THE POLITICS OF APPEASEMENT: GREAT BRITAIN, GERMANY,
AND THE UPPER SILESIAN PLEBISCITE

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Figure 1 – Map of the Plebiscite Area and results  Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/201/1/12
Introduction

In 1918, nestled in the southeastern corner of Germany was Silesia. This region possessed one of the wealthiest areas in the German Reich, Upper Silesia. In the post-war period, the region became the topic of heated debate over the region’s national character. On March 20, 1921, the citizens of Upper Silesia, both those who currently and formerly lived in the region, went to the polls to decide the fate of the region. The plebiscite determined the ethnic complexion of the region and by extension would whether Germany or Poland would control the extremely prosperous industrial triangle, named after location the cities of Beuthen, Kattowitz, and Gleiwitz (each city occupied the tip of the geographic triangle). The process of deciding the fate of Upper Silesia comprised heated argument, national hostility, and political drama.

Upper Silesia, at the end of World War I, was an industrial powerhouse with massive coal, iron, and zinc reserves along with significant industry, its importance evident to the great and lesser powers of Europe, in particularly Germany and Poland. These two nations stood the opposites of each other: Germany, the continental power of Europe for 45 years, defeated after four years of bloody conflict; and Poland, after being erased from Europe for 120 years, reborn through war. While opposite, in some ways, at the end of the First World War, the two nations were not on dissimilar footing. Germany was a defeated nation undergoing revolution and adjusting itself to a republican form of government. Poland, on the other hand, was fighting for territory and stability after gaining independence from Germany, Austria, and Russia for the
first time since 1795. These two nations fought over bordering territories between them including Danzig and Eastern Prussia. However, the area that garnered the most attention was Upper Silesia with its industry and resource reserves. Prussia (later Germany) controlled the region since the War of Austrian Succession; however, the region had a Polish quality due to a large Polish speaking citizenry. This population thrust the region into the international spotlight.

Germany signed the armistice agreement in November 1918 insisting that the 14 Points of the American President, Woodrow Wilson, would govern and dictate the peace that followed the war. One of the most important points was the idea of national self-determination, though in the post-war period this generally meant ethnic self-determination. The idea of ethnic self-determination hoped that no significant ethnic group would be persecuted because they were under the thumb of a different, repressive ethnicity. In reality, this idea fomented uncertainty especially in Eastern Europe. Many regions contained significant ethnic overlap such as Upper Silesia, Lithuania, Eastern Galicia, and the Sudetenland, to name a few. Though not every group had an advanced sense of nationality, the Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians had a budding sense of national awareness, but, significantly, had not gained significant support at the Paris Peace Conference or the League of Nations to lend credence to their claims. These regions became lightening rods for border conflict because of Allied fears over persecution, should the wrong ethnic group end up in the wrong state. Against this backdrop the Upper Silesian drama played out. Upper Silesia possessed a diverse and complicated ethnic make-up and consequently
determining the majority ethnicity was difficult, especially since Germany had much to lose if Upper Silesia was separated from the German state.

Germany pointed not only to the wealth and the positions of power that Germans had in Upper Silesia but also to the significant number of ethnic Germans living in the region. Polish concerns were not only economic, but from the very beginning of the Paris Peace Conference they declared the region to be distinctively Polish in character and consequently the entire region should belong to Poland. The Germans challenged this claim on the basis of the language the Upper Silesian “Poles” spoke, the pejoratively named “Wasserpolnisch,” was distinct from High Polish. Since the 19th century, Germany had declared that the Poles of Upper Silesia should not call themselves Poles, but rather Upper Silesians. This was a declaration some Upper Silesia Poles resented.¹ Historiographically, T. Hunt Tooley claimed that Polish nationalists were divisive and not representative of the larger population but useful for determining the nationalist claims and trends. James Bjork, in his book *Neither German nor Pole*, attempts to explain the nationalist sentiment of the average person in the region and hypothesizes exactly what his title suggests: that “Poles” and “Germans” in the region thought of themselves in terms of religious affiliation and not primarily as Germans or Poles.² Rather than national allegiance, Bjork focuses on confessional differences (Catholicism vs. Protestantism) as the primary differentiator in Upper Silesia.

While the ethnic argument was made, the economic wealth and industrial potential in the region provided useful and significant influences. Each side, German and Polish, declared the region essential for their national survival. August Müller, the State Secretary of the Reich Economic Office in 1919, punctuated the place of Upper Silesia in German economic policy by saying, “If we lose the Upper Silesian coal, then Germany will fall apart.” This is interesting especially considering Germany later boycotted Upper Silesian coal. This statement was not disputed by the German government and was reiterated to the allied powers. Poland, as a nation reborn, attempted to gain as much economic wealth and the largest population or territory, depending on political or national affiliation, they could legitimately justify. Upper Silesia, with its large Polish population and considerable wealth, was an important factor in the future planning of the fledgling Polish state.

Germany and Poland presented out their claims to the Supreme Allied Council at the Paris Peace Conference and to the League of Nations. The Supreme Council, made up of representatives of the victorious powers and the Prime Ministers of Italy, France, and Great Britain and the President of the United States, had their own ideas concerning ethnic determination. In particular, President Wilson embodied the major proponent of national self-determination. An ethnic referendum captured the ideals of his 14 Points. However, in Upper Silesia, he worried about undue influence from Germany and equally worried about committing allied troops to the region. Georges

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4 Tooley, “German Political Violence,” 59.
5 Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 215-6.
Clemenceau, the Prime Minister of France, also worried about undue influence in the still German governed region. However, he argued resolutely for Poland receiving the territory, not only because he felt that it was necessary for a strong Poland, but also because it would weaken Germany and its economy; perhaps diminishing German ability to wage a future war. Great Britain, on the other hand, was not keen on seeing Upper Silesia in Polish hands. David Lloyd George even went so far as to say that allocating Upper Silesia to Poland was akin to giving a clock to a monkey. Thus there were two sides not interested in considering a Polish Upper Silesia: Great Britain and Germany.

Understanding the dynamics between Germany, Great Britain and Poland is crucial for interpreting the results of the plebiscite and deciphering the power dynamics at the end of the First World War. This paper will explore the relationship, policies, and ideas of Great Britain and Germany towards the Upper Silesian referendum. By exploring the similarities and differences, larger ideas about inter-war dynamics can be extrapolated: namely why Great Britain did not support Poland and why Germans were never able to reconcile their defeat in 1918. Germany was able to be aggressive in its pursuit of Upper Silesia because of the support of Great Britain and because of the similarities in the desired outcomes of the two nations.

There is little written directly about British attitudes towards Upper Silesia. By and large the literature tends to be about the greater issue of British attitudes toward German reconstruction, French proposals, and promoting a balance of power. Piotr Wandycz, in his book *France and her Eastern Allies*, makes the point that the British
were wary of Polish possession of Upper Silesia because they feared that France would use Poland as a puppet for French ambitions. Marie-Jacqueline Powell’s *The Battleground of High Politics* makes the argument that British policy was determined by British harmony with Germany at the time. Germany largely thought of the Baltic and Slavic lands as its natural hinterland; and consequently, if the British government supported German claims, they would support German claim for territory in the east. This naturally meant that Britain would support Germany’s continual claims on Upper Silesia. Brock Millman, in his book *Pessimism and British War Policy*, conceptualizes British wartime policy. He argues that pessimists, who did not consider total victory possible during the war, led Great Britain. The sudden and unexpected totality of victory on the Western Front did not change British plans for Eastern Europe after the war. Great Britain was bound by its wartime commitments in the east, and thought regional powers could alleviate British engagement. Therefore, Lloyd George simply did not think that a powerful, expansionist Poland could exist peacefully between the traditional great powers of Germany and Russia without significant allied support, which he was reluctant to provide. As a result, he was not fond of giving Poland industry and mineral that he viewed would be mismanaged or damaged. Even if the infant Polish republic did not mismanage the industrial power,

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French industry would have a large share of the wealth of the region, which worried the British because of concerns over French power.

Germany changed dramatically post-war. In 1918, a republican revolution toppled the Kaiser and brought the Weimar Republic into existence. However, the revolution did not destroy the German military hierarchy. Which remained very powerful in the Republic. Josef Korbel in his book *Poland Between East and West* argues that the military represented stability and calm and, because of this representation, it remained a powerful force.  

Korbel goes on to say that the military, though defeated on the battlefield, was a major political force in Germany; which turned German attention to lost territory in the East. This description of the power dynamics in the Weimar Republic lends itself to an overly militaristic view; and is explored in T. Hunt Tooley’s argument in *National Identity and Weimar Germany*. Tooley argues that the Weimar government was restricted in its response to the Upper Silesian issue due to constitutional and regional constraints. These two opinions are not contradictory, but rather compliment one another. Tooley describes the restraints facing the Weimar government, while Korbel describes the military fascination with regaining territory lost to Poland. These historiographic arguments epitomize German attitudes towards Poland: resentment bordering on hatred, yet restrained by the post-revolutionary and constitutional situation in Germany. What is more, Prussian policy, for the last 120 years, had been concerned with preventing the Polish state from

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11 Korbel, *Poland Between East and West*, 69.
existing and suddenly at the end of the First World War; that state of Poland once again existed. This was not a change that was welcome and naturally Germany attempted to keep its new neighbor as weak as possible.

At the Paris Peace Conference, David Lloyd George pushed his vision for Europe: a sustainable, lasting peace led by the great powers of the continent without any one-power dominating. British great power politics and the desire for a sustainable peace meant Germany would play a prominent role in the British vision for Europe. On the other hand, Poland was, in British eyes, a minor power that was at fault for its post-war problems and thus undeserving of British support. At times, Great Britain even appeared an enemy of Poland; Lloyd George was attempting to create a Poland free of outside intervention. To make Polish borders secure, Lloyd George thought Poland should be as ethnographically Polish as possible. This policy, for Lloyd George, meant Upper Silesia should remain German due to the large German population there. This strategy might ensure that larger powers would not invade to reclaim lost populations. The ongoing fear over German irredentism, German military power, and the anxiety that a depressed Germany would develop a casus belli meant providing support for German causes: in a word, appeasement. This thesis will argue that British demands for a sustainable, fair peace led Great Britain and Lloyd George to support German causes empowering Germany to become bullish on the Upper Silesian plebiscite. British great power politics and antipathy towards some smaller, lesser states created the image of British hostility towards France and Poland and facilitated Germany’s ambitions. Lloyd George did not want to go to war again over
small states and, in his mind, small issues. Thus he promoted German demands in an effort to create a fairer, lasting treaty in Paris and beyond.

This paper will be divided into three main sections. The first will explore British policy towards France, Germany, and Poland. By delving into secondary sources related to British policy in the aftermath of World War I, memoirs, minutes from the Paris Peace Conference and commission reports (primarily from British Documents on Foreign Affairs), as well as the David Lloyd George papers, this paper will demonstrate British preoccupation with great power politics, sustainable peace, and a European balance of power. The second section of this paper will examine German political stability and the role of the military in the formation of political objectives. Secondary sources, memoirs, and primary literature (Akten der Reichskanzlei) show the instability of the German government and the overlapping relationship between the aspirations of the military leadership and the Weimar Republic from 1919-1921. The third and fourth chapters will examine the Upper Silesian plebiscite itself. By examining British correspondence, the David Lloyd George papers, German cabinet meeting minutes, and secondary sources, the chapter will demonstrate British support for Germany in Upper Silesia as a motivating force for German actions. Furthermore, it will demonstrate the importance of the plebiscite outcome for Anglo-German relations and British post-war policy.
Chapter One

The More You Sweat in Peacetime, the Less You Bleed in War

The multi-faceted British policy towards Upper Silesia can only be explained through close examination of British attitudes towards French policy, German demands and policy, and Polish programs. British policy towards Poland must also be understood within the broader political domain: the Lloyd George government and its circumvention of the foreign office, the wishes of the British electorate, and the continuation of great game politics. After understanding broader British objectives, particularly towards Poland, France, and Germany, British policy towards the Upper Silesian plebiscite can be understood. The British decision of force the Upper Silesian issue was a complex process, stemming from historical anxieties and the desire to craft a lasting peace.

David Lloyd George possessed a well-known disregard for tradition and routine. This manifested in two ways. First, Lloyd George relied on a small group of advisors that became known as the “Garden Suburb” due to their meeting in a garden hut in the Prime Minister’s yard. Chief among the Garden Suburb were Maurice Hankey, head of the cabinet secretariat, and Philip Kerr, the Prime Minister’s personal secretary.¹³ This diminished the role of various other cabinet members and most importantly had a significant impact on the active role of the Foreign Office. The

struggles of the Foreign Office were the second manifestation of Lloyd George’s disregard for tradition and routine. The Foreign Office was a venerable institution and extremely powerful within the British government. However, under the Lloyd George government, Hankey and Kerr gradually restricted the resources and influence of the Foreign Office from the Prime Minister. The Foreign Office’s primary functions were progressively eaten away by other ministries such as the War Office and Ministry of Information.\textsuperscript{14} The Foreign Office oversaw the various actions and policies of nations around the world and it also accumulated the opinions of the various ambassadors. The slow exclusion of the Office from the Lloyd George government meant the wealth of information possessed by the Foreign Office, headed by Lord Curzon, the former British Viceroy of India, was often left out or minimized in discussion. This omission represented a significant and far-reaching change in policy formation, increasing the ever-dangerous possibility of incomplete information in the formation of foreign policy, and resulted in the foreign policy of the British government becoming more susceptible to public opinion.

Two excellent examples of the minimization of the Foreign Office occurred in 1920: the appointment of the British representatives of the Inter-Allied mission to Poland and the appointment of Lord D’Abernon as ambassador to Weimar Germany. Occurring after the Paris Peace Conference, these two examples provide insight into how policy decisions were made and the considerations that were taken in making those decisions.

\textsuperscript{14} Doerr, \textit{British Foreign Policy}, 29-30.
The Inter-Allied Mission to Poland was conceived at the Spa Conference in 1920 as the Soviet Army reversed Polish gains and invaded Poland. Polish Prime Minister Władysław Grabski appealed to the allies for military assistance against the invading Soviets. As a result, the Inter-Allied Mission was formed. It would stand to reason that the Foreign Office would appoint the members of this mission as its goal was to assess the situation in Poland and determine the necessary aid. However, Lloyd George appointed Lord D’Abernon as the head of the mission, General Percy Radcliffe as the military advisor, and Maurice Hankey as secretary. The British contingent to the mission was decidedly Lloyd George’s creation and the Foreign Office regarded it as such. The view of Poland as unstable and unsustainable was fueled by reports coming from the British representatives in Poland, as well as a negative British opinion of Polish statesmen. The uncertain stability of the Polish state was used as an excuse to justify a number of British positions: the plebiscite in Upper Silesia, opposition to the transfer of Danzig to the Poles, the refusal of military aid to the beleaguered Polish state during the Soviet-Polish War, and the transfer of East Galicia to Poland. Great Britain did not believe that they should rush to Polish aid if they were picking fights with their larger neighbors. The Soviet-Polish war of 1919-1921 represented the perfect example of this. The conflict began in earnest in 1920 after Polish and Soviet forces attempted to finish their respective annexations of Ukraine. After initial Polish successes, the Red Army forced Polish armies back all along the frontier. Horace Rumbold, the British ambassador to Poland during the

Soviet-Polish War, faulted the Poles and their own incompetence for the war.\textsuperscript{16} The British and the French had guaranteed Polish security; however, rather than rush supplies to the new state’s aid, David Lloyd George made it the policy of Great Britain to search for a peaceful solution. He made this position clear by saying that Poland would not be aided unless the Soviets would be unwilling to present reasonable peace terms.\textsuperscript{17} These reasonable peace terms were not defined, though, and British thought seemed to disagree with fundamental Polish demands: that the nation be as strong as it can be with as many Poles as possible to fight against powerful neighbors on each side. What constituted that strength was a matter for debate in Poland itself. Roman Dmowski, the leader of the right-wing Endecja (the National Democrats), believed that Poland would be strongest with ethnically Polish homogeneity at the expense of territory. On the other hand, Jozef Pilsudski believed Poland would be strongest in federation with other states (such as Lithuania and Ukraine) and would maximize territory and resources; however it would be at the expense of ethnic homogeneity.

The British contribution to the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland presented the situation in Poland as beyond hope. Sir Maurice Hankey left the mission early and composed numerous letters to Lloyd George which skewered the effectiveness and potential for stable Polish governance. Hankey described various Polish government officials as peasants and pro-German and described Pilsudski as a socialist wanting to

\textsuperscript{16} Sir H. Rumbold to Lloyd George, 9 August 1920, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/57/6/19, Parliamentary Archives, London.
forge collaboration between the Germans and the Soviets.\textsuperscript{18} Hankey’s opinions of Pilsudski as well as Pilsudski’s alleged plans were based on false information; for example Hankey thought Pilsudski was an Austrian Pole, a friend of Lenin, and had been imprisoned by the Austrians. Pilsudski actually was a Lithuanian Pole, hated Lenin, and had been imprisoned by the Germans.\textsuperscript{19} Pilsudski, raised to be a Polish nationalist when Germany and Russia dominated the Polish lands, viewed Germany and Russia as enemies and consequently worked to resist the influence of both nations. Hankey’s views did not exist in the realm of fact; rather, he attempted to reinforce already held opinions and fears. While it is not known how much Hankey’s correspondence and his personal report influenced the Prime Minister, it seems likely that it played a significant role in Lloyd George’s policy decisions. The rest of the Inter-Allied Mission and the British embassy in Poland were not communicating as prodigiously as Hankey; and Hankey had a close working relationship with the Prime Minister.

In addition to the appointments for the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland, Lord D’Abernon’s appointment as ambassador to Berlin demonstrated the diminished power of the Foreign Office and the increasing power of the Prime Minister’s programs. Lord D’Abernon possessed the skill of the “new” diplomats of the post-war period. He had extensive financial expertise as well as a deep hostility towards bolshevisim.\textsuperscript{20} Lord D’Abernon owed his appointment to Lord Curzon’s recognition of

\textsuperscript{18} Norman Davies, “Sir Maurice Hankey and the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland, July-August 1920,” \textit{The Historical Journal} 15, No. 3 (1972): 556.
\textsuperscript{19} Norman Davies, “Sir Maurice Hankey and the Inter-Allied Mission to Poland,” 560.
\textsuperscript{20} Johnson, \textit{The Berlin Embassy of Lord D’Abernon}, 21.
the challenges of post-war diplomacy. Lord Curzon begrudgingly accepted Lloyd George’s new diplomacy and expressed his willingness to work within the framework of the Prime Minister’s policy.\textsuperscript{21} This meant appointing officials that were knowledgeable about financial, geographical, or ethnic matters over career diplomats. Despite Lord Curzon’s involvement in his appointment, Lord D’Abernon thought he owed his ambassadorship to Prime Minister Lloyd George. Consequently he supported the ideas and policies of 10 Downing Street to a greater degree. For example, D’Abernon not only agreed with John Maynard Keynes, the influential British economist, that the peace was too harsh, but he also agreed with Lloyd George that the peace was a result of French greed and desire for revenge.\textsuperscript{22} Consequently, both the Prime Minister and the ambassador to Germany felt like the Germans were being treated with too much hostility; and anti-German feeling should be toned down to avoid elevating anti-Entente sentiments in Germany. This indicates at least a tacit support for German concerns about the post-war political landscape. Concerns about Germany signing the peace treaty and keeping to their obligations were real, which explains the position Curzon, Lloyd George, and D’Abernon took.

In 1919, the Entente leaders were generally concerned about Germany signing a peace treaty that vilified the German nation. However, Great Britain and France differed in their approaches to this problem. France wanted justice for the war believing the Germans had no choice but to sign. Great Britain, on the other hand,


\textsuperscript{22} Johnson, \textit{The Berlin Embassy of Lord D’Abernon}, 31.
demanded tempered post-war claims with the intention of making the peace more palatable and in this way achieve its continental and global claims. There was a legitimate fear among the British delegation that Germany would not sign the peace treaty because of overly harsh terms. British policy at the conference was primarily driven by a desire to end the war as quickly as possible and create a sustainable peace. Thus, the terms had to be agreeable to the Germans, while still punishing them.

British foreign policy after the First World War was concerned with three principal items: British naval supremacy, security of overseas possessions, and a balance of power in Europe that could sustain peace on the continent. This desire for a balance of power often put the British at odds with the French, historically the greatest continental power in Europe until the Prussians defeated them in 1870. Great Britain was primarily interested in reestablishing a balance of power after World War I. France was the fundamental perceived opponent to British interests on the continent and consequently Lloyd George and the British delegation quarreled with Clemenceau and his government over its view of post-war Europe. After the signing of the armistice, Georges Clemenceau said to David Lloyd George, “I found you an enemy of France.” To which Lloyd George replied, “was it not always our traditional policy?” This quote suggests British policy in Paris. Lloyd George simply viewed France as the British Government always had: as enemies. Lloyd George resisted French claims and ideas. He was skeptical of French plans in Eastern Europe, resisted

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French plans on disarmament and reparations, and forced the French to compromise on the Rhineland.

France wanted to contain Germany in three ways: by removing a military threat, keeping the economy relatively weak, and surrounding the nation with states that would not allow German aggression. For French post-war security concerns, the last part of this policy was essential, because arming Poland and Czechoslovakia, would place militarily empowered nations all around Germany. The goal of this plan was to discourage German aggression; and as a result, diminish French military responsibilities. This policy, though seemingly sound in theory, would never become what the French envisioned. The primary reason for this was the dissenting opinion of David Lloyd George. He considered the Poles “troublesome, their leaders feckless, and their administration chaotic.” Consequently, he considered Poland a saisonstaat (a temporary state) and resisted efforts to bolster it. In fact on January 10, 1919, the British government received a telegram from their emissary in Poland that said Poland might cease to exist, due to economic and political unrest. This warning, however, was unheeded and the War Cabinet led by Lloyd George did nothing, despite objections by some members. Part of the economic problem in Poland was that it needed a large seaport, the post obvious option was Danzig. On March 19th the Polish Commission, whose members were agreed upon by the Council of Four, unanimously proposed that

Poland be given Danzig and a corridor to the city. Since the British Prime Minister assumed Danzig would strengthen Poland and his policy was to deprive Poland and by extension France, Lloyd George opposed the measure on the grounds that it would be a detriment to the stability of the German state to place Germans under Polish rule.  

This was his way of arguing against aggrandizing Poland, which would diminish Clemenceau’s vision of strong nations around Germany. Lloyd George’s concerns regarding French ambitions may seem distrustful, especially since France and Great Britain were allies, whose soldiers died next to one another. The deep-seated anxiety and animosity of generations past, coupled with the constant bickering over command and conduct during World War I, soiled Anglo-French post-war relations. The end result was skepticism toward each other’s intentions in Paris.

Great Britain pursued a renewed balance of power. The casualty of that pursuit was anything that might increase French power. What is more, the British delegation feared that if French suggestions and proposals on Eastern Europe were followed, then Germany would not sign the treaty. Lloyd George made this point clear several times when the Supreme Council met. There is no telling how legitimate this fear was at the time. Germany was still a powerful force, though disillusioned after the events in late 1918. Furthermore, the allied wartime blockade of Germany succeeded, leaving the population hungry and the prospect of a renewed war dim but not out the question. War weariness on the allied side was partly to blame for anxiety about a renewed

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28 Wandycz, France and Her Eastern Allies, 43.
conflict, but British desires to weaken French claims aimed at strengthening France’s eastern allies were the primary motivators behind Britain’s rejection of French proposals. In contrast to British motives, France still saw Britain as a necessary ally and worked to retain that alliance. France needed allies, because it still saw Germany as a potent enemy that was bound to strike again. French policy went beyond a desire to see Germany bordered to the east by strong states; it saw the Entente as a necessary part of continental security. Clemenceau thought of Lloyd George as an ally. As a result he believed Lloyd George would understand and support French claims, not necessarily in their entirety but at least in essence.

Plans for strengthening Germany’s neighbors were one aspect of France’s proposals for continental security. The other, and perhaps more important, aspect was German disarmament and military limits. A key part of this plan was the destruction of German armaments and the reduction of the German army. Germany, and Prussia before it, had an impressive and decidedly successful military history. Prussia had revolutionized the military reserve system. This allowed it to maintain a huge military reserve that was constantly ready to deploy, even if soldiers were not in uniform. The memory of rapid German deployment against French armies in 1870 dominated French thinking and drove the French military in their demands. The concern at the Peace Conference was that Germany would simply retool and wage war once again.

In order to contain the German threat, France proposed a strict limit on the size of the German military. Marshall Foch, the French general who is credited with

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leading the allied armies to victory, called for a conscript army that would serve only one year. Lloyd George opposed this measure because he thought that it would give Germany a huge wealth of trained soldiers. Foch retorted that a longer serving army, as proposed by the British, would give Germany a large base of experienced troops to rebuild their army when the time came. Lloyd George caught Clemenceau aside from the Supreme Council and convinced him to support the British plan for a longer term of service in the German army.\(^{30}\) As a result, a volunteer army would be established in Germany with a fixed number of soldiers. This type of negotiation (privately between the Prime Ministers) was common in Paris and Lloyd George used it liberally to achieve his goals. Next, Marshall Foch proposed the limit for the German army be lowered from the previously agreed 200,000 to 140,000 men. Then he called for it to be lowered again, this time to 100,000.\(^{31}\) This was necessary because it would limit the amount of men that Germany had available to wage war at any one time. Clemenceau strengthened this proposal by adding that British and American troops would be going home. Consequently, defense fell to France alone and thus German troops should be limited.\(^{32}\) Lloyd George was impressed by this argument and Sir Maurice Hankey, the secretary of the British delegation, recorded the Prime Minister as saying, “if France felt strongly about this question, he did not think … Delegates


\(^{32}\) Hankey, “Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 17th Session,” 343.
had the right to oppose her wishes.” This wording is crucial. Lloyd George did not see the value of squabbling over 40,000 men. There were larger issues at stake and consequently since Marshall Foch and Clemenceau were so eager for this measure, Lloyd George let it pass. Lloyd George supported Foch’s request to fix the German army at 100,000, not only because of the strength of Foch’s argument, but because the British Prime Minister had already won concessions in regard to the issue that concerned him. He had won Germany the right to a longer serving volunteer army, which would give some stability and security to the state by creating soldiers, not simply recycling conscripts. Lloyd George, through his back room dealing, managed to limit the severe terms proposed by the French Marshall and shift the restrictions to be more favorable towards Germany.

The number of soldiers describes only one part of an army. On February 17, 1919, the Supreme War Council met to discuss the question of German armaments. A French military commission came up with the suggestion to cripple German production by occupying German armament factories in addition to confiscating the German military arsenal. David Lloyd George suggested moderating the severity of the commission’s proposal. Lloyd George said that with proper surveillance and confiscation of weapons, Germany would be impotent and unable to wage battle. This served two purposes for Lloyd George. First, his suggestion, which won the day,

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33 Hankey, “Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the 17th Session,” 344.
would keep Germany’s military from being permanently crippled as their undermanned army would still be provided with weapons made in Germany. Second, it kept German armament factories out of French hands. Had the seizure of the factories gone ahead, France would have been the dominant occupying force and thus would have been a greater insult to Germany, due to the deep animosity held by Germany towards France. By promoting the effectiveness of disarmament and allied inspections, Lloyd George diminished French power, while giving greater potential to Germany.

To reestablish a balance of power in Europe, Lloyd George subtly campaigned against the French peace proposals while appeasing the British public’s desire to punish Germany. These two opposing ideologies put the Prime Minister in a precarious position. The press in England accused him of fabricating the threat of further revolution in Germany and not doing enough to punish the perceived originators of the war.\(^{35}\) This left the prime minister vulnerable; he had to be tough on Germany, but he still desired to see a balance of power and a sustainable peace returned to Europe. For Lloyd George, this meant moderated peace terms, which put him in conflict with Georges Clemenceau, who demanded “Restitution, reparations and security.”\(^ {36}\) Lloyd George was able to establish measures that would dramatically limit German power, but still pursue policy decisions that would ultimately limit


French powers, primarily by giving Germany some power and stability. He walked a fine line between what he and what his constituents wanted.

Historical French hegemony over continental Europe partially motivated British policy towards French proposals at the conference. However, simply denying French power did not guarantee the balance of power Lloyd George desperately wanted; he needed a counterweight, and Germany presented the best chance. The problem facing the British in this quest was that in 1919, Germany had undergone a democratic revolution, socialists ruled the government, and there was uncertainty about German stability. The second motivation for the British and David Lloyd George at the Paris Peace Conference was stabilizing Germany and preventing a communist take over that would spread further west and leave a power vacuum in Central Europe. The third motivation was the necessity for a long-term peace. A peace Germany would sign and honor.

British fear of German instability was predicated on the revolution of 1918, which overthrew the Kaiser and the old conservative regime. In its place, a socialist government was installed. The new government possessed radical ideas and was hostile to the previous conservative establishment. Not everyone welcomed this new government; in particular, the military actively disliked it. Erich von Manstein, a veteran of World War I and later a prominent officer in the Third Reich and West Germany, best characterized the abdication of the Kaiser and the subsequent political upheaval’s effect on the military by saying that the abdication was “not a mere change of the form of government. It was, at least for the Prussian Army, the collapse of their
world.” Manstein’s statement is significant, for the military was a source of great pride and prestige in Germany. War veterans saw themselves as great warriors deserving of respect and adoration. More importantly, despite their defeat in the war, and the fact that the government was weak and disunited, the military was still a powerful political force in Germany in the years following World War I. The collapse of the Kaiser and the subsequent political upheaval created a power struggle between the military and the state. The high command was confronted with the dilemma of the source of military power: the government or the General Staff? It was this uncertainty that the British feared. Germany did not seem to have anyone leading it or, at the very least, it seemed the military and the civilian government squabbled over control.

The British government seemed positioned to favor German claims; as a result, they were not so favorable toward Poland. This was not because of any animosity by Lloyd George or because of objections to a Polish state. It was because the British government opposed Polish territorial ambitions at the expense of Germany and Russia. Furthermore, British officials worried about the effectiveness and the stability of the Polish government, Poland’s territorial ambitions at the expense of Germany and Russia, and Poland’s ties with France. These attitudes emanated straight from 10 Downing Street. Lloyd George viewed Poland as a small nation that could (and should) be equated with other small nations, such as his native Wales. Based on this comparison, Lloyd George praised the patriotic fervor of the Poles, but decried larger

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ambitions. Lloyd George’s attitude toward Poland was part of a larger platform renouncing the policies of small nations in favor of the Great Powers. Interestingly, the British Prime Minister did not seem to realize that Poland with its large population, substantial territory, and a national identity forged under the annexation of outside powers was not an equitable comparison to other small nations of his experience. Despite the false suppositions Lloyd George made creating his analogy of Poland to Wales, the sentiment was important. In the post-war political landscape, the powers of great nations were vindicated and became more preeminent.

It seems the position of Poland in British policy was not essential. British officials such as Churchill and Curzon did not view the existence of Poland as an established fact. British political circles regarded Poland as a pawn for political gain. Churchill considered Poland a tool to delay or fight against the Bolsheviks. Curzon thought Poland could be used against Russia to protect British India. These perspectives demonstrate both British animosity towards Bolshevism and the continuation of “great game” policies in the British Foreign Office. Poland could play an important role, but was ultimately unessential in reaching broader goals, thus making it expendable. Great Britain had no desire to defend a nation they viewed as responsible for their own misfortunes. Britain did not want to entangle themselves with conflicts in lands that did not really matter and that were the result of the incompetence of these nation’s governments. Lloyd George followed the previous policies of Great Britain. He supported German and even Russian causes instead of

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39 Davies, “Lloyd George and Poland,” 134.
40 Davies, “Lloyd George and Poland,” 137.
Polish ones; and it was not because he disliked Poland. Rather Lloyd George considered Poland “the Ireland of the continent.”\textsuperscript{41} This meant Poland was a small nation with outsized ambitions. In the David Lloyd George’s eyes, Poland did not realize that it was a pawn to Germany’s rook or Russia’s bishop. Consequently, the British Empire was unwilling to commit resources to preserving a pawn that picked fights with larger, more important neighbors.

Lloyd George criticized the Polish delegation at the Peace Conference describing them as amateurs and outright dangerous for the stability of Eastern Europe. In his Fontainebleau Memorandum, Lloyd George states that placing “2,100,000 Germans under the control of a people which is of a different religion and which has never proved its capacity for stable self-government throughout its history must … lead sooner or later to a new war in Europe.”\textsuperscript{42} The idea that Poland lacked the necessary capacity for stable self-government was not solely Lloyd George’s opinion. Sir Horace Rumbold, the ambassador of the U.K. to Poland from 1919-1920, wrote to Earl Curzon: “The better I become acquainted with conditions here the more I am convinced that it will be necessary for the Poles to rely on outside advice if they are to get their administration on to a proper basis.”\textsuperscript{43} The opinion was based on the relative inexperience of the Polish government. Lloyd George’s opinion that Poland could not govern itself was being reinforced by reports coming from British officials in Poland.

\textsuperscript{42} Lloyd George, \textit{Memoirs of the Peace Conference}, 267.
This fed the notion that Britain needed to educate the Polish diplomats; or worse, should not take Polish demands seriously because of the amateur nature of their government.

The fears about the amateur nature of Polish politics and how the Polish government could offend its more powerful neighbors fed overall British policy: to limit the power and influence of small powers. Consequently, Great Britain appeared an enemy of Poland. The British Empire delegation at the Paris Peace Conference portrayed the Upper Silesia issue as simple self-determination and ethnic justice. However, the delegation’s actions towards Middle East protectorates and mandates as well as attitudes towards other disputed areas show there was more to British policy than their stated concerns. The importance of Upper Silesia for Lloyd George and the British delegation was two-fold: first, they did not want Germany to feel wronged and give the state ammunition to launch another campaign against the West; and second, they did not want Germany to break the peace in Europe that Lloyd George and the British government were attempting to forge. This desire to forge a sustainable peace and fears of renewed German aggression was the main thrust of Lloyd George’s Fontainebleau Memorandum. He introduced the Memorandum at the Conference in an attempt to diminish the harsh terms leveled against Germany.

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Chapter Two

Political Power Growing Out of the Barrel of a Gun

In the years directly following the First World War, Germany struggled to find a healthy balance between self-protection and peace making. After only fifty years of united German rule under the Kaiser and centuries of rule by the Kaiser over Prussia, the old regime was swept away, shocking the old, conservative elite. Significantly, the German Revolution took place in 1918, while the war was still being fought, sparked by mutinous German sailors turned rebels. Their revolt did not stay isolated and was picked up by socialist-leaning individuals who spread the revolt into the industrial centers, distressed by four years of war. The result was the replacement of the conservative government that had long shut out the German Socialist Party (SPD) from power. Following the declaration of a republic on November 9, 1918, the SPD sought an armistice through the U.S. on the basis of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points. The German government’s request for an armistice shocked most of the German people. Up to this point, the news around the war had been positive and the German people had no reason to doubt the success of their armies; after all, the their armies had emerged victorious in its war against Russia. However, the proposed armistice, the collapse of the Kaiserreich, and the defeat of Germany’s armies in the West left Germans shocked and questioning how Germany had been defeated after three and a half years of reputed victory.
The questions surrounding the end of the First World War and the way the public and the government responded to them shaped German policy decisions in the post-war period. Additionally, it is crucial to comprehend the power dynamics in early Weimar Germany: meaning, the role of the military in politics and policy decisions. The role of the military was extensive, particularly in the early years of the republic. The territorial goals of the German military were particularly driven towards the East; and consequently, the Germans pushed for more favorable settlements in its border with Poland. The revision of German war guilt, the perpetuation of the Dolchstoß (stab-in-the-back) narrative, and the role of the military in politics helped strengthen German willingness to become bullish on the Upper Silesian issue.

During and especially immediately following the war, German scholars, politicians, and archivists censored themselves to make the war’s origins more favorable to Germany. These “patriotic self-censors” changed the historical accuracies around the war in Germany and consequently impacted political development.46

Immediately after the war, the new socialist government began its examination. The purpose of the examination was to determine the origins of the war, regardless of who was at fault. To compile the necessary documents, the socialist government appointed Karl Kautsky, a noted Marxist.47 However, in late December 1919, the socialist government collapsed and the new government formed was decidedly less favorable to Kautsky’s work. In fact, the new government was downright hostile to true fact-

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finding missions on the question of war guilt.\textsuperscript{48} A program of misinformation began in earnest when the new government appointed a new commission led by future state secretary Bernhard W. von Bülow. This new commission combed through Soviet documents pertaining to the beginning of the war and used these documents to launch attacks on the Allied position regarding German liability in bringing about the war. The documents Bülow compiled were later edited and published by German scholars (Hans Delbrück, Max von Montgelas, Albrecht Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, and Max Weber), who did their patriotic duty and provided their signature lending academic credibility to the collection.\textsuperscript{49} This academic credence allowed the Germans to combat Allied claims of German war-guilt. The German Government paraded this document, which claimed (albeit skewed) diminished responsibility for the war and provided Germany another perceived wrong.

The government was particularly interested in disproving the war-guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles. Cabinet meetings included discussion about how the Germans had been merely reacting to its neighbors. For example, Dr. Johannes Bell, from the Center Party, argued to the cabinet that Germany could not have been the aggressor because Germans were forced into being aggressive. Additionally, cabinet members argued that there was a secret agreement between Belgium and the Entente. Therefore, the Entente was not entitled to reparations, as Belgium was not a truly neutral power. The Reich minister of War, Gustav Noske, added that in addition to what Dr. Bell said, the submarine warfare was merely a response to the blockade of

\textsuperscript{48} Herwig, “Clio Deceived,” 7-8.  
\textsuperscript{49} Herwig, “Clio Deceived,” 12-15.
food into Germany. Consequently their egregious actions could not be blamed because they were simply defending themselves.

The Allies used war-guilt to justify the removal of territory from Germany and to impose heavy reparation payments. The German denial of war-guilt had implications for the economic and territorial future of the newly formed republic. The German government’s denial of guilt and the fabrication of Entente liability created a culture of victimization within Germany. The scholars who signed the collection deflecting the blame from Germany to Russia and Great Britain did so only a week after receiving them. Max Weber, after he signed the document, privately confessed to Hans Delbrück that he “‘shuddered’ at the thought of ‘what might be in our documents.’” Weber’s quote indicates discomfort towards the line Germany was selling. Nonetheless he signed the document because he felt it was his patriotic duty. This was not an uncommon feeling in Germany: action because of patriotic obligation. The national support the civilian population lent to Germany enabled the government to press forward with programs of misinformation and victimization.

The Dolchstoß narrative began almost immediately after Germany lost the war. The narrative essentially presents socialists, revolutionaries, and Jews as scapegoats for Germany’s defeat. The German military and government used the Dolchstoß to hide the truth about the war: that Germany had lost; its armies had been defeated; and even that Germany begun the war. The Dolchstoß replaced military responsibility and

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51 Herwig, “Clio Deceived,” 12.
offered an alternate explanation for Germany’s defeat. The narrative rose to prominence in Germany because of a systematic program of misinformation and simple denial.

Germans rewrote the story of the beginning of the war to be more favorable to German aggression; however, that was only half of Germany’s battle to control the narrative around the war. The German military created a history that explained their defeat in 1918, presenting the idea that the socialist revolution undermined the German war effort. This idea took hold immediately. Major Ludwig Beck, the future chief of the general staff, said in 1918:

(The) long prepared revolution has attacked our rear … I do not know of any revolution in history that has been undertaken in so cowardly a manner … It is poisonous if the people in the rear, most of whom never heard a shot, … fabricate a contrast between officer and private soldier. And it is the worst thing they can do, to undermine the authority of the officer; it leads directly into anarchy … For an officer like myself and many thousands who live through this, the decline of our army is something dreadful.53

At the time, Major Beck was a younger officer and his attitude was typical of young officers: Germany lost the war not because the British and French bested them on the battlefield, but rather because the revolutionaries undermined the bond between officer and soldier and caused the army to unravel. This was a fabrication. The Entente’s Fall Offensive broke the German Army. In the eyes of the enlisted soldier, the German Army’s collapse was more related to the abuses perpetrated by aristocratic dominated officer corps than by a socialist revolution. Soldiers became increasingly unable to look beyond the moral failings of the officers. Officers regularly beat their

subordinates, received far superior rations, and generally lacked consideration for their men. Consequently, the men lost respect for their officers and began to tie the moral failings of the officer corps to the failings of the aristocracy in general.\textsuperscript{54} This of course does not represent a broad, universal truth about the German army; however, it certainly indicates discontent and diminishes Major Beck’s vision of officer-soldier bonding. The German government worked to hide the truth about the beginning and the end of the war to mislead the population, gather support for their territorial and economic claims, and calm potential discontent.

Additionally, the power dynamics of the German government were important to the pursuit of various goals, including keeping territory and maintaining economic power. The new German republic was formed after the overthrow of the Kaiser’s government, but important apparatuses of the Kaiser’s government still remained - namely the military. The military, as the primary enforcer of German power and security, maintained its power, which was not dramatically altered by Germany’s 1918 defeat. The military was arguably the most important part of the Kaiser’s government and was a source of tremendous national pride. In the first six months of 1919, the German military was left largely intact, albeit having lost top echelon commanders. The military remained a significant force in the new republic and used their influence to impact political decisions.

Erich von Manstein, a veteran of World War I and later a prominent officer in the Third Reich and West Germany, best characterized the abdication of the Kaiser

and the subsequent political upheaval’s effect on the military by saying that the abdication was “not a mere change of the form of government. It was, at least for the Prussian Army, the collapse of their world.”\textsuperscript{55} War veterans saw themselves as great warriors deserving of respect and adoration.\textsuperscript{56} The collapse of the old regime which had supported the military and its veterans left many disillusioned and confused. More importantly, the military was still a powerful political force in Germany, despite their defeat in the war, and the fact that the government was weak and disunited. The collapse of the Kaiser and the subsequent political upheaval created a power vacuum for the military and the state. The new socialist government was weak and disunited. The moderate and radical socialists bickered over the scope and goals of the revolution. Although the new government was sparked by a sailor’s revolution, the sailor’s mutiny did not spread to the army. Thus, even though the military lost its symbolic figurehead (the Kaiser) it possessed the power structure of the old guard. Without an army, the new government would lack the force to expand and protect its influence; consequently, the government required the military to support them.

The head of the new government, Friedrich Ebert, and General Wilhelm Groener, the successor to General Ludendorff, worked out a deal for the protection of the infant republic. The German military was placed at the disposal of the government to maintain order, protect the nation, and fight against Bolshevism, while the government promised to maintain discipline and order within the army.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{55} von Manstein, \textit{Aus einem Soldatemleben}, 51.
\textsuperscript{56} Ziemann, \textit{War Experiences in Rural Germany}, 211.
\textsuperscript{57} Carsten, \textit{Reichswehr and Politics}, 11.
Groener wrote to his wife after the agreement and stated his reasons for supporting the government. He thought Ebert a straightforward and honest character and he believed that the reconstruction of Germany was impossible without the officer corps.

Furthermore he expressed contempt for the middle class for not standing up for the old regime and permitting “a handful of sailors to knock it down as if it were a dummy.”

The army was willing to help the government as long as the military was protected from upheaval and was guaranteed the government’s commitment to anti-Bolshevik causes. This was the beginning of the military demanding assurances and compromise to aid a government they official supported but privately resented. These agreements are important because they were made between the ideologues of the respective commands both civil and military - not because those commands independently stabilized the government.

The civil authorities could rest easier knowing the military would support them, even as the civilian authorities struggled to assert their authority. In reality, the military authorities were dealing with a collapse of their own. In December 1918 as the military was supposed to be demobilizing in an orderly fashion, troops began abandoning their units to get home as soon as possible. As a result the military recognized the necessity to recruit an army based on volunteers, willing and not forced to serve because of conscription. In post-World War One Germany, the demands of the government were great because of threats such as the Sparticists (radical

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58 Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, 12.
59 Ziemann, War Experiences in Rural Germany, 213.
60 Carsten, Reichswehr and Politics, 16.
communist revolutionaries) and discontented soldiers. Consequently, the German military quickly required a force. The use of the volunteer forces was a move to secure Germany against enemies both internal and external. The best-organized and most effective volunteer forces were the *Freikorps* (Free Corps). These forces were enabled and sustained by the high command to support and protect Germany, despite their status as paramilitary and nonofficial. ⁶¹ As the Reichswehr was collapsing in late 1918, the *Freikorps* troops were the most highly trained and represented the most significant physical force in Germany. ⁶² Many members of the Freikorps were drawn from former units in the Eastern theater of the war. This is important for several reasons: the German armies had won in the east and the soldiers were invested in keeping territory they won. Members of the *Freikorps* were nostalgic for the days of the Kaisercorps and the preeminence of the military in societal and political structures. However, the new republic overthrew the old regime and was seemingly bending to the demands of Germany’s enemy: France. This drew the ire of the members of the *Freikorps*, who in later years would become militantly anti-republican. The volunteer *Freikorps* was built around former soldiers who felt abandoned and confused by Germany’s defeat. They needed to fight and be part of the military in order to make sense of the events of 1918. ⁶³ The victory of Germany’s eastern armies and the make up of many volunteer forces by these troops created confusion and disillusionment with the situation in Berlin, Weimar, and Paris.

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⁶² Diehl, *Paramilitary Politics*, 42.
Freikorps members saw themselves as the victors of the war in the East and were reluctant to acquiesce to the demands of the Entente to vacate territory in favor of new nations. Consequently, these paramilitary forces and some border troops were all too eager to defend the Eastern Borders of Germany from Polish nationalists and the Bolsheviks.\textsuperscript{64} The British enabled the Freikorps in their desire to hold on to conquered territory. The British High Command ordered the Freikorps to remain in the Baltic area to defend it against the Red Army and they were forbidden to withdrawal until the allies ordered it.\textsuperscript{65} This order was used by the Germans to launch a new Baltic campaign to secure the area for Germany, at minimum through the establishment of a puppet state.\textsuperscript{66} The free hand the Freikorps received in the Baltic States to fight the Soviets was a result of allied, primarily British, discomfort and inability to supply troops to protect the area. Consequently, the British relied on German formations, which also enabled the Germans to continue their dominance of the region into 1919.

German plans to use their military to secure their eastern borders began early. On November 21, 1919, the German cabinet met and discussed the possibility of losing of Upper Silesia and its coal. They decided that they could use force in Upper Silesia to secure the not only the territory but also their coal, which was needed in Berlin. State secretary, Gustav Bauer, said that it would be careless to remove the threat of violence against the Poles, because they (the Germans) were merely defending

\textsuperscript{64} Diehl, \textit{Paramilitary Politics}, 44.
\textsuperscript{66} Liulevicius, \textit{War Lands on the Eastern Front}, 230.
themselves. After all, the populations in the eastern areas were decidedly German and must be protected. Other cabinet members pointed out there were no forces available to send east (to the Polish provinces).\(^67\) The forces that could be successful in securing Germany from revolutionaries and defending Germany’s not yet decided eastern borders were the paramilitary organizations. The Freikorps discontent with the government made them a politically unreliable force, whose loyalty could be counted on only when the goals of the government were in line with their own. None-the-less, the government needed the army to enforce order in a nation that was seemingly falling apart at the seams.

After the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the German army was officially limited to 100,000 soldiers; however, the strength of the Freikorps was well over a million. Consequently, the Freikorps needed to be disbanded, despite their nonofficial status. Naturally, the soldiers were not pleased about the order to disband. They had joined the volunteer units because they were disillusioned about the collapse of the German army and the perceived treachery of the new government became a rallying cry for further action. In March 1920, some of the Freikorps led by General Ehrhardt and supported by Wolfgang Kapp and General Walther von Lüttwitz attempted a coup d’état against the Weimar Government when they refused to stop the demobilization of the Freikorps (the so-called Kapp Putsch).\(^68\) General Ehrhardt led his troops to Berlin and occupied the city. Afterwards, Kapp and Lüttwitz called upon former

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\(^{68}\) Waite, Vanguard of Nazism, 151-54. Wolfgang Kapp was a political activist and a founding member of the Deutsche Vaterlandspartei, a pro-war nationalist political party formed in 1917 that voted against making peace during World War One.
members of the regime and other Freikorps commanders to join in the new

government; they refused. At this point, Noske called upon the General von Seeckt,

chief of the military, to use the Reichswehr to put down the coup d’état. Von Seeckt
simply replied that troops do not fire upon troops.69 Abandoned by the military, the
government called for a general strike. The strike coupled with general ineptness on
the part of the putsch organizers caused the coup to fail.

In the wake of the collapse of the putsch and the continuing strike, the

communists took full advantage, fomenting unrest and revolt in Berlin. The president
of the republic, Ebert, could only turn to the man who had only recently turned his
back on the government: General von Seeckt, who in turn called upon the Freikorps and

General Ehrhardt to put down the communists. The Freikorps were only too happy to
comply and in return received bonuses, amnesty for their role in the putsch, and a
government decree stating any man who left the Ehrhardt Brigade, as General
Ehrhardt’s troops were called, was a deserter.70 These were the men that just days
earlier were attempting to overthrow the Weimar Government and now were being
pardoned from treason and even given special benefits (such as better rations). The

military was clearly far too important (and the administration far too weak) for the
government to alienate, despite the fact that the loyalty of the Freikorps and the army
was far less than certain. This was the hold the military had on the government. The

military knew its salient position to the government but also believed that its first
loyalty was to itself. The Kapp Putsch and the subsequent communist revolt proved

69 Waite, Vanguard of Nazism, 155.
70 Waite, Vanguard of Nazism, 170-71.
that the government was not in control and needed the military to remain in power. Consequently, the government supported the causes the military believed in: defeating Bolsheviks, fighting Poles, and keeping territory in the East. They did not support Treaty stipulations that diminished the size of the military.

The precarious position of the Weimar government and its reliance on the military meant the government needed a strong economy to support their position and pay the reparations demanded by the Treaty of Versailles. The pre-war German economy was heavily industrialized and required a significant amount of coal to run factories, transportation, and related industries. The major industrial and coal producing areas of the German Reich were the industrially developed Ruhr, the Rhineland, the coal rich Saarland, and Upper Silesia. Together these areas along with Posen, West Prussia, Schleswig, Danzig and Memel accounted for 15 percent of arable land, 75 percent of iron ore deposits, 44 percent of pig iron production, 38 percent of steel production, and 26 percent of coal.\textsuperscript{71} These areas made significant contributions to the German state and their loss would be keenly felt. This is not to say that the loss of Upper Silesia was a “life-and-death question for Germany” as the government stated. However, the loss of a major economic center would negatively affect the ability of the Weimar economy to recover after the war and the payment of reparations.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{72} Schulze, Das Kabinett Schiedemann, 194.
In early 1919, for the German government, reparations debt did not present the greatest worry. That designation fell to the continuing blockade of Germany and the security of the German food supply. The instability of foodstuffs led the German government to evoke the threat of Bolshevism in Germany as a reason to lift the blockade. The allies shared the German fear of Bolshevism.\(^7\) While the winter of 1918-1919 put tremendous stress on the German foods supply, the supply did not break. In fact, one of the British military missions in Germany discovered stockpiles of food in Hamburg warehouses totaling 50,000 tons. These stockpiles were not destined for the citizens of Germany; they were for the military.\(^4\) The position of power held by the military in post-war Germany secured rations for soldiers and indicated the position of the military in the calculus of the government. This also helps explain the lasting power of the Freikorps. The promise of good rations was a powerful incentive for men to stay in uniform, a fact the British recognized.\(^5\) The food supply in Germany was a prominent aspect of the economic situation. Coupled with the potential to lose a significant portion of German coal and other industrial potential, the economic outlook was bleak. The German economy did have a food shortage, the blockade did affect the citizens, and the loss of significant German territory could negatively impact German industrial output. Given the surplus of food to the military and the later boycott of Upper Silesian coal; despite security in pricing and supply, the Germans were capitalizing on potential and appearance. The potential for economic


collapse coupled with the Bolshevik threat was a serious concern not only for Great Britain, but also for the rest of the Entente and co-belligerents. The Germans used this concern to assert their territorial goals.

Germany, particularly the military and the paramilitary organizations in the post-war period, was obsessed with retaining territory in the East. The German army wished to retain territory in the Baltic States, Eastern Prussia, Danzig, and Upper Silesia. The reluctance of the German army to surrender territory to the Poles, Czechs, or the Baltic States stemmed from a desire to maintain Germany’s empire and the belief that Germany was bringing *Kultur* (German civilization) to those regions. The losses of the Baltic areas and Upper Silesia later negatively affected the morale and loyalty of the *Freikorps* and volunteer soldiers. In August 1919, the German *Freikorps* troops stationed in the Baltic region revolted after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles and the order to disband. The violently negative reaction of the Germans stationed in the Baltic areas indicated a profound attachment to this area, curiously only being conquered by Germany two years prior. The reaction over losing Upper Silesia was not as violent, but indicated an intense disappointment at losing the territory. The Germans furiously protested after the partition of the region, to no avail. Afterward, they made it their mission to unite the German population in Polish areas around German causes using the infamous scheme of economic and political support from Berlin if they rallied around pro-German causes. The new Polish state’s total

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76 For an excellent discussion of the *Kultur* program in the Baltic, refer to Vejas Liulevicius’s fourth chapter, “The Kultur Program,” in *War Lands on the Eastern Front*.
population was 4% ethnically German, a small but not insignificant amount.\textsuperscript{79} Most minorities were subjected to programs of nationalization or political marginalization. The German and Jewish populations were subjected to what Rogers Brubaker characterizes as “dissimiliationism,” which means that there was no effort to turn these populations into Poles, rather they were simply pushed to the margins of Polish political life.\textsuperscript{80} This further helped the German cause, as more and more Germans were willing to accept aid from Berlin to compensate for the harsh or indifferent treatment received from the Polish government. The German government did this to ingratiate the population to their homeland and secure support within the nation those citizens lived. This pattern existed especially in Germany’s two eastern neighbors: Czechoslovakia and Poland. Germany wished to retain as much territory as possible without regard for the ethnic makeup of the region. For example, Germany wanted to retain Posen (Poznan) despite the overwhelming Polish majority. This desire was driven by the idea that Germany must retain territory and keep its empire, despite the fact the empire had been replaced by a republic.

The German desire to maintain possession of their territory in the East demonstrates single-minded territorialism. The rapid growth of the Soviet Union and the success of its armies should have been a huge concern in the territorial calculus of the region; however, Germany did not think it a serious enough threat, especially after the defeat of the Sparticists at the hands of the Freikorps in mid 1920. The position of

\textsuperscript{79} Rogers Brubaker,\textit{ Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe} (Cambridge, 1996), 86.
\textsuperscript{80} Brubaker,\textit{ Nationalism Reframed}, 88 and 93.
Germany during the Polish-Soviet War is also telling. The German government wished to see Poland defeated but was also worried about the spread of communism to the fragile German republic; thus the German government declared their neutrality.\textsuperscript{81} However, German neutrality was decidedly one sided. Germany prevented French aid to pass through German territory, but at the same time significant evidence shows that the German military supplied the Red Army with weapons.\textsuperscript{82} The Germans wanted Poland to fall in order to regain lost territory. However, the strategic reasoning for this is not immediately apparent. There were vague yet grandiose plans developed by the ardent nationalists to forge a German-Soviet alliance to rid Germany of the influence of Western powers.\textsuperscript{83} This seems remarkably short sighted and naïve. The Soviets’ stated goal was to spread the worker’s revolution around the globe and Germany was supporting the army of that revolution both actively and passively. Germany was positioning itself to be neighbors with the Soviet Union in 1920. This certainly could not have been based on any solid political strategy. Placing Germany’s borders next to an aggressively expansionist power (the USSR) with tremendous industrial potential and the stated desire to overthrow capitalist governments would be negligent, reckless, and even suicidal. The German government, however, did not see the Soviet Union as a threat. German armies had thoroughly defeated the Tsarist armies and they believed that the poorly organized Red Army would pose no great threat to Germany. Germany’s territorial ambitions did not seem to be based on careful political calculus,\textsuperscript{81}\textsuperscript{82}\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} Korbel, \textit{Poland between East and West}, 87.
\textsuperscript{82} Korbel, \textit{Poland between East and West}, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{83} Korbel, \textit{Poland between East and West}, 89-90.
rather they were centered on the idea of diminishing a German diaspora and keeping as much former Reich territory as possible. The lack of a strategic political vision, from a nation considered to be a great power, points to selfish short term goals, territorial aggrandizement, and arrogance.

Germany’s position after World War One was tenuous. The emergence of the *Dolchstoß* explains German unwillingness to accept defeat and Germany’s decision to give greater power and prestige to the military, despite periodic public animosity towards the military establishment. The power of the military and its importance relative to the government meant that Germany was more susceptible to military priorities, such as territory in the Baltics, modern day Poland, and demobilization. However, the unstable situation in Germany meant the government relied on the military to keep order, even if that military was largely volunteer units only loosely controlled by the high command. The bleak economic situation in Germany was used as a tool to gain sympathy and to evoke the post-war boogeyman, Bolshevism. The fear of economic collapse and the spread of Bolshevism in Germany was a real fear for the peacemakers in Versailles and the Germans capitalized on it. Finally, German territorial ambitions were driven more by nostalgia and territorial aggrandizement than any central strategic goal. While there was not a central strategy, the Germans were able to frighten the allied powers enough (primarily Great Britain) to gain concessions. The perception of a failing great power, Germany, was enough to scare the British into championing German causes.
Chapter Three

The Placidity of Elections

German and British policies towards Upper Silesia were informed by the history of the region. Both Germany and Poland could claim Upper Silesia: the Poles by ethnic and linguistic dominance and the Germans by political and economic dominance. In the 14th century, the Polish kings had relinquished Upper Silesia to the Bohemia, which was later absorbed by the Hapsburgs. In 1742, Prussia conquered the region during the War of Austrian Succession. It was after the Prussian annexation of the territory that German settlement and influence increased; in fact, before Frederick II’s annexation, Upper Silesia was almost entirely Polish.  

However under Prussian administration, German colonization of the region began in earnest. German farmers settled the rural areas on a small scale, but in the cities, German industrialists and administrators arrived in greater numbers. Under this influx of money and influence, Upper Silesian industry and coal production flourished. Although German capital and know-how began Upper Silesian industrial power, it was on the backs of Polish laborers that Upper Silesian prosperity was built. This created the dual perceptions common after the First World War: Germany believed Upper Silesia to be rightfully theirs by virtue of their investment and the belief that many Upper Silesians

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considered themselves German and were not separatists. Poland believed the region to be theirs as a result of Polish sweat.

The Polish speaking population of the region spoke a dialect that became known, pejoratively, as *Wasserpolnish* (Water Polish). This dialect was significantly different from the High Polish spoken in the Congress Kingdom (Russian Poland) or Posen. The development of a distinct dialect in the region is not surprising given the lack of a centralized Polish organization to ensure the homogeneity of the Polish language.\(^86\) The *Wasserpolnish* dialect was one example of a divergent dialect that would be difficult for a Krakovian or a Varsovian to comprehend, the other being the Masurian dialect, spoken in areas of East Prussia. The dialect of the Upper Silesians was different enough to claim linguistic independence from Poland and thus Polish Upper Silesian identity based on linguistic similarity could be attacked.

During the latter half of the 19\(^{th}\) century, Otto von Bismarck launched the *Kulturkampf* as a concerted effort to Germanize the Polish population. The *Kulturkampf* attacked the Polish language in Posen and the Upper Silesian dialect along with the entire Polish culture. This attack hardened the population against the Prussians in order to defend their common Catholic faith against the protestant Germans.\(^87\) Catholic defensiveness led to the creation of the politically powerful Center Party in Upper Silesia, as well as several Polish language newspapers designed to oppose the Prussian Government.\(^88\) The Center Party throughout Germany was

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overwhelmingly Catholic and also a majority German; but for the Upper Silesians, the importance of Catholicism to the Center party made it an attractive political ally. Interestingly, it was the program designed to assimilate the Polish population that ultimately inspired the institutions that facilitated the growth of a Polish national consciousness. A consciousness utilized by the Poles and French to justify Polish absorption of Upper Silesia at the Paris Peace Conference.

The issue of national self-determination and the importance of ethnic homogeneity created issues in borderlands where ethnicity was not easy to determine. Unfortunately for the delegates at the Peace Conference, borderlands between Germany and Poland were not only hotly contested; but it was difficult also to prove a particular ethnic majority. The areas of Posen, Danzig, Eastern Prussia, and Upper Silesia all possessed significant German populations and claimed to be part of the German state. To a large measure the issue in Danzig and Posen was out of the hands of the Germans. Danzig had been guaranteed to the Poles, eventually becoming a free-city under the control of the League of Nations. This pleased no one. The Germans were bitter because Danzig was no longer part of Germany. The Poles were not pleased because they feared without direct Polish governance; Danzig would not serve as a friendly port. Posen had seen a pro-Polish revolt and the Germans could not legitimately claim the region based on an ethnic majority, not that they did not try. Consequently, it would be difficult to take the land from Poland. However, the regions of Eastern Prussia and Upper Silesia had significant German populations; and the Germans could make a claim that Polish populations were not significantly Polish in
national spirit based on cultural and linguistic differences from High Polish. The British latched on to these ideas and promoted them at the conference. This was not simply an effort to thwart French security ideas; it was a conscious effort to push Germany into a pro-Western sphere by softening the anti-German measures in the Treaty. Unfortunately for Poland, its own territorial ambitions were a casualty of that policy decision. The Upper Silesian situation was representative of British policy at Versailles: support German causes to prevent irredentism and push it into a Western sphere. Herbert Fisher, the President of the Board of Education under Lloyd George, summed up British policy towards Poland when he wrote: “an irredentist [sic] Prussia will constitute a greater danger for the future peace of the World than an irredentist [sic] Poland.”

The idea, that in the grand political scheme Germany was the greater power and thus more useful, drove British policy towards Germany.

The primary arguments used to demonstrate which country Upper Silesia should belong revolved around the ethnic make up of the region. Predictably, Poland claimed the region by virtue of the perceived Polish majority. However, Germany countered that argument, stating the economic power of the region was due to the very large German minority. Both nations stressed nationality, due to the importance of national self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference. The discussion in Paris largely centered on two national groups: the Germans and Poles. In contrast with the discussion in Paris, James Bjork in his book, *Neither German nor Pole*, argues another theory. He states Germanness or Polishness was not the core divider in Upper Silesia;

89 H.A.L Fisher, Board of Education, to the Prime Minister, 17 March 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/LG/16/7/37.
rather, religion was the true dividing line (Roman Catholicism vs. Lutheranism). Bjork does not say Polish or German nationalists did not exist in the region, because they certainly did, but he makes a compelling case for the power of the Church in identity in the region. Many Upper Silesians recognized the power of the Church as a political and social force and consequently Catholic Unions and Catholic-centered parties sprang up. The central voice for Poles was the newspaper *Katolik* (the Catholic). This newspaper, founded by Karol Miarka, began as a way for Catholics to defend their religion and eventually the Polish language against the Bismarckian *Kulturkampf*, which was aimed, in part, at the Polish language and political Catholicism. After Miarka’s death in 1882, some Upper Silesian intellectuals began to consider themselves Polish, but largely in response to the heavy hand of the *Kulturkampf*. In the early 1890s, a debate began in the Center Party in Upper Silesia about the nature of Polish identity in Upper Silesia. This debate was largely political and intellectual in motivation and produced no definitive answers. The point could be made, and certainly James Bjork makes it, that Upper Silesia had a unique identity. After an independent Upper Silesian state was rejected by the Peace Conference, the discussion turned to the German or Polish character of the region and the potential for an independent Silesian identity was largely ignored. The rejection of an independent state meant the ethnic make up of the region became important in deciding whether Germany or Poland would receive the industrial wealth of the region.

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90 Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole*, 14-5.  
91 This attack on the Polish language resulted in the Germany government outlawing Polish schools.  
Determining the ethnic divisions in the region was easier said than done.

Historiographically, T. Hunt Tooley and Richard Blanke both argued that Upper Silesian identity was tricky to determine, especially along linguistic or religious lines. Blanke argued that upwardly mobile Upper Silesian Poles aided the German cause. These affluent landowners and wealthier laborers associated socioeconomic advancement with being German. They spoke Polish but identified politically with Germany.\(^{93}\) Tooley points to the socioeconomic divides in Upper Silesia and comes to the same conclusion as Blanke: the Upper Silesian middle-class was divided because of the Germanization of its most upwardly mobile members.\(^{94}\) Determining the true ethnic make up of the region was complex and the importance of the industry and symbolism of the region to both Germany and Poland made determining which nation would acquire Upper Silesia a contentious issue.

The importance of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference created the rationale under which David Lloyd George demanded a plebiscite be held in Upper Silesia. On June 2, 1919, Lloyd George made his proposal for such a plebiscite to the Council of Four. Up to this point, it was determined that the region should go to Poland. However, Lloyd George made the argument that because Poland had not possessed Upper Silesia for “several centuries,” (i.e. over five centuries) it was necessary to conduct a plebiscite to determine the true fate of Upper Silesia and to


avoid a *casus belli* for the German state. Both Clemenceau and President Wilson
were adverse to this proposal, but for different reasons. The perceived Polish
dominance in the region had convinced Wilson to support Poland and Clemenceau
wished to deprive Germany of the industrially rich area. The next day, however, Lloyd
George reframed his point as one of national self-determination and justice (one of
Wilson’s 14 Points) to dispel potential claims of being wronged by Germany.
President Wilson was skeptical of Lloyd George’s motives and accused him of
attempting to protect German capitalists. To this claim Lloyd George retorted, “No
one has proclaimed more forcefully than you (President Wilson) the principle of self-
determination. It means that the fate of the people must be determined by the people
themselves, and not by a Dr. Lord, who thinks he knows better than they what they
want.” The British Prime Minister used President Wilson’s own belief in national
self-determination to gain grudging acceptance of the plebiscite. A major issue facing
the plebiscite and potential division of the region was the dangers of separating the
industrial areas. However, Lloyd George pleaded to ensure the legality of the transfer
of the region and stated a plebiscite would ensure German equability in the transfer of
the region to Poland. President Wilson did not agree with this interpretation of his 14
Points, because in his mind the ethnographic fact was that Upper Silesia was decidedly
Polish in character. Wilson reluctantly acquiesced to the British Prime Minister with

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the understanding that Germany be made to accept international control of the
plebiscite. Clemenceau was made to go along with the plan. Because of these
concessions, Lloyd George won a victory for Germany.

While Great Britain seemed to champion the cause of national self-
determination (at least in Upper Silesia and Masuria), they worried about the misuse
of industry in Upper Silesia and about the security of reparations to the Entente. The
British government wanted to secure economic power for Germany to ensure that the
industrial and mineral wealth of Upper Silesia would not be misused and that
reparation payments would not be threatened. In 1920, Mr. Thelwall, the commercial
secretary in the British Embassy in Berlin, wrote:

I consider that it would be most regrettable if Upper Silesia were turned
into a Foreign State in as far as Imports and Exports are concerned; not
only would this have an exceedingly detrimental effect on the country
itself, but would create far reaching disturbances in the remainder of
Germany. The German Government would be much more likely to treat
the Plebiscite Area with exceptional favour than exceptional harshness …

This quote explains two important points within British policy. First, it described the
opinion that Germany could not really bear the loss of the region. The Germans had
taken this position in 1918 by stating that if they lost Upper Silesian coal, Germany
would fall. There was no way to verify the legitimacy of this claim in 1919, though
given the coal output of the Ruhr and Saar areas, it seemed unreasonable and

99 Titus Komarnicki, *Rebirth of the Polish Republic: A Study in the Diplomatic History of
100 Lord Kilmarnock to Earl Curzon, Berlin, 21 May 1920, in *Documents on British Foreign
Policy*, ser. 1, vol. 11 (referred to as DBFP here on out), ed. Rohan Butler and J.P.T. Bury
101 Tooley, “German Political Violence,” 59.
hyperbolic to claim Germany would fall. The accuracy of this statement is not necessarily important. The idea that Germany needed Upper Silesia was powerful. Lloyd George used this idea in his argument for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia. The British delegation discussed the issue of reparations the same day they discussed Poland. The issue became what the Germans could and couldn’t pay; ultimately the delegation discussed the difficulty the Germans would face paying the reparations, especially if Poland were to receive Upper Silesia.102 Even if Poland received the region, Lloyd George believed that coal must be guaranteed to Germany at fair prices and in consistent amounts because the loss of Upper Silesia would downsize the German economy.103 This was a concerted effort, by the British, to secure potential payments from Germany by allowing the state to keep important territory or gain favorable trade agreements.

The second half of Mr. Thelwall’s quote indicates a second point: the preference of a German-run Upper Silesia. Though Mr. Thelwall did not mention Poland, it specifically says the German Government would treat the area with “exceptional favour, [rather] than exceptional harshness.” This implies that Poland would be unfavorable as a governing body for Upper Silesia and if Germany ruled, the Upper Silesians would fare better. Jan Smuts took this idea one step further by stating, “Poland was an historic failure, and always would be a failure, and in this Treaty

103 Upper Silesia supplied about 24% of the coal output in Germany. Mantoux, The Deliberations of the Council of Four, 2:279.
[Treaty of Versailles] we were trying to reverse the verdict of history.”

Smuts made this statement during a meeting of the British Delegation in Paris in early June 1919. Previously on May 22, 1919, he wrote to the Prime Minister that he did not think that the “unfair enlargement of Poland” should be undertaken at Germany’s expense and went on to imply that Upper Silesia was real German territory and should remain as such. Smuts was an important figure in the British Empire and his voice was influential; however, this view was particularly radical. Arthur Balfour, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, thought Smuts’ view harsh but did not disagree with the underlying sentiment: that Poland should not be aggrandized just to be later swallowed by greater powers. This mentality was also seen in the letters from Sir Maurice Hankey to Lloyd George sent during the Soviet-Polish War in 1920. Hankey described the situation in Poland as hopeless and government as inept. His advice was that Poland needed to immediately make peace with the Soviets, at nearly any cost, and take the advice of Great Britain and the French. Furthermore, Hankey’s and the British Government’s fears over the socialist leanings of the Polish Government prompted them to make the Polish government guarantee its commitment to fighting Bolshevism. This guarantee indicates England’s uncertainty on the stability of the government and its effectiveness to control and make use of Upper Silesia, especially given the German character of the industrial class.

104 “Minutes of a Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, held at 23, rue Nitot, Paris, on Sunday, June 1, 1919, at 11 a.m.,” 99.
105 J C Smuts, British Delegation, Paris, to the Prime Minister, 22 May 1919, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/45/9/35.
The Germans recognized the difficulty of their situation. A growing Polish nationalist presence in the region combined with a newly independent Polish state and a lost war meant the German government was forced to recognize difficult scenarios. The armistice in November 1918 had unleashed a fury of popular unrest, primarily in the mines of Upper Silesia. By November 23rd the strikes had spread to twenty-four mines and placed the German coal supply in jeopardy.106 This prompted a meeting of the Council of People’s Commissars. At this meeting, they determined that in order to protect German interests and defend the German people, the strikes must be forcibly put down. Popular unrest worried the Government and, though they planned to use plebiscites to demonstrate the German character of the east, it would do little to quell current unrest. The use of troops was necessary to preserve the peace; however, few Reichswehr units were available for the endeavor. This prompted Gustav Bauer to exclaim, “In Upper Silesia the majority of the population is German. Even most of the coal workers want to stay with Germany. We don’t need a plebiscite there. At all costs, we must send troops to the east.”107 The danger of popular unrest in Upper Silesia was, in the view of the German government, extreme. August Müller, the state secretary of the Reich Economic Office, stated, “if we lose Upper Silesian coal, Germany will fall apart completely.”108 This statement was not disputed during the meeting and in fact it was used again to strengthen German claims on the region. The need for a military peacekeeping force in the area prompted the creation and deployment of volunteer

forces to the region. These forces were successful in restoring order through martial law, but not necessarily for long. After relative calm was restored in Upper Silesia, the Weimar Government embarked on a propaganda campaign in an attempt to sway the minds of Polish Upper Silesians and placate the population. On May 22, 1919 during a cabinet meeting, the German cabinet approved one million Deutsche Mark towards the production of propaganda in Upper Silesia. The German government hoped that through military peacekeeping and propaganda, the region might stay quiet.

While Upper Silesia was governed by martial law after November 1919, discontent did not cease. The heavily industrialized region had significant unionization and socialist infiltration of the workforce as a result of Upper Silesian economic success. Consequently, workers could unite to bring their demands to the forefront. In August 1919, the condition in Upper Silesia reached its breaking point. A repressive government, poor working conditions, and food shortages led Polish-speaking workers to become increasingly amiable to the Polish national cause. These workers, in collaboration with labor leaders, led a strike and on August 12th, sixty percent of coal production and other industries shut down. The German authorities led by Reichs and Staatskommissar Otto Hörsing, declared the strike illegal and violently forced the workers back to the mines and factories. On August 28, after the strike was suppressed, Hörsing, reporting to the government, described the strike as communist in

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109 The infamous Freikorps and Grenzschutz forces
110 Schulze, Das Kabinett Schiedemann, 363.
111 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 77.
motivation.\textsuperscript{112} However, on August 16, 1919, the strikers now demanding bonuses and the reopening of closed mines and factories, were fired upon by German troops. These instances of violence increased and the strikes turned into an insurrection.\textsuperscript{113} The Polska Organizacja Wojskowa (Polish Military Organization or POW), led by Wojciech Korfanty, activated some of their armed units, both in Upper Silesia and across to border in Posen, to support the strikers. The POW, according to Hörsing, operated and imported men from the Congress Kingdom (Russian Poland) and consequently could retreat behind those borders.\textsuperscript{114} The German repression of the strike was brutal and swift. By August 24 the Germans had regained complete control of the situation. However, the strike had awakened national sympathies, due to atrocities committed by both sides.\textsuperscript{115}

While the Germans were swift in their suppression, British officials were cool in theirs. Philip Kerr, Lloyd George’s personal secretary wrote to the Prime Minister that the Polish workers of Upper Silesia were striking but the Germans were “dealing with the matter with a firm hand” and that the Poles in Warsaw were becoming very excited and might have to send in troops.\textsuperscript{116} Furthermore, Balfour wrote that the Poles in Upper Silesia were still under the German government and should simply be patient.\textsuperscript{117} These two letters to Lloyd George are remarkably detached and fall under

\textsuperscript{112} Anton Golecki, ed., \textit{Akten der Reichskanzlerei: Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett Bauer, 21 Juni bis 27 März 1920} (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt, 1980), 219
\textsuperscript{114} Golecki, \textit{Das Kabinett Bauer}, 219.
\textsuperscript{115} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 78.
\textsuperscript{116} P H Kerr to the Prime Minister, 20 August 1919, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/89/4/13.
\textsuperscript{117} Mr. Balfour to Lord Curzon, 20 August 1919, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/89/4/14.
the opinion that this was an internal German affair, which in 1919 was the truth. The
German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Herman Müller, stated that he believed that, “the
Entente, especially England, believed that a new atrocity campaign would be waged
against Germany.”118 The Germans were ready and willing to advertise Polish violence.

In 1918, a riot broke out in Lemberg (modern day Lviv). The riot took place at the tail
end of a conflict between Ukrainian and Polish forces. The Ukrainians and Poles
fought over the city, with the Jews of Lemberg remaining neutral. The Poles bitterly
resented Jewish neutrality and even accused Jews of aiding the Ukrainians.119 This riot
quickly devolved into a pogrom, including both Polish soldiers and civilians, that
resulted in the 72 dead, 443 wounded, and 41 destroyed properties including 3
synagogues. The Germans took this opportunity to establish a bureau that
disseminated information to governments. This information depicted the grim future
of minorities living in Poland.120 The Germans were ready and willing to use perceived
Polish anti-Semitism and xenophobia to gain the upper hand in negotiations and
portray Germany as the victim.

Müller’s statement, made eight days after Kerr and Balfour wrote their
opinions on the subject, was exaggerated and it seems in reality that the Entente was
actually concerned with atrocities against both Germans and Poles, even though the
British thought the matter an issue of internal German security. Herbert Hoover’s

118 Golecki, Das Kabinett Bauer, 223.
119 Wiliam Hagen, “The Moral Economy of Popular Violence: The Pogrom in Lwow,
November 1918,” in Antisemitism and its Opponents in Modern Poland, ed. Robert Blobaum
120 Carole Fink, Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and
opinion fell outside that of his British counterparts.\textsuperscript{121} He looked at the violence in Upper Silesia and determined that an allied occupation of the territory was essential to preserving and upholding peace in the region until the plebiscite.\textsuperscript{122} British officials largely stayed out of the first Upper Silesian uprising. Those that did venture into the quandary simply stated the facts, or in Kerr’s case, understated the facts and stayed on the side of Germany’s right to preserve peace in their territory - the territory that would soon be under international control and undergoing preparations for a highly contentious and ethnic vote.

The first Upper Silesian insurrection was a relatively quick affair that helped expose latent or suppressed national identity. After the suppression of the strikers and the defeat of the POW, the report on the aftermath of the insurrection presented to the German cabinet said, “the calm in Upper Silesia is, however, a calm after the storm and before a new storm.”\textsuperscript{123} The storm described was violence and insurrection along national lines. Consequently, the elevated tensions, the vote, and the threat of violence accompanying it cast a pall over the region. Despite these tensions and growing antagonism between the POW and German forces, such as the Freikorps and Grenzschutz, the Inter-allied Administrative and Plebiscite Commission of Upper Silesia took power in early February 1920. The allies hoped that the commission’s presence along with occupation troops would diminish the possibility of violence in the area. The commission took power on February 11, 1920. There was little fanfare.

\textsuperscript{121} Herbert Hoover was a noted humanitarian during the post-war period. He had worked to supply Germany with food after the end of hostilities. His voice was influential on humanitarian issues.

\textsuperscript{122} Mr. Balfour to Lord Curzon, 21 August 1919, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/89/4/15.

\textsuperscript{123} Golecki, \textit{Das Kabinett Bauer}, 220.
The commission made decrees declaring its control over the region and abrogated the power of the existing courts. Upper Silesia was quiet, though; national flags went up and there were only a few minor incidents.124

The commission’s task was a tall one. On February 13, the commission issued a decree required a pass to enter and exit Upper Silesia.125 This was a necessary measure to prevent paramilitary organizations from funneling men into the plebiscite area. This tactic was used during the first Upper Silesian insurrection and was a continuing concern as the plebiscite preparations continued. While the problem of leaky borders concerned the commission, another serious threat was the proliferation of arms and ammunition. The make up of Upper Silesia was primarily rural with an important industrial center; consequently many citizens possessed private arms. In order to prevent violence, the plebiscite commission issued a decree requiring the registration of purchased weapons and mandating fines and potential jail time for illegally possessed weapons.126 These actions were designed to prevent arms and soldiers from crossing in from either Germany or Poland and causing unrest in a region that had already shown a recent propensity for ethnic conflict.

The Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission in Upper Silesia was made up of General Henri Le Rond (French), Colonel Henry Percival (English), and General Alberto de Marinis (Italian). The French, who had carefully reserved for themselves the commission’s presidency and consequently control of the military, had appointed

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Le Rond, the former head of the commission for Polish affairs and negotiator of the eastern plebiscite agreements. He was known as an advocate of France’s desire to empower nations of Eastern Europe to in order to balance German military power.\textsuperscript{127} The British did not support this position because of their belief that a strong Germany was necessary for European recovery. Le Rond’s support of Polish causes and organizations in Upper Silesia prompted Col. Percival to express his concern about Le Rond’s impartiality. Percival wrote to Earl Curzon and expressed the worry that Le Rond’s pro-Polish sympathies were clouding his judgment and he was exhibiting bias against Germans. At the same time, Percival stated that General de Marinis developed anti-Polish feelings since coming to Upper Silesia, but “his actions up to the present have always been strictly impartial.”\textsuperscript{128} Percival’s complaints indicate his wariness that the Commission could be an extension of the Quai d’Orsay informing French policy.

While Percival made efforts to promote and display unity within the commission, efforts were underway to complain about French partiality in Upper Silesia. Because of the increasing ethnic tensions in the region, minor clashes between Polish and German organizations increased. The British components of the commission complained that French military elements overly sympathized with Polish causes and organizations. This prompted the German Minister of Foreign Affairs to talk with the English Charge d’Affaires in Berlin, Lord Kilmarnock, about coercion from the French towards German organizations and their overt sympathy towards

\textsuperscript{127} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 141.
\textsuperscript{128} Colonel Percival to Earl Curzon, Oppeln, 2 May 1920, in \textit{BDFP}, 12-14.
Poles.\textsuperscript{129} The German complaint prompted Lord Curzon to direct a grievance towards the Quai d’Orsay about French actions and told the British ambassador in Italy to request that the Italian government support England in this complaint.\textsuperscript{130} Furthermore, Percival wrote to Lord Curzon on September 5, 1920, that the failure of France in repressing Polish bands made the likelihood of an impartial plebiscite slim.\textsuperscript{131} This was a way to enforce impartiality and equal treatment, while also strengthening German causes. British claims of the potential impartiality of the plebiscite underlined a basic duplicity in British policy. They failed to chastise Germany for their brutal suppression of Polish strikers in August 1919, but they chastised France for its failure to remain impartial.

British and German officials decried the Polish paramilitary organizations and their attempts to police areas with Polish populations. Neither nation spoke out against German policing elements; the German dominated police force and the Sicherheitspolizei (secret police force or Sipo) received even less English scrutiny. However, in June 1920, the Sipo was dissolved and replaced by a multi-ethnic force including Germans and Poles to ensure fairness. While the Poles set up recruiting stations, the Germans recruited former Sicherheitspolizisten, purportedly ‘to ensure fairness.’ In practice, however, the Germans were exerting their own control over the new organization that would be technically half German but have much greater experience than their Polish counterparts. The division of Upper Silesian police

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{129} Lord Kilmarnock to Earl Curzon, Berlin, 31 August 1920, in BDFP, 45.
\textsuperscript{130} Earl Curzon to Sir G. Buchanan, London, 31 August 1920, in BDFP, 46.
\textsuperscript{131} Colonel Percival to Earl Cuzron, Oppeln, 5 September 1920, in BDFP, 48.
\end{footnotes}
worried the Germans and prompted. The British commissioner for Upper Silesia informed London that the dissolution of the Sipo had been delayed because of fears of “Polish hooliganism.” The fear of Polish hooliganism was driven by German reports of a new Polish uprising in the region. The British bought into this idea and forced the issue to the Plebiscite Commission, despite the fact that the Commission president, Le Rond, did not believe the German reports. The British were inclined to listen to German officials on the Upper Silesian matter. Lloyd George and the rest of His Majesty’s Government had suggested Germany’s centrality in the rebuilding of Europe and the maintenance of a sustainable peace.

The German government, rightly, considered France to be hostile; and as a result, their cabinet proposals reflected perceived French poor treatment of Germans. For example, during a September 6, 1920 cabinet meeting, the Germans discussed the possibility of detaching French troops from Upper Silesia to help close the eastern border with more reliable German troops. This was immediately deemed impossible because no such suggestion would be approved. In the course of the discussion about the border, Curzon’s September 5 letter was brought up as potential support for the German cause. This is important for several reasons. First, it indicates a very self-aware approach by the German government. They were aware of their limitations and the decline of their influence in plebiscite negotiations at this juncture. However, more importantly, it also demonstrates awareness by the Germans of British designs and

132 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 183.
133 Peter Wulf, ed., Akten der Reichskanzlerei: Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett Fehrenbach, 25 Juni 1920 bis 4 Mai 1921 (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt, 1972), 159
leanings. This means that Germans knew that the British had, at best, sympathy for German policies or, at worst, desired an impartial Commission and a neutral vote. The German government believed that they would win Upper Silesia in the plebiscite. However, the German cabinet thought that they could not win with Polish antagonism swaying the vote.\textsuperscript{134} With British support or at least sympathy, the Germans believed they could push back against Polish and French cooperation. This would mean a freer hand for the German military and administration in Upper Silesia. This further explains the German Foreign Minister’s statement before the Reichstag. Walter Simons said, “According to the press the British Prime Minister’s health has suffered severely; we can only wish that it will very soon be restored, for (with emphasis) he has come to understand German conditions. I can scarcely imagine how the near Eastern question could be settled without him …”\textsuperscript{135} This quote indicates an important German position: they had a friendly ear and voice within the allied camp and that friendly person was David Lloyd George. The German position was strengthened and they were aware of British support in resolving their eastern borders. This was a powerful idea that undoubtedly influenced the German political calculus.

Due to queries by Curzon, Percival and the German government, Henri Le Rond’s motives and partiality were questioned. Le Rond was recalled to Paris to defend himself and the commission’s actions in Upper Silesia. This was good news to the British and Italian commissioners in Upper Silesia. The British began formulating

\textsuperscript{134} Peter Wulf, \textit{Das Kabinett Fehrenbach}, 153.
\textsuperscript{135} D’Abernon British Legation, Warsaw, to Hankey, 4 August 1920, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/57/6/20.
a proposal to make the power in the commission more equal and reflect the spirit of cooperation supposedly binding their work there.\textsuperscript{136} The problem was that, by design, in Upper Silesia, the work was not distributed evenly. Originally, when the allies were negotiating their contingent contributions for peace keeping in Upper Silesia, they agreed each nation should contribute the following battalions: six from France, four from the United States, three from Great Britain, and five from Italy. Later, Italy stated it could only send three battalions, the United States would not send any until the Treaty was ratified by Congress, and the British announced in November 1919 that they could not send any battalions at that time.\textsuperscript{137} Furthermore, of the 128 clerks, interpreters, chauffeurs, telephone operators, and orderlies the commission brought with them, 69 were French, 33 British, and 26 Italians.\textsuperscript{138} Although David Lloyd George demanded the plebiscite, the French contributed a disproportionate amount to the commission. By attacking Le Rond, the British were attempting to gain power without substantially increasing their commitment to the plebiscite commission. However, when Le Rond spoke to the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris on September 21, 1920, he defended his activities and resiliently defended and stated the successes of the commission. After his impassioned defense, his removal was all-but impossible and the Conference of Ambassadors whittled down British proposals to include more support staff for French controlled areas.\textsuperscript{139} British attempts to remove

\textsuperscript{136} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 207.

\textsuperscript{137} November 1920 was only three months before the Commission was scheduled to take control in Upper Silesia. Great Britain eventually sent four battalions in May 1921 after the beginning of the third Upper Silesian insurrection.

\textsuperscript{138} Wambaugh, \textit{Plebiscites}, 1:219, 223.

\textsuperscript{139} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 207.
Le Rond and diminish the power of the French in the plebiscite area did not come to fruition. Consequently, German desire to diminish the power of the French was quashed and the Le Rond was there to stay with his positions vindicated by his impassioned defense in Paris. Le Rond’s defense solidified French authority over the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission.

The plebiscite commission was supposed to promote peace and impartiality. However, differences between commission members and differing priorities between France and Great Britain led to discontent and fractured relationships. The lead up to the plebiscite was not at all peaceful. Neither the Germans nor the Poles wanted a plebiscite, because neither thought it was necessary to determine the ethnic make up. Germans and Poles worked to undermine the process and influence voters. When Lloyd George proposed the plebiscite because he proposed Germany would accept a plebiscite, which would provide the most equitable solution in Upper Silesia. The run-up to the plebiscite was proving anything but peaceful and evenhanded.
Chapter Four

Reversing the Verdict of History

Before a vote could be held, the problem of outvoters had to be determined. Outvoters were individuals born in Upper Silesia but who had since moved from the region. The outvoter provision in the plebiscite agreement was originally thought to benefit the Poles and the Polish diaspora in Europe and America. For that reason, the Polish delegation at the Paris Peace Conference pushed for the inclusion of outvoters to plebiscites. However, it soon became evident that outvoters benefited Germany in other plebiscite areas (e.g. Schleswig) and the German government began subsidizing outvoter travel. Once it appeared that outvoters could decidedly tip the scales in Germany’s favor, France and Poland attempted to negate the German advantage. The French and Poles argued outvoters should vote on a different day than the actual residents and their vote should not play as big a role in the formation of Upper Silesian boundaries. The idea of a divided vote did not settle well with the Germans or the British as they feared the diminished importance of plebiscite outvoters in deciding the outcome. Furthermore, if the plebiscite was held over the course of multiple days, the British and Germans feared the security of the ballots. At the behest of German lobbying, the Lloyd George government brought the issue to a head in January 1921. Before December 1920, the British had committed no troops to Upper Silesia

141 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 214.
142 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 214.
and on February 2, 1921, the British ambassador to France proposed a compromise, a one-day, one-zone plebiscite in exchange for British troops in Upper Silesia. The offer was taken in the face of potential unrest in the region. The Germans were jubilant. They had won the outvoter issue and the increasing support of Great Britain boosted their spirits and expectations for the plebiscite. After further discussion and the settlement of voting regulations, the plebiscite date was decided: March 20, 1921.

The pre-plebiscite period in Upper Silesia was tumultuous. Violence, ethnic tensions, and Inter-Allied Commission friction created an anxious and uncertain atmosphere. However, in the days leading up to the vote, the Inter-Allied Commission tightened their grip on the region and its population. On March 20, 1921, the plebiscite took place quietly and peacefully in Upper Silesia. In the end, 1,186,342 valid votes were cast – 59.6 percent favored Germany and 40.4 percent favored Poland. 81 percent of the voters were born and lived in the areas; 3.5 percent qualified for the vote by domicile only; and 16 percent were outvoters (79 percent of eligible outvoters made the trip to Upper Silesia). The fear that German outvoters would steal the election for Germany turned out to be exaggerated as even without them, Germany would have still emerged victorious with a 53.6 percent majority. In the major industrial area, the so-called industrial triangle (Gleiwitz, Beuthen, and Kattowitz), five of the eight districts reported German victory, albeit in some areas slim majorities, and the overall area reported a 54.2 percent German majority. However, German areas

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144 Colonel Percival to Earl Curzon, Oppeln, 21 March 1921, in *BDFP*, 196.
of strength were the cities while Polish majorities were strongest outside the major population areas.\textsuperscript{146} The general results did not equate with the 1910 census, which the Poles claimed to have a pro-German bias; in only two districts did the Poles receive a result consistent with the census. Ultimately, of 1,474 commune areas, 792 voted for Germany and 682 for Poland. This prompted Curzon to call for the entire area to be given to Germany, on the basis of a German majority.\textsuperscript{147} The Poles, however, saw it differently, referring to divided areas in the industrial triangle and large Polish majorities in the southeast. Upper Silesia was ethnically divided and a partition seemed unavoidable.

The Poles claimed German terrorism affected the vote.\textsuperscript{148} If the Poles were correct, it would stand to reason that German aggression and terrorism would steer Poles from the vote. However, including outvoters, 97.5 percent of eligible voters cast their vote; and excluding outvoters, 99 percent cast their vote.\textsuperscript{149} This hardly indicates significant intimidation and supports the idea that this vote was the result of the complex nature of Upper Silesian identity. However, the differing results from the city and surrounding areas were a problem for the plebiscite. If the Germans dominated the cities and the Poles dominated the countryside, who should receive the region? A similar situation at arose in Wilno (modern day Vilnius, Lithuania) in 1920. Wilno, the city, was majority Polish; but Wilno, the area, was Lithuanian in majority. In this example, a Polish general, Lucjan Zeligowski, “mutinied” and took the city for Poland.

\textsuperscript{146} Colonel Percival to Earl Curzon, Oppeln, 23 March 1921,” in \textit{BDFP}, 197.
\textsuperscript{147} Lesniewski, “Three Insurrections,” 31.
\textsuperscript{148} Tooley, “German Political Violence,” 87.
\textsuperscript{149} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 237.
Faced with this *fait accompli*, the allies were forced to begrudgingly accept Polish occupation of Wilno. The annexation was made complete after the Soviet-Polish War in 1922. However, in Upper Silesia the Germans or the Poles were unlikely to launch an invasion, but that did not preclude paramilitary action from either side to force a favorable solution. Both Germans and Poles in Upper Silesia had extensive paramilitary organizations in the region and the conclusion of the vote left much up in the air.

In the wake of the plebiscite the allies were forced to consider how or whether to divide Upper Silesia. The Inter-Allied Commission was responsible for communicating the results of the vote and, most importantly, their recommendations for the German-Polish frontier. Le Rond favored a line that would give Poland the entire industrial area and much of the land east of the Oder. Percival and De Marinis, on the other hand, wanted to give Germany the entire industrial triangle and almost all the region, except for Pless and Rybnik and small parts of the rural areas around Gleiwitz, Kattowitz, Zabrze, and Beuthen. This would give Poland 25 percent of the communes and 23 percent of the population; however, in the plebiscite, Poland had won 42 percent of the communes and 40 percent of the population.\(^{150}\) The British used the rationale that they must give the greatest possible satisfaction to the greatest number of voters. E.H. Carr, in 1921 a British Foreign Office diplomat, wrote a report for Lord Curzon, who forwarded it to David Lloyd George following the plebiscite, to explain the results of the vote and offer suggestions of his own, which were

remarkably similar, but slightly more severe than Percival and De Marinis’s. Carr argued that not only was the land around the industrial triangle indivisible from the cities, but that cities indicated a German majority in the plebiscite results. He then went on to say that the industrial areas constituted a whole and could and should not be separated.\footnote{Memorandum on the result of the Upper Silesian Plebiscite, by E.H. Carr, 6 April 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/201/1/12.} This was largely in line with what Percival and De Marinis argued to Le Rond and wrote in their reports. Carr concluded that, after the plebiscite in Allenstein (an area in East Prussia) and Upper Silesia, the information used to settle German-Polish boundaries was questionable and thus further injustice should be avoided.

The ethnic make up of the region was one aspect for the settlement of the boundary in Upper Silesia. The economics of the region and the financial condition of Germany represented another important consideration for the allies. The problem of reparations and placing Germany on solid footing for a strong economic future influenced British thought on Upper Silesia. This was partially by German design. The reparations issue was one of the more contentious stipulations in the Treaty of Versailles within Germany and the Germans knew they could gain from it. The allies wanted the Germans to pay reparations and consequently Germany needed a strong economy to support the weight of reparation payments. In May 1919, the German delegation to the Paris Peace Conference wrote a note on the issue of territorial settlements. In this note, the delegation tied territorial losses to the ability of the
German government to meet reparation payment schedules.\textsuperscript{152} Lord D’Abernon, the British ambassador to Germany, reiterated this idea. D’Abernon wrote to Lloyd George in January 1921 and explained that German businessmen feared the impact of Upper Silesia’s separation on reparations and the German economy as a whole.\textsuperscript{153}

In the wake of the plebiscite the German government shifted their negotiating tactics. Before the plebiscite, the Germans used Upper Silesia as leverage on reparations suggesting that if Upper Silesia was taken away from Germany, they would not be able to pay reparations. However, after the plebiscite, the Germans proposed to pay reparations if the allies gave all of Upper Silesia to Germany.\textsuperscript{154} While the Germans reproached the reparations discussion, they still could evoke the specter of non-payment. On October 12, 1921, German labor leaders sent Lloyd George a letter saying the complete loss of Upper Silesia would be a significant hardship for the working population of Germany and if Upper Silesia went to Poland, German labor would have to renounce all obligations placed on Germany.\textsuperscript{155} The Germans were determined to bring the economic consequences or benefits of the Upper Silesian to the allies’ attention and use it to garner sympathy.

The shift in German tactics and fears over the timeliness of reparation payments divided the allied camp. The French rejected the idea that reparations were tied to a unified Upper Silesia in Germany but sided with the British who stipulated

\textsuperscript{153} D’Abernon, Paris, to Earl Curzon, 19 January 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/1/6.
\textsuperscript{154} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 254.
\textsuperscript{155} Representatives of German Trade Unions, Berlin, to the Prime Minister, London, 12 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F53/3/11.
that Germany be guaranteed Upper Silesian coal for 15 years following the settlement of the Upper Silesian plebiscite.\textsuperscript{156} At minimum, the Italians listened to German complaints. The Italian ambassador wrote to Lord D’Abernon expressing the worry that an unfavorable solution in Upper Silesia would mean the fall of the current Joseph Wirth-led government. Although D’Abernon thought this a bit hyperbolic, he did share some concern for the consequences of an unfavorable result for Germany.\textsuperscript{157}

The reports made by Le Rond, Percival, De Marinis, and Carr were preliminary and offered only suggestions. However, word leaked of British and Italian proposals. Wojciech Korfanty published an editorial in his main press organ, the \textit{Grenzzeitung}, entitled “The Diplomats have Spoken.” The article claimed the commission supported the British-Italian plan.\textsuperscript{158} This sparked the beginning of the Third Upper Silesian Insurrection. On May 2, 1921, Upper Silesian coal, iron, and zinc workers’ unions declared a general strike and, later in the evening, Korfanty’s POW began their armed insurrection in the industrial triangle, as well as Tarnowitz, Pless, and Rybnik.\textsuperscript{159} Tarnowitz, Pless, and Rybnik returned the three best results for the Poles in Upper Silesia and they were important to the industrial triangle. The Poles were well organized; they were about 60,000 strong; and they were reinforced by the defection of the Polish contingent to the plebiscite police.\textsuperscript{160}

The British, Italians, and Germans immediately blamed the French for the insurrection, especially because Le Rond had left for Paris the night before the

\textsuperscript{156} Wandyecz, \textit{France and Her Eastern Allies}, 230-1.
\textsuperscript{157} D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 2 July 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/1/30.
\textsuperscript{158} Wambaugh, \textit{Plebiscites}, 1:253.
\textsuperscript{159} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 255.
\textsuperscript{160} Lesniewski, “Three Insurrections,” 33.
insurrection.\textsuperscript{161} The Poles caught Germany and the Commission by surprise and quickly overran the outmanned Italian contingent. By May 9, Le Rond was pleading with the allies to send more troops because the Commission was overrun and could not keep order. Lloyd George was furious about the insurrection and delivered a scathing critique of Polish actions in Upper Silesia to Parliament. He challenged the authenticity of Polish claims of a majority in Upper Silesia, skewered Korfanty’s attempt to create a \textit{fait accompli}, attacked Korfanty himself, and reverted to the idea that Germany should be able to defend herself.\textsuperscript{162} Korfanty actually responded to Lloyd George and challenged the points the Prime Minister said, reminding him that the Poles were not immigrants to Upper Silesia, the insurrection was a result of allied attempts to make an unfair deal at the expense of Poland, and even reminded the Prime Minister that about 15,000 Upper Silesians fought with the Haller Army against the Germans.\textsuperscript{163} The Germans offered their help to put down the insurrection, but were refused by the allies.

On May 9, the allies sent Germany an ultimatum forcing their hand on the reparations issue. As a result, the Fehrenbach Cabinet dissolved.\textsuperscript{164} At the last meeting of the Fehrenbach Cabinet, General von Seeckt reported that large numbers of \textit{Freikorps} troops were gathering in Breslau for a counterattack, but he did not

\textsuperscript{161} Wandycz, \textit{France and Her Eastern Allies}, 232.
\textsuperscript{163} Korfanty, Poland, to the Prime Minister, London, 17 May 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/57/5/8. – the Haller Army (also called the Blue Army) was a French Army made up of Poles that fought on the Western Front against the Germans.
\textsuperscript{164} Tooley, \textit{National Identity in Weimar Germany}, 256.
advocate their use. However, as the Fehrenbach Cabinet was dissolving, no decision was made on the issue. The new government led by Joseph Wirth decided to use the Freikorps to suppress the insurrection, which they viewed as an internal security measure. The new government was even asked by Lord D’Abernon not to allow paramilitary organizations into Upper Silesia and wait for the Inter-Allied Commission. The British knew German retaliation would be difficult to defend. German and Polish irregular formations in Upper Silesia first clashed on May 18 and within two days there was open war in Upper Silesia. By July 7, as more Inter-Allied troops arrived, the allies were able to end the hostilities and create a neutral zone between German and Polish paramilitary formations.

The next six weeks saw the allied powers bicker over the boundary in Upper Silesia. This culminated in five days of negotiations in Paris in the second week of August 1921. The Germans continued their play for the entire plebiscite area and recognized that the matter might be turned over to the League of Nations, an idea they considered foolish, as a League of Nations’ commission would most certainly partition the region. Before the meeting in August, the British ambassador to France assured the German charge d’affaires, Leopold von Hoesch, that Lloyd George would not leave Paris without a solution to the Upper Silesian boundary. Here again, the British

165 Wulf, Das Kabinett Fehrenbach, 671.
166 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 256. Ingrid Schulze-Bidlingmaier, ed., Akten der Reichskanzlerei: Weimarer Republik. Das Kabinett Wirth I und II, 10 Mai 1921 bis 26 Oktober 1921 (Boppard am Rhein: H. Boldt, 1971973), 1:81-83
167 Schulze-Bidlingmaier, Das Kabinett Wirth, 1:53.
168 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 257.
worked to reassure the Germans and indicate their belief that an outcome favorable to Germany was desired. Lloyd George was bombastic in his arguments, yelling and rejecting proposals that did not favor Germany. He even hurled accusations at the French Prime Minister, Aristide Briand. He fought over every town in the industrial triangle, though he agreed that the southeastern portions of Upper Silesia should go to Poland and the northwestern and western portions should go to Germany. Lloyd George kept Briand on the defensive by accusing the French of plans to cripple Germany and emphasizing Polish inability to adequately use the industry in Upper Silesia. Lloyd George and Briand worked out a compromise that gave Poland some of the industrial triangle but left most of the commercial wealth in Germany. Lloyd George was then unexpectedly forced to London to handle a worsening situation in Ireland. However, Lloyd George left, he had agreed with the Italians that if the French rejected the compromise the matter would be referred to the League of Nations. The French cabinet rejected the compromise.

The worsening situation in Ireland combined with the collapse of the Venizelos Government in Greece caused Lloyd George to abandon his close support for Germany on the Upper Silesian issue. In August 1921, Lloyd George left the Paris negotiations over Upper Silesia because of increasing violence in Ireland. Massive riots broke out in Belfast that required substantial military intervention. Some even described the situation as something resembling trench warfare during the First World War. For all intensive purposes, the conflict in Northern Ireland was or would soon

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become a civil war. This conflict required Lloyd George’s supervision and leadership and consequently necessitated his withdrawal from the post-plebiscite border negotiations. The Irish under the Sinn Fein movement had revolted against British rule during the First World War and had caused a violent counterinsurgency by the English military. The Irish separatist movement had cemented in the Catholic south and had waged a war against the British in Northern Ireland. The Irish gained independence in July 1921, but in the north around Ulster, the separatist movement hit a roadblock with the religiously divided Ulster counties. These areas became a hot bed for violence and required British attention.

While the Irish situation dominated Lloyd George’s agenda during the late summer and early fall of 1921, another crisis would emerge: the collapse of the Treaty of Sevres. The Treaty of Sevres settled the collapse of Ottoman Empire and gave significant territory to Greece, as well as zones of occupation in Anatolia to France and Great Britain. The Greek government, led by Eleftherios Venizelos, had envisioned a Greece on two continents and five seas, and consequently the Treaty of Sevres had granted Greece the territory around Symrna (modern day Izmir). The Greeks used their foothold in Anatolia to launch a campaign to gain territory and unseat the rising Turkish political and military leader Mustapha Kemal. The Turks, though, were able to effectively counterattack and drive back the Greeks, while also forcing the French out of the conflict. In October 1921, the French signed a treaty with Kemal that recognized the Turkish government and allowed France to withdraw

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from its zone of occupation in Turkey. Lord Curzon was furious at his action because it left Great Britain alone to back Greece in Anatolia. Furthermore, in spring 1921, the Greek king, Constantine, returned from his exile (imposed during the war). This led to the defeat of Venizelos’ government and the breakdown of a key Lloyd George ally in the region.¹⁷³ The abandonment of the French occupation zone, the collapse of the Venizelos government, and the success of Mustapha Kemal’s forces gave Lloyd George huge policy concerns for the future of the Near East.

Great Britain’s seeming abandonment of the German case for Upper Silesia was apart of larger policy concerns in Ireland and the Balkans and Anatolia. Lloyd George largely washed his hands of issue, but he did so, in part, because of reports coming from Germany. Lord D’Abernon issued regular reports to Lloyd George about German opinion and politics. After the conclusion of the voting in Upper Silesia, he began to plead for a prompt resolution because of fears over increased violence. In one letter, D’Abernon tells Lloyd George that the Germans will be satisfied with what they receive in Upper Silesia, because the German government was too concerned with losing the Ruhr.¹⁷⁴ Later in October 1921, D’Abernon writes that the Germans portrayed the loss of Upper Silesia as overly tragic, but he was not convinced that giving Poland a section of the industrial triangle would be that catastrophic.¹⁷⁵ This indicates two trends in British thought. The idea that Great Britain does not have to devote tremendous resources to defending Germany because they either will accept

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¹⁷⁴ D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 26 July 1926, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/1/35.
¹⁷⁵ D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 10 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/4.
the decision or it simply would not be a deal breaker. Secondly D’Abernon’s quotes indicate a willingness to secede a portion of Upper Silesia to Poland to end the issue. By 1921, other more global and internal concerns accompanied by reports indicating potential German acceptance of an Upper Silesian compromise had forced Lloyd George and the British government’s attention from Upper Silesia.

The League of Nations formed a commission on September 1 to decide the boundaries of Upper Silesia. The commission was made up of representatives from China, Belgium, Brazil and Spain, purposely choosing states that had no part in the preliminary examinations of the Upper Silesian issue. They were charged with soliciting the advice of experts on Upper Silesia and develop a working proposal for the division of land between Germany and Poland. While this commission met to solve the boundary issue, another committee met to attempt to hammer out a workable economic state after the partition. These parallel commissions worked through September and the first week of October and on October 12, 1921, the League of Nations communicated their recommendation to the Supreme Council. The committee recommended that Poland be given most of Rybnik and all of Pless; this was hardly a surprise, as these regions were not particularly contested in previous negotiations. In the all-important industrial triangle, Poland received most of the land around Beuthen, the city and land of Kattowitz. Germany retained Gleiwitz, Hindenberg, and the city of Beuthen. Germany received a little over 70 percent of the land and 57 percent of the population. Poland received 76 percent of the coal mines, 90 percent of the coal

176 Wambaugh, Plebiscites, 1:257.
177 Tooley, National Identity in Weimar Germany, 257.
reserves, 97 percent of the iron ore, 82 percent of the zinc ore, 71 percent of the lead ore, all the iron works, over half of the zinc factories, half of the steel works, and the largest power plants.\textsuperscript{178} Though Germany gained most of the land and population, Poland was given about two-thirds of the industrial triangle. The partition of Upper Silesia necessitated economic cooperation between Germany and Poland. The League of Nations mandated that the industrial area be considered and run as a single entity for a transitional period of fifteen years; this required Germany and Poland to negotiate and write a treaty that would guarantee that mandate.\textsuperscript{179}

Upon hearing the news, the German government was incensed. The Wirth Cabinet resigned in protest, though Joseph Wirth returned as Chancellor.\textsuperscript{180} The Germans implored the British to intervene, but due to circumstances in Ireland and the conflict between Greece and Turkey, the British had washed their hands of the issue and allowed the League of Nations to decide.\textsuperscript{181} Lord D’Abernon reported to Lloyd George about the attitude in Germany in late October 1921 through regular correspondence. On October 21, he wrote the decision in Geneva (where the League of Nations was centered) was a blow to British prestige in Germany. Lord D’Abernon also wrote that the Germans believed the Belgium representative was “alleged to have been under French influence.” He went on to say that Germany had gained much because of Lloyd George. Sir Maurice Hankey wrote on the front of the letter, “This makes my blood boil and confirms your and my opinions as to what happened at

\textsuperscript{178} Wambaugh, \textit{Plebiscites}, 1:259.
\textsuperscript{179} Wambaugh, \textit{Plebiscites}, 1:259.
\textsuperscript{180} Schulze-Bidlingmaier, \textit{Das Kabinett Wirth}, 1:318-20.
Geneva.” The letter indicated the level of hope Germany placed on British support. Also, Hankey’s quote indicated that Lloyd George and Hankey took German suspicions to heart and used German speculation to affirm previously held beliefs. In the minds of Lloyd George and Hankey, it was apparent that France influenced the League of Nations commission on Upper Silesia. In late October, D’Abernon sent Lloyd George another letter presenting more German views on the Geneva decision. He wrote that the Germans believed:

Lloyd George had defended Germany at Paris and his claims over the indivisibility of the industrial area meant Germany was sure to get all of it. About three weeks ago, something changed England’s mind. This might have been that England required concessions from France in Asia Minor (the Greek-Turkish conflict) or England required French support at the Washington Conference. England sold the German birthright. England no longer serves German interests. Economic concessions given to Germany were worth very little and communicated to Germany as dictates, thus rendering them indistinguishable from insult.

D’Abernon goes on to say that though these views were quite absurd, “it represents what high and low, rich and poor, conservative and radical alike think.” In short, Germany had come to rely on Great Britain and Lloyd George for support; and when a decision came about that could not be spun in Germany’s favor, it felt like a betrayal and provided fuel for the German government’s desire to right the wrongs done to Germany in the years following the First World War.

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182 D’Abernon, Berlin to Hankey, 17 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/5.
183 D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 26 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/7.
184 D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 26 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/7.
Conclusion

The plebiscite and subsequent League of Nation’s commission had settled the problem of the Upper Silesian boundary. Though the boundary was agreed upon, Germany and Poland still needed to work out a treaty of economic cooperation to ensure the economic unity of the industrial triangle. The German government sent Herr Schiffer and the Poles sent M. Olzowski to Geneva to negotiate the Upper Silesian Convention, which would provide the legal framework for economic cooperation and unity in the industrial zone. The German and Polish plenipotentiaries met under the presidency of the former President of the Swiss Confederation, M. Felix Calonder. These three men met for the first time on November 23, 1921 and continued to meet till May 15, 1922, when the final convention was completed. The negotiators worked out deals on power, rail lines, and minority protection relatively quickly. The largest problem facing the negotiators was the liquidation of German-owned property. Poland intended to divide the great estates of German landowners in accordance with Polish law; naturally, the Germans disagreed with this proposal and insisted that the process not begin for fifteen years. The final convention was a behemoth of 606 articles. It was signed in Geneva on May 15, 1922 and ratified by the Polish Sejm on May 24 and the German Reichstag on May 30. After the ratification on June 15, the Inter-Allied Commission and its troops left Upper Silesia and German and Polish troops and administrators were able to march into the region and take control.

185 Wambaugh, Plebiscites, 1:260.
The plebiscite was the most difficult and disputed plebiscite of the post-World War I period and provided no satisfaction for either side. The Germans had hoped the presumed indivisibility of the region, in particular the industrial triangle, meant they would receive the entire area, especially after the German victory in the plebiscite. The Poles, on the other hand, looked at previous census figures and thought Poles dominated the region, thus they should receive the area *in toto*. The division of Upper Silesia made no one happy. The Germans viewed the Upper Silesian settlement as a dictate from the League of Nations; a dictate that alienated thousands of Germans from Germany proper. Furthermore, the Germans thought allowing Poland to control some of the industrial sector opened the area to “Russian barbarism,” where before German *Kultur* had reigned supreme.\(^\text{186}\) The British were also unhappy about the arrangement. They had put considerable effort into appeasing the Germans in the hope that Germany would become a part of the greater European community and allow a sustainable peace without further grievance against the allied powers. However, the plebiscite decision did anger Germany, who, as Lord D’Abernon said, believed the British had betrayed them and gave into French demands in exchange for support elsewhere.\(^\text{187}\) This was a powerful belief and fueled feelings of German victimization.

The German military and general population bought into the idea that German armies had been victorious on the battlefield but were betrayed by the revolution in Berlin (the Dolchstoß narrative). These skewed perceptions led to anger over the peace terms dictated at Versailles. The loss of territory to Poland and the Baltic states was a

\(^{186}\) Wambaugh, *Plebiscites*, 1:261.

\(^{187}\) D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 26 October 1921, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/7.
further injustice that in most cases was truly unavoidable, given the importance of self-determination and the ethnic make up of those regions. The German government argued that the partition of Upper Silesia, after the German victory in the vote, violated the principle of self-determination; however, the allies pointed out that the partition of Upper Silesia was always a possibility and was included in the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans, especially the soldiers stationed in the East, thought it their mission to bring *Kultur* to the Slavic peoples. Though they viewed the population of the Baltics and Poland as lesser people, the German military and hierarchy were not Nazis, but they were racists and cultural elitists. The indoctrination over the war’s ending and the racial component to German perspectives towards its eastern territories would make any peace a hard sell. German displeasure with the Geneva Convention and the Upper Silesian settlement was evident by the appearance of the Reichstag, draped in mourning for the signing.  

The Treaty of Versailles was difficult for Germans to accept and the fact that Upper Silesia was not guaranteed to remain united after the plebiscite created a situation where Germany would not be happy with any arrangement. Unless the allies acquiesced to every German demand, there was little hope Germany would be happy with any treaty or situation in Europe.

The British at Versailles wished to craft a peace that would bring Germany back into the Western European sphere and create a lasting peace. In order to meet these goals, David Lloyd George needed to moderate anti-German clauses in the treaty. It was this policy that led David Lloyd George to demand a plebiscite be held in Upper

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188 Campbell, “The Struggle for Upper Silesia,” 238.
Silesia. Lloyd George’s defense of Germany and its interests caused German diplomats to praise Lloyd George. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs said the Prime Minister had come to understand German conditions. Furthermore, the president of the Reichstag, Löbe stated, in 1922, that the German would regret the retirement of David Lloyd George because he was the only one that understood the importance of moderation towards Germany. Great Britain’s policies led to greater expectations for support from Lloyd George and his government to Germany. The desire to moderate peace terms and bring Germany into the West European sphere put Great Britain in conflict with the smaller powers in Eastern Europe, namely Poland. The Lloyd George government was not hostile to small powers; it simply would not support a small nation with outsized ambition when a greater power was available for the British to align themselves. Consequently, the British were not inclined to help these nations with self-imposed problems (e.g. the Polish during the Soviet-Polish War). Great Britain wanted to keep Germany happy to ensure they would sign the peace treaty and then honor it. Great Britain hoped that by honoring the peace, Germany would contribute to a continuing calm on the European continent. In Lloyd George and His Majesty’s Government’s eyes it was the great powers, not the lesser ones, which would bring peace and prosperity back to the continent.

In 1938, Neville Chamberlain said: “How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel

189 D’Abernon British Legation, Warsaw, to Hankey, 4 August 1920, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/57/6/20.
190 D’Abernon, Berlin, to Hankey, 9 March 1922, Lloyd George Papers, LG/F/54/2/19.
in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing. It seems still more impossible that a quarrel that has already been settled in principle should be the subject of war.” Chamberlain expressed ideas similar to the policy of David Lloyd George in 1919-1921. Like Chamberlain, Lloyd George did not see the usefulness of risking or fighting a war for “a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.” Both Chamberlain and Lloyd George shared a common goal: lasting peace in Europe. Lloyd George thought he could achieve this goal by moderating the peace terms and securing, for Germany, a favorable boundary in the east.

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