

Tomasz Kamusella, *Schlonska mowa. Język, Górny Śląsk i nacjonalizm*, 1. Zabrze: Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, 2005. pp. 188.

Andrzej Roczniok, *Zbornik polsko-ślůnski/Słownik polsko-ślůski*, 1: A–K, 2: L–P. Zabrze: Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, 2008. pp. 216 + 248.

Reviewed by Robert A. Rothstein

Poland officially recognizes nine “national minorities” (*mniejszości narodowe*) and four “ethnic minorities” (*mniejszości etniczne*). The thirteen groups specified in a January 2005 law share most of the characteristics that the legislation uses to define minorities: they are numerically minorities; they differ significantly from other citizens in language, culture or tradition; they strive to preserve their language, culture or tradition; they are aware of their own national (or ethnic) community (*wspólnota*) and are dedicated to expressing and protecting it; their ancestors have lived in the present territory of Poland for at least one hundred years. National minorities differ, however, from ethnic minorities in that the former are identical to a group (nationality) that has its own state, while the latter are not.

The nine official national minorities mentioned in the 2005 law are (in order of size according to their 2002 census totals): German (147,094); Belarusian (47,640); Ukrainian (27,172); Lithuanian (5,639); Russian (3,244); Slovak (1,710); Jewish (1,055); Czech (386), and Armenian (262). The four official ethnic minorities are Roma (12,731); Łemko (5,850); Tatar (447), and Karaim (43). The 2005 law also adopted the definition of “regional language” given in the 1992 European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Charter says that a regional language is one that is “traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State’s population” and is “different from the official language(s) of that State; it does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants.” The 2005 law recognized one such language, namely, Kashubian, which

most Polish linguists had previously (before the 1990s) viewed as a dialect of Polish.

The two works under review deal with a speech variety that was not recognized by the 2005 law, namely the so-called *schlonska mowa* or *ślōnsko godka* of Upper Silesia (Górny Śląsk), which in what follows will be referred to for simplicity's sake as "Silesian." Upper Silesia is the southeastern part of a territory that historically has been claimed by Germans, Czechs, and Poles, but since the end of World War II lies almost entirely in Poland. The northwestern part, Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk), is now mostly populated by Poles who lived elsewhere in Poland before the War and their children and grandchildren. The older generations include Poles repatriated from the former eastern Polish borderlands (*Kresy*) which are now in Ukraine and Belarus. The inhabitants of Lower Silesia, by and large, speak standard Polish or dialects thereof.

The linguistic and ethnic situation is different in Upper Silesia. The 2002 census showed the following distribution of "declared nationality" in the two provinces of Upper Silesia, województwo opolskie and województwo śląskie: Polish–5,232,237; German–138,737; Silesian (śląska)–172,743. For home language the statistics were as follows: Polish–5,534,161; German–137,045; Silesian–56,577. Despite these results from an official state census, Poland does not recognize the existence of a Silesian ethnic minority or of a Silesian regional language, viewing Silesian as a dialect of Polish. Dr. Kamusella, who is a lecturer in the School of History of the University of Saint Andrews (Scotland), reports in his book that as of 2005, a Union of the Population of Silesian Nationality (Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej, organized in 1996) had been unable to achieve official registration. Further checking by this reviewer has shown that Polish courts have continued to support the denial of registration on the grounds that to register the organization would be tantamount to recognizing the existence of a Silesian nationality, for which there is no basis in Polish law, and this position was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in 2004.¹ Dr. Kamusella's *Schlonska mowa*, a collection of seven previously published papers, provides an excellent survey of the com-

¹ "Stowarzyszenie Ślązaków znów skarży się do Strasburga", <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/1,114873,4682183.html>, accessed 20 February 2012; http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narodowość_śląska, footnotes 1, 2, 3, accessed 20 February 2012.

plex history and present status of Silesia and Silesian. Among them is his review of the first volume of a planned multivolume *Słownik gwar śląskich*, which he translates as the *Dictionary of Silesian subdialects*.² Although stressing the importance of the dictionary, which has now reached eleven volumes, the author criticizes the editor of the dictionary, Bogusław Wyderka, for his apriori assumption that the Silesian *gwary* are dialects of Polish. As an epigraph to his review the author chose a most appropriate quotation from Edward Sapir: “National languages are all huge systems of vested interests which sullenly resist critical inquiry.”

Andrzej Roczniok, who is one of the leaders of the Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej, published his Silesian dictionary in three volumes, only the first two of which were available to this reviewer. In Polish he called his work a Polish-Silesian dictionary (*słownik*), but the Silesian title uses the word *zbornik* ‘collection’ [of words] since it really is a list of words in Polish with anywhere from one to twenty possible Silesian equivalents, which gives some idea of the difficulties to be faced by efforts at standardization. Such efforts have begun, however, and a first standardization conference was held in Katowice in 2008, followed by a second conference in 2009 that proclaimed a standard orthography. These conferences were preceded in 2003 by the establishment of a publishing house, Narodowa Oficyna Śląska (Ślōnsko Nacyjowo Ôficyna), which began publishing the first Silesian-language periodical, Ślōnsko Nacyja, in 2006. That year also marked the beginning of *szl.wikipedia.org*.³ In 2010 Roczniok published the third volume of his *Zbornik*, apparently in the orthography that was promulgated at the 2009 standardization conference. Also published in 2010 were two Silesian primers, *Gōrnoślōnski ślabikōrz* and *Ślabikorz ABC*. If such standardization efforts gain acceptance, and if an incipient movement for Silesian political autonomy does not arouse serious political opposition to the linguistic-cultural movement, we

² In Polish linguistic tradition the term *dialekt* refers to one of the four main Polish dialects—małopolski, wielkopolski, mazowiecki, and śląski—also previously to a fifth dialect, kaszubski, now recognized as a separate language, while a subdivision of any of these four is known by the term *gwara*.

³ The code *szl* was awarded to Silesian by the International Organization for Standardization—ISO—in 2007.

may yet see *ślōnsko godka* recognized in Poland as a second regional language alongside of Kashubian.

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