

Summary

The main theme of this dissertation is the life and work of Jan Kędzior (1880-1955) – a politician and social activist from Upper Silesia. The source base for the research consists of archival materials related to the various stages and initiatives of J. Kędzior, which are located, among others, in the State Archives in Katowice, the Archdiocesan Archives in Katowice, the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance in Katowice, the Central Military Archives – Military Historical Office in Warsaw-Rembertów, and the private archives of J. Kędzior's family.

The worksheets present a picture of J. Kędzior's life, covering both his activities and the broader socio-political context. The combination of these two themes allows us to learn about J. Kędzior's life in a broad spectrum, which may be helpful in understanding his decisions and choices. He had to make them at every stage of his life: during his early socio-political activities, when he was involved at the local level; during the Silesian uprisings and the plebiscite, when he served as the district plebiscite commissioner; during the interwar period, when he served as a member of the Silesian Parliament and as a senator in the Senate of the Second Polish Republic; during the Second World War; and in the new post-war reality.

Learning about J. Kędzior's life is also an attempt to answer numerous research questions: what did the model of a local pro-Polish activist look like in the first two decades of the 20th century in the reality of the German Empire; what was the role and importance of local activists during the Silesian uprisings and the plebiscite campaign; how did the political and social career of an activist from a peasant background develop; how did a well-known and respected politician and social activist find his place in the face of two totalitarian regimes? Through the life of J. Kędzior, it is also possible to build a general picture of what life might have been like for people involved in the Polish cause from the period before the outbreak of the First World War to the times and realities of 'People's' Poland.

The work itself consists of four chapters preceded by an introduction and concluded with an epilogue and two appendices. Each chapter corresponds to a particular stage in the life of J. Kędzior, which has been correlated with general historical events.