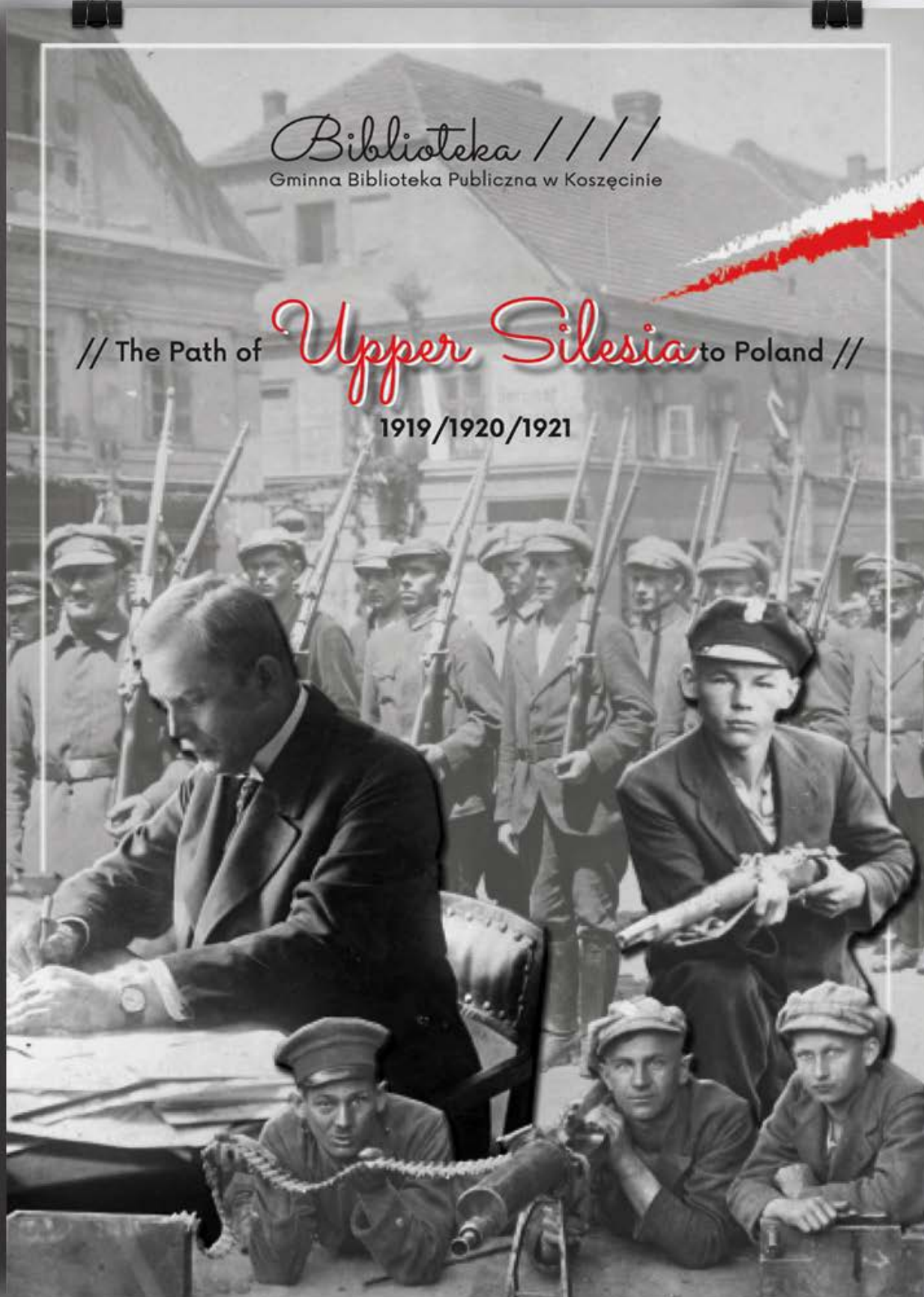


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// The Path of *Upper Silesia* to Poland //

1919/1920/1921



The project is the effect of intergenerational dialog and cooperation of local communities:  
a representative of the university of the third age, teachers of Primary School in memory of John Paul II  
in Koszęcin, a member of Polish Ethnological Society, Language and Creativity School "Wena"  
with Municipal Public Library in Koszęcin.

Photographs: Silesian Rising Museum in Świętochłowice, the National Digital Archives

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## // The Path of *Upper Silesia* to Poland //

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The political situation in Silesia was complicated, because the national affiliation of the region changed very often. Until the fourteenth century, it was part of **the Piast state**, subsequently for centuries it belonged to **the Kingdom of Bohemia**, **the Habsburg Monarchy**, **Prussia**, and in the nineteenth century it was part of the newly created **German Empire** as an important economic part of the state.

**The fate of Silesian inhabitants was equally intricate and complex as the history of their Little Homeland.**

After the Great War (1914-1918) for many nations hope to regain independence appeared - for Poles as well. The defeat of all our partitioners (Russia, Austria, Germany) contributed to the rebirth of the Polish state.

**November 11, 1918** is considered as the symbolic beginning of the Second Polish Republic. Its creation was accompanied by a struggle for borders. Upper Silesia - where the Germans, the Poles and the Silesians lived side by side, was the point of contention in the west between Poland and Germany. It was a land where the Polish and the German were mixed, where Polish traditions and culture were cultivated despite it had remained outside the Polish state for six centuries. There were numerous Polish cultural, sports and political organisations, which was a good starting point to fight for the incorporation of Upper Silesia into Poland.





# Wojciech Korfanty

// On October 25, 1918 Wojciech Korfanty  
- member of the German Sejm - in his speech in the Reichstag he demanded  
incorporation of Upper Silesia into Poland: //

(...) Sirs, we don't want even a span  
of German land. We only demand,  
in accordance with section 13 of the  
Wilson's program, our own, one Poland  
composed of the lands of three partitions,  
with assured its access to the sea, that is  
with its own coast inhabited by the undeniable  
Polish population (...)  
I declare that we do not want a single one  
of the German county, we only demand  
Polish counties of Upper Silesia, Middle Silesia,  
Poznań district, Polish West Prussia  
and Polish counties of East Prussia. "

- WOJCIECH KORFANTY



**Wojciech Korfanty** was active and one of the most prominent political activists in Upper Silesia. Still in the process of learning in the middle school he founded a secret club – Polish literature and culture were disseminated during its meeting. He was expelled from the last grade of school for statements concerning Otto von Bismarck.

He was an uncompromising man, as the story of his wedding showed. The fiancée of Wojciech Korfanty was a saleswoman working in Barasch brothers' department store in Bytom, Elizabeth Szprotówna. The wedding date was scheduled for July 1, 1903 in the church of St. Trinity. Unexpectedly, on the eve of wedding parish priest Reinhold Schirmeisen gave him the collection back and made the marriage ceremony dependent on the apologies to those pro-German priests who had been criticized by Wojciech Korfanty. Korfanty refused to apologize and went with his fiancée abroad – to Krakow. After they had fulfilled the obligation to reside for six weeks in the Habsburg Monarchy, they got married on October 5, 1903 in the church of St. Cross.

He was a member of the Reichstag and the Landtag (1903-1918), where he represented the Koło Polskie. He headed the third Silesian Uprising, but seeing no chances of success, he held the fight back. He left Silesia in 1921. He was a member of the Sejm (in 1922-1930) in already reborn Poland. He was deputy prime minister in the government of Witos from October to December 1923. The last years of his life Korfanty spent having a seat in the Silesian Parliament and the Senate of the Republic of Poland. In the spring of 1935 he emigrated to Prague and then to France. He returned to Poland in April 1939, however he was arrested and imprisoned in Pawiak. Released on July 20, 1939, he died in hospital in Warsaw on August 17, 1939. He was buried in the family tomb in Katowice.

# Calendar:



**Treaty of Versailles**, signed **on June 28, 1919**, finally ended the First World War. It was decided under the treaty that about the future of Upper Silesia would decide its inhabitants in a plebiscite, which was to be held in the near future. From that moment on, the fight for voices and "souls of Silesians" began.

## Article 88 of the Treaty of Versailles

In the part of Upper Silesia, located within borders described below, the residents will be called to indicate by a vote whether they prefer joining Germany or Poland.

Upper Silesia Polish Military Organization (Polska Organizacja Wojskowa, POW) was responsible for the preparation of the First Silesian Uprising.

The Headquarters of the Lubliniec County was located in the Old Pharmacy in Koszęcin (Sobieskiego Street). Then it was transferred to Lubsza. In the pharmacy in Koszęcin the members of POW headed by Kazimierz Burzyński (owner) were sworn in. Words of the oath were: "I vow (...) when summoned to fight with weapons in hand for the incorporation of Upper Silesia into Poland".

## The First Silesian Uprising:

**August 16, 1919 - August 24, 1919**

### Causes:

- anti-German strikes in the industrial area of Silesia,
- Mysłowice massacre (death of 7 miners, 2 women and a child),
- repressions and arrests among Polish activists.

### Consequences:

- defeat,
- repressions against Poles and forced emigration,
- increased interest in the case of Upper Silesian, both internationally and in Poland,
- an increase in pro-Polish sympathies in Upper Silesia.

**Alfons Zgrzebniok** was formal commander of the First and Second Silesian Uprisings, and a very clever man. He was arrested and imprisoned by the Germans but he managed to escape from the prison. In the twenties he was a Polish intelligence agent (spy - something like James Bond - 007) in The Free City of Danzing. He could share many of us with his biography.

### The Second Silesian Uprising: August 18, 1920 - August 28, 1920

#### Causes:

- anti-Polish actions of the German security police (SiPo), striving for its liquidation,
- strikes and protests in which the Upper Silesians demanded pay rises and not hiring German ex-soldiers at the Polish workers expense.

#### Consequences:

- military defeat,
- political victory,
- disbandment of SiPo and creation of combined Polish-German Plebiscite Police (APO),
- liquidation of POW.

### The plebiscite in Upper Silesia: March 20, 1921

The voting was preceded by the so-called "Paper war" - a hard propaganda fight, full of manipulation on both sides.

The victory of the Germans was achieved largely thanks to the votes of approx. 180 thousand of so-called emigrants - people born in Upper Silesia, but living elsewhere, mostly in the west part of Germany. Paradoxically, those people took part in the plebiscite at the request of Polish side.

#### Overall voting results:



**1 221 274**

- the number of people entitled to vote



**1 190 637**

- the number of cast votes



**707 393**

- the number of votes in favour of the Germans



**479 365**

- the number of votes in favour of Poland



## Voting results in our community:

### a/ communal areas

| Official name<br>wof the town | Polish name<br>of the town | In favour<br>of Poland | In favour<br>of Poland | Cancelled<br>votes |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Brushiek                      | Brusiek                    | 13                     | 29                     | 0                  |
| Koschentin                    | Koszęcin                   | 382                    | 709                    | 2                  |
| Ruschinowitz                  | Rusinowice                 | 105                    | 152                    | 1                  |
| Sodow                         | Sadów                      | 149                    | 304                    | 2                  |
| Strzebin                      | Strzebiń                   | 377                    | 194                    | 1                  |
| Wiersbie                      | Wierzbie                   |                        | 39                     | 0                  |
|                               |                            | <b>1069</b>            | <b>1427</b>            |                    |

### b/ manor areas

| Official name<br>wof the town | Polish name<br>of the town | In favour<br>of Poland | In favour<br>of Poland | Cancelled<br>votes |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Brushiek                      | Brusiek                    | 69                     | 83                     | 2                  |
| Koschentin                    | Koszęcin                   | 35                     | 179                    | 0                  |
| Wiersbie                      | Wierzbie                   | 60                     | 47                     | 1                  |
|                               |                            | <b>164</b>             | <b>309</b>             |                    |

**Total:** for Poland **1233**  
for Germany **1736**

### The Third Silesian Uprising: May 2/3, 1921 – July 5, 1921

#### Causes:

- dissatisfaction with the results of the plebiscite and decisions on the course of the border within the plebiscite area.

#### Consequences:

- military defeat of the uprising,
- political success: the new division of Upper Silesia -
  - Poland received 1/3 of the disputed territory, 46% of the population along with most of the mines and ironworks (what is important). Lubliniec county and Koszęcin commune were on the Polish side.

"We will achieve victory at any cost and there is no such mighty ruler in the world who could put us back in Germanic fetters" - Wojciech Korfanty - the dictator of the uprising, encouraged compatriots in his appeal. The fights lasted two months - the insurgents managed to take over almost the entire plebiscite area, then defending it against German forces. The most serious clashes took place in the vicinity of Góra św. Anny, that ended in defeat.

// The last act was the ceremonial entry of the Polish Army and the takeover of Silesia under Polish sovereignty - 1922 //

"Polish nation! People of Upper Silesia! We are free! Well, the fetters that us restrained, have already fallen off. Welcoming Poland, we welcome you, White Eagle! Soar up over the land of Silesia, over its cities, over its villages. To us you are a symbol of freedom and glory, symbol of national ideals. Silesia brings generous gifts to its homeland in sacrifice, for our land is rich in treasure above the ground and in the ground. But the greatest treasure of our land is not coal or iron, but the heart of the Catholic people, a simple heart like the heart of a child, yet brave and as solid as the steel that the steel worker forges. Long live Poland! Long live Upper Silesia! "

- JAN KAPICA

The memorable words of Father **Jan Kapica**, being a greeting of Polish soldiers, seem relevant to this day - they are worth remembering no matter what your beliefs are, they should be forged in our hearts forever.





# // Songs of *Silesian Uprisings*

and about the Silesian Uprisings //

Three of the many Silesian songs are presented below.

"Silesian Oath" – by **Jan Nikodem Jaroń**, „Where, oh where is my sweet little son?" **a song of a mother's despair after losing her son**, and "Tell the Winds", words by **Tadeusz Kijonka**, music by **Katarzyna Gaertner**. It's impossible to tell about these songs collectively, each of them is an individual story.

## "Silesian Oath"

**Jan Nikodem Jaroń**

The King-Spirit lives in Upper Silesia,  
Piaśt's sword stripped,  
Mighty movement wavered the earth,  
The enemy has fallen, struck by lightning.  
The end of torment and fear for us  
- So help us God!

Disgraceful enemy, get away  
From the Upper Silesian land.  
Our castles, our villages  
They have been Polish for ages.  
Get out of here, tyrants, get out of our ways  
- So help us God!

Prussian will not poison our souls,  
The sceptre will be knocked out of his hands,  
You, Upper Silesia, already free,  
The pearl of the Polish crown.  
We will fortify the Polish threshold  
- So help us God!

We don't give up Silesia, here is the singing,  
That today flies through Poland,  
We will shed our blood for Upper Silesia,  
We - free children of Poland.  
The enemy will leave Upper Silesia.  
So help us God!

## **Jan Nikodem Jaroń (1881-1922)**

the author of the musical work was born in Jastrzygowiec village, located on the west bank of the Prosna river. The same Prosna used to separate the Russian partition from the Prussian one, and then Poland from Germany.

He was born into a peasant family. At the end of the nineteenth century, his father and the family moved to Olesno, but the income from running a farm was not sufficient to make the life of their large family prosperous. Walenty Jaroń (the poet's father) was forced to work hard to clothe a group of nine children. John, craving for knowledge, was placed in a famous middle school in Bytom.

Unfortunately, due to conflicts with German teachers, he was forced to leave the school just before graduation. Teachers couldn't stand the fact that young Jaroń felt Polish and manifested his national affiliation. There was a thoroughly German atmosphere in the middle school. An echo of those episodes can be found in his later national-social drama entitled "Expropriation". After leaving the middle school Jaroń completed his education on his own, and he earned his livelihood mainly from private lessons he was giving. Subsequently he enrolled in the philology department at the University of Wrocław.



In 1904 he left for Switzerland. The following year he passed his secondary school-leaving exam in Baden and started his studies again in Wrocław at the Faculty of Law. His parents repeatedly persuaded the young Jaroń to study theology, but he strongly refused. He chose a more difficult life, but in accordance with his conscience. The writer's studies often were interrupted. Annoying poverty forced him to give lessons to wealthy landowners from Greater Poland and Lesser Poland. In 1910 Jaroń moved to the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv. He graduated there and earned a doctorate in law. Jaroń waived Prussian citizenship. The First World War had broken out in Austria before he obtained Austrian citizenship. During the war he worked as an economic apprentice. He got a job soon at the Austrian consulate in Wrocław. Thanks to that, he was able to move freely around the territory controlled by the Germans. After the war he cooperated with „Nowiny” (”The news”) – a daily known for its anti-Germanization campaign in Silesia. He also worked at the Information Office for the Coalition in Katowice. He took an active part in the Third Silesian Uprising as a civil commissioner for the Olesno district. He delivered speeches at rallies (in 1919 in Bogacica, in 1920 in his hometown of Jastrzygowiec) and published anti-Germanization articles.

// When the Polish army entered Upper Silesia  
the poet moved to Lubliniec, where **he died on August 1, 1922.**  
The grave is located in the cemetery in Lubliniec. ' //



**„Where, oh where is my sweet little son?“  
A mother's song of despair after losing her son**

Where, oh where is my sweet little son?  
Probably, the Grenzschutz killed him  
in the uprising. You bad people, for the sake  
of the Holy God, Why did you kill my son?  
Support shall I have no more,  
even if I cried my old eyes.  
Even if my bitter tears had turned into  
a second Oder, It would not have revived my son.  
He is lying there in a grave, and I don't know where  
Although I keep asking people everywhere  
Maybe he is lying in a hollow, poor thing,  
and he could lie down on his stove bench.  
Hey, god birds, tweet him there,  
when mum cannot find him.  
And you, the blossom of God, flourish around,  
let my son merrily lie down.

These are the words of one of the most famous songs related to the Silesian Uprisings. We will hear it in "Salt of the Black Earth" by **Kazimierz Kut**, or in the Symphony of Sorrowful Songs by **Henryk Mikołaj Górecki**. The song describes the consequences of the events of **August 15, 1919**. Miners from the Mysłowice mine decided to claim the overdue wages. When the crowd broke through the gate, the German army started firing. Seven miners, two women, and a thirteen-year-old boy were killed. The following day the population of Silesia began to attack the outposts of Grenschutz, a German volunteer paramilitary formation. The insurgents took over, among others, Tychy, Radzionków, Piekary and part of Katowice, including the railway station in Katowice-Ligota. Although the Germans managed to take them back quickly and the uprising collapsed ten days later in the face of the enemy's supremacy, a spontaneous revolt of the Polish population drew the attention of the international community on the issue of Silesia. The ground for two more uprisings in the following years was prepared. The song's text says about the heroes of those times.

<sup>1</sup>Based on the text by Tadeusz Bednarczuk



"Red as a brick",  
"Time Machine", "Ash trees"

- it is known that these are the songs of **the Dżem group**. But if you rummage through its achievements, it turns out that it has started its career singing about ... Silesian Uprisings!

"One evening Kasia Gaertner together with Janek "Kyks" Skrzek and Rysiek Riedel came to my house. The preparation for the "Gilded plait" was in progress at that time. I wrote a few texts live right away, including in dialect "It was a peasant." I also wrote two texts for Riedel related to uprisings, ballad "Tell me the winds" and "Let me go mother to rise ...". Later I also met Riedel during rehearsals before the concert in Zabrze, but actually our contacts ended there, although they had a very nice aura, and so does it I remember."<sup>2</sup>

- **TADEUSZ KIJONKA**

**Tadeusz Kijonka** also talks about cooperation with **Katarzyna Gärtner** (literary director of the Silesian Opera).

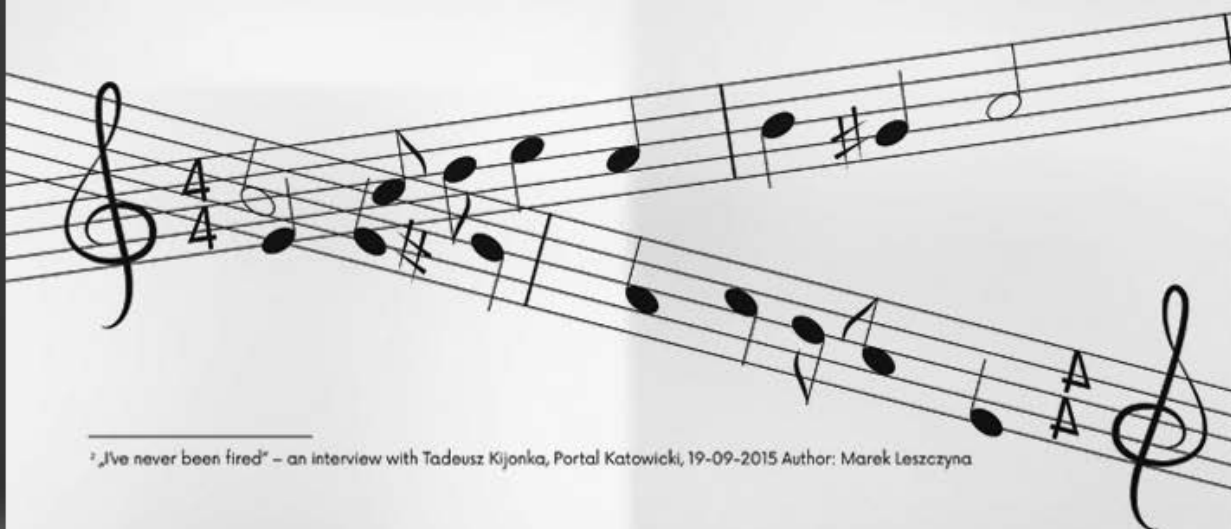
Tell me the Winds

lyrics: **Tadeusz Kijonka**,

music: **Katarzyna Gärtner**,

performed by: **Rysiek Riedel and the Dżem band**

Tell us winds smoky and fiery  
About these years loud as three salvos  
Bright sun rose above dark heaps  
When the Silesians were going to the uprising  
Nobody went down, the ironworks' flame went out  
Everyone went to the uprising as he stood  
As for a shift, he took a chunk of bread for the way  
Some shotgun, if he had one in the storage  
Did anyone believe they could win  
They were so ordinary that I felt sorry  
And the arrogant troops of enemy's walked against  
You can make it - to perforate steel with your hearts  
Tell the houses sprinkled with soot  
How mothers were crying in those days  
When the news spread, the boys were already being dragged  
straight to the wall, for the fear to be spread  
But the boys weren't blue for a long time  
When the first uprising was crushed by the enemy  
They convened again to grab the guns  
There is no miracle - we will do a miracle  
A song is flying high over the coal ground  
House by house, the same hard call  
When the second falls, we induce the third one  
Because trojak you count to three  
Tell us the Oder winds around  
That everyone would remember and repeat  
About the twenty-first, the most beautiful year  
A wanderer's song along insurgent ways  
A wanderer's song along insurgent ways



<sup>2</sup> „I've never been fired” - an interview with Tadeusz Kijonka, Portal Katowicki, 19-09-2015 Author: Marek Leszczyna



Although in the early 1980s the Dżem group was already formed and it gave concerts, it wasn't known to a wider audience. And then Katarzyna Gärtner – a famous composer (including "Małgośka" performed by Maryla Rodowicz), met the group and became fascinated by the vocalist's voice. Their acquaintance resulted in cooperation on the artist's singspiel entitled "Gilded Plait". Gärtner asked Riedel to perform a few songs in it. She went on purpose to the Riedel house for dinner to convince Rysiek's father to consent to his son's performance. The performance was performed in 1981 at the House of Music and Dance in Zabrze. For Gärtner it was a new project, and for Dżem – first ever appearance in front of cameras.

Why Riedel? The answer to this question can be obtained from the book "Rysiek" by Jan Skaradziński. He quotes Katarzyna Gärtner: "I was looking for someone who would connect the slogans "Silesia", "rock'n'roll" and "dynamite". And I wasn't looking on the TV, but in Jarocin, in the basements. I found Dżem in such basement where water was running down the walls. When they played and Richard screamed the place down – I fell off. It was a revelation."

**Dżem** performed two music works about the Silesian Uprisings in Zabrze. "**Let me go mother to rise**" was one of them. This is how **Kazimierz Kutz**, the Silesian director, talked about his achievements:

// Rysiek Riedel proved  
that you can make blues from the  
Silesian song. //

**Katarzyna Gärtner** - born in 1942, polish composer, arranger and pianist. She graduated from Secondary Music School in Krakow. She cooperated, among others, with Agnieszka Osiecka, Maryla Rodowicz and Ernest Bryll. Winner of numerous awards at the KFPP in Opole and the Soldier's Song Festival in Kołobrzeg.

"Tell the Winds" was the second song made famous by the spectacle. Singing about the Silesian Uprisings was a short but significant episode in the career of Dżem – they appeared on television for the first time. It therefore can be said it was the beginning of their media career. In 1995 songs from the "Gilded Plait" were recorded and called the Silesian songbook by **Katarzyna Gärtner**. There are songs performed, among others, by **Stanisław Sojka**, **Kuba Badach**, **Paweł Kukiz**, **Anna Serafińska** and **Mirosław Breguła** on CD.



# Paper war

// The future of Upper Silesia was to be decided by its inhabitants in a plebiscite. The word and the image were the tools of the fight for the voices and „souls of the Silesians. //

## POLISH PROPAGANDA



## GERMAN PROPAGANDA:





POLISH PROPAGANDA



GERMAN PROPAGANDA:





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Photographs: Silesian Rising Museum in Świętochłowice, the National Digital Archives.



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**In memoriam**  
The Silesians – for the Silesians

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