

**Report of Research Conducted during the Summer of 2006**  
**by Chris Ganowski**

I would like to thank the Centre for European Studies for giving me the opportunity to travel to the region of Silesia, Poland in order to conduct research for my MA Research Paper.

The general premise of my Research Paper revolves around the idea of coal miners' trade unions in Poland. In general, the literature written about trade unions in Poland paints a pessimistic picture of industrial relations with trade unions declining in membership and losing influence with government and the private sector. The aim of my paper is to refute this generalization with the case example of the Miners' Trade Union (*Związek Zawodowy Górników, ZZG*) in the region of Silesia, Poland. This particular trade union seems to be an exemption among others in Polish industrial relations, with a strong public presence, high membership rates, and ability to influence both the government and the private sector. The reasons for this exception to the rule seem to be multi-faceted and include issues such as the uniqueness of Silesian culture, the highly urbanized and industrial nature of the region, the importance of the coal mining industry to Poland's national economy, the profession of coal mining in itself creating stronger trade unions as witnessed in a number of other countries throughout the world, and the effect of Poland's recent accession to the European Union.

With such a large number of possible factors contributing to the uniqueness of the ZZG among Polish industrial relations, my research in turn, had to take a multi-faceted approach. I was lucky to spend a great deal of time in Silesia which allowed me to witness first hand how the society functions and the high degree to which the mining industry prevails in the region. When in Poland I was able to access a number of primary and secondary sources that would have been impossible to find in Canada. I visited the Silesian University (*Uniwersytet Śląski*) in Katowice where I purchased books about my exact topic from university bookstores. I obtained most of my primary sources from the people I interviewed. I was able to conduct eight interviews in all. Through persistence and a little bit of luck, I was able to interview some very high ranking experts related to my field of study, including university professors, managers in private mining companies, Members of Parliament, City Councillors, and trade union leaders at the enterprise and national levels. These interviews helped me tremendously in developing a clearer picture of industrial relations in the mining sector through a variety of perspectives.

This Research Paper would have impossible to write without the knowledge that I gained living in Silesia and interviewing a variety of people related to the topic. For this I greatly thank the Centre for European Studies for making it possible for me to travel to Poland in order to conduct my very much needed research.