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## THE HISTORY OF THE URSULINES AND THEIR SCHOOLS IN LOWER SILESIA

### INTRODUCTION

In the Silesian lands, which after World War II became part of Poland, the Ursulines have carried on their apostolic mission for 330 years. From 1687 onwards they were active in Breslau (Wrocław) and later in foundations of their Breslau house: in Schweidnitz (Świdnica; 1700), Liebenthal (Lubomierz; 1845) and Ratibor (Racibórz; 1863).<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Breslau house had two important branches: one in Breslau-Carlovitz (Karłowice district; 1845) and another in Wartha (Bardo; 1914).<sup>2</sup> The Ratibor house had a branch in Altheide (now Polanica).<sup>3</sup> The Schweidnitz house had a filial house in Ziegenhals (Głuchołazy; 1919) as well as a small property in Ober Weistritz (Bystrzyca Górna; 1909).<sup>4</sup> The Liebenthal house had branches in Schreiberhau (Szklarska Poręba; 1919) and in Neustadt O.S. (Prudnik; 1928).<sup>5</sup>

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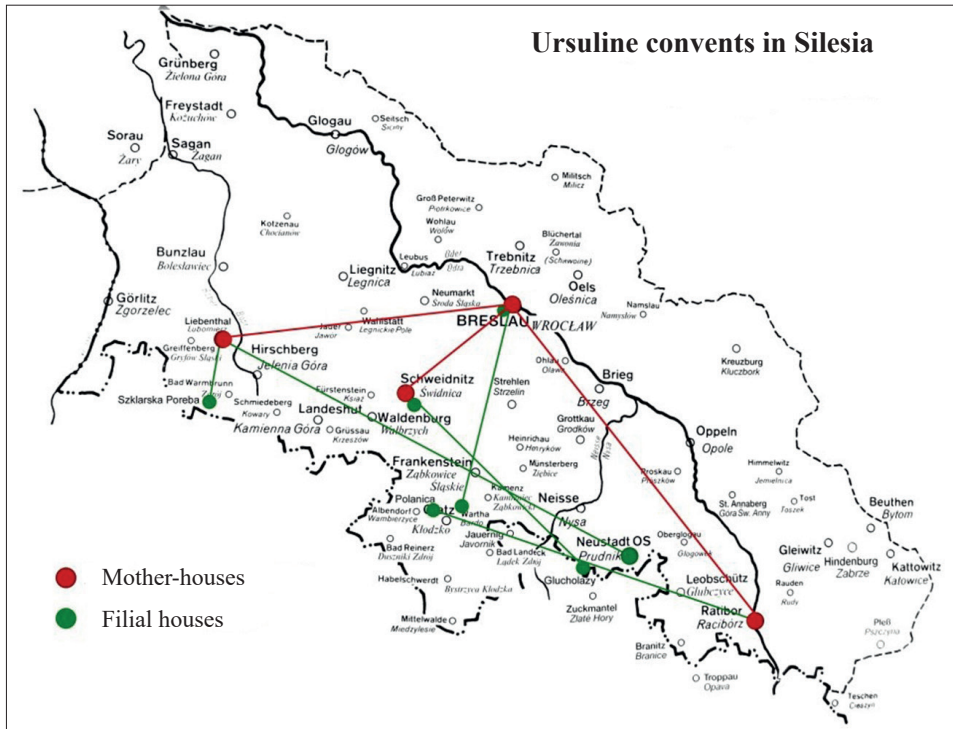
<sup>1</sup> A. Meer, *Der Orden der Ursulinerinnen in Schlesien: nachhandschriftlichen Aufzeichnungen, Urkunden und Acten, Geschichte des Ursulinerinnenklosters in Breslau*, vol. 1, Breslau 1878, pp. 33, 99-100; A. Meer, *Zakon urszulanek na Śląsku*, part 1. *Historia urszulanek wrocławskich*, translated by Sr. R. Mazur OSU, [mps]. Archiwum domu wrocławskiego urszulanek (Archive of the Breslau Ursulines, henceforth ADW); *Circulaire nr 1 et 2. Congrégation de Bordeaux. Monastère des ursulines de Marseille (exilées de Breslau. Silésie)*, 1880, ADW. This circular was written at the time of the Kulturkampf, when the Wrocław Ursulines lived in exile in Marseille for 10 years. The circular contains a history of the Breslau Ursulines. NOTE: Lower Silesia became part of Poland in 1945, after many centuries under Austrian, Prussian and German rule. In this text, German place names are used until the end of World War II, and Polish names subsequently.

<sup>2</sup> *Ursulinenkloster St. Ursula „Bey Maria Hülff“ Breslau-Bielefeld*, Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ursulinenordens. XI. Jahrbuch. Berlin 1955, pp. 24-32.

<sup>3</sup> *Ursulinenkloster st. Josef Ratibor-Offenbach*, Beiträge zur Geschichte XI:1955, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Ursulinenkloster st. Ursula Schweidnitz-Mannheim*, Beiträge zur Geschichte XI:1955, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg*, Beiträge zur Geschichte XI:1955, p. 121; T. Mengel, *Das Schicksal der schlesischen Frauenklöster während des Dritten Reiches und 1945/46*, Köln: Böhlau, 1986, p. 33.



The task of each Ursuline foundation was to establish a school and educate girls in accordance with the local community's needs. It should be emphasised that each of the German Ursuline communities was autonomous; they were linked by spiritual bonds, but not legal ones. In contrast to the Polish Ursulines, the German Ursuline communities did not belong to the *Unio Romana Ordinis Sanctae Ursulae*, an international institution founded under papal law, with its Superior General residing in Rome.<sup>6</sup>

As each convent was a separate institution, the German Ursulines did not produce a comprehensive history of their order in Silesia. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century they asked August Meer to write a study on each of their houses. His studies were published during the Kulturkampf.<sup>7</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s and after World War II, German Ursulines tried to save their history from oblivion by publishing yearly *Beiträge zur Ge-*

<sup>6</sup> The *Unio Romana Ordinis Sanctae Ursulae* is a branch of the spiritual company founded by St. Angela Merici. The union is an international institution established in 1900 by Ursuline houses on the incentive of Pope Leo XIII. Some houses remained independent.

<sup>7</sup> A. Meer, *Der Orden der Ursulinerinnen in Schlesien: nachhandschriftlichen Aufzeichnungen, Urkunden und Acten, Geschichte des Ursulinerinnenklosters in Breslau*, Vol. 1, Breslau 1878; idem, *Geschichte des Ursulinerinnenklosters zu Ratibor*, Breslau 1879; idem, *Ursulinerinnenklosters zu Liebenthal*, Breslau 1883; idem, *Geschichte des Ursulinerinnenklosters zu Schweidnik*, Breslau 1884.

*schichte des Ursulinenordens*.<sup>8</sup> After the war the German Ursuline sisters were forced to leave their convents in Silesia, and there still does not exist even a short outline of their history in the Polish language. In 2014 there appeared a short article in Polish titled *The takeover of German Ursuline convents in the Recovered Lands by the Polish Province of the Ursulines of the Roman Union*;<sup>9</sup> however, its focus was neither the history and development of the order nor its apostolic work up to World War II. The present paper is an attempt to fill that gap from a wider research perspective.

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BRESLAU HOUSE AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

The first Ursuline convent in Silesia was established in Breslau. The sisters arrived there from Bratislava on 30 September 1686. At that time the Ursuline Order was very active, as there was a great need for boarding schools.<sup>10</sup> The Ursulines were already widely known and played an important role in educational networks, and women's education in particular. For 300 years all Ursuline convents ran their boarding schools alongside free schools for poor girls. In many of their centres they established teachers' colleges, as they valued the opportunity to form the personality of future female teachers in the spirit of Catholicism. Owing to the high educational standards and the value of a religious upbringing, the Ursulines' centres were thriving educational establishments, valued and trusted by society.<sup>11</sup>

The Ursulines from Bratislava initially planned to found a convent in Glatz (Kłodzko) in 1683, and for three years they carried on their educational activities there. This Ursuline group was led by Josefa, a countess of the Hungarian aristocratic family Nadasdy. Because of financial obstacles, this foundation could not survive, and

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<sup>8</sup> *Beiträge zur Darstellung und zur Geschichte des Ursulinenordens. IV. Jahrbuch des Verbandes selbständiger Deutscher Ursulinenklöster, Gebundene Ausgabe – 1929*; no. V, 1930; no. VI, 1931; *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ursulinenordens*, no. XI, 1955.

<sup>9</sup> D. E. Klich, *Przejęcie przez Prowincję Polską Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej urszulańskich klasztorów niemieckich na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*, in: *Perspectiva. Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne*, no. 2 (25), 2014, pp. 88-104. The term *western lands* (Recovered Territories or Regained Lands; Polish: *Ziemie Odzyskane*) refers to the parts of pre-war Germany that became part of Poland after World War II, Silesia included.

<sup>10</sup> The beginnings of the Order of St. Ursula go back to the Company of St. Ursula founded in Brescia in 1535. Its founder was St. Angela Merici. Throughout centuries the Company underwent numerous transformations. In 1612 the Church decided to transform the French Company of St. Ursula into a closed religious order (*Ordo Sanctae Ursulae*). As cloistered nuns, they dedicated themselves to the education of girls within the walls of their convents. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Ursuline Order flourished as there was much need for boarding schools for girls. From France, missionaries were sent to many places in the world and established their convents there. U. Borkowska, *Tradycje szkół urszulańskich w Europie (XVII-XVIII w.)*, in: U. Borkowska (ed.), *Edukacja w szkołach urszulańskich XVII-XX w.*, Lublin KUL 2012, p. 29ff. In Central and Eastern Europe the following convents were founded: Prague 1655, Bratislava 1676, Breslau 1686, Košice 1696, Olomouc 1697, Schweidnitz 1700, Ljubljana 1702, Varaždin 1703, Tmava 1724, Győr 1726, Kutna Hora 1761, Oradea 1772, Škofja Loka 1782, Brno 1782.

<sup>11</sup> U. Borkowska, *Tradycje szkół urszulańskich w Europie (XVII-XVIII w.)*, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

consequently the Prince-Bishop of Breslau Franz Ludwig von Pfalz-Neuburg (1683–1732)<sup>12</sup> ordered the Ursulines to settle in Breslau, hoping that their education of girls would contribute to a revival of Catholicism in a city where Protestants prevailed.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of the unfavourable attitude of Breslau's Protestant authorities towards the Ursulines, in February 1687 they were granted the right to settle in the city by Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I.<sup>14</sup> Shortly afterwards they bought two buildings in Pokutnicza street (now Łaciarska) to serve them as their convent and school. They immediately established a boarding school for girls and a free elementary school for poor children from the city. The community developed strongly, and the number of sisters and schoolgirls grew fast. The Ursulines won the trust of the local society. This was demonstrated by the high number of young women who joined the Ursulines and wanted to devote their life to teaching. In the 12 years from 1687 to 1699, Mother Josefa accepted 33 novices into the convent.<sup>15</sup>

In 1693 the Ursulines expanded their premises by buying neighbouring houses. Consequently the Ursulines owned eight row houses along Pokutnicza and Nożownicza streets up to the New Market.<sup>16</sup> As the personnel situation of the Breslau Ursulines was good, in 1700 it was possible to found a new convent and school in Schweidnitz, and six of the sisters together with Mother Josefa (Nadasdy) moved there.<sup>17</sup> The buildings in Breslau were already overcrowded. In 1707 Princess Karolina of Legnica-Brieg, the last member of the Piast dynasty and wife of Frederick, Duke of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Wiesenburg, died. In 1709 the Ursulines were able to buy the Holsteins' residency on Szewska street,<sup>18</sup> to which they moved their convent and schools.<sup>19</sup> The Ursulines carried on their activities there for over 100 years. Together with the local population they experienced the hardships of repression by the Lutheran city authorities, the annexation of Silesia by Prussia, the Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War.<sup>20</sup> In 1810 Frederick William III of Prussia issued his edict of secularisation, and the property of many monastic orders was seized. The Clarisses had to leave their premises in Breslau after 550 years. The Ursuline Order

<sup>12</sup> J. Pater, *Poczet biskupów wrocławskich*, Wrocław 2000.

<sup>13</sup> *Circulaire nr 1 et 2. Monastère des ursulines de Marseille (exilées de Breslau, Silésie)*. 12 September 1880, henceforth ADW, ref. no. C 104, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Circulaire nr 1 et 2, op. cit.*, p. 2ff.

<sup>15</sup> A. Meer, *Zakon urszulanek na Śląsku, cz.1. Historia urszulanek wrocławskich*, ADW, ref. no. C 112, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 7, *Circulaire nr 1 et 2, op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ursulinenkloster St. Ursula Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, pp. 129-138; *Circulaire nr 1 et 2, op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> This residence belonged earlier to Princess Karolina, who spent her last years at the Clarisses' convent in Breslau and died there in 1707. A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> M. Przywecka-Samecka, *Z dziejów wrocławskich konwentów klarysek i urszulanek*. Wrocław 1996, p. 23; A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

was both contemplative and active, and as such escaped dissolution, but they lost their property and in June 1811 were forced to move to the Clarisses' convent.<sup>21</sup>

For many years, beginning in 1840, Mother Ursula Herrmann<sup>22</sup> stood at the head of this community. Times were hard, but nevertheless she fostered the further development of the convent and its schools. To adapt the convent to fulfil educational and boarding needs, an expensive enlargement and modernisation of the building was needed.<sup>23</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ursuline schools in Breslau were attended by 550–850 schoolgirls yearly.<sup>24</sup> The convent also grew: there were 45 sisters in 1857 and 55 in 1869. In this period the Ursulines founded several new convents in Prussia: in Liebenthal (Lubomierz; 1845), Berlin (1854) and Ratibor (Racibórz; 1863). Since their community always included some Polish sisters and schoolgirls, in 1857 the order founded the first convent of Polish Ursulines in Posen (Poznań).<sup>25</sup>

#### THE HARSH TIMES OF KULTURKAMPF AND NEW HOPES

As a result of the repressive Kulturkampf policy of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in 1875 the Ursulines were notified of the planned dissolution of their convents. The new law of 31 May 1875 dissolved all orders within six months except those involved in care for the infirm. Since there was a shortage of secular teachers, for teaching orders this time could be extended until 1879. The Ursulines looked for a suitable place to resettle.<sup>26</sup> Some Ursuline communities expelled as a result of the Kulturkampf were granted permission by Emperor Franz Joseph to settle in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, specifically in Bohemia and Moravia.

In 1877 cardinal Friedrich Egon von Fürstenberg, Bishop of Olmütz (Olomouc), gave his summer residence in Přestavlky in Moravia to the Schweidnitz convent. The sisters also bought a property in Böhmischeskalitz (Česká Skalice). The Liebenthal convent was granted the premises of the former public school in Arnau (Hostinné) in 1878.<sup>27</sup> The Berlin convent settled in Reichenberg (Liberec). The state authorities

<sup>21</sup> Once the Clarisses were forced to leave their convent, it was first used as police headquarters. *Circulaire nr 1 et 2, op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Mother Ursula Herrmann (1807–1888) was born Emilia Henrietta Herrmann. As a child she attended the Ursulines' boarding school in Breslau. In 1826 she joined the convent and was named Maria Ursula Józefa of the Immaculate Conception. She worked as a teacher of French, German and history at the boarding school. In 1840 she was elected the Mother Superior and served as such until 1888 with a three-year interval. After the Kulturkampf the Ursulines returned to Breslau in 1887. At that time Mother Ursula was 80 years old. In April 1888 the Ursulines reactivated their boarding school. Mother Ursula died on 8 December 1888.

<sup>23</sup> J. Kębłowski, *Klasztor, kościół ss. urszulanek i mauzoleum Piastów*, Wrocław 1998, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> A. Meer, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–27.

<sup>25</sup> *Circulaire nr 1 et 2, op. cit.*, p. 5; B. Banaś, *Początki Zakonu św. Urszuli w Polsce (1857–1871)*, Nasza Przeszłość 6:1957, pp. 127–169.

<sup>26</sup> T. Błaszczyk, *Zakony na Śląsku w dobie Kulturkampfu*, Wrocław 2004, p. 195.

<sup>27</sup> There were 40 sisters in this community. *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg*. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Ursulinenordens, XI. Jahrbuch, Berlin 1955, pp. 121–124.

of Austria-Hungary recognised all of the sisters' teaching credentials and authorised them to teach.<sup>28</sup> The youngest convent, in Ratibor, did not have enough resources to found a new convent in a safe location. In early 1879 the sisters moved to various convents in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>29</sup>

The Breslau Ursulines were ordered to leave their convent in 1878.<sup>30</sup> At that time their community consisted of 61 sisters, and their school, which in fact comprised elementary, secondary and technical schools and a teacher training college, had 851 schoolgirls and students. Having foreseen the approaching catastrophe, Mother Ursula Herrmann had bought a convent in Marseille, France, two years before the Ursulines were ordered to leave Breslau,<sup>31</sup> and Mother Aloysia von Gilgenheimb organised a school for girls there.<sup>32</sup> At first the Ursulines in Marseille were successful; however, the French government's stance on Catholic schools and orders was unfavourable. Being again at risk of deportation, they considered selling their property in Marseille to buy some premises in Austria-Hungary. In 1881 a group of the sisters moved to Freiwaldau (now Jeseník)<sup>33</sup> where they opened their school and boarding house.<sup>34</sup>

The Kulturkampf ended in 1887, when the final law readmitting all orders was passed by the Reichstag. In Silesia, religious life bloomed again. The Ursulines could return to their convents in Schweidnitz, Liebenenthal, Ratibor, Breslau and Berlin.

<sup>28</sup> Histoire de la province de tchéco-moravie, supplément au bulletin Inter-Ursulines, septembre-octobre 1981, nr 5, [mps], AGUUR. sygn. RHP/1HP; T. Błaszczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

<sup>29</sup> Oedenburg in Hungary, Linz and Gratz in Austria, and Bratislava. T. Błaszczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

<sup>30</sup> A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 35. Mother Ursula Herrmann went to France in May 1876, and shortly after the Ursulines bought a convent in Marseille. In July 1876 Mother Ursula sent the first sisters there, including Mother Aloysia von Gilgenheimb; T. Błaszczuk, *Zakony na Śląsku w dobie Kulturkampfu*, p. 203.

<sup>31</sup> A. Meer, *op. cit.*, p. 37; M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 23. With the consent of the bishop of Breslau the Ursulines bought the convent in Marseille for 500 thousand francs. This was a financial burden on the Breslau convent. The Ursulines took a loan from the Nadasdy and Esterhazy families, to which their first Mother Superior was related. They received some support from the Breslau diocese, as a collection was organised. Father J. Mandziuk writes that in the Wrocław Diocese Archives there is a letter of Mother Ursula Herrmann dated 16 September 1877 in which she asks the bishop for consent to organise a public collection to raise money (ref. no. V C 8 q.). The outstanding sum was paid in instalments. J. Mandziuk, *Urszulanki czarne we Wrocławiu do XX wieku*, in: M. Rosik (ed.), *Księga Pamiątkowa dedykowana S. Profesor Ewie J. Jezierskiej w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, PWT in Wrocław, Wrocław 2005. pp. 400-401; *Circulaire nr 1 et 2*, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Tosca Anna Maria Luisa von Gilgenheimb, born 28 April 1850 in Strehlen (Strzelin in Lower Silesia) to Count Ritter Joseph Hentschel von Gilgenheimb and Rosalie d'Ambly. She graduated from the Ursuline teachers' college on 22 April 1868. In October 1868 she took her vows. ADW, personalia – m. Aloysia von Gilgenheimb.

<sup>33</sup> In Austrian Lower Silesia in the Olomouc Region; now Jeseník in the Czech Republic.

<sup>34</sup> *Ursulinenkloster St. Ursula „Bey Maria Hülf“*, *op. cit.*, p. 1; B. Tinzová, *Dějiny kláštera Řádusv. Voršily ve Frývaldově a jeho dívčích škol 1881-1948*, in: *Zapadlivlastenci. 2. Bruntál. Moravská expedice v Moravském Berouně*, 2001, pp. 65-87; M. Neubauerová-Brachtlová, *Osudy ženský chřádů a kongregací na Jesenícku po roce 1945*. *Vlastivědný věstník moravský* 4:2004, pp. 337-354; B. Tinzová, *Kláster voršilek ve Frývaldově jako centrum vzdělávání dívek (1881-1948)*, in: *Jesenicko: vlastivědný sborník / Jeseník: Vlastivědné muzeum Jesenícka* 2:2001, pp. 16-24.

A positive result of the period of repression was that their new schools in Freiwaldau, Arnau, Reichenberg and Přestavlký flourished until World War II.<sup>35</sup>

The Breslau Ursulines, led by 80-year-old Mother Ursula Herrmann, returned to Breslau from Marseille in 1887. After arduous efforts they regained their premises, and in March 1888 they resumed their educational activities.<sup>36</sup> Following the death of Mother Ursula Herrmann, who had been at the head of the community for 45 years, on 15 May 1890 the community elected Aloysia von Gilgenheimb as their new mother superior. Except for a break of three years, she would remain in this post for 33 years until 1923, and contributed to the Ursuline convent's further development.<sup>37</sup>

The Ursulines provided the highest level of education that a woman could have at that time. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the programme for girls' education was modified and gradually became similar to the programme for boys. In 1908 the Breslau Ursulines ran a ten-year school and a teachers' college. The latter was attended by nuns and lay women who wanted to become teachers. In the following years the Ursulines also ran a "higher school for girls", a lyceum, and a post-secondary school offering seminary study.<sup>38</sup>

As the number of rooms in the boarding house was insufficient, in 1898 Mother Aloysia von Gilgenheimb founded a filial house in Carlowitz near Breslau (now the district of Karłowice).<sup>39</sup> The building in Carlowitz was surrounded by a large park, which provided a place of rest for the sisters living in the centre of Breslau. There was enough space for was a boarding house and a school of domestic education. In 1899 the Breslau community numbered 69: 40 sisters and novices in Breslau and 29 sisters in Carlowitz.<sup>40</sup> In 1913 Mother Aloysia von Gilgenheimb decided to make a new foundation in Wartha (Bardo). The new facility was to function as a filial house and also as a rest house. Its construction began in the spring of 1914 and was continued with determination and faith in spite of World War I.<sup>41</sup> As early as 1916 the Ursulines opened a domestic school and boarding house there. The school provided education in the Catholic spirit and prepared girls for family life.<sup>42</sup> In 1926 the sisters opened a training college for future teachers of domestic education.<sup>43</sup> This was the only college of its kind in Lower Silesia.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Histoire de la province de tchéco-moravie, supplément au bulletin Inter-Ursulines, septembre-octobre 1981, nr 5, [mps], AGUUR. Ref. no. RHPr/1HP.

<sup>36</sup> T. Błaszczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>37</sup> ADW, personalia – m. Aloysia von Gilgenheimb.

<sup>38</sup> *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau 1913–1938*.

<sup>39</sup> M. Lichius, *Handbuch der privaten katholischen Schulen und Internate Deutschlands. Im Auftrage der Zentralstelle der Katholischen Schulorganisation bearbeitet. Mit zahlreichen Abbildungen*, Düsseldorf 1929, pp. 183-184.

<sup>40</sup> *Schematismus des Bistums Breslau und seines Delegatur-Bezirks für Jahr 1899*, p. 114.

<sup>41</sup> *Das Ursulinenkloster zu Breslau und seine Filialen*, Düsseldorf, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau und seines Delegaturbezirks fuer das Jahr 1926*, p. 186; T. Karamon, *Wartha. Bardo*, p. 125.

<sup>43</sup> *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau das Jahr 1930*, p. 172

<sup>44</sup> M. Lichius, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184; *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau*, 1926, p. 186. The convent hosted a rest house for sisters, a farming school for women and a state-licensed domestic school.

## THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC (1919–1933)

After World War I Germany was a two-thirds Protestant country. The Catholic minority constituted 32.2% of the population. The 1919 Weimar Constitution guaranteed freedom of belief. This was favourable to the development of the Catholic Church. The number of monastic communities, charitable undertakings and Catholic schools multiplied.<sup>45</sup> Analysis of the Breslau diocese statistical yearbooks shows that Ursuline convents flourished at that time. Thanks to the Ursulines' good spirit their numbers grew, including the number of young sisters. Every Ursuline convent in Lower Silesia had a relatively large group of novices, and this gave hope for further successful apostolic work. The number of sisters in the Breslau Ursuline community (Breslau, Carlowitz, Wartha) grew particularly fast: 106 sisters in 1912, 132 in 1917, 161 in 1926, and 176 in 1935.

*Number of sisters in Ursuline convents in Silesia in 1914–1942*

Year	Location	Choir sisters	Choir novices	Lay sisters	Lay novices	Total
<b>1914</b>	Breslau	46	7	22	6	81
	Carlowitz	21		19		40
	Liebenthal	31	6	20	1	58
	Ratibor	26		20		46
	Schweidnitz	33	2	20	3	58
<b>1917</b>	Breslau	42	7	19	7	75
	Carlowitz	21		19		40
	Wartha	11		6		17
	Liebenthal	36	3	20	2	61
	Ratibor	28		22		50
	Schweidnitz	27	3	20	4	54
	Ober Weistriz	4		4		8
<b>1922</b>	Breslau	43	11	27	4	85
	Carlowitz	24		17		41
	Wartha	11		6		17
	Liebenthal	33	9	18	8	68
	Schreiberhau	5		6		11
	Ratibor	34	1	17	4	56
	Schweidnitz	27	7	18	6	58
	Ober Weistriz	5		4		9
	Ziegenhals	8		7		15
<b>1926</b>	Breslau	58	7	31	5	101
	Carlowitz	23		21		44

<sup>45</sup> B. Kumor, *Historia Kościoła. T. 8 Czasy współczesne 1914-1992*, Lublin 2001, p. 178ff.



	Wartha	9		7		16
	Liebenthal	36	3	26	3	68
	Schreiberhau	6		6		12
	Ratibor	31	2	19	8	60
	Schweidnitz	33		28	5	66
	Ober Weistritz	4		5		9
	Ziegenhals	7		11		18
<b>1935</b>	Breslau	53	8	35	2	98
	Carlowitz	29		24		53
	Wartha	15		10		25
	Liebenthal	36		20	4	60
	Schreiberhau	4	1	5		10
	Neustadt O.S.	9		7		16
	Ratibor	34	1	29		64
	Schweidnitz	40	6	33	2	81
	Ziegenhals	7		13		20
	Ober Weistritz	4		5		9
<b>1940</b>	Breslau	54		33	1	88
	Carlowitz	30		25		55
	Wartha	16		8		24
	Liebenthal	29		22	2	53
	Schreiberhau	5		5		10
	Neustadt O.S.	8		7		15
	Ratibor	34		30		64
	Schweidnitz	38		30		68
	Ziegenhals	7		14		21
	Ober Weistritz	4		6		10
<b>1942</b>	Breslau	55	1	33		89
	Carlowitz	27		24		51
	Wartha	18		10		28
	Liebenthal	2		4		6
	Schreiberhau	3		2		5
	Neustadt O.S.	3		4		7
	Hindenburg O.S. (Zabrze)	4		1		5
	Ratibor	34		29		61
	Schweidnitz	The Schweidnitz Ursulines were dispersed. Many moved to the Breslau convent and its filial houses.				
	Ziegenhals					
	Ober Weistritz					

Source: *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau und seines Delegatur-Bezirks für das Jahr 1907, 1908 etc. until 1929, Handbuch des Bistums Breslau für das Jahr 1930, Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1931, etc. until 1942.*

The above data show that the Breslau Ursuline community was almost thrice the size of other convents. In 1935 it consisted of 176 nuns, including 53 sisters working in Carlowitz and 25 in Wartha. Mother Edeltrudis Malchus<sup>46</sup> headed these three communities from 4 April 1929. In the 1930s, 1200 girls attended the schools of the Breslau Ursulines.<sup>47</sup> In the Ursuline convents and filial houses, the Ursulines taught children and adolescents in different kinds of schools: elementary, secondary, vocational, and teachers' colleges. The table below gives their locations and the types of education provided. The curricula were regularly updated in line with the demands of the educational authorities. Until World War II the Ursulines continued to reorganise and expand their convents to meet the needs of their growing schools.

*Ursuline schools in Silesia in 1933*

Location	School type
Breslau	higher school for women, lyceum, higher lyceum, teachers' college, boarding house
Carlowitz	lyceum, higher school for women, nursery school
Wartha	resting house for sisters, rural domestic school, college for teachers in domestic schools
Liebenthal	boarding house, lyceum, private further education school for women, domestic school, nursery school
Schreiberhau	technical college (state-licensed), boarding domestic school, further education school for day schoolgirls
Neustadt O.S.	higher lyceum
Ratibor	higher lyceum following the reformed <i>Realschule</i> programme, mid-high school, elementary school, domestic school, nursery school, boarding house
Schweidnitz	boarding lyceum, commercial and industrial education school for women, domestic school, cooking school, social pedagogy college, nursery school and day room for children
Ziegenhals	rest house for sisters, boarding house (state-licensed), domestic school
Ober Weistritz	domestic boarding school, three-month domestic education courses, rest house for sisters

Source: *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1933*, pp. 164-165.

#### UNDER THE NAZI REGIME

After Hitler came to power in 1933, the situation of the flourishing Catholic schools became difficult.<sup>48</sup> Even at the start of the 1930s the Catholic Church had

<sup>46</sup> *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1935*, p. 161.

<sup>47</sup> M. Lichius, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>48</sup> T. Mengel, *Das Schicksal der schlesischen Frauenklöster während des Dritten Reiches und 1945/46*, Köln: Böhlau 1986, p. 33ff.

been worried about the growing influence of the national socialists. As early as 1930, the German episcopate led by Cardinal Adolf Bertram condemned national socialism for its racist ideology, extreme nationalism, violence and hatred towards others.<sup>49</sup> In January 1933 Hitler was appointed Chancellor. After Hindenburg's death in 1934, Hitler also became *Führer*. He declared publicly that the rights of Catholic churches would not be restricted because he perceived them as factors strengthening the nation, and he promised to establish friendly relations with the Holy See.<sup>50</sup> In 1933 Hitler signed the Concordat with the Vatican. This Concordat ensured the legal protection of Catholic schools, whose staff was to be Catholic only. Hitler judged the Concordat to be a success on the path of "trust building". Indeed, following these declarations, the German episcopate abandoned its complaints and its prohibition on Catholics' joining the National Socialist Party.<sup>51</sup>

After Hitler and his party seized total power, however, the fight against Christianity began to intensify.<sup>52</sup> Nazism was a totalitarian system which aimed to control all aspects of individual life, especially the upbringing and education of the young. Schools were to propagate the Nazi worldview only and be a tool for social indoctrination. According to Hitler the task of schools was to incite minds and implant racial awareness in the hearts and minds of the youth.<sup>53</sup> In 1933 the Nazi government began to reform the educational system.<sup>54</sup> After the four-year elementary school, girls could go to the eight-year high school (*Oberschule*). The high school leaving certificate was a university entrance qualification. After completing the first five years of the high school, girls followed three-year specialised curricula in either "language" (*sprachliche Form*) or domestic education (*hauswirtschaftliche Form*). There were also six-year elementary schools, upon the completion of which girls could enter six-year further education schools similar to high schools (*Aufbauschulen in Oberschulform*). These further education schools were established in rural areas and offered the domestic education curriculum only.

Traditionally, the German education system included six-year mid-secondary schools (*Mittelschule*) whose completion did not provide a university entry qualification. Mid-secondary schools could be entered upon completion of four years of elementary education (*Grundschule*). Various types of these schools provided vocational

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<sup>49</sup> R. Morsey, *Mniejszość katolicka i powstanie narodowego socjalizmu*, in: K. Gotto, K. Repgen (eds.), *Kościół, katolicy i narodowy socjalizm (Kirche, Katholiken und Nationalsozialismus)*, translated by Z. Zieliński, Warszawa 1983, p. 14; B. Kumor, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> B. Kumor, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>51</sup> R. Morsey, *op. cit.*, p. 20; W. Marschall, *Historia biskupstwa wrocławskiego od założenia do końca II wojny światowej. Zarys*, in: M. Hirschfeld, M. Trautmann (eds.), *Dziedzictwo i posłannictwo śląskiego Kościoła, 1000 lat diecezji wrocławskiej (Erbe und Auftrag der schlesischen Kirche. 1000 Jahre Bistum Breslau)*, translated by H. Migło, Dülmen 2001, p. 43.

<sup>52</sup> R. Lill, *Ideologia i polityka kościelna narodowego socjalizmu*, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-31.

<sup>53</sup> E. Król, *Polityka oświatowa i naukowa Trzeciej Rzeszy (1933-1945)*, in: M. Walczak (ed.), *Polityka oświatowa i naukowa Trzeciej Rzeszy niemieckiej w okupowanych krajach Europy*, Warszawa 2000, p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> E. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

training. Girls could attend domestic schools, child care schools and schools preparing for work in nursery schools. In 1936 it became compulsory to continue education after the six-year elementary school, at three-year vocational technical/industrial or domestic schools, or at two-year agricultural schools.<sup>55</sup>

As the process of uniformisation of schools advanced, in April 1936 private elementary schools were dissolved. Private secondary and mid-secondary schools, which were much more numerous, suffered much administrative, legal, financial and political harassment. The appropriateness of a private school in a given area was examined and questioned. As a principle, private education was judged to be a substitute tolerated only in cases where public education was not available.<sup>56</sup> Private schools were frequently inspected. The main subjects of the inspections were the “national-socialist” orientation of teachers and pupils/students and their membership of appropriate organisations. Negative reports were usually followed by a recommendation to close the school. Despite the Concordat, which ostensibly safeguarded the existence of Catholic schools, in the summer of 1934 the process of closing down schools of Catholic and Protestant religious organisations began.<sup>57</sup> Many religious schools were replaced by national-socialist schools.<sup>58</sup>

All teachers were indoctrinated in the national-socialist ideology. In 1933 the Union of Catholic Teachers was dissolved, followed by its female equivalent organisation in 1937. All teachers were obliged to join the National Socialist Union of Teachers.<sup>59</sup> Catholic youth associations were also gradually dissolved. The *Gesetz über die Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth Law) of 1 December 1936 forced all eligible juveniles aged 10 to 18 years to join the Hitlerjugend (boys) or the *Bund Deutscher Mädel in der Hitler-Jugend* (BDM; League of German Girls in the Hitler Youth).<sup>60</sup> The law which obliged all schools to support national-socialist youth organisations was a matter of concern to the Ursulines, who were aware that this ideology posed a moral danger to young people.<sup>61</sup> In Ratibor, in the 1932–1933 school year, girls at the Ursuline schools began to join the League of German Girls.<sup>62</sup> At that time 30% of children of the appropriate ages belonged to the organisation, and by 1939 this had risen to 96%.<sup>63</sup>

A popular method of forcing the closure of schools was to forbid recruitment and the teaching of some classes. State officials and members of national-socialist organisations were forbidden to send their children to Catholic schools. At Easter 1933 the number of girls at the schools run by the Breslau Ursulines decreased by 70%.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>55</sup> E. Król, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 41.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*; T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> R. Lill, *Ideologia i polityka kościelna narodowego socjalizmu*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> E. Król, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-61.

<sup>60</sup> J. Wieliczka-Szarek, *III Rzesza. Narodziny i zmierzch szaleństwa*, Kraków 2007, p. 106; T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 35; E. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>61</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>63</sup> E. Król, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*.

Schweidnitz, according to the Ursulines there, was a particular stronghold of national socialism. They wrote that mayor Georg Trzeciak “gave his body and spirit to this ideology and the *Führer*”.<sup>65</sup> He considered the education of young people at Catholic schools to be a disgrace. From 1935 he insisted that town officials send their children to state schools, although this met with resistance. He sought to gradually close down the schools of the Ursulines. Being concerned for their future, the Ursulines seriously considered moving to a convent that had been founded in 1914 in Canada. In 1938–1939 several sisters went to Brazil to found a convent there.<sup>66</sup>

The most important Nazi holiday was Adolf Hitler’s birthday on April 20. All German towns had to be decorated with his portraits, and in schools special events were held in honour of the *Führer*. Celebrations were also organised in Catholic schools.<sup>67</sup> In Ratibor the Ursulines were forced to display a flag with the swastika. Respect for this flag was a duty, and disrespect might have threatened the school’s existence.<sup>68</sup>

The Metropolitan of Breslau, cardinal Bertram, encouraged the Ursulines to have confidence in the future “as long as our most sacred goods are intact”.<sup>69</sup> He believed that secular power, like episcopal authority, came from God. He argued that the cooperation of both secular and episcopal authorities was absolutely necessary. As the *ex officio* head of the German episcopate (1914–1945) he strove for a “no-conflict model” in Church policy.<sup>70</sup> His approach was not to oppose the legal state authorities. He tried not to worsen the relationship with the state, to safeguard what he possibly could for the sake of the Catholic Church and to protect the religious life of Catholics.<sup>71</sup> During World War II, cardinal Bertram appealed to Catholics to unite in prayer for the military and the motherland, for the state and the *Führer*. This caused controversies and a rift in the German episcopate.<sup>72</sup>

In 1935 the Ursulines celebrated the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Company of St. Ursula. In Breslau, cardinal Bertram bestowed his patronage on the celebrations. In his speech to the Ursulines he expressed his confidence that in the future the German government and nation would not withdraw their support and kindness towards the

<sup>65</sup> In 1937 he changed his surname to Trenk.

<sup>66</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” Schweidnitz-Mannheim*, *op. cit.*, p. 130; T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>67</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” Schweidnitz-Mannheim*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>68</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>69</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>70</sup> B. Kumor, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>71</sup> L. Volk, *Niemiecki Episkopat i Trzecia Rzesza*, in: *Kościół, katolicy i narodowy socjalizm*, *op. cit.*, p. 49; W. Marschall, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>72</sup> J. Pater, *Bertram Adolf*, in: *Słownik biograficzny katolickiego duchowieństwa śląskiego XIX i XX wieku*, M. Pater (ed.), Katowice 1996, pp. 25-27. Cardinal Bertram incurred the anger of other bishops who demanded an open confrontation with German nationalism. Bertram’s motivation was pastoral. Each year he congratulated Hitler on his birthday. Initially, he would send his congratulations on behalf of the German episcopate which he chaired. In 1940, his congratulations included a praise of “the incomparable successes of recent years”, against which Konrad von Preysing protested. After this protest, Bertram would congratulate Hitler on his own behalf only. In May 1945 he appealed to parish priests in his diocese to celebrate funeral masses for Adolf Hitler, the *Führer*. B. Kumor, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

Ursulines' educational work. He said that he respected the National Socialist government and expected that the Ursulines would too. He said: "Saint Angela calls on the Ursulines to try to adjust to the demands of new times. Religion teaches respect for the state and Church authorities. This applies also to our times."

The Ursulines debated the question of tasks and responsibilities in their apostolic work, and regularly held conferences with Dr. Paul Oppermann, their prelate and member of the Breslau Cathedral Chapter. The Ursulines also organised conferences of all mothers superior. One conference was held in Breslau on 6–7 October 1936, attended by cardinal Bertram and the Bishop of Osnabrück, Wilhelm Berning. Their participation provided the Ursulines with signposts for the coming years. The Ursulines knew that regardless of the situation they should provide Catholic education as long as it was possible.<sup>73</sup> The future, however, appeared to be full of dangers. On 10 May 1935 a ministerial regulation was issued prohibiting the Breslau Ursulines from training teachers for schools teaching farming and domestic skills in Wartha. At that time their domestic school was shut down too. Consequently the Ursulines there began offering lower- and higher-level courses in domestic education.<sup>74</sup> Rooms no longer used for educational purposes served as a place of rest for girls attending the Breslau schools and for families and friends of the Ursulines.<sup>75</sup>

In 1936–1937 the Ursuline convents were subject to official and persistent smear campaigns, and their premises were frequently searched. In Ratibor a daughter of the local propaganda chief wrote malicious reports about the religious instruction teacher Father H. Richter. This led to a search of the school, during which the Ursulines and schoolgirls were interrogated by the Gestapo and the Breslau educational authorities. Shortly afterwards, the school was inspected by a group of five ministerial counsellors for secondary schools. Their behaviour towards the sisters and schoolgirls was unkind and hostile.<sup>76</sup>

In March 1937 in Catholic churches the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* ("With burning concern") of Pope Pius XII was read. The encyclical condemned racism and national socialism, described the suffering of the Catholic Church in Germany and expressed hope that peace could be restored. This encyclical increased tensions between the German state and the Church, and the government of the Third Reich started preparing its planned total elimination of the Catholic Church in Germany.<sup>77</sup>

At that time the Ursuline schools were shut down one by one. Recruitment of new pupils and students was forbidden in Liebenthal in 1937 and a year later in Schweidnitz. A regulation was issued forbidding administrative officials to educate their children at convent schools, which threatened the existence of some schools. For exam-

<sup>73</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*; *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau 1933*, p. 163.

<sup>75</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>76</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>77</sup> Z. Zieliński, *Mit brennender Sorge*, in: *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. 12, Lublin 2008, columns 1365–1366; R. Lill, *Ideologia i polityka kościelna narodowego socjalizmu*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

ple, of the 506 girls attending the school in Ratibor, 250 were daughters of officials.<sup>78</sup> The Ursulines in Neustadt O.S. filed an appeal in September 1937. There were 175 students in their higher school, of whom 90 were daughters of administrative officials, and the school was the only one of its kind in the district. In the schools of the Breslau Ursulines, 45% of all schoolgirls and students were daughters of administrative officials.<sup>79</sup>

Catholic schools were harassed by the imposition of land taxes, which were impossible to pay. In August 1937 the Reichsminister of Science, Education and Culture, with the consent of the Reichsminister of the Interior and Finance, ruled that convent schools might be exempted from the land tax if they fulfilled state educational tasks. The financial situation of the schools was very difficult. The Ursulines in Schweidnitz were instructed to pay the land tax because “their work and the purpose for which their buildings were used did not qualify as state tasks”. They were able to survive financially thanks to the support given by their friends and former students. A finance inspector examined their financial position for a week, looking for potential other sources of income for the state. The convent was ordered to pay tax on every money donation since 1936. Retired sisters (over 65 years old) had to pay a 2% tax on their income.<sup>80</sup>

The Breslau Ursulines wrote on 14 February 1938 that due to the closure of the higher years of the lyceum, 16 sisters had nothing to live on and could not pay their taxes.<sup>81</sup> The downsizing of Catholic schools intensified the feeling of insecurity. In 1937 Ursuline schools in Berlin were shut down<sup>82</sup> and the Ursulines worried that the same fate would befall their schools in Silesia. Before Easter 1938 the Breslau Ursulines were forbidden to recruit first-year students to their high school. This meant that, in addition to the loss of children of officials and members of national socialist organisations, they had to reject 230 student applications. Parents who wanted Catholic education for their daughters enrolled them at the middle school (*Mittelschule*), which had not yet undergone reduction. Others, predicting a bleak future, transferred their daughters to state schools.<sup>83</sup>

The Breslau Ursulines transformed their vacated school premises into accommodation for female students.<sup>84</sup> However, the authorities of the Schlesi-schen Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau made it clear to its female students that they should not stay at the Ursulines’ if they did not wish their national credentials to be called into

<sup>78</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Josef“ – Offenbach, op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem; Ursulinenkloster St. Ursula Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, p. 131; T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula“ Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, p. 130; T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>81</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>82</sup> The Berlin Ursulines received a decree issued on 16 July 1936 which stated that their school was no longer needed. A year later they were forced to sell their premises. In 1938 some sisters left for Majpú, Chile, where they founded a convent and a school which is still in operation today.

<sup>83</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem.*

question.<sup>85</sup> Another option to improve the financial position of the convent was the provision of care to elderly women.<sup>86</sup> The German Ursulines were offered hospitality by the Dutch Ursulines should the need arise.<sup>87</sup>

Cardinal Bertram, concerned for the Ursulines' future, pleaded their cause with the Breslau authorities. He asked for a revision of the decrees on the closure of schools. In a letter of 16 February 1938, addressed to the party leader and High President (*Oberpräsident*) of the Prussian province of Silesia, Josef Wagner, Bertram requested revocation of the reduction of Ursuline schools in Liebenthal, arguing that the town had no other schools for girls. The reduction was revoked, but the daughters of administrative officials had to leave the Ursuline schools. Their filial school in Neustadt O.S. was also the only school for girls, and for that reason was not reduced until 1939. The municipal authorities of Neustadt O.S. were to take over the Ursuline school at Easter 1939, but they appealed, stating that they had no means to bear the costs of teachers and school maintenance. Consequently, the Ursulines gained permission to carry on their educational activities until Easter 1940, but still had to pay the detrimental taxes. At the start of World War II the school building was taken over by the military to serve as a hospital with 250 beds. Thus educational activities had to be transferred to the convent, even though there were not yet any patients in the hospital.<sup>88</sup>

At the German Bishops' Conference in August 1938, the reduced intake to schools and their gradual closure were discussed. The bishops and the teaching orders were aware that an open protest addressed to the German government and read from pulpits might aggravate the persecutions. Attempts were made to provide legal assistance to the teaching orders; however, written protests sent by the Ursulines met with no response. The sisters decided to carry on their apostolic tasks as long as possible.<sup>89</sup> The table below presents the educational activities of the Ursulines in 1939.

*Ursuline schools in 1939*

Location	School type
Breslau	higher secondary school with language curriculum, mid-secondary school, ( <i>Mittelschule</i> ), college in liquidation ( <i>Studienanstalt im Abbau</i> ), boarding house
Carlowitz	higher secondary school with domestic curriculum, nursery school, boarding house
Wartha	rest house for sisters, rural domestic school
Liebenthal	boarding house, higher secondary school, private further education school for women, domestic school, nursery school
Schreiberhau	boarding domestic school (state-licensed), rest house for women
Neustadt O.S.	higher secondary school, one-year school

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>86</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula“ „Bey Maria Hülff“ Breslau-Bielefeld, op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> T. Mengel, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 46.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.



Ratibor	private higher secondary school with domestic curriculum (in liquidation), mid-secondary school, elementary school (in liquidation), domestic school, nursery school, boarding house
Schweidnitz	boarding lyceum, commercial and industrial education school for women, domestic school, cooking school, social pedagogy college, nursery school and day room for children
Ziegenhals	rest house for sisters, boarding domestic school (state-licensed), courses for mothers
Ober Weistritz	boarding domestic school, three-month domestic education courses, courses for mothers, rest house for sisters

Source: *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1939*, pp. 168-169.

Also located within the Breslau archdiocese was the Ursuline school in Freiwalddau (formerly Austrian Silesia). There the Ursulines ran a boarding school, a two-year further education school, a commercial school, a domestic school and a three-year technical/industrial school. There were 63 sisters at the convent. The Ratibor convent's filial facilities in Altheide/Polanica lay within the Prague archdiocese.<sup>90</sup> In March 1940 all of the remaining Ursuline schools, along with all other Catholic schools in the Third Reich, were closed down by the Nazi authorities.<sup>91</sup>

#### THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Second World War had a huge impact on life in the Reich. In 1940–1941, on the pretext that there were “necessities justified by the war”, hundreds of monasteries and convents were expropriated, taken over and plundered.<sup>92</sup> As early as January 1940, cardinal Bertram reported to Pope Pius XII that the first year of the war had brought tremendous losses to the Church because of the lost educational impact, schools, educational institutions and Catholic organisations. Bertram also wrote to Hitler on his birthday in April 1940 that the prayers for the *Führer*, the nation and army were a duty of those who were loyal to the state and its authority. He gave an assurance that the Catholic upbringing of children did not conflict with the programmes of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP).<sup>93</sup>

The German Ursulines suffered the atrocities of war no less than their sisters in other countries occupied by Nazi Germany. In the autumn of 1940 the military confis-

<sup>90</sup> Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf”, *op. cit.*, p. 1; C. Szarska, *Urszulanki polskie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*. ADW, [mps] undated, p. 2; M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 38; J. Mandziuk, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>91</sup> Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf”, *op. cit.*, p. 1; C. Szarska, *Urszulanki polskie na Ziemiach Odzyskanych*. ADW, [mps] undated, p. 2; M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>92</sup> U. von Hehl, *Katolicy w Trzeciej Rzeszy*, in: *Kościół, katolicy i narodowy socjalizm*, K. Gotto, K. Repgen (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 66; R. Lill, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Z. Zieliński, *Katolicyzm w III Rzeszy*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

cated all of the Ursuline properties in Schweidnitz, Liebenthal,<sup>94</sup> Altheide, Ziegenhals and Neustadt O.S.<sup>95</sup> These were taken over by families of Gestapo officers, or else served as military hospitals, homes for the elderly or boarding houses. The Ursuline sisters were forced to live and work dispersed among various parishes and hospitals.<sup>96</sup> The modern building of the Ursuline school in Schweidnitz (built in 1929) served as a centre for the elderly and refugees. In July 1941 the convent there was transformed into a military hospital, a boarding house and a school. At that time the Schweidnitz convent of 64 sisters was forced to leave.<sup>97</sup> The Ursulines were allowed to take personal belongings only, and all valuables were confiscated. In July 1941 their filial house in Ober Weistritz was searched and leaflets opposing Hitler were found. Mother Tarsitia Bänsch was arrested and imprisoned. In July 1942 she was moved to the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she remained until the end of the war. The house in Ober Weistritz was taken over by the Gestapo. Training camps for boys and a “national-socialist school for the affianced” were organised there. A similar fate befell the filial house in Ziegenhals. Twenty-nine sisters from Schweidnitz found shelter in the Breslau convent and its filial houses.<sup>98</sup>

When the Ursuline schools in Breslau and Carlowitz were closed down, the Ursulines there ran boarding houses for women and dormitories for girls attending state schools. Later the authorities of Breslau began sending German families and children from bombed areas, including Berlin and Cologne, to those convents. In August 1941 the military took over school buildings in Carlowitz and Wartha. They were transformed into military hospitals, in which the Ursulines were employed.<sup>99</sup> In Wartha the St. Angela convent gave shelter to German refugees on their way from Poland to Germany. In June 1941 it was taken over by the military to serve as a hospital. The teachers’ college there had already been closed down in 1936, and the last one-year course in farming skills, attended by 49 students, was moved from Wartha to Carlowitz, where it was completed on 20 August 1941.<sup>100</sup> After Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the situation was very difficult. In Wartha five military hospitals were set up. In the extremely severe winter of 1941–1942, over one thousand soldiers from the Eastern Front were transported to hospitals in Wartha.<sup>101</sup> The

<sup>94</sup> *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg, op. cit.*, p. 123ff.

<sup>95</sup> *Kroniczka z podróży m. Henryki Sosnowskiej i m. Magdaleny Morawskiej do niemieckich klasztorów urszulańskich na Dolnym Śląsku 21.08-7.09.1945. (Bardo, Polanica, Wrocław, Racibórz)* ADW, [rkps], pp. 6-7.

<sup>96</sup> *Handbuch des Erzbistums Breslau für das Jahr 1942*, p. 139; C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 26; *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg, op. cit.*, p. 123ff.

<sup>97</sup> E. Nawrocki, *Z dziejów Świdnicy*, Świdnica 1998, p. 79.

<sup>98</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>99</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf“ Breslau-Bielefeld, op. cit.*, p. 24; M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>100</sup> M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> *Handbuch des Bistums Breslau Und seines Delegaturbezirks fuer das Jahr 1941, 1942.*

Ursulines worked there as nurses or did domestic work in agreement with Red Cross employees and the hospital management.<sup>102</sup>

Breslau was designated a “fortress city” (*Festung Breslau*). From August 1944 to 8 June 1945 the city was reduced to rubble by aerial and artillery bombardment. In January 1945 the civilian population was ordered to leave. Most of the Ursulines left and moved to Germany’s western lands.<sup>103</sup> On 6 May 1945 Breslau surrendered to the Soviets. The city had been ruined by bombs and Soviet artillery, and partly also burnt and blown up by the Germans themselves.<sup>104</sup>

Some Ursuline sisters in Ratibor who worked in hospitals were evacuated to Germany together with patients and medical staff in January 1945. The other sisters stayed in Ratibor and survived the horrors of the front. The convent and church were completely demolished and burnt down.<sup>105</sup> In Wartha the story was similar. The hospital was evacuated to Saxony in February 1945. The premises of the Ursulines housed military units, replaced later by units of the Todt Organisation.<sup>106</sup> Later the convent served as a training centre for *Volkssturm* militia groups.<sup>107</sup> Finally, in April and early May 1945 Wartha was turned into a war camp. Local people, in particular women and children, were forced by the SS to dig approach trenches. This was part of the preparations for the withdrawal of German troops via the Sudetes.<sup>108</sup> On the Ursuline property a bunker was built.<sup>109</sup> Then SS units moved into the convent, with the task of holding back the Russians. On the night of 7 May, when a ceasefire was declared, SS troops blew up a large stone bridge over the Neisse and a railway bridge, making it impossible for the Red Army to cross the river. The Russians thus stopped at Wartha.<sup>110</sup> When they entered the town on 8 May 1945, 22 sisters were in

<sup>102</sup> T. Karamon, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>103</sup> K. Dola, *Katolicy narodowości niemieckiej na Śląsku po 1945 roku*, in: M. Hirschfeld, M. Trautmann (eds.), *1000 lat Diecezji Wrocławskiej. Dziedzictwo i posłannictwo śląskiego Kościoła*, Dülmen: Lauman 2001, p. 339.

<sup>104</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>105</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Josef” Ratibor-Offenbach*, *op. cit.*, p. 128; *Kroniczka z podróży*, *op. cit.*, [rkps]; C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>106</sup> The Todt Organisation (German: Organisation Todt, OT) was a civil and military engineering group in the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945, named after its founder, Fritz Todt. The OT was a co-operative effort of the German government and the German construction industry. In 1944 the OT employed 340 000 people. Organisation Todt was notorious for using forced labour. In the period from 1942 until the end of the war, approximately 1.4 million POWs and concentration camp prisoners were in its service. The OT was supervised by the SS from 1944.

<sup>107</sup> The *Volkssturm* (“people’s storm”) was a national militia established by Nazi Germany during the last months of WWII. It was staffed by conscripting males between the ages of 16 and 60 years who were not already serving in some military unit. Germany suffered high losses, and units of the *Volkssturm* were to bolster the *Wehrmacht* in combat. All men obliged to work were conscripted: civil officers, tradesmen, physical workers, and young boys from the *Hitlerjugend*. In January 1945 *Volkssturm* units were sent to the front. T. Karamon, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*; T. Pietsch, *Wspomnienie Urszulanek niemieckich z Barda*, [mpis], p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> M. Grakowicz, *Wśród wyżyn Barda*, p. 63; T. Pietsch, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>110</sup> T. Pietsch, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

the convent. The situation was very dangerous, because there were German weapons at the house. The sisters had to leave the convent as quickly as possible and seek shelter with their families in Germany. Only four nuns stayed in Wartha. They took valuables, containers used in church services and food, hiding them in the cellar. The Russians did not find the hiding spot, even though over 200 Russian soldiers stayed at the convent for many weeks. The sisters hid in the woods, and later with the sisters of the Sacred Heart.<sup>111</sup>

Knowing that the Russians tolerated the running of children's homes, the Ursulines appealed to the Caritas organisation in Breslau to send orphans to their care. Fifty-four extremely malnourished, sick and dying children aged 2–15 years arrived in Wartha on July 25.<sup>112</sup> The sisters were again able to do the work of their calling, and enjoyed a certain degree of security because of the children. Many of the children were sick, however, and many died of tuberculosis.<sup>113</sup> The Russians moved out of the convent. When the Poles took power, they often searched the convent of the German sisters. According to the Ursulines' recollections, some Poles visited them wanting to adopt German children. The mayor wanted to move the children to Polish orphanages, an idea which the German sisters deplored.<sup>114</sup>

After the Battle of Breslau was over, the city had the appearance of a huge cemetery. The Ursulines' convent had been hit many times by heavy missiles in February and March 1945, and was 60% destroyed. Both churches had been bombed, roofs had been damaged, and windows and doors blown off.<sup>115</sup> Despite the destruction, the Ursuline convent on Rycerski square looked like an oasis amidst the ruins. The undamaged part of the building, with its thick walls and huge cellars, gave shelter to 53 Ursulines and to other nuns whose convents had been destroyed. It was also a haven for many people in need. In view of the heavy damage to church buildings on Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island), the whole Breslau Chapter and students of the seminary moved to the Ursulines. The Ursulines also gave shelter to old people and refugees who had no roof over their heads.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>111</sup> 100 lat urszulańskiego klasztoru „Sancta Angela” w Bardzie Śląskim (1916-2016), Sr. Ligia Kiecka, Bardo Śląskie 2016, [mps]; *Ursulinenkloster St. Ursula „Bey Maria Hülf”*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>112</sup> The fate of these children was described by Daina Kolbuszewska in her book, *Niemka. Dziecko z pociągu*, Poznań 2011. Kolbuszewska researched the archives of the Wartha/Bardo Ursulines. The children were from nurseries and children's homes in Breslau. They were removed from Breslau in August 1944 when the city was declared to be a fortress (*Festung*). After several months of escaping from the war front, they returned to Breslau in freight wagons escorted by Russians, who intended to transfer them to the East. The children, however, were exhausted, ill and dying (p. 74). The Polish Red Cross took care of them and moved them to the Wartha Ursulines.

<sup>113</sup> T Pietsch, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>115</sup> J. Kębłowski, *Klasztor, kościół ss. urszulanek i Mauzoleum Piastów Wrocławskich*, Wrocław 1998, p. 23.

<sup>116</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf” Breslau-Bielefeld*, op. cit., p. 26; C. Szarska, op. cit., p. 27.

## THE POST-WAR REALITY

After World War II the political situation changed. With the inflow of Poles to Lower Silesia and their taking over the remains of organised economic life and administration, the situation of the German Ursulines became more and more complicated. They were not officially employed and were not entitled to receive ration coupons for food and other necessities. German Ursulines from all of the Silesian convents appealed for help to Mother Emanuela Mrozowska, who was Provincial Superior for the Polish province of the Roman Union. They asked her to send Polish Ursuline sisters as soon as possible to save the convents and their communities, because only Polish citizens were able to deal with the new authorities – for instance, to apply for ration coupons.<sup>117</sup>

At the same time the Church authorities insisted that Polish convents take over Church assets in what were now the western lands of Poland. The Bishop of Katowice, Stanisław Adamski, visited Breslau (now Wrocław) thrice: in May, June and July 1945, staying each time at the Ursulines' convent on Rycerski square, where the curia had its provisional seat. Bishop Adamski passed on letters and appeals from the German sisters to Polish Ursulines, and encouraged the latter to assist the convents in Silesia.<sup>118</sup> The situation of the provincial authorities of the Polish Ursulines was difficult, because at that time there was a need to organise their schools anew, and there was a high number of schoolgirls applying (in Lublin, Cracow, Rybnik, Tarnów, Poznań, Gdynia and Włocławek). During World War II the German Ursulines had tried to help the Polish Ursulines as much as they could (in Posen and Rybnik), and so after the war the Polish province felt obliged to help the German sisters.<sup>119</sup>

In response to the appeals of the German Ursulines, on 12 May 1945, just four days after Germany's surrender, two Polish Ursulines – Mother Józefa Wysocka and Mother Bogusława Lewińska – set off for Wrocław. They were not able to go further than Opole, because bridges and railway tracks had been destroyed. It was not until 23 August 1945 that, on the order of Provincial Superior Mother Emanuela Mrozowska, Mother Henryka Sosnowska and Mother Magdalena Morawska began a tour of the Silesian Ursuline convents that were requesting help. They visited the two sites in Wrocław (the convent and the filial house in Karłowice/Carlowitz, located within the city boundaries since 1928), the property in Bardo (formerly Wartha) and the filial house of the Racibórz (Ratibor) convent in Polanica (Altheide). They established contacts with the Church and state authorities in Silesia. The situation of the German Ursulines was tragic, and they begged their visitors to enable the rapid arrival of Polish Ursulines to assist them on a regular basis. The German Ursulines did not speak

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<sup>117</sup> Letter of Mother Czesława Neubauer from Carlowitz to the Provincial Supervisor Mother Emanuela Mrozowska dated 24 May 1945, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/4.

<sup>118</sup> *Kroniczka z podróży, op. cit.*, [rkps], ref. no. A.IV.0/1; S. Trzecińska, *Pierwsze lata po drugiej wojnie światowej urszulanek polskich we Wrocławiu*, ADW, [rkps].

<sup>119</sup> B. Weyman, *Urszulanki polskie na Dolnym Śląsku w roku 1945, 1954*, ADW, sygn. A.IV.2/4 [mps].

Polish, and they asked for a few Polish Ursulines to come and help deal with matters where knowledge of the language was necessary. In a diary documenting the tour, the situation in Bardo was described as follows:

On the gate of the convent in Warta [the German name of the town was Wartha] it is written: "Klasztor Ursulinów, dom dla dzieci" [Ursuline convent, children's home]. The Mothers there welcomed us wholeheartedly... At present the building is full of expropriated Germans and poor children. Both local people and the Mothers do not understand the political situation. They think that the situation is temporary and are fully convinced that this land will be German again. They do not consider the possibility of leaving Silesia at all. They feel at home and if allowed they would probably easily accept Polish citizenship to survive in the present situation.<sup>120</sup>

On 12 August the Ursulines on Rycerski square played host to the Primate of Poland Cardinal August Hlond, who had come to Wrocław on an unofficial visit to prepare the Cathedral Chapter for the changes to come, and held a meeting with the vicar capitular Ferdynand Piontek. As decided by the Holy See, from 1 September 1945 the new western lands of Poland were to come under the Polish church administration.<sup>121</sup> In August 1945, the newly appointed apostolic administrator of the Wrocław diocese Father Dr. Karol Milik arrived in Wrocław. He and a group of Polish priests stayed at the chaplaincy hosted by the German Ursulines on Rycerski square.<sup>122</sup> Father Dr. Bolesław Kominek, the new apostolic administrator of the Opole diocese, also arrived. On 1 September 1945 the vicar capitular Father Dr. Ferdynand Piontek officially passed the administration of the Wrocław archdiocese to the Polish authorities of the Church represented by Father Karol Milik.<sup>123</sup> This historic event took place in the Ursulines' convent, in its beautiful baroque hall, known as the abbey.<sup>124</sup>

From then on the organisation of the religious life of the Polish Catholic Church in Poland's western lands could develop freely. Both apostolic administrators – Father Karol Milik and Father Bolesław Kominek – insisted that Polish Ursulines take over the convents of the German Ursulines. They wished to create Polish spiritual and apostolic centres and provide support for repatriates from the east. The Polish Ursulines consented on the condition that they would be allowed to run schools for young Poles. Their proposal was appreciated by the Church authorities and local units of state administration.<sup>125</sup> Mother Henryka Sosnowska came to Wrocław several times in September and October 1945, striving to open a Polish school in the Karłowice filial

<sup>120</sup> *Kroniczka z podróży, op. cit.*; *Zapiski m. Józefy Wysockiej, Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia* [Notes of Mother Józefa Wysocka], ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>121</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf”, op. cit.*, p. 27; J. Pater, *Ksiądz infułat dr Karol Milik jako rządcą archidiecezji wrocławskiej w latach 1945-51*, Wrocław 2012, p. 52.

<sup>122</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülf” Breslau-Bielefeld, op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>123</sup> W. Müller, *Niemiecka pozostałość Arcybiskupstwa wrocławskiego*, in: M. Hirschfeld, M. Trautmann (eds.), *1000 lat Diecezji Wrocławskiej. Dziedzictwo i posłannictwo śląskiego Kościoła*, Dülmen: Lauman 2001, p. 321. The capitular vicar Father Dr. Ferdynand Piontek judged this situation to be provisional and temporary..

<sup>124</sup> J. Pater, *Ksiądz infułat dr Karol Milik jako rządcą archidiecezji wrocławskiej w latach 1945-51*, Wrocław 2012, p. 57; B. Kominek, *W służbie ziem zachodnich*, Wrocław 1977, p. 31.

<sup>125</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 5; B. Weyman, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

house.<sup>126</sup> The Polish sisters, however, were concerned with the distressing and difficult situation of the German Ursulines, who could not contemplate leaving their homes. For a long time the German Ursulines believed that the existing situation was temporary and that Silesia would be part of Germany again. All of them were ready to adopt Polish citizenship to survive the “temporary” situation and stay at their convents.<sup>127</sup> Also the situation of the Polish population in the western lands at that time was uncertain and unstable, despite the Potsdam Agreement, which stated that the German population was to be resettled in Germany.<sup>128</sup> At the convent on Rycerski square no sister spoke Polish. Only Mother Superior Czesława Neubauer<sup>129</sup> in Karłowice knew Polish well.<sup>130</sup> As the assistance of Polish sisters was indispensable for the German Ursulines in Wrocław, Edeltrudis Malchus, Mother Superior of the German Ursulines’ congregation, accompanied by Mother Czesława Neubauer from Karłowice, went to Cracow on 25 September 1945 to ask for help in person.<sup>131</sup>

#### POLISH URSULINES IN LOWER SILESIA

##### (A) Wrocław

On 3 October 1945 three Polish Ursulines arrived in Lower Silesia. Sister Adamina Borowiak came to Bardo, sister Justyna Małecka to Polanica and sister Celestyna Talarczyk to Wrocław. Sister Celestyna Talarczyk established relations

<sup>126</sup> Notes from a query of Sr. Laetitia Wojślaw, provincial archivist in Cracow, [rkps] 1986, ADW, A.IV.0/1; *Kronika świąteczna Domu Wrocławskiego z 1948 roku*, ADW, A.IV.0/1. Convent annals from 1945–51 are missing for unknown reasons; they are replaced by records sent to all Ursuline communities in Poland together with Christmas greetings, a tradition which lasted to 1968. The 1948 Wrocław annals were the first post-war.

<sup>127</sup> *Kroniczka z podróży...*, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> B. Kominek, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>129</sup> Mother Czesława Neubauer (born 26 May 1881), prefect and then Mother Superior of the Karłowice house, was a Pole from Pomerania, who received her education at the Ursuline school in Berent (Kościerzyna). In 1940 her family was deported from Pomerania and almost all of its members perished. Mother Czesława considered herself Polish, however she remained loyal to her convent where she had lived for 40 years. Throughout WWII she helped Poles, risking that her convent would be confiscated and all the sisters sent to a concentration camp. After WWII she was granted Polish citizenship. Everybody who knew her highly appreciated her kindness. She was held in high esteem by all her convent sisters. She died in Wrocław in 1949. *List z Karłowic z dnia 7.07.1949 r.* [A letter from Karłowice dated 7 July 1949] *Kroniczki Świąteczne 1947-53*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.6/1; *Klasztor sióstr urszulanek, Wrocław. Rejestr sióstr zakonnych wstępujących do klasztoru urszulanek we Wrocławiu (wraz z wyszczególnieniem posagu) w latach 1898-1942* [Ursuline convent in Breslau. Register of sisters joining the Breslau convent (including their dowries)], ADW [rkps]; *Zapiski m. Józefy Wysockiej, Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia* [Notes of Mother Józefa Wysocka], ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>130</sup> *Kroniczka z podróży...*, p. 5. The convents at Karłowice and Bardo were filial houses. The Mother Superior resided at Rycerski square in Wrocław. The superiors at the filial houses were called prefects, to whom some power was delegated..

<sup>131</sup> *Zapiski m. Józefy Wysockiej* [Notes of Mother Józefa Wysocka], *Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia*, ADW ref. no. A.IV.2/3; C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

with the Polish authorities and monitored the needs of the inflowing Polish population. The repatriates were mainly Poles forcibly deported from the east, from Lvov in particular, but also included former inhabitants of Warsaw who had suffered long and tragic experiences. There were also Poles from other parts of Poland, from camps and prisons, and displaced persons.<sup>132</sup> The Polish Ursulines recognised 5 October 1945 as the beginning of their history in the western lands.<sup>133</sup>

Mother Emanuela Mrozowska, the Provincial Superior for the Polish province of the Ursulines of the Roman Union, visited Wrocław, Bardo and Polanica on 12–13 November.<sup>134</sup> In Wrocław she had a lengthy discussion with Father Karol Milik and Mother Edeltrudis Malchus. She also talked with many important administrative officials.<sup>135</sup> Following this reconnaissance, at the provincial meetings in November 1945 it was decided that the premises of the German Ursulines in Wrocław would be taken over. Since the situation of the German Ursulines was difficult and painful, the Polish Ursulines did not decide to found a Polish school in Wrocław at that time. The Karłowice house was being used as a hospital, and the convent on Rycerski square was overcrowded with lodgers.<sup>136</sup> On 7 December 1945 sister Zenobia Kruppik arrived. She was appointed Mother Superior of the Polish Ursulines in Wrocław and officially represented the convent.<sup>137</sup>

The most urgent matter was to organise a dormitory in the convent for female students of the University of Wrocław, as the academic year began on 15 November 1945.<sup>138</sup> The Polish Ursulines also made efforts to establish a Polish school. On 4 November 1946 they were officially granted permission by the Wrocław educational authorities to open and run a lower secondary school and grammar school in Wrocław.<sup>139</sup> Many post-war orphans found their home there.<sup>140</sup> This lower secondary school was the second such Polish establishment in Wrocław, after the 1<sup>st</sup> State Lower Secondary

<sup>132</sup> A. Łączka, *Ze wspomnień siostr Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej we Wrocławiu*, [mps] p. 5, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>133</sup> B. Weyman, *op. cit.*, p. 33. The Wrocław community of the German Ursulines led by Mother Edeltrudis Malchus comprised 53 sisters. The German Ursulines distanced themselves from the Polish Ursulines and there was much distrust. They wanted to safeguard their achievements at any cost and a Polish school was unthinkable for them.

<sup>134</sup> *Zapiski m. Józefy Wysockiej* [Notes of Mother Józefa Wysocka], *Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>135</sup> B. Weyman, *op. cit.*, p. 42; C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>137</sup> *Kronika święteczna Domu Wrocławskiego z 1948 roku. Kroniczki Święteczne 1947-53*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.6/1.

<sup>138</sup> M. Przywecka-Samecka, *op. cit.*, p. 38; A. Łączka, *Ze wspomnień siostr Urszulanek Unii Rzymskiej we Wrocławiu*, [mps], ADW, p. 7ff; S. Trzeciecka, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> J. Jezierska, *Jubilatka. Pięćdziesiąt lat Szkoły Urszulańskiej we Wrocławiu w zarysie*, in: T. Małachowska (ed.), *50 lat urszulańskiej szkoły*, p. 12.

<sup>140</sup> G. Łukaniewicz, *Referat na 25-lecie szkoły*, [rkps], ADW, A.IV.0/1; L. Rychlewska, *Pierwsze „ostrog” pani Profesor*, in: *50 lat urszulańskiej szkoły*, p. 12.



School. Its headmistress was Mother Gertruda Łukaniewicz, who was a university graduate and had 25 years of teaching experience.<sup>141</sup>

The order to evacuate all German Ursulines was delivered in the afternoon of 6 April 1947. Because of a fire in the school building, the German Ursulines finally left on 1 July 1947. Twenty-six sisters and their Mother Superior Edeltrudis Malchus left on that day.<sup>142</sup> The sisters who decided to stay had been born in Silesia and applied for Polish citizenship. Thirty-five sisters stayed in Karłowice, led by Mother Czesława Neubauer.<sup>143</sup> After the German sisters left, Polish Ursulines from other convents arrived, and the convent on Rycerski square (renamed Nankier square) became purely Polish in character, although some German Ursulines born in Silesia remained until 1956.<sup>144</sup> In the first years the work done for schoolchildren and students certainly made an important contribution to strengthening the feeling of Polishness and to the development of religious life in the western lands.<sup>145</sup>

### **(B) Filial houses of the Wrocław convent in Karłowice and Bardo**

The hospital in Karłowice continued its work as a private institution. The German Ursulines tried to maintain it, because its existence ensured that they could stay in Wrocław. They worked in the hospital and the diocesan curia, and gained income from produce grown in their 1.5-hectare garden.<sup>146</sup> However the hospital was nationalised in 1949, like all private hospitals in Poland. Later it became a children's hospital. Thirty-five German sisters born in Silesia lived in a wing of the filial house in Karłowice until 1957, despite the efforts of the hospital management to remove them and expand the space available for the hospital.<sup>147</sup> Finally the German Ursulines left Karłowice on 19 March 1957. They moved to Bielefeld in West Germany, where their community had already built a huge school in 1951.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Wniosek o nadanie praw państwowych dla Szkoły Sióstr Urszulanek we Wrocławiu na rok szkolny 1946/47*, AAN, Min. Ośw., ref. no. 1376, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> *Sprawozdanie o wyjeździe sióstr urszulanek niemieckich z Wrocławia, Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>143</sup> *Relacja s. Celestyny Talarczyk, Dokumenty dotyczące dziejów zgromadzenia*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.2/3.

<sup>144</sup> On 15 September 1956 the last three German sisters left for Karłowice: Engelberta Renner, Joanna Ochman and Baptysta Michalska. *Kronika Klasztoru wrocławskiego 1956-58. Notatka z dnia 15.09.1956*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.0/3.

<sup>145</sup> E. Jezierska, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>146</sup> *Korespondencja Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań z Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej we Wrocławiu w sprawie przekwaterowania urszulanek z gmachu szpitala przy ul. Kasprowicza. 26 kwietnia 1954*, AAN, UdsW, ref. no. 21/59.

<sup>147</sup> *Korespondencja Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań z Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej we Wrocławiu w sprawie przekwaterowania urszulanek z gmachu szpitala przy ul. Kasprowicza. 1954-55*, AAN, UdsW, ref. no. 21/59.

<sup>148</sup> *Kronika Klasztoru wrocławskiego 1956-58, dnia 19.03.1957*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.0/3.

The St. Angela convent in Bardo was a filial house of the Wrocław Ursuline convent. Responding to the appeals of the Wrocław German Ursulines for help in the new political situation, in September 1945 the Ursuline authorities of the Polish province sent Mother Henryka Sosnowska there. She came with letters written by Father Karol Milik and Mother Emanuela Mrozowska authorising her to begin the takeover of the convent by Polish Ursulines. The building was large and comfortable; it was a perfect place for sisters and school students to rest. Its good climatic conditions were the main reason why this establishment was retained, although it was not planned to carry on much apostolic work there.<sup>149</sup>

On 3 December 1945 the new superior, sister Paula Winiarska, arrived, accompanied by sisters Jowita Szymańska and Kandyda Pietroń. They found the convent in Bardo overcrowded: 19 German Ursulines (eight choir sisters and eleven lay sisters), over 50 German children in the orphanage (aged 1 to 12 years), and a nursery. In addition there were many families of German refugees and families of the German sisters, about 100 people in total. The German sisters took care of the children and lodgers and lived in extreme poverty. Sister Paula helped them obtain food supplies and dealt with external administrative issues. She also tried to teach the German sisters Polish.<sup>150</sup> The mayor of Bardo, Teofil Tomczak, supported the orphanage with provisions of food obtained from the UNRRA.<sup>151</sup> It was his desire that the children be raised speaking Polish. The sisters prepared the children for their First Communion and other sacraments. Soon schoolgirls began to approach the Polish sisters for Polish language lessons and preparation for the lower secondary school.

Under the repatriation process, 11 German Ursulines left for Germany on 29 April 1946.<sup>152</sup> Those who remained applied for Polish citizenship. The decline in the number of sisters made the work of the Ursulines harder. At that time children's homes were much needed. The Polish Ursulines declared that they were ready to take in several dozen orphans. The sisters planned to run a home for small children and to open a school for childminders. However, at the end of August, even the German Ursulines who had applied for Polish citizenship and residence in Bardo were forced to leave for Germany.<sup>153</sup> This changed the situation drastically. Mother Emanuela Mrozowska soon decided that the home for small children was to be closed down completely. It

<sup>149</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>150</sup> *Kronika klasztoru w Bardzie Śląskim, zeszyt I od 3 grudnia 1945 do 1 czerwca 1947 r.*

<sup>151</sup> UNRRA – The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was an international relief agency founded in 1943, prior to the founding of the United Nations, to provide relief to areas liberated from the Axis powers when the fighting ended. *Kronika klasztoru w Bardzie Śląskim – notatka z dnia 17 lutego 1946 roku.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” „Bey Maria Hülff”, op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>153</sup> *Wspomnienie Urszulanek niemieckich z Barda, op. cit.* The German Ursulines from Bardo, after a long and arduous journey in freight wagons and searching for a place to settle and work, reached Bielefeld. There they received permission to build a Catholic school. Building the school was a huge effort, but they succeeded in completing the large and beautiful building in 1951.

was finally closed at the end of November 1946, when the children were moved to the convent of Mary the Immaculate in Bardo.<sup>154</sup>

Sister Paula Winiarska organised Polish language courses for Silesian women, and from January 1947 she also offered learning support to schoolchildren. She organised a dayroom where many children came every day to do their homework with the assistance of the Polish Ursulines.<sup>155</sup> In 1947 numerous schools asked to hold summer camps in Bardo. An important part of the Ursulines' activities in Bardo was the hospitality which they provided to sisters from other convents, to groups of Ursuline schoolgirls, to families of the Ursulines and of former students, and to many priests who came to rest in the beautiful and formerly unknown western lands. In the first years after World War II, the Polish Ursulines hosted youth touring groups, girl guides, spiritual retreats for university students, summer camps and various courses for pupils of the Ursuline schools, nuns' seminars and pedagogical conferences. Priests from various dioceses also arrived for spiritual retreats and observation days.<sup>156</sup>

The Ursulines in Bardo continued their activities even though in August 1949 half of their convent was requisitioned to serve as a preventorium for 100 sick children. The preventorium was called "Warszawianka" because it belonged to the Central Union of Metalworkers in Warsaw.<sup>157</sup> In 1967 its premises began to function as a state nursing home for mentally handicapped children.<sup>158</sup> Over time the Ursulines began teaching catechesis in nearby parishes. After the fall of communism in 1989, they regained and refurbished their confiscated premises. As a result they were able to receive more guests, including groups coming for retreats and to rest, individual clergy members and nuns, scouts and guides, as well as family events organised by the Light-Life Movement (widely known as the Oasis Movement), seminars for married couples and evangelistic Alpha courses. Since 1990 the Ursulines have organised summer camps for children.

#### OTHER CONVENTS IN SILESIA

##### (C) Racibórz and its filial house in Polanica

The Ursuline convent in Racibórz (Ratibor) was completely destroyed and burned down by the Russians. The German sisters who had not been evacuated before the front approached found shelter with the Polish Ursulines in Rybnik.<sup>159</sup> The following was written on 19 April 1945 in the annals of the Rybnik convent:

<sup>154</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>156</sup> *Kroniczka świąteczna domu w Bardzie Śląskim z 1947 roku*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.6/1.

<sup>157</sup> *Kroniczka świąteczna domu w Bardzie Śląskim z 1949 roku*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.6/1.

<sup>158</sup> *100 lat urszulańskiego klasztoru „Sancta Angela” w Bardzie Śląskim (1916-2016)*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>159</sup> *Ursulinenkloster st. Josef Ratibor-Offenbach*, in: *Beiträge zur Geschichte XI:1955*, p. 127.

On 16 April the Rybnik community embraced the Racibórz Ursulines wholeheartedly. They had suffered war hardships, and had been homeless and vulnerable for several weeks wandering from village to village. When they learned that the Rybnik Ursulines were asking about their fate, their exhausted and starving group (18 sisters) came to Rybnik. Their appearance were appalling. All of them were dirty, covered in dust, deadly tired, and some were bruised. Their Mother Superior had had her head hit with a rifle butt, sister Angela had a black eye, having been beaten and stabbed with a knife. All of the sisters were frightened. Sister Filomena sat amidst bundles on a push cart. Sister Józefa was in her wheelchair; she cannot walk any longer. It was difficult not to cry. All of us cried. As it happened it was St. Joseph's day – the patron saint of the sick. Despite our cramped conditions, we did everything to embrace these poor sisters, with whom for years the Rybnik convent had had cordial sisterly relations and who during the war supported Rybnik as much as they could.<sup>160</sup>

Knowing that the Racibórz convent could in no way be rebuilt and that the German sisters would be not allowed to carry on their apostolic work, the Mother Superior, Benedykta Gröger, asked the authorities of the Polish province for help, and sent some sisters to Germany to look for a new place for their convent.<sup>161</sup> She also wrote a declaration dated 29 August 1945, and addressed to the Mother Superior of the Polish province Emanuela Mrozowska, in which she transferred the German Ursulines' property in Polanica (Altheide) to the Polish Ursulines. In August 1945 two Polish Ursulines, sisters Teofana Rymer and Bogusława Lewińska, arrived in Polanica. In October they were joined by more Polish Ursulines and in December by sister Lidia Poleska, who was appointed their mother superior. In January 1946 they began teaching domestic education courses. At the request of parents, they also taught the curriculum of the first two years of the lower secondary school. Sister Eudoksja Zagrocka taught Polish language classes for the German sisters from Racibórz and catechesis in the nearby parishes.<sup>162</sup>

In March 1946, the German sisters were deported to Germany. There, in October 1946, they opened their school in Offenbach in rented premises. In 1953 they moved the school to their own newly constructed building.<sup>163</sup>

In late 1946, the Polish Ursulines in Polanica were permitted by the educational authorities in Wrocław to run a children's home for 30 girls, some of whom had been repatriated from Germany.<sup>164</sup> However, in 1948 the communist government announced the closure of this children's home. In March 1952 the orphanage was nationalised. At the request of the Wrocław curia, the Ursulines in Polanica opened and ran a rest house for elderly priests. Over time, this rest house has become a holiday residence for Polish Ursulines and their families. The Ursulines have also hosted summer camps for children and adolescents.<sup>165</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Quoted after C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>161</sup> *Ursulinenkloster st. Josef Ratibor-Offenbach, op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>162</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 43ff.

<sup>163</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Josef” Ratibor-Offenbach, op. cit.*, p. 127; *Marienschule der Ursulinen Offenbach–Main. 40 Jahre. 1946–1986*, Offenbach 1986, p. 5ff.

<sup>164</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 16ff.

<sup>165</sup> *Kroniczka Świąteczna Domu w Polanicy z 1952 roku*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.6/1.

**(D) Świdnica and Lubomierz and their filial houses**

Not only the German Ursulines in Wrocław, Bardo and Polanica, but other Ursuline convents in the western lands also asked the Polish province for help. Polish Ursulines tried to provide assistance, and would send sisters for short stays. However, the Polish province could not take over other premises of the German Ursulines. To ease the situation, the Polish Ursulines asked other convents to do so.

German Ursulines returned to their convent in Świdnica (Schweidnitz) in June 1945.<sup>166</sup> Three Polish Ursulines did much to help them. These were sisters Konstanca Mierzwicka, Józefa Wysocka and Nazariusza Augustyniak. Sister Nazariusza Augustyniak travelled around to bring expropriated and dispersed German sisters to the convent, as it was safer for them to travel with a Polish companion. She also strove to obtain food for the starving sisters in Świdnica, and helped some sisters who had been born in Silesia to apply for Polish citizenship. That citizenship could help them remain in their convent after its agreed takeover by the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Cracow. Polish Ursulines helped the German Ursulines in the Świdnica filial house in Głuchołazy (Ziegenhals), near Nysa, in a similar way. Thanks to the efforts of sisters Konstanca Mierzwicka and Nazariusza Augustyniak, the Ursulines in Głuchołazy were able to keep their premises, and some were granted Polish citizenship.<sup>167</sup>

The German Ursulines of Świdnica were forced to leave Poland on 20 August 1946. They resumed their educational work in Mannheim.<sup>168</sup> Twenty-seven Silesian Ursulines were permitted to stay in their convent together with the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who had come from Cracow. The sisters from Cracow ran a Caritas nursery school, while the Ursulines ran a dormitory for adults and a canteen for invalids. In 1957 there were still 16 Silesian Ursulines in Świdnica.<sup>169</sup> They joined their convent in Mannheim in spring 1958.<sup>170</sup> Five Ursulines worked in Głuchołazy.<sup>171</sup> In the autumn of 1971, only one elderly sister, Berchmana Donder, remained. She was joined by three Polish Ursuline sisters: Julia Kubiczek, Piusa Czyżewska and Elżbieta Zagrocka. Sister Elżbieta Zagrocka was appointed their Superior.<sup>172</sup> The Świdnica convent also had a small rural property 10 km away in Bystrzyca Kłodzka (formerly Habelschwerdt). This was also taken over by the sisters from Cracow, but later it served as a state children's home.<sup>173</sup> In 1958, the

<sup>166</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, p. 130ff.

<sup>167</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>168</sup> *Ursulinenkloster „St. Ursula” Schweidnitz-Mannheim, op. cit.*, p. 135ff.

<sup>169</sup> *Urszulanki Świdnica. Ankieta z dnia 21.05.1957 r. Ankiety do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań*, Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archives of Modern Records, henceforth AAN], UdsW ref. no. 51/2.

<sup>170</sup> *Wyjazd sióstr urszulanek ze Świdnicy*; AAN, UdsW ref. no. 31/1590.

<sup>171</sup> *Urszulanki Świdnica. Ankieta z dnia 1.03.1952 r. Ankiety do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań*, AAN, UdsW ref. no. 51/2.

<sup>172</sup> *Kronika Domu Wrocławskiego 1958-65. Notatka z dnia 2 kwietnia 1971 r.*, ADW, ref. no. A.IV.0/4.

<sup>173</sup> *Urszulanki Świdnica, Ankieta do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań*, AAN, UdsW ref. no. 51/2.

Świdnica convent became the property of the Saint Joseph parish, by order of Bishop Kominek.<sup>174</sup>

The Ursuline convent in Lubomierz (Liebenthal), in beautiful mountainous surroundings, and its filial house in Szklarska Poręba (Schreiberhau), also asked for help. After military operations ended, the German sisters returned to their convent, which was then confiscated first by the Russians and then by the Poles. In July 1946, the German Ursulines were ordered to leave Silesia.<sup>175</sup> The Polish Ursulines had insufficient human resources to take over the Lubomierz convent. It was taken over instead by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Felix of Cantalice Third Order Regular of St. Francis of Assisi. The Felician Sisters ran an orphanage and nursery school there. The Polish Ursulines intended to take over the filial house of the Lubomierz convent in Szklarska Poręba and transform it into a health resort for sisters suffering from tuberculosis, but in 1947 they decided to pass it to the Caritas organisation in Wrocław.<sup>176</sup> From 1929, the German Ursulines of Lubomierz also had a filial house in Prudnik (Neustadt), where they ran the Saint Angela Merici lyceum for girls.<sup>177</sup> During World War II the German Ursulines in Prudnik worked in the hospital; they were probably evacuated along with the patients and medical staff, and did not return there.<sup>178</sup> In 1945, a Polish state lyceum for girls was opened in the former school of the German Ursulines. A surviving reminder of the building's history is a statuette of Saint Angela Merici on the pediment.<sup>179</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The history of the Ursulines in Silesia, in both its early and later years, reflects the complicated history of the region itself, where profound political changes were frequent. These changes were frequent enough to make political, social and cultural life turbulent, and often threatened the very existence of religious orders and their apostolic endeavours. Despite the storms of history, the Ursuline sisters continued their educational mission with trust and enthusiasm, running schools and boarding houses. Of the eleven houses of the German Ursulines in Lower Silesia, after World War II the Polish Sisters of the Roman Union of the Order of St. Ursula took over the houses in Wrocław on Nankier square, in Bardo and in Polanica, and in 1971 also in

<sup>174</sup> *Urszulanki Świdnica. Pismo Prez. Woj. Rady Narodowej Wydział do spraw wyznań do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań z dnia 13 grudnia 1958 r. Ankiety do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań*, AAN, UdsW ref. no. 51/2.

<sup>175</sup> *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>176</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>177</sup> *Ursulinenkloster von der Unbefleckten Empfängnis Maria Liebenthal – Glücksburg*, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>178</sup> C. Szarska, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>179</sup> *Z historii II Liceum Ogólnokształcącego im. Stefanii Sempołowskiej, Prudnik; ul. T. Kościuszki 55*. [http://lo2prudnik.wodip.opole.pl/e107\\_plugins/content/content.php?content.6](http://lo2prudnik.wodip.opole.pl/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.6). (accessed 27 May 2016)

Głuchołazy.<sup>180</sup> Only in Wrocław did they found a secondary school for girls, which survived the repressions of the communist authorities. At present, their secondary school in Wrocław is public and co-educational. On the premises on Nankier square there are also a boarding house for schoolgirls and a dormitory for female students of various higher education institutions in Wrocław. The buildings in Bardo and Polanica (and until 1997 also in Głuchołazy) are used for retreats and for holidaying and spiritual formation groups.

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**Key words:** Ursulines, Catholic education, religious orders, Lower Silesia

#### ABSTRACT

*In the lands of Lower Silesia, which after World War II became part of the Polish state, the Ursuline Sisters have carried on their apostolic mission for over 330 years. They worked in Wrocław/Breslau and other foundations established by the Wrocław chapter: Świdnica/Schweidnitz, Lubomierz/Liebenthal and Racibórz/Ratibor. Each of these convents had filial houses. Ursulines have always been devoted to the education of girls in boarding and day schools. The history of the Ursulines in Wrocław/Breslau, both in its initial stage and also in the later years, reflects the complex history of Silesia, which experienced frequent and profound political changes. These changes had a profound impact on social and cultural developments and often threatened the very existence of religious orders and their apostolic work. Despite their turbulent history, the Ursuline sisters have continued their educational mission with generosity and enthusiasm in Lower Silesia up to the present day.*

*After World War II, the German Ursulines were forced to leave their flourishing schools. Of 11 houses of the German Ursulines in Lower Silesia, only four were taken over by the Polish Province of the Roman Union of Ursulines after World War II: Wrocław/Breslau, Bardo Śląskie/Wartha, Polanica/Altheide and, from 1971, also Głuchołazy/Ziegenhals. Only in Wrocław was the Ursuline secondary school for girls reactivated, and miraculously, it survived the entire period of communist rule. Thus, the long tradition of Ursuline schools in Lower Silesia, which began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, has been preserved.*

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<sup>180</sup> The building in Głuchołazy was damaged by flood in 1997, and the Ursulines passed it to the Caritas unit of the Opole diocese.

