously could not ignore an open invitation to the Germans to send their own troops into the area, and his reaction was immediately forthcoming: "I am certain that Mr. Lloyd George would never on his own initiative invite German troops to march against Poland, and so against France. No such invitation could possibly be issued except in concert with the Allies. We have been getting a lot of advice from England recently, but it would be more useful for the reestablishment of order if we could get men to help our 12,000. . . . Never, never could the French Government consent to German troops entering Upper Silesia."⁴⁷ After a flurry of activity between Paris and London, each man issued a public statement to conciliate the other, and 5,000 British troops departed for Upper Silesia to help restore order.

The idea of using German forces against the Polish insurgents was by no means dead. Shortly after the outbreak of the uprising, the

⁴⁵ AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601730-731, note from Simons to German embassies in London, Paris, and Rome, May 5, 1921; Alte Reichskanzlei, protocol of the cabinet meeting of May 6, 1921, 3438/748012-013.

⁴⁶ *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 5th ser., 141 (1921): 2380-86.

⁴⁷ *New York Times*, May 15, 1921, p. 2.

Wirth government secretly engaged Lt. Gen. Karl Höfer to lead the German paramilitary bands in Upper Silesia, which styled themselves the “self-protection” forces.⁴⁸ Composed largely of war veterans, the German volunteer units quickly became a significant military force under Höfer’s command. They launched a counteroffensive against the Poles and succeeded in recapturing key military positions. Official Berlin admitted no connection with Höfer or his troops, nor did the British openly condone Höfer’s activities. But no one was fooled, least of all the French, who sought with all means at their disposal to disarm and disband the “self-protection” units. Despite the usefulness of Höfer and his men, top officials of the British Foreign Office were apprehensive about a possible clash between the German forces and the French plebiscite troops. There was deep fear in London that the French would seize such an opportunity to invade the Ruhr area, and that was by no means in accord with London’s policy.⁴⁹ Nor was it in German interests in Upper Silesia itself to press the military campaign, for Korfanty’s forces repeated their threat to destroy the mines and factories of the industrial area before being driven out of the province.⁵⁰

By early June the main activity of the plebiscite commission consisted in trying to establish a neutral zone between the Polish insurgents and the German paramilitary forces. The commander of the newly arrived British troops, General Henneker, served as the contact man with Höfer, and Le Rond brought his influence to bear upon Korfanty.⁵¹ After successfully establishing the neutral zone, they then brought about the simultaneous withdrawal from Upper Silesia of the German and the Polish forces during the first week of July; the plebiscite

⁴⁸ For Höfer’s own account of his expedition in Upper Silesia, see Karl Höfer, *Oberschlesien in der Aufstandszeit, 1918–1921: Erinnerungen und Dokumente*, (Berlin, 1938). Also see Robert G. L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 227–32.

⁴⁹ The possibility of a French occupation of the Ruhr was a recurrent theme in the British documents in the spring and summer of 1921. For British policy on Upper Silesia in 1921, see London, Public Record Office, Foreign Office file 371, vols. 5886–5933.

⁵⁰ Fearing that drastic steps would prejudice Germany’s case with the Allies, the Berlin government sought to maintain strict control over Höfer and his troops (Alte Reichskanzlei, protocol of the cabinet meeting of June 7, 1921, 3438/748334–335).

⁵¹ British-German cooperation in the face of the Polish uprising is documented in the archives of both the British and the German foreign offices. For British reports coming from Upper Silesia during June 1921, see volumes 5910–5915 of Foreign Office file 371. Memoranda by German Foreign Minister Rosen serve as a useful complement to the British documents. See AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601762–765, memorandum of Rosen, June 15, 1921; 3057/D601780–781, memorandum of Rosen, June 20, 1921.

commission thus managed to regain some of its lost prestige. The Germans and the Poles had matched force with force and had fought to a standstill.

The fate of Upper Silesia still hung in the balance. At the time of the Polish uprising Percival suffered a nervous breakdown and had to be replaced by Sir Harold Stuart, the British representative on the Rhineland commission. Stuart soon formed the opinion that "rather more" of Upper Silesia should be given to Poland than Percival and advocated but that the entire industrial area should definitely stay with Germany.⁵² Stuart therefore was no more able to reach agreement with Le Rond than Percival had been. In June Curzon once more tried to persuade Briand to replace Le Rond on the commission, but Briand would not hear of the idea. Briand and Curzon did agree to request the plebiscite commission to try again to reach a common boundary proposal, but conditions in Upper Silesia were at a stalemate.⁵³ It was soon apparent that the heads of the Allied governments themselves would have to wrestle with the problem.

During June and July, British policy concentrated on an effort to force an early meeting of the Supreme Council, where the final division of Upper Silesia would be determined. The British knew that they had Italian support, and they hoped to isolate Briand in the Council and to force him to give way on the boundary dispute. Briand used every delaying tactic at his disposal, but, eventually backed into a diplomatic corner, he agreed to a meeting of the Allied prime ministers in Paris during the first week of August. The Italians obviously hoped that the dispute would not rupture what remained of the alliance, and officials in the Foreign Office in London also were concerned about the possible permanent damage to Anglo-French relations.⁵⁴ In the discussions

⁵² London, P.R.O., F.O. 371, vol. 5915, C14232/92/18, dispatch from Stuart to S. P. Waterlow, July 1, 1921. The numbers, taken together, form the archival number of the document cited.

⁵³ *DBFP*, 1st ser., 15:598-608.

⁵⁴ Throughout the struggle the Italians generally supported British policy. On July 25, for example, the counsellor of the British embassy in Rome reported that Foreign Minister Toretta feared that France might become too powerful and "get her knife into Italy" (London, P.R.O., F.O. 371, vol. 5918, C15217 and C15218/92/18). Through the spring and summer, the Germans conducted an apparently effective campaign in Rome in the hope of winning Italian support in the Upper Silesian question. German promises included concessions concerning the delivery of Upper Silesian coal to Italy and even the possibility of Italian participation in Upper Silesian industrial undertakings. See AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601701-702, memorandum by Erdmann Count von Podewils-Dürnitz, April 15, 1921; 2784/D537285, unsigned memorandum in the German Foreign Office, April 17, 1921; 3057/D601821, mem-

within the Foreign Office, specialists for the Upper Silesian problem favored pushing the dispute to victory despite the dangers, but Sir Eyre Crowe took a considerably more cautious view.⁵⁵ If the French refused to give way, the ultimate question confronting British policy-makers was nothing less than the choice between destroying the alliance or compromising in Upper Silesia. Both London and Paris had to decide what price each was willing to pay for a victory, and that decision hinged upon the ultimate and relative importance of Upper Silesia for Great Britain and for France.

One of the most curious twists in the diplomacy concerning Upper Silesia came in the days immediately before the council meeting. Briand called in the German chargé d'affaires, Leopold von Hoesch, and pressed for German agreement to the cession of Rybnik, Pless, and the industrial area to Poland. The window dressing that Briand used was the possibility of an anti-Bolshevik bloc composed of France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States—a possibility that might be realized if Germany would only give way concerning Upper Silesia. Briand mentioned that the Germans could retain the actual economic control over Upper Silesian industry while Poland was given merely a “sovereignty of appearances” over the industrial sector. Finally coming to his immediate and real goal, Briand suggested to Hoesch that Berlin urge London not to be so unrelenting concerning the boundary line.⁵⁶ It must have seemed to Briand that the British had become more German than the Germans.

The Germans continued to maintain their claim to the entire province, but even the British would not support that demand. In addition to conversations in London between Foreign Office personnel and German Embassy officials, the British ambassador in Paris, Lord Hardinge, emphasized to Hoesch that some concession was necessary in order to

orandum by Foreign Minister Rosen, July 18, 1921. While the Italians were naturally willing to accept those advantages offered to them, theirs was essentially a cautious policy, and they had no desire to see the complete break-up of the Entente.

⁵⁵ As early as June 1, Crowe had warned German Ambassador Sthamer that the German claim to all of Upper Silesia was not “practical politics” (see London, P.R.O., F.O. 371, vol. 5910, C11877/92/18, memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, June 1, 1921).

⁵⁶ AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601843–849, two telegrams from Hoesch to the German Foreign Office, August 5, 1921. Foreign Minister Rosen immediately instructed Hoesch to visit Briand again and to reaffirm the German claim to the entire area. Polish sovereignty in Upper Silesia was “completely indiscussable” (see AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601850–851, telegram from Rosen to the German Embassy in Paris, August 5, 1921).

appease French public opinion. In response, Hoesch pointed out the importance of the industrial area for Germany and, by implication, indicated possible German assent to the cession of Rybnik and Pless. That went beyond Berlin's official policy, although many Germans were well aware that some compromise was necessary. In their conversation, which took place on the day before Lloyd George arrived in Paris, Hardinge characterized the idea of turning the matter over to the League of Nations as "foolish" and promised Hoesch that Lloyd George would not leave Paris without a solution to the boundary problem.⁵⁷

The meeting of the Supreme Council opened on August 8 for what turned out to be five days of difficult and often bitter negotiations. Despite the presence of Prime Minister Bonomi and Foreign Minister Toretta of Italy, of Japanese representatives and American observers, the two men of ultimate importance were Briand and Lloyd George. After listening to the reports of their experts in the opening plenary sessions, they quickly brought their long dispute about Upper Silesia to a climactic, personal confrontation. Lloyd George talked about "justice and fair play," accused the French of being primarily concerned with their own security, and even charged them with entertaining Bolshevik notions (i.e., of wanting to steal from the rich Germans in order to give to the poor Poles).⁵⁸ Where Lloyd George used bombast, Briand tried finesse. Defending the French viewpoint to be sure, Briand nevertheless treasured the importance of Allied understanding "in this matter so difficult, so delicate."⁵⁹ As long as Lloyd George and Briand declaimed to the galleries, there was no possibility of narrowing the gap between them. The real negotiations followed in their private meetings.

The issue was the industrial area. The British were willing to concede the extreme southeastern section of the province to Poland, and the French agreed that the northern and western areas should remain with Germany. But in the industrial triangle, a boundary variation of a few miles meant the difference of a wealth of mines and factories, and Briand and Lloyd George fought each other town by town and commune by commune. In their debates, Lloyd George's low estimate of Polish abilities appeared once more, as pronounced as it had at the Paris peace conference. Again and again he emphasized that the Poles would not make adequate use of the commercial opportunities afforded by

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3057/D601867-870, telegram from Hoesch to the German Foreign Office, August 6, 1921.

⁵⁸ *DBFP*, 1st ser., 15: 632-38.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 640-47.

Upper Silesia, and he also kept Briand on the defensive with charges that France was attempting to cripple Germany permanently. During the four days of negotiations Lloyd George made several concessions that would have given the Poles more of the industrial area than originally foreseen in the British-Italian proposal, while still leaving most of the mines and industries in German hands. Briand agreed to present the compromise proposal to the French council of ministers, but both the British and the Italians foresaw its likely rejection by the French cabinet. News arrived simultaneously that the political situation in Ireland had grown more acute, and Lloyd George hurriedly had to decide to return to London. With no time left for debate, the British and the Italians agreed to propose the submission of the problem to the League of Nations, should the French cabinet decline the compromise proposal. On the morning of August 12 the cabinet did refuse to accept the boundary suggestion on the grounds that Germany would retain its industrial arsenal in Upper Silesia and that Poland's share of the province would not be economically viable. With a parting shot at French policy, Lloyd George won Briand's quick agreement to turn the matter over to the League and departed from Paris.⁶⁰

The outcome of the Paris meetings could be interpreted only as a victory for French and Polish policies. The French had been isolated in the Supreme Council, and had foreseen no real chance of winning acceptance for their own point of view. Yet their intransigence and British troubles in Ireland had robbed Lloyd George of his anticipated victory. British power was spread too thinly. The other important matter of discussion at the Paris conference was the Greek-Turkish conflict, where the British were deeply involved. Added to the Irish dilemma and the Middle East conflict were the Rhineland occupation obligations and the problems of a worldwide empire. Most British subjects knew and cared little or nothing about Upper Silesia, and it was not to be expected that they would support a break with France in order to do Germany a favor less than three years after the war. Lloyd George pursued his objectives with dogged willpower, but, faced with the possibility of destroying the alliance, he hesitated and retreated. In Berlin the Germans received the decision of the Supreme Council with disappointment and anger.

The Upper Silesian situation afforded, for the first time, an opportunity for the League of Nations to demonstrate its ability to settle a key issue among the great powers. Since the permanent members of

⁶⁰ See chap. 6 of *DBFP*, 1st ser., vol. 15, for the progress of negotiations in Paris as portrayed by the British documents.

the Council of the League were those powers that had found it impossible to reach an agreement, the Council requested its four temporary members to recommend a boundary line for Upper Silesia. Those countries—Belgium, China, Spain, and Brazil—therefore suddenly took on great significance in the Upper Silesian dispute. The Germans could expect little or no support from Belgium, China, and Brazil, but they did attempt to win backing from Spain. Both in Paris where Hoesch talked with Quiñones, the Spanish ambassador to France and Spain's representative on the League Council, and in Madrid, where the German ambassador dealt directly with the King, the Germans asserted that anything less than full support for the German position would be an unfriendly act. While formally maintaining their claim to all of Upper Silesia, they indicated their preparedness to accept a compromise, but not in the industrial area.⁶¹ At the beginning of September, Ambassador Langwerth reported from Madrid that the King had instructed the Spanish representatives in Geneva to support the German viewpoint.⁶² (In more recent times, however, it has been alleged in a Polish periodical that Warsaw was able to buy Spanish support through favorable treatment of the Habsburg relatives of King Alfonso XIII.)⁶³

In September the League commission appointed two experts—Herold of Switzerland and Hodač of Czechoslovakia—to study the problem and to draw up a boundary line in Upper Silesia. Herold could make a claim to neutrality between Germans and Poles, but Berlin was particularly upset about the appointment of a Czech to decide the boundary line.⁶⁴ Although relations between Warsaw and Prague were cool, Beneš was committed through his ties with the French to back the Polish cause in Upper Silesia. The extent of his support was never as great as he tried to pretend in his public and private statements, which were meant for French and Polish consumption, but it still could not be claimed that the Czechs were completely neutral on the Upper Silesian issue. At Geneva in September Beneš did help to influence Balfour in a Franco-Polish sense.⁶⁵ Through September and the first week of Oc-

⁶¹AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601875–877, telegram from Foreign Minister Rosen to the German Embassy in Madrid, August 20, 1921.

⁶²Ibid., 3015/D592805–808, letter from Ambassador Ernst Freiherr Langwerth von Simmern to Foreign Minister Rosen, September 3, 1921.

⁶³See Stanisław Zabiełło's review of Jerzy Krasuski's *Stosunki polsko-niemieckie, 1919–1925* (Poznań, 1962), in *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* 16 (February 1963): 93. I am indebted to Dr. Vincent Kroll for calling my attention to this information.

⁶⁴AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601948–955, unsigned memorandum in the German Foreign Office, October 10, 1921.

⁶⁵In the summer of 1921 reports reached the British Foreign Office that

tober the matter stayed within the League of Nations, but by early October rumors began to circulate that a decision was forthcoming.

Word reached the Germans that the result would be unfavorable to them; and there was an immediate movement within the government, led by Walter Rathenau, for the resignation of the Wirth cabinet.⁶⁶ The German Foreign Office did try to persuade the British to intervene once more, but all efforts in London were fruitless. Curzon pointed out that both Britain and France were obligated to accept whatever the League might decide and maintained that it would be "unfair" to influence the decision.⁶⁷ On October 12 the recommendation of the League was officially communicated to the Supreme Council.

The proposal called for the drawing of the political frontier through the industrial triangle, while at the same time establishing controls that would allow the area to survive at least temporarily as an economic unit. Economic matters and minority disputes were to be handled by an "Upper Silesian Mixed Commission," to be composed equally of Germans and Poles as well as a neutral member. On the basis of population and territory, the boundary that was suggested by the League was as fair as any that had yet been proposed. Whereas the Germans had won 60 percent of the votes and 55 percent of the

Beneš was maintaining that he had "pleaded" with the British to honor Polish claims to Upper Silesia. Sir Eyre Crowe commented on the matter: "It is true that Mr. Beneš mentioned the subject to me. It was, I thought, a casual remark. It merely said that in his opinion the chances of securing a lasting peace would be greater if Poland and not Germany received the industrial area. I considered this obiter dictum at the time as hardly deserving to be recorded." See P.R.O., F.O. 371, volume 5911, C12450/92/18, comments on a report by Sir Harold Stuart to the British Foreign Office, June 12, 1921. Concerning the conversation between Balfour and Beneš in September, see P.R.O., F. O. 371, vol. 5925, C18382/92/18, memorandum by Balfour, September 10, 1921. On Czechoslovak-Polish relations concerning Upper Silesia, see Jaroslav Valenta, "Czechosłowacja i przynależność Górnego Śląska do Polski w latach 1918–1921," *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka* 17 (1962): 31–57.

⁶⁶ Alte Reichskanzlei, protocols of the Cabinet meetings of October 10, 11, 12, 21, 22, 24, and 27, 1921, 3438/749647–662, 749690–706.

⁶⁷ London, P.R.O., F.O. 371, vol. 5927, C19444/92/18, exchange of letters between Curzon and Rosen, October 6 and October 10, 1921; AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601963–964, telegram from Ambassador Sthamer to the German Foreign Office, October 11, 1921. The British ambassador in Berlin, Lord d'Abernon, did his best to console the Germans about the Upper Silesian decision (see AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601966, memorandum by Foreign Minister Rosen, October 13, 1921; 3057/D601992–994, memorandum by Foreign Minister Rosen, October 22, 1921). At the same time, d'Abernon was conveying his own sharply negative reaction to the Geneva decision in personal letters meant for Lloyd George (London, Beaverbrook Library, Lloyd George papers, F/54/2/4, 5, 6, 7).

communes in the plebiscite, the division gave Germany 57 percent of the inhabitants and 70 percent of the territory of Upper Silesia. The line, however, cut through the western corner of the industrial triangle and left most of the industries and mines to Poland. At least three-quarters of the coal mines and ore reserves went to Poland as well as most of the industrial installations.⁶⁸ In Paris, Briand reportedly tried to nullify the provisions for the economic unity of Upper Silesia in order to give the Poles immediate control over the industrial area, but his efforts were thwarted by the British.⁶⁹

On October 15 the Conference of Ambassadors accepted the report of the League and by so doing established the permanent division of Upper Silesia. Neither Berlin nor Warsaw was completely happy with the settlement, but the Germans had more to mourn than did the Poles. A storm of protest broke out in Berlin, and the decision precipitated another German cabinet resignation although Wirth did return as chancellor in the new government. Without the support of their British confreres, however, the Germans could accomplish nothing of substance. After the reluctant German and Polish acceptance of the decision at the end of October, all significant Allied diplomacy concerning Upper Silesia came to a close.

For half a year thereafter German and Polish diplomats worked out the provisions for economic cooperation and the protection of minorities. They established, in accordance with the recommendations of the League, two bodies designed to maintain the economic unity of the area and to insure the rights of national minorities for a transitional period of fifteen years. The Upper Silesian Mixed Commission and the Arbitral Tribunal subsequently helped to alleviate the difficulties inevitably associated with the drawing of an international frontier through a densely settled industrial area. On May 15, 1922, representatives of the two governments signed one of the longest and most detailed treaties ever fashioned; by the end of the month both the Sejm and the Reichstag, which was draped in mourning for the occasion, ratified the convention; in June Allied troops withdrew, leaving Upper Silesia divided between Germany and Poland.

⁶⁸ U. S. Department of Commerce, "The Upper Silesian Decision," *Commerce Reports* 4 (November 28, 1921): 795-800; Wambaugh, 1: 259.

⁶⁹ AA, Büro des Reichsministers, 3057/D601983-984, telegram from Ambassador Mayer to the German Foreign Office, October 16, 1921.